

Lesson Plan

Everyday Study Skills

Teach students how to set goals, prioritize, and stay organized

By Michele Goodstein

Start a conversation about study habits in your classroom. What works for students? What works against them? Then review three important factors — setting goals, the study environment, and time management — and complete helpful activities to improve your students' study skills.

The Importance of Setting Goals

For students to be successful in your class and in the years to come, they must learn the process of establishing a goal, and creating and following through on a plan to accomplish that goal. Reaching goals demands a set of skills and habits that you can help your students learn.

Activity One: Setting Priorities

From soccer practice and spelling homework to family meals and TV, each day is busy and full. Learning how to prioritize everyday tasks is a challenge even for many adults. To help your students learn this skill, begin with a class discussion about their many after-school activities. Ask: How do you set priorities? Then hand out the Study Skills: Setting Goals reproducible. Activity One asks students to look at a list of things to do and rank them in order of importance. Let students know that they have the right to choose their own priorities, but some may lead to better consequences than others.

Activity Two: Goal Organizer

As your students learn about goal-setting, take the opportunity to talk about the daily priorities of the classroom and to help your students set reachable goals for the whole class. A simple way to explain the difference between priorities and goals is that priorities are "must dos" whereas goals are "plan to dos." Ask students to help you make a list of classroom priorities, such as safety, learning, and kindness. Establish a list you can agree upon. Then have students focus on Activity Two in the Study Skills: Setting Goals reproducible. Ask students to work in small groups to brainstorm five short-term goals (goals the class can meet today) that correspond with a priority. Next, each group can brainstorm goals for the month (medium-range) and the year (long-range).

The Importance of Creating the Right Study Environment

In a busy household, finding a quiet place to read and do homework can be a real challenge. A well-lit, organized workspace can make all the difference.

Activity Three: Obstacles to Concentration

Students may have difficulty focusing because they do not have a positive study environment where there are few distractions. After a discussion of study environment, try asking your students to write for five minutes about where and how they study. As they write, cause distractions — hum, talk, or open windows. They will catch on and laugh. Explain that these are external distractions. Internal distractions (boredom, hunger) come from inside the self. Then share Activity Three in the Study Skills: Study Environment reproducible and ask students to work in groups to brainstorm external and internal obstacles to studying and smart solutions they can use.

Activity Four: My Study Plan

Discovering the best approach to studying is a personal process. What works very well for one student in one family environment may not work for another. With this activity, students will create individual study plans that can work for them. Ask students to close their eyes and visualize themselves studying effectively. What do they picture? Talk together about good places to study and the best times of day to study. Then share Activity Four in the [Study Skills: Study Environment reproducible](#). Working in pairs, with one student as recorder and the other as interviewee, students can plan and then draw their ideal studying environment.

The Importance of Time Management

Learning to manage time well is a key skill for success at home and in the workplace. By incorporating specific calendar and daily-planner routines into your classroom, you are helping students build important life skills that will serve them well in the years ahead.

Activity Five: Keeping Track of Time

For young children time is elastic. A Saturday afternoon spent playing outside may pass in a blur or stretch into a summer's worth of adventures. As they enter middle school, many children still have not developed the ability to estimate the passage of time. With this activity, students conduct their own "research study" on how they spend their time. Begin by talking with students about their afternoons and evenings. Ask them to estimate how much time they spend sleeping, eating, watching TV, etc. Help students do the math to come up with class averages. Then give each student multiple copies of the [Study Skills: Time Management reproducible](#). Over the course of three days, have students record their activities in half-hour intervals. Ask students to color-code their charts for easier interpretation (e.g., blue for sleep, red for sports.) How do the results compare to their previous estimates?

Activity Six: Where Does the Time Go?

With this follow-up activity, students look closely at their time sheets and make observations about how the choices they make determine the ways in which they spend their time. When they assess how they spend their time, many children may be surprised at the discoveries they make. Start by giving each student a copy of Activity Six in the [Study Skills: Time Management reproducible](#) for homework. Have students use their time charts from the previous days as guides. Encourage them to answer the questions fully and thoughtfully. Let them know that their responses are private and will not be shared with the class. The next day in class, ask each student to write in his or her journal about what was learned from this assignment. Perhaps use a prompt such as "One thing I need to change about how I use my time is...."

More Study Skill Activities

My Personal Goals

After students chart short-, medium-, and long-term goals for your class (Activity Two), give each student another copy of the [Study Skills: Setting Goals reproducible](#) and ask your students to record their own personal goals.

Share the Learning

Have students make posters or flyers with tips and advice about study skills, and post them in the hallways for the rest of the school to see. Sign the flyers "Courtesy of the Super Studiers in Room ____."

"To Do" List

After your students do the time management activities, help them to write a "To Do" list each day for homework and after-school activities. Have students estimate how much time each assignment will take, and then record the actual time. This will help them to become more time-conscious.

Reproducibles

[Study Skills: Setting Goals](#)

[Study Skills: Study Environment](#)

[Study Skills: Time Management](#)

Related Resources

[5 Free and Fun Online Tools for Stress-Free Studying](#)
By [Erin Klein](#)

These tools great for studying, and a blast to play with in the classroom or at home.

[Read more >](#)
[Class Pride and Goals](#)
By [Sandra Blair](#)

This lesson will build class pride and help students see that setting goals and accomplishments builds self-esteem.

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[Classroom Organizing Tips for Encouraging Student Independence](#)
By [Roe Wrubel](#)

Teaching is often about moving kids toward independence. Here are some ways to set up your classroom – from the entryway to the walls – to achieve this goal.

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Aug 09, 2011
Published