

# How to make a class routine

## Key takeaways:

- Your job as a teacher becomes more joyful when you implement routines.
- Routines help learners to be independent, which helps you become a facilitator of fun learning activities rather than a lecturer.
- You have mastered the class routine when you have minimized the empty moments and when the class is a joy for you and the learners.

## Step 1: Commit to investing your time and effort into a routine.

- At first, it might seem like the learners will never follow the routine, but keep working at it because eventually your effort will pay off.

## Step 2: Get to school early if you can, even an hour before the learners arrive.

- Prepare the classroom.
- Prepare the visual schedule. The visual schedule should state the activities the learners will be doing that day in order along with pictures for each step.



- Prepare supplies the learners will need for your planned activities.
- Prepare supplies that you will need as the teacher.

- Prepare a couple of activities to fill in the gaps, like an extra song or book.

**Step 3:** Build a routine for when learners first arrive to your classroom.

- Be in your classroom when your first learner arrives.
- Greet each learner as they walk in and mark their attendance.
- The learners can do table time until a set time (maybe 8:20). Meanwhile, you might be greeting kids, walking around and helping, redirecting behaviors, finishing attendance, assessing learners, chatting with learners.
- Table time activities might include:
  - Chalkboard (Learners use chalk to draw letters, pictures, names of their friends)
  - Play-doh (Learners have their own cup of play-doh they use to form letters, form a path from one point to another, or make their own creation with popsicle sticks and other materials)
  - Buckets (Learners grab a bucket and play with its contents. A bucket may contain legos, zoo animals, cars/trucks, ponies, puzzle pieces, building blocks, connecting cubes, manipulatives).
  - Any other activity that is self-directed and that doesn't have a definite beginning or end so the learner can do it for 1 minute or 20 minutes.

**Step 4:** Build a routine for when class officially begins. Consider starting with circle time.

- Learners sit on the floor in a circle (or maybe they stand along the walls of the classroom if you have many learners).
- Think of a question to ask each learner, such as: "What is your favorite animal?"
- Pass around an object. When a learner gets the object, you greet the learner by name, and the learner practices greeting you back. You ask the learner the question, and the learner practices answering back. You teach the learner to use an appropriate volume, not too quiet or too loud.
- While one learner is talking, the other learners practice listening. You might find that the learners get really excited when they agree with the talker, so you can give them a hand signal to use to silently express their excitement.
- Each learner gets a turn to talk.

**Step 5:** Show the visual schedule and the calendar.

- Show the visual schedule to the learners. Set their expectations for what they will be doing that day.
- Show the day of the week, day of the month, and the year.

- Tell the learners if there is a holiday or anything special happening that week.
- Sing "Happy Birthday" if it is a learner's birthday.

**Step 6:** Include movement breaks.

- Plan each day for movement breaks. Every time you transition from one activity to another, there should be movement.
- A movement break might be a song and dance, prompting the learners to clap around their body ("clap twice above your head," "clap once behind your legs"), jumping ten times, doing the "head shoulders knees and toes" song.

**Step 7:** Build a routine for when learners leave school.

- Clean and organize the classroom.
- Prepare lesson plans for the next day.
- Write a letter for a learner to bring home stating something positive the learner did that day.

**Core principles:**

- Minimize the empty moments.
  - Reduce the amount of time that learners are alone in the classroom without a teacher to zero.
  - Reduce the amount of time that learners are unengaged to zero (always know what the next activity is, and have materials ready)
- Use a visual timer.
  - Some activities, such as table time, should have a timed ending.
  - Use a visual timer that the learners can see so that learners can be emotionally prepared to transition to the next fun activity.
- Use an attention-getting cue.
  - You say "Attention please!" The learners put both hands on their head, look at you, and say, "Macaroni and cheese!"
  - Use this for emergencies, for changes in the visual schedule, or for when the routine isn't reinforced enough yet and the learners need to be prompted on what to do next.
- Infuse play into every lesson.
  - Kids learn through play. Every lesson should be followed by a fun activity that helps them practice what they just learned.