# First Day of School Activities

It is important to set the tone of the year from day 1. Some teachers start the school year with some sort of ice breaker activity on the first day and some jump right in with content. Either way, it is essential that you think about the procedures that you want students to practice and demonstrate those early on. Thinking through the following elements before school starts will make things run more smoothly. Don't worry if you change your mind about some of these elements. You can always change your procedures or change them for next year.

## Elementary:

• Greet the children at the door as they come in and give them name tags that are easy to read and affix.

• Determine how you will handle seating arrangements. Are you assigning seats? Have name tags arranged.

• Developing and practicing procedures are essential for success with young learners.

• Explain procedures for entering the room each morning: where to hang coats, when to be in their seats, transitions, retrieving materials, what to do if they finish early or need more time, and how much conversation is permissible.

• Tell students how they should start each day, then guide them to do it.

• Let them know how you will start each day as well.

- Describe how the lunch count, attendance, and other daily tasks will be handled.

- Read the specific rules for behavior along with consequences and rewards. Point out where they are listed.

- Give students a tour of the room and show them materials they may use.

- Establish a specific location for daily schedules, homework assignments, and reminders of events and deadlines.

- Discuss and outline the basis on which students' grades are determined.

- Schedule a restroom break for yourself early in the morning the first day.

- Explain what students should do if they finish their work early.

- If you plan an activity period, demonstrate the procedures for getting out materials and putting them away.

- Tell your class what is about to happen before they leave for physical education, lunch, or other outside-of-the-classroom activities.

- Tell younger children how you want them to line up and have them practice.

- Vary activities and the pace of lessons every day.

- Use take-home folders to distribute notices to parents.

- Reserve the last 15–20 minutes the first day to clean up and review what has been covered.

- Explain procedures for dismissal and bus loading. Bus loading can be confusing, and buses must leave at scheduled times. Ask your colleagues for help ensuring this runs smoothly.


Harry Wong's First Days of School is an excellent resource to help you think about classroom procedures.

# Secondary:

• Stand at the door to greet students as they arrive.

• Introduce yourself, including your background and special interests in your subject.

• Hand out any notices from the school office and have students complete any forms that are required by the school or you.

• Clear procedures help avoid behavior issues. Outline your procedures for recording attendance and tardiness, giving assignments and collecting papers, make-up work, and hall passes.

• Post rules for classroom behavior and review them with each class. Address rules about technology use and any school policies they should be particularly aware of.

• Discuss and outline the basis on which students' grades are determined.

• Tell the class your objectives for the week and year.

• Allow a short period of time for each class to ask questions about what is expected of them and any of the procedures that you have established.

• Address behaviors immediately. Students this age often try to "test" their new teachers. If you have a student who walks into class disruptively, ask him/her to leave the room and enter again in a more respectful manner.

• Carefully choose your activities for the first day. This will set the tone for the class. Consider saving ice breaker activities for day 2 after you have established the expectations of behavior and learning on day 1

• It is better to start firm and loosen up as students demonstrate responsibility. If you choose to extend privileges, make the parameters clear.

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