

Transitions

Part of using your time effectively is getting off to a good start and not wasting time between the different parts of the lesson.

GETTING STARTED

- Make use of entrance activities. Have directions for an activity related to the focus of the lesson written on the board. Students begin to work on the task immediately.
- Provide a weekly agenda so students know what to expect. Include information such as the focus of the upcoming instruction, work that is due, reminders, etc.
- Record a list of the parts of the lesson on the board. As each part is completed, cross it off. Have another list of things students can do if they finish a part of the lesson early.
- Identify a range of meaningful learning experiences to begin every lesson; e.g., independent reading time, a quote on the board for small-group discussion, independent writing time, quickwrites, etc.
- Have all materials ready to use and in an easily accessible place.

KEEPING THINGS ON TRACK

- Explicitly identify the connections or segues between segments of the lesson.

- Use positive reinforcement. Point out and encourage students who are already working or waiting quietly (or doing the task that was asked). Throughout the period/day, assign points to groups for settling in quickly, working effectively, etc. Accumulated points can be traded in for a reward.
- Schedule a specific activity to be done during free time: for example,
 - free write, or writing to a prompt written on the board
 - reading an independent text selection
 - reading a text provided by the teacher
 - completing a daily reading inventory

Tips for Ending the Period

- Briefly review any homework expectations. Have a responsible student record these on the board in a space designated for homework, while students record it in a homework notebook or daily planner.
- Have a few short, but meaningful, activities on hand for the end of the period, in order to make use of all instructional time. Concept development and word-study activities work well at this time.
- Make sure it is you, not the bell, that dismisses the class.

Refocusing

Every teacher will need to get the attention of students many times throughout the day. It is important that this happen as efficiently as possible.

- Begin counting out loud (either up or down).
- Raise your hand as a signal for students to suspend their talking and raise their hands.
- Flick the lights on and off.
- Quietly say, “If you can hear my voice, put your hands in your lap.” Follow it with, “If you can hear my voice, put your hands on your head.” Repeat, each time giving a different command.
- Quietly say, “If you can hear my voice, end your conversation.” Repeat, each time getting louder.
- Call out “3–2–1.” The students know this is the signal to clap and then be quiet.
- Say, “Hands on top, everybody stop”; students put their hands on the tops of their desks.
- Say, “Give me five” and hold up your hand. Using your fingers, count, “One, eyes on me; two, end your conversation; three, be still; four, be hands-free; five, listen to me.”

If it is the attention of one student you require, stand in close proximity to the student before requesting his/her attention. Often just standing by the student is enough to get his/her attention and a verbal cue is not required.

- Select a song to play to get students’ attention. Once you have their attention, push *Pause* (not *Stop*). Each time you need their attention, push *Play* again, so the song continues from where it left off. If there is music still remaining at the end of the period/day, the class gets a reward.
- Each period, give the class 200 seconds. When you call for their attention, keep track of the number of seconds it takes; subtract this time from 200 seconds. If there is time remaining at the end of the period, the students win a reward.
- Call out, “Knock, knock”; students reply, “Who’s there?” If the students refocus within the expected time, finish telling the joke. If the class takes too long, save the joke for another time.
- Clap your hands, snap your fingers, or count out loud in a pattern. Students join in the pattern once they recognize it.
- Start quietly singing a familiar song and have the students join in. Once you have everyone’s attention, signal the end of the song.
- Rainstorm: Begin by rubbing your hands together, then snapping your fingers. Have students join in. Use gestures to signal raising and lowering the volume, and ultimately to signal the end of the “rain.”