

# SUBstantial News



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News and Information Just for Substitute Teachers From

## Getting and Keeping Students on Task

By acquiring the ability to get and keep students on task you will eliminate most inappropriate student behavior. There are three things a substitute teacher needs to help get students to stay on task. The first thing you can do is to have a starter activity ready to go for the students when they walk into the room.

If a permanent teacher doesn't leave a starter activity, be prepared to implement one. A starter activity should only be about five to ten minutes in length and allow students to work individually and quietly.

**Some ideas for effective starter activities are:**

- Have students design nametags or executive nameplates for their desks.
- In a math class, you might provide students quarter sheets of paper and have them write five sentences about how they used math outside of the classroom in the last week.
- Provide students with quarter sheets of paper and have them graphically represent what they learned the previous day.
- In younger grades, have students draw pictures of their daily schedule.

- Then have them draw clocks listing what time they did the tasks.
- Put a large poster of a picture in the front of the room, have students study the picture. After three minutes, take the picture away and ask them detailed questions about the picture.
- Photocopy a worksheet of addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division facts; have students time themselves on how long it takes to complete a line of equations.
- Write a brainteaser on the board, and allow a few minutes for students to try to solve it.
- Provide students with a piece of paper and have them write a letter to the President of the United States.

The possibilities are endless for what you can do for a starter activity. It is best if you can relate the activity to the subject you will be covering for the day. Remember, starter activities aren't busy work. They need to have a purpose and feedback should be provided on student work. Instead of your grading the papers, have students trade with a partner and have the partner write something he/she liked about the other student's work

at the top of the paper, then hand back to the original owner.

By using a starter activity you will have time to take roll and prepare so that you may smoothly and quickly transition to the first item on the lesson plan. The starter activity will also get students busy, thus decreasing the amount of downtime. Students who are on task don't have time to create classroom management problems.

For more ideas for starter activities, check out the 'Five Minute Fillers' section in the Substitute Teacher Handbook.

Secondly, by transitioning quickly from one activity to the next, you are reducing downtime in the classroom. When there is downtime, the likelihood of students getting off task and creating classroom management problems increases.

The third thing you can do to keep students on task is to be on task yourself. As a teacher, you need to always model the behavior you expect from the students. You need to constantly be walking around assisting students who need help. The teacher should be the most on task person in the room.

## When a Student is Injured

When working with young students it is likely you will experience a medical emergency in the classroom. The injury could be severe enough that you may need to summon someone from the main office. Most classrooms now are equipped with emergency buttons; you can call the office that way. Or to ensure that you can always stay with the injured student, send a runner to the office to

contact a secretary. If you experience having someone hurt in your classroom, be sure to take a minute at the end of the day and document what happened. Leave a copy for the permanent teacher and keep one for yourself.

### Quote of the Month

**"The teacher who is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom but rather leads you to the threshold of your mind."**

**– Kahlil Gibran**



## KWL

Sometimes the lesson plan left by the permanent teacher, particularly in the higher grades, just says to push play on the video. A simple teaching strategy you can implement to help students get more out of a video is a KWL chart.

A KWL chart is a graphic organizer that will help students arrange information.

KWL stands for,

K: What I Know

W: What I Want to Know

L: What I Have Learned.

To make a KWL chart, fold a paper into thirds like a brochure (or divide the white board into thirds if working as a whole class), this will create three columns. In the first column put K, second column W, and third column L.

Under the K column, have students write what they already KNOW about the subject at hand. For example, if you were showing a video about volcanoes, have students write what they already know about volcanoes. In the W column, have students write what they WANT to know

about volcanoes.

Here is where you would show the video, then after the video you would fill out the L column. Ask the students as a review, what they have LEARNED about volcanoes.

A KWL chart is a simple graphic organizer that can be used in a variety of ways.

When you are unfamiliar with the subject matter using KWL encourages students to do the teaching.

## Things you need to know!