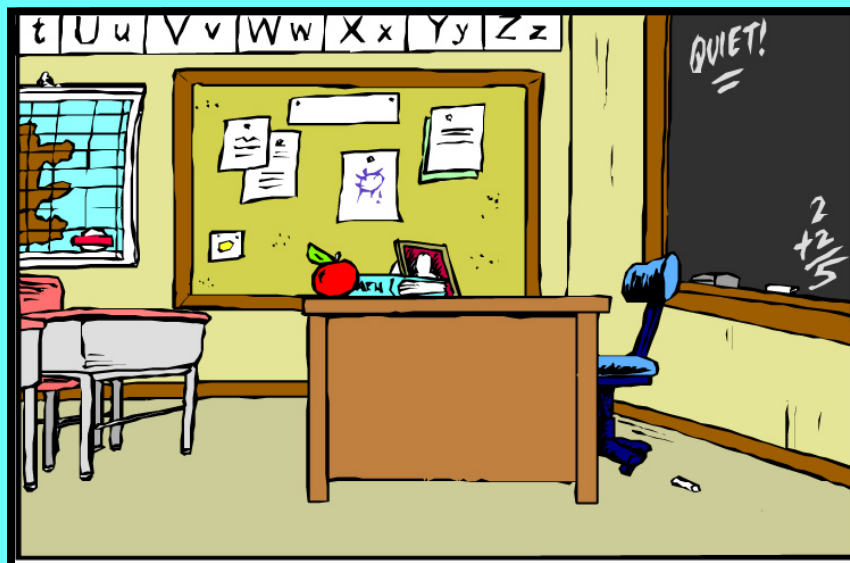




A collection of tips  
from teachers

# Classroom Management Ideas



*The following classroom management ideas come from the old Primary Success magazine. They are in no particular order. If there are duplicates, I apologize! Jean*

### **Desk Drawer Necessities!**

Teachers drew up a list of things to be found in their desk drawers!

- |                              |                                     |   |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| -safety pins                 | - lipstick                          | - prizes for the students                   |
| - lunch bags                 | - medication like Advil and Tylenol | - extra pairs of shoes                      |
| - an umbrella                | - Vitamin C and Echinacea           | - feminine necessities                      |
| - variety of stickers        | - a pointer                         | - Scope                                     |
| - extra class key            | - blank cards for thank you notes   | - hair clips for students with hair in eyes |
| - candles for birthday cakes | - Goo-gone                          | - thread, twine                             |
| - lighter or matches         | - scraper                           | - different kinds of tape                   |
| - batteries                  | - dice                              | - a whistle                                 |
| - pair of socks              | - bandaids                          | - a hand bell                               |
| - change of clothes          | - peroxide                          | - some blank CDs                            |
| - a sweater or vest          | - latex gloves                      | - antibacterial wipes                       |
| - deodorant                  | - staple remover                    |   |
| - flashlight                 | - extra pair of shoes               |   |
| - cough drops                | - awards                            |   |
| - baby wipes                 | - timer or stopwatch                |   |

### **Inexpensive chart holders:**

"I bought some of those white plastic hooks that hang up on the wall with sticky tape backs. I have also used the kind of spring loaded hooks you can use to hang Christmas wreaths on metal doors and used them on my metal chalkboards. They hold up pocket charts perfectly. I use one for my 'Making Words' lessons."

"I hot-glued clothes pins to the wall and hung poems and charts. They won't hold anything heavy, but they are fine for a single chart."

"Skirt hangers with a number of clothes pins hold many charts in my cupboard."

### **Using glue:**

"This may be dated and the children won't understand where it came from, but we say 'A little dab'll do ya'."

"Carefully pry off the little orange cap on the top of each new bottle of liquid glue. Take a Q-tip and coat the inside of the orange cap and the tip of the bottle where the glue comes out with a thin coat of Vaseline. (Or.... spray it with Pam....) Then snap the cap back on. This prevents the glue from sticking to the bottle and the cap."



Attach vinyl eaves trough to a wall to display books so the covers can be seen.

"This is a wonderful idea for your 'All About Me' unit. Ask, 'What gift can you share with others?' All children have something in which they shine! This is a great community-building activity. Perhaps it is bike riding, math, science knowledge in a specific subject, reading, playing soccer, singing, drawing, etc., - all have equal value."

"One important piece of advise for the parents (or teachers) is to be sure they are not training kids to ignore them by repeating the directions over and over and over. Kids are smart enough to know that we will tell them again and again, so why should they stop what they are doing and listen the first time? Prompt their attention by saying, "I am going to give you some directions, so get ready to listen." Do not rescue them by repeating things again and again. Start off with only 2 very specific directions at a time. Then have them repeat the directions back to you. When they master 2 directions, go on to 3 directions at a time. They will have to concentrate to remember the directions in order so they can repeat them back and then follow them."

"My class sits in teams and throughout the week they earn team points for various things (the team that is quiet first, desks cleared first, etc.). One of the things I use every day is the mystery item. This is how I get my room cleaned up - pronto! I quickly write on a scrap of paper 5 - 6 things that are not where they belong. This could be a scrap of paper, a pencil on the floor, a chair at the art table, someone's coat, my scissors, etc. When I say 'go' the students SILENTLY take care of anything they see that is out of place. I write the name of the person who takes care of each item on my list. When the room is spic-and-span I announce the names of those students on my list. They earn points for their team if they are on the list. They absolutely adore this activity! It takes just minutes to do and I use it a couple of times a day."

"I have certain jobs that I do each day of the week to try to keep my classroom organized and my work up to date. On Monday I run off the copies for the week and organize my own desk, on Tuesday I file things and clean the shelves, on Wednesday I make sure all my marking is up to date and filed and I do bulletin boards, Thursday I write the weekly newsletter for the parents and on Friday I plan for the following week and update my sub file. Every day I do anecdotal notes on 4 or 5 students and enter the notes on my computer so I can get through every student each week. Sometimes it is difficult to keep up with all these things, but when I can it really makes life a lot easier!"

"I never let my kids use the pencil sharpener. I have two cans - one with newly sharpened pencils and one where dull pencils are put. The students take a sharp one and place their dull one in the other can and I sharpen all the pencils after school. Pencils are community property. I find they last a lot longer this way!"



"We sing .... Write your name on your paper, write your name,  
Write your name on your paper, write your name,  
Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ wants to know who did this work and so....  
Write your name on your paper, write your name!

If your students have numbers, sing the same song with "Write your number on your paper .... etc."

"At the beginning of the year in *Grade One* we just write our names on papers (we sing 'The first thing on my paper is my name.....' to *If You're Happy and You Know It*). The next thing we add is our number. So the song then goes, 'The first thing on my paper is my name, the next thing on my paper is my number, First is my name and then I write my number, The first thing on my paper is my name....and my number.' Later, when we add the date we will sing, 'Put your name on your paper, write it down (x2), put your name on your paper, put your number on your paper, put the date on your paper, write it down.'

"I call it 'Quiet Cleaning'. When I say 'Quiet cleaning has now begun....' the kids start their jobs. Everyone has a job on the job chart that they must do without talking. The inspector walks around and looks to see if anything needs to be done, he/she is the only one who can talk and nicely tell people what they missed or what has to be done. They love that power!"

"Only one boy and one girl may be in the restroom at a time. They write their name on the board when they go and erase it upon return. That way I know who is missing in case of emergency and there is no one from our room to play with when they are in the bathroom. When I taught Kindergarten, I had a 'bathroom bear' that the student put on his/her chair when going to the bathroom. As there was only one bear, only one child would be away from the classroom."



"Magic 10 count - On the board I have a small chart that has my name and the class on it. Whenever I want my students to move quickly to a new activity or back to their desks I just have to say magic 10. If they can get to the next thing I've asked them to do without running before I get to 10 (or sometimes I count backwards) they get a point on their side of the chart. If they do not make it then I get the point. On Friday afternoon we count up the points and if they have more points than I do they get to vote and choose an activity for the end of the day. (extra recess, centers, video, colouring pages, etc.,) If I have more points then I get to choose."

"I use the 'secret walker' plan when we move to another part of the school. I tell the line that I am looking for good behaviour from my secret walker. Only I know who it is and that person gets lots of positive reinforcement and a sticker if he/she did a good job. If not, I just say that I am sad that the person I had in mind didn't earn the sticker and I don't reveal their name."

"I use response chants to get their attention - For example I say AB-C-D-E, my students reply AB-C-D-E and then they are silent waiting for my next words."

"I use the 'lining up and walking' poem:

We are so quiet,  
Quiet as a mouse.  
No one will know  
That we're in their house.

We begin in normal voices and then get quieter and quieter to a very soft whisper."



Have a can of large craft sticks with the names of each student. You can draw names by pulling a stick when there is a special job to be done. When all the sticks have been pulled, put them all back and start again. This gives every student a fair chance!

Create a substitute folder with specific instructions on how your room is run. Have an updated class list and seating plan, a daily schedule, a brief outline of your procedures throughout the day. Have generic lesson plans that could center around a book for the reading lesson, generic math plans, etc.

Have 'While You Were Away' folders for the students who are absent. Pass out work and papers to all desks, including the desks of absent students. Train the person who sits nearest to the absent person to get a folder and as work is assigned throughout the day he/she adds these to the folder.

Have a folder where you file copies of newsletters or other notes that go home to parents. Sometimes these get lost and the students need another copy. You also have proof that things were sent home!

"My Kindergarten kids are always getting crayon or marker on things. Did you know that toothpaste will take almost any stain out of any surface including permanent marker out of clothes?"

"To get their attention, I bought a battery-operated doorbell. The chime part plugs into the wall, but the part you touch can go into your pocket so it is always handy, no matter where you are in the classroom."

Have the students use sign language to let you know when they need to use the bathroom. You can nod yes or no, so it does not have to interrupt the lesson. To make the sign for "toilet" make a sign language T (fist with thumb between the index and middle fingers) then turn the wrist from side to side.

Buy two rolls of the narrow matching Velcro with the sticky back. Use the Velcro to attach posters to walls.

Aluminum foil makes an interesting bulletin board background, especially for an ocean unit. Cover it with a garden net and add sea creatures!

Write praise words and student names on sentence strips to use as bulletin board borders.

Use wallpaper border as a border on bulletin boards.

At the end of every month visit the local fabric store to look at printed fabric on sale. They often have inexpensive fabric with holiday designs (Halloween, Valentines, St. Patrick's Day, etc.). This is great to cover bulletin boards - and is bright and colourful. It can be washed and used for years!

Next to where you want the children to place completed papers, put an attached highlighter and pencil. Have the students highlight their name every time they turn something in. If they forget, they can use the pencil, and then highlight. It solves the no-name problem and the kids love to use the highlighter.

If you use a lot of sentence strips, punch a hole at one end and slip the strips onto shower curtain hooks for a particular subject in order. These can be stored in a wallpaper trough or a florist box for long-stemmed roses.

***To answer a question about care of books:***

"Maybe you could do some kind of roll play with you speaking for the book. Hold up a book and say, "Oh, I love being a book! I really like that boys and girls can learn to read from me and that I can tell them all kinds of great stories. Not just one boy or girl can learn from me, but lots of them because I should last for years and years."

Then lay the book on the floor and have a child walk by and almost step on it. Have the book talk about what a close call that was and how bad it would hurt to be stepped on. Hand the book to a child and ask them to act like they are going to tear out a page. Ask another child to speak for the book. Do this with all of the behaviours that are damaging books."



When deciding how to put your desks, consider these:

- Students should be able to see you when you talk to the class as a whole. Having to turn chairs to face you when you speak is not good management.
- You should be able to move freely among the desks so you can over-see what the students are doing and help anyone who needs help.
- The proximity of the teacher is directly related to the attention the student will pay to the task.
- A student should not be in a position to copy easily from another's paper. Sometimes this is quite suitable - you may want collaboration, but generally you want students to think independently.
- Do you have a class that can work quietly and independently when sitting in small groups? If the answer is 'no', then separate the desks.
- Can all students see the word wall, charts, chalkboard, etc?

### **Students' mailboxes**

"Some of the closet organizers are great for mailboxes! I have used shoe holders from Walmart and hanging closet organizers with lots of pockets from Ikea."

"I bought a plastic black file box and put a hanging file folder for each child in it. I typed the labels for their names on the computer and they all fit nicely. The good thing is that if someone wants to file, they can take the box to a table to file things. It only takes up a little space, and that is good in my crowded classroom."

"I found a pocket chart with 20 clear vinyl slots in it. I put names on tag that fit the slots and slip them inside."

"I have one of the pidgeon-hole boxes from Staples. I like it because it is neat and handy. I put the student's name and number on the slot, and that makes it easy to file papers for going home."



### **Organization**

As the end of the year draws near, it is time to organize and re-organize your teaching materials. We tend to keep everything we see, just in case it might come in handy some day - but when that day comes the items or ideas may not be easy to find! Teachers do not throw things out easily! It may pay each of us to watch the TV program 'Clean Sweep' and use the same procedures to organize our teaching materials, and throw out things that have not been used for years. You may be sure that if you haven't used them in years, it is unlikely that you will use them in the near future.

For those of you who are on-line with high-speed internet access - you could almost dispose of most of your resources and simply use the resources at your fingertips via your computer. There are complete units, with ideas and downloadable sheets, etc.

Work on your filing system, so that you can find what you need easily.

"I love a clean teacher's desk! It took me a long time to achieve this - I used to have piles of paper and books and 'things' on the top, and I would have to do my prep book somewhere else because there wasn't a space to write on! Now I make a special effort. I just have my plan-book and a pen and pencil and marking pencil, and I try to have some flowers or a plant, too. It is so nice to sit down and have a pleasant place to do my paper work!"

"I have a binder set up for a sub. It has a class list, a seating diagram, the class rules, a timetable, etc. When I know I am going to be away I leave it open on the desk, with helpful hints and extra things that the sub teacher can do."

Have a look at these mini-offices! This is a great idea.

<http://www.teachingheart.net/minioffice.html>

<http://jmeacham.com/mini.offices.htm>

<http://www.reagankinderbears.com/printables.htm>



"I have tables with 4 children at each. Each position at the table has a number. Each number has a job assigned to it and the kids rotate through the jobs each week.

1- paper passer (I count out four papers and lay them in front of the 1s, who then take one and pass the rest to #2, who takes one and ...so on).

2 - The second person looks after the supplies - keeps them tidy and makes sure there is enough for the group.

3 - The third person washes the table after we eat lunch and at home-time if it is needed.

4 - The fourth person collects completed work and puts it in the correct tub."

"I have a coloured dot at each table spot, and they have a rotation of colours for table captain. The captain for the day handles all the jobs that need doing at the table. They get the caddies, hand out papers, put the caddies away making sure all the supplies are accounted for, put the chairs up after school, etc."

"I have a box of ear protectors (the type you see airport crew wearing). The children go and get a pair if they need quiet to concentrate. It's always interesting to see who goes and gets a pair. Most schools have old listening posts in the basement because nobody seems to use them any more and the old earphones that comes with them work as well."

"I use the 5 Bs! If a child wants to tattle, I ask: is there blood?, barf? bee stings or bites?, broken bones, bullying? If it doesn't apply to this then I wave bye-bye. It has helped a lot this year."



"I assign my students numbers which they all put in the right hand corner of their papers. When I take up any test papers I quickly put them in order and I can see easily if I am missing a paper - it also makes it easy to record marks and file."

### Names on Papers

"We sing the 'Names' song to "If You're Happy and You Know It"."

If your name is on your paper, raise your hand

If your name is on your paper, raise your hand

If your name is printed there, put your hand up in the air

If your name is on your paper raise your hand. (*snap, snap, clap, clap,*)

Hoo-ray!

"I have the children draw a happy face, heart or a cat or some simple drawing after their name so that they enjoy the name task. I often go around with stickers in the first 2-3 weeks of school and give one to the children who have their name already printed. I tell them that I will expect it always! Then I go around with just a date stamp or picture stamp for a few days and then I have a helper who gets to go around with the date stamp. They like this job!"

The first thing we do is always the same:

We pick up our pencils and write our names!

"I use those dozens of teacher mugs I have been given to store pens and markers, jumbo clips, loose change, etc. When I was painting my home, I painted a number of coffee cans, too, and use them to store rulers and items for 'read-the-room.'"

A rolling cart with drawers is very useful! Keep all the things you will need during the day - marking pens and pencils, scissors, stickers, stamps, etc. Keep files and flashcards and photocopies you will need. There are lots of uses and it can go with you to the calendar area and where you teach groups.

### Use your chalkboards!

For beginning printers, give each student a section and have them practice the letters.

Put your morning message and announcements on the chalkboard.

Print poems on the chalkboard for the students to print.

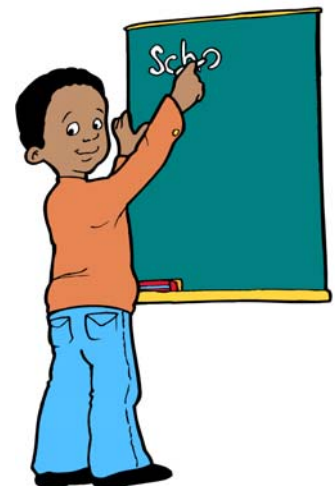
Print the spelling words on the board.

Keep homework assignments up for all to see.

Print questions on the board for the students to answer.

If your boards are metal, use magnets to hold up charts, etc.

Keep your chalkboards clean and tidy! Clean the chalk off your boards with a Puffs Plus tissue with lanolin.



If you are a teacher who takes lots of things home each night and packs them back in the morning, buy a small suitcase on wheels. Pack it up and it wheels along behind you! Don't risk a back injury .....

Students' dry erase boards or individual chalk boards are great! You can get a building materials store to cut a sheet of the shiny bathroom wallboard into individual pieces for dry erase boards. Sand the edges.

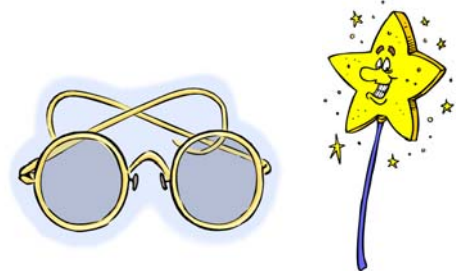
Use them in calendar time, for making words or spelling, printing or writing practice and math drills. Everyone can be involved in the lessons! The students can hold up their boards to show you their answers or turn them over to hide the answers.

Tissues or paper towel can erase, or give each student an old sock and they keep the dry erase pens or chalk in the toe. The sock is used for erasing. Shake them out once a week or give them a wash (the students can wash their own in the classroom sink...)

Buy a large box of craft sticks at Michaels or other craft store. These can be used for math manipulatives, especially for place value as they can be piled in groups of ten. Print the students' names on them and draw from a can to do jobs, to answer questions, to help out, etc. They are great for art projects - put frames on pictures or make designs with them. Make 'Space Men' with the sticks to space printing between words. The kids love to build structures with them, stacking them like logs.

Another great craft store idea is to buy the tubs of foam cutouts. They are different colours and have different shapes, so they are very good for simple sorting by colour or shape. They can be used for counting one-to-one correspondence in Kindergarten.

Go to the Dollar Store and look for interesting things. You will find funny glasses and magic wands to 'read the room', many things that are useful for math manipulatives, plastic containers with lids, decorations and much more!



If you have problems with your desks or tables being moved about and looking sloppy, put a small round sticker on the floor where the front two legs of the table or desk should go. If you have carpet, use a tiny piece of Velcro (the hook part). Then when the tables get crooked, just say, "On your mark!" and the room looks tidy in seconds.

Teach your children to move their chairs, not the table!

"When working with my guided reading groups, I keep the noise level under control by using coloured circles. If I want the class to stay on task and be very quiet, I put up a red circle. If they may talk softly in whispers, a yellow circle is put up. When more talking is allowed, there is a green circle. I find they will calm back down quickly when the circles are changed."

"I have a small kitchen timer to get my students to pay attention to the task at hand and not waste time. I set a specific time limit on many tasks and I've noticed a great improvement in finished work. This is especially helpful for the students with learning disabilities."

"Sometimes children bring toys or other things from home. I created a 'Safekeeping Box'. I found a medium-sized box with a lid, decorated it, and put a label on the box that said 'Items in Safekeeping, To Be Returned Later.' When I see children playing with something that is distracting them, I ask them to put it in the Safekeeping Box and let them know that they can retrieve their item at the end of the day. This validates their important personal treasures and assures them they will be returned. Additionally, it cuts down on the distractions in the classroom, as the students learn quickly to avoid having things put into the box."

"I teach my children to give and receive compliments. I choose a student of the week and make a colourful poster on which I write a few specific compliments about the student. My class takes time out at the end of the day for the children to give compliments to the student of the week. As I write the compliments on the poster, the students respond with 'thank you' and 'you're welcome'. We continue to do this every day that week. I find they are now complimenting each other more often and using the polite words to respond. It is very nice to hear!"

"When I have two quarreling children who come to me, each telling me their side of the story, the first thing I ask them to do is to sit together somewhere away from the other children so they can have privacy. Next, I tell them to talk between themselves about what happened, and then come back to me when they both have the same story as to what really happened. Many times, through this discussion, they will conclude that it was just a misunderstanding, and they will come back to me and say they have resolved it by themselves. If this is not the case, then when they come to me, I know I will hear what is probably the 'truth' about what happened, and I am able to handle it from there. This teaches the students the importance of communication, and that many times they are able to resolve their own problems without my interference."

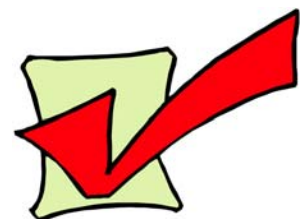
"While the students are eating lunch I play soothing music, usually classical, and I also play it very softly when they are doing independent tasks. They really like it! We discuss the composer and they soon have favourites."

### **Marking**

- Mark as much as possible with the students. It is much more valuable to the students if marking is done in the same work period.

- Marking daily work after school or on the weekend isn't benefiting the kids. Do it for your information, but do not consider it part of the learning. The students won't gain from correcting on another day.

- Some papers can be marked as a class. If you send all papers home, have a stamp that says 'Marked together' so the parents know that the work has not been overlooked.



### Anecdotal Assessment

Make up a sheet of labels with the students' names in the corner of each. Put the sheet on a clipboard and as you go around the classroom, jot down notes for each student. This way, you won't forget anyone! Then, when they are filled, take off the label and put it under today's date in the students' files.

"I keep my assessment files on my classroom computer. I have a file for each child, and I just open the file, add the date and put in the things I have noticed. I try to do one for everyone each week - more for the students who have difficulties. This is very handy for parent-teacher conferences and report cards, as all the information is in one place.

Then I make databases for marks. This is especially handy for math quizzes. They are easy to do on 'MS Works', and you can then sort them in lots of ways."



### Plan Ahead....

- Photocopy things you know you are going to need far ahead and file them so they are easy to lay your hands on.

- Do your daily plans on the computer, and put in all the things that rarely change. This way there is less work when you fill them out. Do the daily plans a week ahead - if they are done on the computer they are very easy to change.

- If you do centres, have basic ones that stay the same all year, and each week or two a small part of each can be changed. This saves a lot of work!

- Some teachers are so organized that when they plan an art project, for example, they organize enough supplies for another year ahead. Of course, that means you must be able to find it next year!

### Prioritize

- Believe it or not, teaching is just a job! You have the right to a personal life and a family life outside the classroom. If you are spending more than nine hours at school or doing more school work each evening, you should learn to prioritize your duties. You will be able to be a better teacher if you are able to relax and think about other things each day. If you have a partner and/or children, they must have as much time as possible. You will never get those missed hours back.

- Decide when you want to leave the school, empty handed, and work through the day to achieve this. If you want to leave at 4:30 p.m., then organize your time so that it happens. You will find that you can get everything done and go home, if you work towards that goal. You would manage going early if you have a meeting! Your family is much more important.

- Plan your work and work your plan!

"I use a chalkboard on wheels for my teaching corner. That leaves my built-in chalkboards for the word wall."

"I organize all papers I need to keep up with in notebooks. The best organizational idea I incorporated this past school year is I organize all curriculum, activity sheets for all subject areas for the week in a notebook. Therefore when I go to the copy machine everything I will be teaching for the week is all together and not in 6 or 7 different folders in different places. I just pull from one place. I use dividers to separate the weeks. I can fit 5-6 weeks worth of material in one notebook. This has been a life-saver!



I do not allow my students to be up and down all day sharpening pencils. I have 2 pencil boxes on a shelf beside the electric pencil sharpener. One is labeled "yes" and one is labeled "no". Inside the "yes" box there are sharpened pencils. In the "no" box they are unsharpened. When a child needs to have their pencil sharpened they go and put it in the "no" box and get a sharpened pencil from the "yes" box. I sharpen pencils at the beginning or end of the day. I also allow student helpers to sharpen pencils sometimes for good behavior. Children love to use the electric pencil sharpener so this is a good treat.

I use a variety of methods for lining up and try to incorporate standards and skills that need to be mastered. You can have them line up by their favorite thing: such as color, animal, vehicle, how you get to school, etc. I also incorporate a lot of power point presentations in order to make them more interactive. I have one power point that has all student's names that scroll. When their name comes across the screen they line up - I do the same thing with last name, middle name and full name (one of our kindergarten standards is being able to recognize their full name in print). I also have power points such as colors, high frequency words - when you can read a word you can line up. Sometimes we do not have time to line-up in that way so I call them to line-up by tables - my tables are colour coded.

I use homework charts that stay in the child's take home folder. They have a calendar that has 30+ skills. They can choose which ones they want to do and when. They just need to be finished with the entire chart by the end of the month. The students and parents really love the homework charts. Students are not penalized for not doing their homework. However, students are rewarded for doing their homework, which makes the students that did not do theirs want to do it the next month. By the second or third month all of my students are completing their homework charts.

"At the beginning of the year I ask for money instead of having the parents buy supplies. I first price everything, and then see what the cheapest prices can be. This is a bit of work for me, but it pays in the long run! It means that the individual children do not 'own' the supplies and therefore there isn't the problem of lost or destroyed items. I keep all the supplies in the cupboard and dole them out as needed. When we clean out desks or have a weekly super classroom cleaning, anything found goes back into the general collection."

"I use cookie sheets with my magnetized letters and words. I buy a bunch the same size. These are great for lessons, for centres or for children to practice making words or sentences."

"I have metal chalkboards. I bought some magnetic clothes pins and use these for the word wall words, for hanging charts and other uses. I also bought some special magnets that are very strongly magnetized, so can be up over the corners of charts or heavier things. I also use the magnetic tape - this works really well for smaller items."

"I hate file cabinets, and have finally found an organization technique that works for me -- 3-ring binders. I have each month of ideas in its own binder. The pages in the binder are in page protectors (because I hate punching holes in them and the marks that the holes leave on the copies I make). If I have more pages than I have room in the binder (I have the 3" ones) I make up two binders. I also have done this with my ReadingAtoZ.com reading books. It keeps everything at my fingertips, and I don't have to worry about finding the file folder that the pages go in, all I have to do is put it back into my binder."

"I need my tall metal filing cabinets but I think they are ugly! I try to soften them by putting a big spreading plant on top, and putting charts on the sides with magnets."



"I found some of my kids asking to go up to the word wall to see the words. I sat in their desks and I couldn't see the words either - the window light was reflecting off them as I had them laminated. I took them down, made the print as large as the space allowed and didn't laminate them. I am finding that the kids are using them much more than before."

"I have something that works well for a magnetic board. I bought a piece of duct metal from a plumbing shop. They cut it to the size I wanted and rolled the edges so they weren't sharp. I sanded it and painted it with green chalkboard paint. Now I can write on it with chalk and use magnetic letters, too. I have it secured to a bulletin board with brackets over the corners. I think it is very handy!"

"I bought the heavy cardboard boxes from Staples with 12 x 2 inch openings to use as mailboxes. I think they are called 'Literature Sorters'. The paper we use fits easily, and each compartment holds all that is needed for take-home mailboxes. I made labels for each child and put a label with the name and number under each box. They are very neat and attractive. Mailboxes can be so messy!"

"Instead of having to clean off transparencies for the overhead I just use a dry erase marker and write directly on the overhead projector. I wipe the top clean with a tissue - and use a baby wipe if any marks are left."

"I have a unique organizational idea that works great for me. It's a seating/job wheel that rotates every day. I make two circles out of poster board. I would say the inner one is about 18 inches diameter and outer one 24. They are stacked with a brad through the center. We have classroom maximums of 20 students so I divided the inner circle with lines every 18 degrees and extended those lines to the outside edge of the outer circle. The students' names are written in each section of the outer circle. That circle stays stationary on the wall (whiteboard) so that the students names always appear in the same location...quick and easy to find.

The inner circle also has a 12 inch circle drawn within it. Each section of the innermost circle Indicates where the child is to sit that day when we are on the carpet (row 1, location, 2--I actually have a rug with 20 squares so the wheel indicates which color and seat). The outer area of the 18 inch circle contains symbols and words representing classroom jobs and privileges, e.g. student of the day, feed the fish, turn off the lights, shut the door, edit the DOL, lead the line, put the rug on the floor, push G's wheelchair, lead the pledge, lead Simon Says, first dibs on a recess game, pass out papers, first dibs on various balls and jump ropes, etc. The inner circle is turned one space each day so that everyone gets a turn at everything and I don't have to keep track of who is getting what privileges.

Before use, I put the student numbers on the outer circle and had it laminated. Each year I just write on first names with permanent marker...it comes off by writing over it with dry-erase. I also put on all the carpet locations and filled every other job location with things that are "for sure" and had that laminated. During the year I write in other jobs in the empty spots as they come up.

To keep students from changing the wheel I poked a hole at the outer edge of every line in the inside circle and one hole total in the outer circle. I insert a brad through the appropriate inner circle hole and the outer circle hole."

"I have an Ikea nearby, and I buy lots of neat organizational things there. I especially like the drawers with the metal frames - some of the drawers are plastic and some are wire mesh. I like the shoe holders for the kids mailboxes, too. There are hanging shoe bags and other hangers with places for toys, etc. that I hang in the kids' coat area."

"Every student has a 'Take Home' file folder that they decorate and then I have laminated. One inside pocket is labeled 'Leave at home' and the other is 'Return to school'. I cut open the pockets, after lamination. They put all the papers in the correct pocket. It is easy and efficient."

"Over the years I have discovered the importance of having all the children facing me when I want to tell them something or teach a whole class lesson. I really dislike having children with their backs to the front of the classroom - it is so much harder to get their attention. Now that I have a Grade One class, I sit them in a semi-circle facing me. I put them into separated rows when I want them to do independent work without looking at each other's assignment."



"I have a plastic box with a hanging file for each student. Any work that isn't finished in class time goes into the file. When the children finish their work, they can go into their file and finish other work. They are not allowed to draw or play until the file is empty. At the end of the day they take any work still not done out of the file and take it home to complete."

"I am going to work on my transitions in the coming year. Last year I found that the children were taking too long and were too noisy when we were cleaning up from one activity and going to another. I am going to model the behaviours I want and see if I can save those precious minutes!"

### **Student Helpers**

"I don't have student helpers. I say that we have all helped to make the mess and we should all help to clean it up. At the end of the day I simply give two tables the floor to clean, one table the shelves and bookcases, another table to check students' desks, etc. I find it is all done in 30 seconds and without any fuss."

"I have one student helper for the day. That person does all the jobs - is line leader, hands out papers, takes messages, etc. The children are always thrilled when it is their day."

"I have these jobs that rotate on a chart: floor superintendent, computer assistant, pencil sharpener, board cleaner, line leader, line ender, paper filers, librarian, plant and pet person, desk inspector, and chair supervisor."

"My overhead projector is on a moveable cart. I can wheel it to different places in the classroom. Luckily, I have lots of electrical outlets! The lower shelves of the cart are used for a tray of erasable pens, felt pieces for erasing and my transparencies."

"I laminate blank tags for cubbies and desktops. Then I use felt pen to write on top of the lamination. These can be wiped clean and used again and again."

"If you write over top of permanent marker with a dry erase marker and then erase, both the dry erase and the permanent marks come off. You sometimes need to do it twice, but it works."

"To do name tags on desks, I put a piece of packing tape on the desk, write on it and put another piece of tape on top. To change name tags I just lift the tape and do it again."





"For our December open house I put up a bulletin board tree. On it are ornaments with suggestions of things the parents can donate to the classroom. Most parents want to help but don't know what we need. There are things to buy, such as books, games, skipping ropes, etc., and things that do not cost money - such as wrapping paper rolls, margarine containers, bits of ribbon and fabric. There are also ornaments with jobs that the parents can do - volunteer to listen to children read, bake for class parties, etc."

"I always send home thank you notes to parents who donate to my classroom - I bought a cute 'thank-you' pad and I try to add something personal. Classroom volunteers are given a thank-you note that all the children sign. It is good for the class to see the thank you notes."



"I bought a class set of baskets that fit into the desk spaces. All the supplies go into the basket. It is easily slid out, it is easy to find what the person is looking for, and easy to slide back in. We tidy them quickly every day before the students go home. Moreover, the baskets are quiet when they are moved!"

"I bought a lot of clear plastic containers and put math manipulatives in them. They stack easily and neatly, and they don't have to be labeled as you can see what is in them."

"I have a specific lesson in the art of passing out papers! My Grade Twos sit in rows, but I would do a similar lesson for tables. I hand enough papers for the students in the row to the front person. He/She takes one and hands the pile back, and the next person does the same. Handing in papers is the opposite. The back person hands his paper to the person in front of him, that person adds his paper and hands the two forward, etc., until all the papers reach the front. The front person puts the pile where it should go.

This sounds easy and obvious - but for some reason it never goes as smoothly as it should until I teach the specific lesson!"

"I designate two students to hand out papers for the week as part of the 'helpers' board. At the beginning of the year I model getting the papers, handing them out and collecting them and putting in the proper place."

"I train my helpers to hand out papers in a specific order and direction. They walk through the same path each time - this way no-one is missed or gets two papers by accident."

"I have a plastic tray that the students use to hand out the papers. The papers are put in the tray and as the 'passer' comes to each person, he/she takes one paper from the tray. I find this works very well. We do the opposite with collecting papers - the children put the papers into the tray as the passer goes by."

"I like to ask my Grade Three students to line up in a variety of ways. I use alphabetical order (first or last names), length of names, birthdays through the year and birthdays in seasons, hair colour from lightest to dark, the number of pockets, tallest to shortest, etc. I also have a map on a bulletin board and ask the students to line up depending on where they live - nearer or farther from the school, and also the place of birth and the distance from the school that place is. We get some very interesting discussions from these. We discuss our differences and the things that make us special, as well as the obvious learning of alphabetical order, months, map reading, and so on."

Here are a number of strategies to get attention and keep it.

- Use proximity control. Walk around the classroom and stand near the restless children. Seat them near you.
- Gently touch the arm of someone who is not paying attention, whisper the name or gently tap the desk top.
- Use the students' names in reading vocabulary practice and math problems.
- Use the names of people who are behaving most appropriately.
- Use peer pressure to get children to behave appropriately.

"If a student does not look after his pencils, only give that person the short ones - not the newer long ones - until they get the idea!"

"I have a large 3" binder to organize all my things. There are sections for my daily plans, substitutes, seating arrangements, meeting notes, student information, weekly newsletters, calendars, class mark sheets, individual student anecdotal notes, etc. I print out pages from my computer and pop them into the book. Everything I need is in this book! When I go to meetings or do report cards everything is with me. This is a great organizer!"

"When making copies I was forever forgetting which paper was my original. Many times I gave a student my original to use and did not catch it until it was too late. To prevent that from happening again, I highlight the top corner with a yellow highlighter or clip off the corner. The copier does not pick up the highlighted or clipped part and I immediately know which copy is mine."



"My kids have workbooks for math and phonics, too. When both sides of a page have been completed and corrected, I clip the top corner of the page. This way I can see exactly what pages need doing or correction, and the students use the clipped corners to find the right page easily."



"I put labels with my name on all the things I buy with my own money. Then when I move to another room or another school I will know which things go with me. It is also handy when I lend items to others - there is a much better chance of having them returned!"

"I really like to use 12" sentence strips rather than the long ones. The long ones are hard to store and to find when I need them - and the students can just put the 12" ones in front of them at the group table. This works really well!"

"Our district allows teachers to visit other classrooms to see how things are done. This is often very valuable and I have picked up lots of new ideas to take back to my own classroom. Sometimes, though, I get a needed lesson in 'what-not-to-do!' The last teacher I visited (Kindergarten) did a lesson that was disjointed, was far over the children's heads and completely confusing. Watching this reminded me of the value of good planning. Poor lessons produce a negative; confusion rather than learning. But - I did get some good art ideas from this teacher and she had some good bulletin board ideas....."

"I bought the tall black magazine holders - one for each table. The children put all their journals, guided reading books and workbooks in these, standing upright. These are on the tables all day and handed in after school for marking. This is really handy as the books don't have to be handed out or handed in."

"I use an accordion file for all the things I need each day and things that I must remember. I put papers I want to photocopy, notes from parents, reminders, office papers, etc., in labeled slots. On Friday I take a few minutes to toss unneeded things, to file important papers, etc. This keeps the papers off my desk and where I can find them, and I can find things I need!"

"I have an egg timer (it is shaped like an egg - with a face - and the kids love it!). I use it for math drill times, and after school I set it for five minutes and I dash around the classroom tidying, filing, organizing and cleaning. It is absolutely amazing what I can accomplish in five minutes!"

"Every Monday after school I am available to the parents. They can make an appointment to see me, call me on the phone or just drop in. When free on this afternoon I try to do up a week's worth of lesson plans, day plans, worksheets, etc., and also do a better cleaning on this day when I do not have parents talking to me. The parents like it, and I get a lot done, too - and don't have to stay as late on other days of the week."

"I have a classroom parent who organizes things, calls other parents, etc. I change the classroom parent every month so all parents that want to help have a chance. This saves me a lot of work!"

It is typical for classrooms to be set up in rows or in groups of 3-4 tables (which allow for easier cooperative learning). However, there are fundamental problems for each:

In rows, studies have shown that the further back you go, the more discipline problems there are. The visual, auditory and physical stimulation from the teacher is increasingly diminished as you move further back. This allows boredom to set in, and as a result, potential disruption.

In groups, the opposite is true. Students are over stimulated - by the peers that are now not only next to them, but across the table! There is now MORE to distract the student, leaving it harder for the teacher to keep the student focused on the instruction. And, no matter where you stand in the classroom, half the children will not be facing you.

An alternative is to arrange the chairs/tables into a three-sided shape (with an occasional second row if room demands). Every student is in the front row! The teacher can freely move around the room while talking, and therefore give personal contact with each student. The result: greater attention and fewer discipline problems. Desks/tables can be moved into cooperative learning groups as needed usually within two-three minutes.

"My children line up outside the classroom door. I don't have the students line up in a straight line before entering the room, I have them line up in a semi-circle facing the door. When I open the door, I can see all of the students' faces, what they are wearing, and can greet them all at the same time. I think it is important to greet each child in a personal way."

"I have a diary on the top of my desk and put into it all the reminders and phone calls and other things that happen in the day. As it is always handy I don't forget to do the entries. As it has a page for each day there is lots of room for these notes. Later I can transfer notes to the pupil's files, etc."



"I assign each of my students a number at the beginning of the year. Everything for that child is labeled with that number. They can line up by numbers, I call the roll by numbers, and there are numbers on all their papers so that they are easily filed."

"I have a long flat plastic tub for each month. These stack easily. In my last classroom I took them all home and just had the present month at school, but in this room there is room to stack the 10 tubs without them being in the way or looking untidy. Another year I asked the principal where I could store them, and he let me pile them in a storeroom - labeled with my name, of course."

"In my Kindergarten class we made a name book. I took a picture of each student holding a sign with his or her name on it. I printed out the pictures, one to a page, and then bound them together to make a book with a cover. There was a page with a picture of me, too. The kids took turns taking it home, and they loved 'reading' it. I had so many requests that I photocopied it so that the parents could have a copy for their keepsake box."

"I have a date book on my desk that I find very useful. I enter staff meetings, PTA meetings, IEP team meetings and any other times I must remember. I put in deadlines for having paper work done and special events for my class. I also add any things that come up each day - I add phone calls from parents and things that happen in the classroom that are important.

I find that I use it every day, and I would be really lost without it!"

"My principal asks us to e-mail our daily plans to him on the Monday morning (or earlier). We all do them on the computer, of course. Some teachers just do them in word processing without structure, and others do them in a spreadsheet format. He doesn't care about this..... He likes to have an idea what we are doing at any given time of the day as he walks around the school.

We also have to do brief monthly plans in each subject and e-mail these, too. I hated this in the beginning, but now find it is useful and not much work to jot down this outline."

### **Bulletin Boards**

"I take a picture of every bulletin board I put up, and put the picture into a computer file. I put all the things I used to make the board into a large envelope and mark it. Another year I can go on my computer, be able to see what the BB was like in the picture and take out the envelope and find everything I need."

"I hate to see pictures just a little bit off straight and it is really hard to staple things up so they all are straight. I always put up the children's pictures and work angled and offset so that I don't have to worry about being straight. It is much faster and looks better."

"I have bought alphabet sets of large letters at the teacher's store. When I put up a board heading I lay out the letters I need and find the middle of the words (counting letters and spaces). Then I start pinning up the letters in the middle of the title and work both ways."



### When You Finish....

"I used to have children who chattered and got into mischief when their work was done. Now there is only one rule - read! They are to pick up a book at their reading level or easier, and read, read, read. My classroom is much quieter and the kids are happy with their heads in a book that they enjoy. Some even bring books from home to read. I find it works very well and is valuable, of course."

"I try to follow daily routines in my own management. Before I go home each night I clean off my desk, tidy the classroom and be prepared for tomorrow. I usually do the lesson plans on Sunday for the week ahead, so preparation consists of having all the copies done, chalkboard exercises up (if any), books out and organized, etc. This makes my mornings really nice! It is lovely to walk into an organized classroom with everything in place for the day. Then I can do anecdotal notes, read my e-mail and have a coffee without stress!"

"For years my desk was piled high with junk - I would go to a table if I wanted to write anything. Now I keep it tidy and I love it! I even try to keep fresh flowers on it - what a treat!"

The optimum classroom is visually:

- attractive by being neat, colourful and arranged in a pleasing way.
- functional by having materials usefully organized. The charts and decorations should be purposeful.
- stimulating by being interesting to the students - but not too stimulating for students with ADHD and other problems who can be over-stimulated by too much decoration.
- a source of pride and self esteem. Pride for the teacher comes when he/she is always pleased with the visual sight of the room, and to students when their work and art is displayed in a manner that promotes self-esteem.

<http://www.teachnet.com/how-to/manage/sixhats120800.html>

This is an interesting idea for problem solving in the classroom - where children are talking during a lesson. The teacher calls it the 'six hats' process.

"I've started using a timer in my classroom and it really has changed my life. I didn't realize it could be so powerful, and keep me and the students accountable to the time commitment. I've found that with the timer if you give the kids a reasonable time limit, and other work or choice time when they're done, it seems to work out, and they almost always finish in time."



"I keep a plastic basket on my desk where I put everything that comes in that day that I need to look at later. At the end of the day it's all in one place and I go through it then."

### Organize student records

- **Assign numbers to students.** Assign the same number to each student that you used in your gradebook. Have each student write his or her number on every assignment. Use corresponding student numbers to label all student materials, including mailboxes.

- **Make labels with each student's name.** Have your students write their names and numbers on labels, which you can peel off and use for all folders, notebooks, and other materials that need student identification, including forms. This is a real time-saver. You can also make these up on the computer using a label program - neater looking!

- **Be prepared for new students.** Have packets of information prepared ahead of time so when a new student enters your class in the middle of a unit, you're ready.

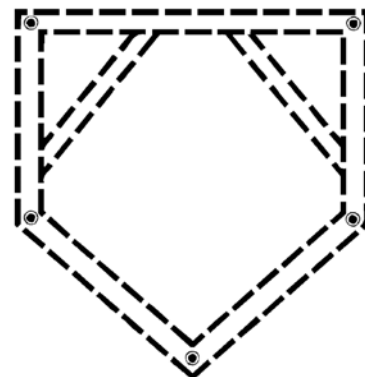
- **Create a seating chart.** Create a seating chart from your perspective at the front of the class. This is useful for substitutes.

- **Create assignment baskets or trays.** Use a basket or tray for students to turn in assignments. You can have a different basket or tray for each subject. Then train your students to turn in assignments in these places.

"Here is a great little tip that took me about 20 years to figure out. I always need some kind of list to keep track of who owes me what work, and I was always writing who owed me things on a list or on the board or something. It was taking too much time and effort. I made a simple class list on the computer (ABC by first name - I find it easier that way). I could fit several on a paper. I cut them into strips and use them to monitor who turned in work, homework, slips, etc. I put the assignment name on the top. Now I can just tape this to the white board and kids know (and so do I) if someone owes me an assignment. This is particularly important if you have multiple assignments going on all the time.

The kids clamor to be in charge of my list now. I assign written spelling homework and someone is always asking to be in charge of collecting and checking off - they just scratch off the name when work is turned in. Whoever collects it follows up and basically nags the offending child until the work is done."

"I made a cute 'Helpers' poster. I cut pockets off of old blue jeans. I bought the red bandana fabric, cut it into squares to make individual 'handkerchiefs' and used the file folder stickers (they're rather long and narrow) on which to write their name. Stick those to the squares of fabric and put the hankies in the pockets."



"Here is a collection of rewards that don't cost money or give a sugar high!"

Sit at the teacher's desk.

Get first pick of recess equipment.

Get a fun worksheet.

Play a computer game.

Be the zookeeper and take care of the animals.

Have lunch with your favourite person.

Have the teacher phone parents to tell them what a great kid you are.

Draw on the chalkboard.

Be first in line.

Do only half an assignment.

Choose any class job for the week.

Choose the music for lunch.

Do all the class jobs for the day.

Use the couch or beanbag chair for the day.

Use the pencil sharpener any time.

Stay in at recess to play a game with a friend.

Write in ink for the day.

Use the teacher's chair.

Take a class game home for the night.

Move your desk to a chosen location.

Keep a stuffed animal on your desk.

Be leader of a class game.

Extra center time or extra recess.

Read to a younger child.



"I was absent last Friday and returned yesterday. As I entered my room I noticed a piece of chart paper on the blackboard. At the top was **Why Does Mrs. Smith Teach?** Beneath that were all of the reasons the kids came up with to answer the question. It is hilarious! The one I liked most was - Who else would she play with? Apparently, the kids told me, the principal came in and asked them the question. It turns out that last week was one of the education awareness weeks and so the principal went around dismissing each teacher for a few minutes while she took the class for a 'quick lesson'. None of the teachers were aware of what this lesson might have been. Needless to say, this piece of paper will be one of my treasures for years to come!"

"We have a game we play when we walk in the halls. We try to pass by classrooms without the class inside noticing. The kids always feel proud when we pass by a classroom without the door being closed because of noise. It helps keep feet quiet too!"

"I save lids from milk and drinks like Sunny Delight. When I run out of glue sticks, I can put some Elmers in a cap and give the kids a Q-Tip. It saves a big mess!"



"I give out clean desk awards occasionally. The kids don't know when it will happen so it keeps them on their toes. They are excited when they come in to see a big bright star on their desk."



"We have planners at our school. This year I gave each child a ziplock - the kind with the slide to close it - to keep their planner, notices, home reading etc. in. It works well because at a glance, I can see what they might be missing. Parents love it because things come home neat and in one piece."

"I have one long table in my classroom near my desk. On this table I have a number of baskets, filing shelves, etc. This is where all student work is kept. The students know to put all their completed work on the table as soon as it is done. This way I always have their work handy to look at, mark, etc."

"All the crayons, pencils, erasers, scissors, rulers, etc., are community property. When they need something it is handed out or they can come to get one out of the box. This really helps the desk mess, as none of those things are supposed to be in the desks at any time. Also, there are no arguments about who owns a certain thing, or problems with borrowing, or being without because something is lost. I wouldn't do it another way!"

"One of the hardest transition times for my class has been entering the room after recess. In *Grade One* I like to have them work in their Journals following the morning recess. It settles them right down and gives me a chance to deal with any problems that arise during recess.

When I taught older grades (and later in *Grade One*), I had a math word problem on the chalkboard or overhead and the class had to copy down the problem and then answer it in their exercise book. They had both printing (handwriting) practice and math at the same time."

"I have my students do a lot of their work in interlined exercise books. When their work is done, they hand it in with the book open to today's work so I don't have to go looking in order to mark."

"At the end of each section of the day, I get the children's attention and tell them that it's time to clean up. Every scrap has to be picked up, every pencil or crayon that has fallen, etc. Nothing can be on the floor. The first group of 4 children that has a clean area and is standing quietly behind their chairs with their indoor shoes on their desks is the first group that can quietly leave the room to go out for recess. Clean up is done in about 30 seconds. Everyone helps and I don't have kids saying 'It's not my paper' because cleanup is a group thing."

"I want to have as many students using the computer as possible. What I have to keep reminding myself to do, is to follow the advice of a colleague. Occasionally, all students are absent, right? Well, inevitably they will all miss something that we teach. I have learned not to worry about my students being in on every single thing. So, what I try to do is have a student on the computer as much as possible all day long! For example, this morning I had one student doing a journal entry on one computer even though the rest of the class was doing Calendar Time. On the other computer I had another student reviewing a beginning level of using coins on Franklin Learns Math. With only two computers in my room the kids would rarely get a turn if I only used activity time."

### Organization Ideas!

Most of us are collectors! We keep things in the classroom that we haven't used for years (if ever) just in case we might need them *some day*. This is perhaps the biggest problem in keeping our classroom space organized. *Some day* never comes, and all this 'stuff' prevents us from having a tidy, well organized space.



It is an unpleasant fact that visitors to the classroom make snap decisions of our capabilities by the organization of the classroom. In some cases, this judgment may not be accurate - but in most it follows that a teacher who takes time to organize the space and has an attractive neat classroom also takes time to have organized lessons and written records and plans. If the time is not taken to make the classroom an attractive place for the teacher and the children to spend these hours each day, usually the time has not been put into organizing lessons and planning well. The classroom organization is very important!

We also want to teach our children to work in an organized manner, to print neatly and to keep their supplies in good order. We must set an example.....

Here are some ideas to help you organize your space.

1. Sort through your materials. Throw out things that you haven't used in the last two years - or, if you can't bear to throw things in the trash, put them out for other teachers to look at and take if they wish. If no one takes the things - well - that proves they are junk! If you have materials for other grades than the one you are teaching, box up these things and take them home. Toys, puzzles or math manipulatives that aren't being used or are looking worn or have missing pieces can be tossed.
2. Organize your themes and units, and put these in plastic boxes or tubs with lids, labeled clearly. Some teachers have 10 of these labeled with the months - with charts, books, art ideas, themes, etc., all ready to use at the beginning of the month and then put away in the box at the end of this time. Then put these boxes out of sight! Boxes are never attractive. Put them in cupboards or a closet or up high in the children's coatroom. If these places don't work for you - take them home and bring them when needed.
3. I hereby challenge you to keep the top of your desk tidy and organized! It is a pleasure to work at a desk that is not cluttered with paper and 'stuff'. Put a large piece of coloured tag to define your workspace, and have only your daily plans and perhaps a computer to one side. Put the necessary pens and marking pencils into an attractive container. Then a small plant or some flowers will complete the space. Why should we expect the children to keep their desks clean and tidy if we can't?

4. In your desk filing drawer, have files that are for your personal paperwork. Forms for discipline and accident reports, etc., staff and committee meetings, substitute ideas, letters and correspondence from parents, newsletter copies, etc.
5. Have a shallow plastic container marked 'To File'. Pop things that need to be filed into it when you are in a hurry, and clean it out often so you can put your hand on things that you need quickly and easily. Don't let it build up to where you don't want to look at it!
6. Have a computer calendar file, a desk calendar, appointment book or a calendar in your plan book where you put important dates. Keep a record of appointments past so you can refer to them.
7. Buy a plastic file box and make files for each day of the week. Put in photocopied materials, lesson plans and worksheets, books, tests, etc. If you have the week planned ahead, life is so much easier!
8. Put as much as possible on the computer. Daily plans can be done quickly onto a template. They are easily changed this way, as we often don't do exactly what we had planned. Keep all the used plans. Monthly and yearly plans can be on the computer, too, and easily changed or modified from one year to another. Marks can be put onto databases and anecdotal notes into files for each student.
9. The students should have places to put completed work so that the different sheets or exercise books are piled neatly.
10. Take home papers can be in student files in a special filing cabinet or put into pocket folders. If your kids are given a student number in alphabetical order and these are put on all papers in the top corner, the students can file these easily for you.
11. Have containers for student supplies that are neat and attractive.
12. Organize the library books so the children can find books at their level and also find non-fiction books on subjects that interest them. You may have sections for different authors or genres of literature. However you organize the books, make sure they look neat and attractive. Have some books on a ledge or railing for the students to see to encourage reading.
13. Keep your walls looking attractive! Change bulletin boards often. Staple items up neatly - haphazard papers or art work makes your room look really messy. Don't over-do the decorations - make sure they are practical. If you have ADHD kiddies keep your classroom attractive but spare as distractions may make the behaviours worse.
14. Student desks and tables move about and look untidy. You can bring them back to the proper spot by putting a small sticker or piece of masking tape on the floor or carpet to show where two feet should be. Tables together can have the joining legs strapped or tied together so the tables move as one unit.
15. Train the students to clean up after themselves. At the end of each period, spend thirty seconds tidying up - picking up items from the floor, putting materials back where they belong, organizing desks, books and supplies. At the end of the day have the children do all the cleaning possible so the classroom is left in perfect shape.
16. Train yourself to spend perhaps ten minutes after school each day tidying, too. File things, put papers where they belong, make sure your desk top is cleaned off, and everything looks nice.



It is a pleasure to have a clean tidy workplace. You are responsible for providing an attractive place for yourself and your children to spend a large part of your day. In a neat environment the students will be more peaceful, quieter and happier - and that is definitely worth some time and effort!



Keep baby wipes handy! Clean white boards, transparencies, desk tops and hands. This can be one item that parents can donate to your classroom.

Use computer labels (Avery or other brands). Make up a sheet of address labels with each of the students' names - these can be put on pencil boxes, coat hooks, exercise books, etc. Other sheets of labels can be used for messages - Good work! A+ Math! Great Spelling! etc.... Use the larger shipping labels to put on bins, boxes and crates of supplies. Label your math manipulatives, too.

If you have a student who works really slowly or is easily distracted, have him/her make a quiet beeping sound after each question or set of questions. This oral and auditory signal seems to keep the kids working.

Research tells us that the teacher walking around the classroom while the students are doing a written exercise actually doubles the time students are on task.

There are always a few speedy finishers! Train your class to always pull out a book to read whenever their work is completed. Consider this a treat for getting the work done well and early.

At the end of each day ask, "What did we do today? What did we learn? What happened today?" Hopefully, when parents ask about the day, students will have an answer other than "Nothing!"

Use a digital camera to create a seating chart. Take each student's picture, add the names, print, laminate and cut them apart. Stick Velcro dots on to the backs of the pictures and onto a laminated poster board with a blank seating plan with the other half of the Velcro. They are easily changed and subs can put names with faces.

Use magnets on the side of your tall metal filing cabinets to hold word cards, charts, pictures, etc. Use those little magnetic word packs and let your children make sentences.

For cleaning up the classroom, put on a piece of music. While the music plays, everyone cleans and picks up everything off the floor. Can everything be tidy before the music stops? Do this several times each day.

"I am teaching my class basic words and phrases in sign language. The children must be focused in order to 'read' what I am saying. This gets them quiet quickly."

"When it is lunch time I put a squirt of soft soap into each hand as they line up to wash hands."

"Each of my students has a file folder that they decorated early in the year. These have been laminated over the pockets and then the pockets were slit open. After they complete an assignment, they put their finished work in their file folder. At the end of the day they put their folder in a special pile. This eliminates the 'no name' problem since I know who the work belongs to right away!"

### Lining Up

I'm giving myself a great big hug,  
I'm standing straight and tall.  
I'm looking right ahead of me  
I'm ready for the hall.



"We play the 'if you talk, I win' game. No one, including the teacher, can talk as we walk in the hall. The goal is to make it to the destination without anyone having to say a word. I give a thumbs-up to successful walkers when we arrive."

Teach the students to walk on the right hand side of the hall. Associate it with driving on the right side of the road.

"I choose a 'mystery walker' before we go down the hall. As no child knows who the mystery person is, they all walk quietly. When we return I give that person a fancy sticker if he/she has been perfectly quiet. If that person has talked, I do not tell who the person is - just that the mystery person has not behaved perfectly."

Model what you expect for every activity, whether it is reading or walking in the hall. This takes a lot of time in the first weeks of school, but pays off handsomely later.

## Hula Hoops

"I use hula hoops a lot in my classroom. When my kids play board games, they take a hoop, lay it on the floor and put all the game pieces inside. This way the pieces do not get scattered.

I use them for centres, too. I keep each centre materials in a plastic box on a shelf, and when the children go to that centre, they get the box and a hoop and go to a corner where there is room for the hoop to be laid flat. When groups are rotated, the children go to the next hoop. These are also used when my students are using math manipulatives in a small group. The hoop keeps all the pieces in one small area.

Then I have my kids learn to hula hoop! The girls love it and it is great exercise."

## Names on papers

"One of the daily jobs is for two students who collect papers from the rest of the students. Part of this job is to check for names."

"I keep a can with a few highlighters in it right next to the hand-in basket. When they have the work finished they go to the can and highlight their name. They love to do this and so the name must be there so they can highlight it."

"My kids have their own highlighters and highlight the name before we begin to work."

"We sing...(to *If You're Happy and You Know It...*)

The first thing on your paper is your name,  
The first thing on your paper is your name,  
Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ needs to know...who did the paper sooooooooooooo,  
The first thing on your paper is your name."



The first thing I do is always the same  
Pick up my pencil and print my name.

"When my children are doing a paper, I will ask them to draw a simple shape beside their name. For example: 'Draw a smiley face beside your name!' Of course, they can't do this if the name isn't there."

"I purposely call the child who does not put a name on the paper 'Fred'. As I circulate to check work, I say things like, "Nice printing, Fred!" "Good work, Fred!" The kids all check their papers when I say 'Fred'. No one wants to be Fred....."

"I don't assign jobs to certain children and rotate them. I think it takes too long for some children to do certain jobs. Before each break and the end of the day I assign tables or rows to do certain things - clean up the floor, straighten desks, tidy the books, etc. So there are at least four children doing a job and it gets done in seconds rather than minutes. I often count to 10 and see if they can have the job done by then. We all make the mess and we all need to clean it up!"

### Simple Classroom Management Ideas...

"- All my kids have a number that they keep all year. It goes on all work that they do. We line up by number, too - I say a number and that child is the leader - then they go in numerical order, with the '1' going after the last number.... '22' in my class.

- When I want quiet I raise one hand. The children all copy this and are quiet very quickly.

- I time the children with a stop watch when I want something done quickly. For example, 'How many seconds will it take you to tidy the floor?' 'How many seconds to get ready to go home?' The children all scramble to beat their last number.

- I count down from 5 as the children are tidying up and they have to be ready by the time I get to zero.

- I clap rhythm patterns to get the children's attention. They must repeat the pattern I clap. I make the patterns more complicated as the year goes on.

- My children each have a 'home' spot in the gym. They find their spot by looking at the lines on the floor. This really helps, as they go directly to this spot when they enter the gym, and they are all separated and ready for warm-ups.

- I use 'criss-cross applesauce' to get my kindergarten kiddies to sit with legs folded under them at circle.

- I have my children pretend to be vacuum cleaners at clean-up time. They can make a soft humming noise, too - for some reason that gets them to clean-up faster.

- I have a couple of small brooms and dustpans. These are very popular at clean-up time.



### Don't Interrupt!

"During my Reading Conferences (when I really hate to be interrupted), I wear my red hat. It is a ball cap. I tell the kids that it is a 'stop sign' hat. If they plan to interrupt me when I am wearing it, there had better be a fire or a broken leg!"

"A teacher I know wears a necklace with a red circle on one side and green on the other. When the red circle is showing the children know they are not to interrupt unless their is a REAL emergency! It seems to work pretty well."

For the first week of school, make two sets of name tags - one for the child's table space or desk, and one for the child to wear around the neck to special classes. This is not only helps you learn the names, but it helps other teachers, too. And keep these neck tags - they are great to pull out when a substitute teacher is there. These could be hung on a hook - handy for these other uses.

Children love to use a little broom and dustpan, and the inexpensive carpet sweepers, too. It will be a treat to clean-up!

## Transition Times

"Some things that I've done during those hard-to-fill times:

- Get out our Song/Poem folders and read/sing our favourites.
- Play "mixed up words" -- I scramble their names, the current spelling words, or whatever on the board and they have to come and write them correctly. (i.e., I write nrwob and they come up and write brown). As long as they know the category of the words, Grade 1's are amazingly good at this and they love it.
- To practice spelling words, we play tic-tac-toe with our spelling words in two teams and they love this as well.

Another couple of favourite activities are:

Tossing a beanbag from one person to another in a circle. The tosser has to say "Sue, this is for you", toss the beanbag, and Sue has to respond, "Thank you". Do it once, with everyone only getting one turn. Then do it again, **IN THE SAME ORDER**, but faster. Then add a couple more beanbags, a minute or so behind each other. This is fun and it's also good for memory and concentration.

We also do a game where everyone sits in their chairs facing outwards from their tables. Unused chairs are pushed in and are not used in the game. The leader says, "I like everyone in this class but especially people with (black shoes, for example)". Everyone with black shoes has to get up and sit in another free chair. Meanwhile the leader quickly sits down in an empty chair. It's a bit like musical chairs but everyone still participates. Whoever doesn't get a chair is the new leader. To prevent a child from not trying to sit in a chair and therefore being leader all the time I just say you can only be the leader once.

They also love counting in a circle. You just rote count by 1's but choose a number to sit down on. For example, we might say that everyone who says a '5's' number (5, 10, 15, etc.) has to sit down. The standees keep on counting until only one person is left.

One of the messiest places in the classroom is where coats and boots are kept - this is especially bad in the Canadian winter with all the outside clothing needed. Teach your children to hang the clothes carefully and put the boots or outside shoes just so. Model what you want every day for the first week and at least once a week after that.

"Every day the last thing we do before going home is talk about what we did that day - what we learned, what we read, what we sang, etc. Then the children can go home and answer the question, "What did you do in school today?"

Having set routines is very comforting to insecure children, and ones who have behavioural disorders - the more formally set routines, the better. Some children cannot handle change easily, and become nervous or excited and act out when things don't go according to plan. If there must be a change in the daily schedule, talk about it so the students are ready for it.





Teach your students the expectations in assemblies and concerts and other activities where all the students gather.

Certificates for good work or good behaviour are always favourites! Parents love them, too.

### "In" Days

"I find that limiting the options for the students when in the classroom on in-days helps to keep order. I often have a large jigsaw puzzle on a table, and I bring out the math games. They can play Chutes and Ladders, card games and simple board games. I teach the directions first, so there are no arguments about rules. Then they can read on comfy cushions. I also put out puzzle sheets and I encourage the children to bring an empty scrap book or other book to draw in. For the first few in-days, I either stay in the classroom or pop in frequently to make sure all is going well.

After the bell goes and it is school time again, we have a drink of water and do exercises for a few minutes."

"I have a list on my computer of all my favourite read-alouds. I add to it whenever I find another great book. Each year I bold and underline the entire list, and then put each book into regular print as I read it to my children. This way I am able to look at my list, choose a book that has not been read, and go to the library and grab it quickly. I find that this saves me lots of time of hunting through books to find one that might be suitable."

### Silent Reading

Tired of calling reading time SSR (sustained silent reading) or, as my school called it U.S.S.R (even worse - uninterrupted sustained silent reading)? Here are a few more acronyms that are more interesting:

BEAR - Be Excited About Reading

DEAR - Drop Everything and Read

WEB - Wonderfully Exciting Books

OTTER - Our Time To Enjoy Reading

GRAB - Go Read a Book

RABBIT - Read a Book Because it's Terrrific

RIOT - Reading is our thing

ZYLAR - Zip Your Lips And Read



"I keep free standing wind chimes on my desk. They are the signal to stop what you are doing and listen. And the students do stop and listen because of the lovely sound."

"My washroom signal is a W - three fingers up to form that letter. I either nod or hold up my hand, fingers up and palm toward the child, meaning 'wait a minute'. When they do go out, they take the bathroom bear (a small stuffed toy) and put it on their desk. That way I can immediately see who is out, and only one child can go at a time."

"We use hand-sanitizer, but the kind that has a hand lotion base. Some sanitizers will sting if there is an open cut, and the lotion helps to prevent this and the children like it much better. Of course, dirty hands must be washed."

"I made banners each with a polite word or phrase - please, thank you, I'm sorry, you're welcome, and excuse me. I put one banner up each day and each time a classmate hears someone use the word of the day, they get to put a marble in the treat jar. This helps the students to think of the polite words to use."

Make a chart on the wall that shows how you want printed exercises set up... margin, leaving spaces, headings, etc.

Clean up, clean up,  
Everybody, everywhere...  
Clean up, clean up,  
Everybody do their share!



"When I want to get the children's attention, I start counting to 10 in sign language. The class knows that when I do this, they are to quietly join in with me. Our goal is to have everyone counting before I reach 10 (which I do by putting my thumb up.)"

"I use craft sticks with each child's name in a cup. I have 3 different cups for selecting students for different activities: 2 extra helpers at lunch, 3 students to share writing daily, and 3 students to read in book nook at SSR. I also have the students names written on 5 x 8 index cards which I use to call on students throughout different activities. It's amazing how something so simple and inexpensive is revered by the students because 'it's fair.'"

An organizational tool that works for me is using computer labels to write comments for students as I conference with them during writer's workshop. I use my clipboard with the labels and just peel them off and put them in student's notebooks as I conference. I also use labels as I collect information for report card comments and stick the labels into my record book. It saves re-writing.

"We've all known for a long time about soap and shampoo bottles that can be put to use in the classroom holding glue, water, whatever. Having just started wearing contact lenses, I've discovered another: the cleaning solution bottle. Smaller in size than soap bottles, with a flip top cap that won't get lost, these are great for glue, but you may want to make the hole larger."

"I have Silent Vacuum as one of my class jobs. It's for 2 children and they love it - they go around and get all the trash off the floor."

"During the times your entire class is lined up and waiting, have one child start by using fingers and hand signals to give math problems. (Example: Hold up one finger (1), then make a plus sign (+), then two fingers (1 + 2). Lastly, put one hand above the other facing in opposite directions for the equal sign (=).) If a student wants to answer, he/she must raise their hand to be called on. They must give the answer using fingers and hand signals. The kids love it and it keeps the noise level down!"

"I have my students pick up a number of scraps in exchange for their homework folders. I change the number every day. In Grade Two we teach about community. We talk about how helping clean up is an important part of being in a community. I think that part of learning to be responsible is learning to clean up after yourself. The children have never had a problem with this and their parents appreciate the lessons learned."

"Tidiness is a pleasure! I enjoy my classroom so much more when everything is put away and organized."

If your routines became less efficient in December, spend time in the first week back in January reviewing them.

We have a motto in our classroom: 'It's is cheaper to do it right the first time!' I introduce this the very first day. I tell them that if something cannot be done right the first time then they will have to 'spend' their time doing it again and again until it is done correctly."

Always make copies double-sided. There is no reason to copy a phonics exercise on one paper and math on another.

