

First Days of School Checklist

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How to use this resource

Whether you are a novice or veteran teacher, it can be overwhelming to plan for the first days of school. Both you and your students are coming in with prior experiences that have shaped your perspectives on school. How can you set the stage for student agency, growth, and learning for every student who walks through the door on the first days of school?

Narrowing down your planning will help. Review the *First Days of School Checklist* on the following pages. It is designed to help you prioritize and identify what you need to prepare for the first days of school, using four categories:

- establish your support system
- establish classroom routines
- establish relationships
- establish academic expectations





But wait – don't start checking off boxes just yet! First, prioritize the essentials. Evaluate each item on the checklist according to the categories listed below:

- Already done 
- I can handle this on my own 
- I need help to do this 







If something stands out as a major priority that you need to accomplish before students are in the building, star it * or highlight it.


Then, go! Check off as many boxes as you can right now and in the days before school starts. You may not be able to anticipate every situation or plan for every moment, but you can give yourself a solid foundation for those first days. The internet has a million great resources on the first days of school, but you will want to **start with your support system** (administration, department chair, mentor teacher, other colleagues).


Finally, keep this in mind as you use the checklist: Imagine the wide range of emotions, behaviors, habits and attitudes you might encounter during the first week. *How will your level of preparedness before the first day of school affect the way you respond to students on the first day of school?*

Establish your support system			
Identify subject area mentorship	Already done <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I can handle this on my own 	I need help to do this 
Contact your department chair or other team members in the same subject area and request syllabi, pacing guides, or any other relevant curriculum materials.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Request digital or physical copies of last year's unit plans, weekly plans, assignments, or assessments from the previous year's teacher, if someone has access to them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Locate relevant supply rooms (book room, lab materials room).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understand procedures for contacting administration or counseling services for emergencies, discipline .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Find a mentor colleague who understands your preps and classes. Make sure you have a way to contact them for quick questions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish classroom routines			
Set up your space	Already done <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I can handle this on my own 	I need help to do this 
Make a plan if you travel or are "on a cart" - communicate with the teachers who "own" that space in advance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Place students desks in appropriate pairs, groups, or rows, keeping student engagement in mind (consider ease of moving desks for collaborative activities).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Place the teacher desk in an appropriate, accessible location in the room.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pinpoint a focal point in the room (what is the focus when students enter the room?).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create organizational systems for...			
turning in student work (on time, not on time)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
absentee materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
supplies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
graded student work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
student data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Review emergency procedures	Already done <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I can handle this on my own 💪	I need help to do this 
Locate and review the guidelines for fire drills, tornado drills, lockdowns.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learn how to handle allergy attacks, health emergencies, violent or disruptive students, or a child in danger of hurting themselves and/or others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Create and plan to share procedures for the following (adhere to school wide norms and procedures)	Already done 	I can handle this on my own 	I need help to do this 
bathroom visits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
clinic visits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
locker visits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
sharpening pencils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
asking for help	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
cell phones/headphones/other devices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
backpacks/instruments/other materials students may bring to class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
what to do if students finish early	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
voice volume expectations when students are working			
Create plans to incorporate and introduce devices and school wide or classroom specific technology	Already done 	I can handle this on my own 	I need help to do this 
How should students treat their device/technology? (Consider a technology contract.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When/how will the devices need to be charged? What if students need to charge them during class?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Establish procedures for web browsing, listening to music	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What happens if their device isn't working? (What do you do? What should students do?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How will they get help logging in?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How will you know that they are listening to you while their devices are out?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plan to have something paper based for students to work on if they don't have a device or can't get logged in at any point	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teach students how to make a bookmark to your LMS or class website, so that they always have a central location to go	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create opening routines	Already done <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I can handle this on my own 💪	I need help to do this 
How should students enter class and what should they do first? Where will they look for directions? Tip: Consider a welcome slide (agenda, materials to get out, warm up, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How will you take attendance (and what are the norms for the school)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How will you manage and keep track of tardiness/absences? How will you respond to students who are late to class? How will you help them get oriented or caught up?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How will you share classroom announcements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How will you introduce the standards/objectives/learning targets each day? (How will you help students answer the question “where am I going today?”)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create closing routines	Already done <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I can handle this on my own 💪	I need help to do this 
Plan how to wrap up class (“Where to next?” or “Where am I now?”) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exit tickets • directions for homework, home learning, or completing class work 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plan how you will transition from one class to the next (where you place your materials ahead of time matters!)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How will you address behavior or academic issues that came up during class that need to be addressed? How will you follow up?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make a plan to communicate to students when and what to pack up, clean up, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish relationships			
How will you collect personal information?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How will you learn students’ names?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How will you begin to build relationships with students?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How will students get to know each other?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How will students get to know you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How will you contact families and build a relationship with them? What habits do you want to establish for communicating with families?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish academic expectations			
How will you introduce the syllabus and content/skill goals for the year?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How will you assess what students already know? Levels? What common assessments are required by the school/county?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How will you introduce any tech tools needed for the year?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>