

Designing Your Space



ACTIVE LEARNING
FOCUS

Have a classroom to set up and decorate? Before you run to the store or start an inspiration board, take some time to make a plan and be intentional with your learning spaces. Follow these 5 steps to build engaging spaces in your classroom.

STEP 1: WRITE AN ENGAGEMENT GOAL

Start thinking about your classroom spaces by writing an engagement goal for your students. Do you want to support active learning? Help students develop a certain skill or habit? Provide more continuous feedback? Your goals should be SMART- specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound.

STEP 2: CHOOSE YOUR SPACE

Choose one space in your classroom that you want to design to meet your engagement goal. Shift your focus from pretty to purposeful. Every teacher loves to create pretty spaces, but how do those pretty spaces meet the needs of the students?

Need ideas for engaging spaces? See the list below.

Classroom Spaces That Support Engagement		
collaboration space	emotional regulation space	quiet zone
resource and material organization	reading corner	peer review area
writing nook	maker space	student work showcase
flexible seating	independent work space	conference corner

STEP 3: DESIGN YOUR SPACE

How can you design a physical space to support your engagement goal?

The spaces in a classroom may look and feel different than what is “traditional” when the student and their engagement are the focus of the room. For example, if your goal is for students to collaborate more, you can place desks or tables together in pods rather than putting them in neat rows. Or, if your goal is to give students more consistent feedback, you can use a table to create a designated conference corner instead of having students stand at your desk. Create a purposeful design for your space the way you see fit: write a list, make a sketch, or start an inspiration board.

STEP 4: GATHER MATERIALS

Now that you have a design plan, gather the materials needed to make it happen. Are there things you already have that you can reuse or repurpose? Is there something you can make yourself? Perhaps there is another teacher on your team who is getting rid of something that would work well in your new space? Try to find what you need for your space before you go out and buy it new. If you do need something new, consider creating an online wishlist that friends and family can use to support your classroom. Check out the resources listed below:

- [Buy Nothing](https://buynothingproject.org/) - <https://buynothingproject.org/>
- [Freecycle: Front Door](https://www.freecycle.org/) - <https://www.freecycle.org/>
- [Really Good Stuff](https://www.reallygoodstuff.com/) - <https://www.reallygoodstuff.com/>
- [Teacher Wish Lists](https://www.teacherwishlists.com/) - <https://www.teacherwishlists.com/>
- [Get Your Teach On: Clear the List](https://www.getyourteachon.com/clearthelist) - <https://www.getyourteachon.com/clearthelist>
- [Donors Choose](https://www.donorschoose.org/teachers) - <https://www.donorschoose.org/teachers>

STEP 5: MAKE YOUR SPACE

You have the design. You have the materials. Make your space! Use everything you have gathered to make your design a reality. It may not all come together in a day and that is ok. Remember to keep your engagement goal in focus as you put your space together.

Get more resources like this at www.opportunityeducation.org/resources



5 Steps to Designing Your Space

1

Write an Engagement Goal

What is the goal of your space?

Engagement Ideas:

- Support active learning
- Encourage student routines or specific habits
- Make skills the focus
- Support a feedback loop

2

Choose Your Space

Choose one space to design to meet your goal.

Space Ideas:

- Quiet, independent work space
- Collaboration space
- Emotional regulation space
- Creative corner or makerspace

3

Design Your Space

How can you design a physical space to support your engagement goal?

Design Ideas:

- Write a list
- Sketch it out
- Make an idea board
- Create a collage of photos

4

Gather Materials

Can you repurpose or reuse anything?

Material Ideas:

- Ask members of your team if they have what you need
- Start a wishlist for friends and family who want to support your classroom

5

Make Your Space

Put your plans into action.

Action Ideas:

- Do small bits of work as you have the time or materials
- Gather help and create your space in a day

Want a deeper dive into designing intentional learning spaces? Check out [this resource](#) and more at www.opportunityeducation.org/resources