

Ways to Beat the First Day Jitters

Organization + Activities = Success

Plan the drive to school

If you plan to drive to school, drive it at least once during the time of day you will be driving to school. Find the best route and an alternate route in case of a traffic accident.

Learn your way around

Familiarize yourself with the building. Locate exits, principal's office, gym, nurse's office, cafeteria, supply room, faculty lounge and media center.

Know the rules

Get acquainted with school policies and procedures, such as opening and closing hours, attendance procedures, fire drill regulations, lunchroom regulations and nurse services. Ask if there is a student handbook. Set up a notebook or folder to hold official notices, policies and schedules.

Introduce yourself

Meet the teachers on your hall. They can be of assistance in the first few weeks of school. Take the time to say "hello" to other important people in your building: the librarians, the counselors, the school nurses, the cafeteria workers and custodians.

Decorate your room

Get your room ready. Make sure your classroom is friendly and livable for opening day.

Put up pictures, design

a colorful bulletin board and add a few plants. Before bringing in an animal, check school policy and student allergies.

Consider traditional seating

Start with the traditional arrangement of desks until you've established control and know your students' names. Make a temporary seating plan. Check for "blind spots" from your desk and various parts of the room. Keep traffic patterns in mind when arranging.

Get your materials ready

Make sure you have all the materials you'll need for getting school under way: paper, pencils and books. Obtain blank forms such as hall passes and textbook forms. Identify the forms that will be used the first week, what information should be included and how they are handled. There are more than you could ever expect! Obtain supplies provided by the school. These go fast—learn how to keep track of them. Among supplies you'll need are: paper, pencils, pens, paper clips, masking tape, scotch tape, scissors, chalk, stapler and staples. Find out how to obtain textbooks. If you are a floating teacher, prepare a means of moving materials from room to room, such as a luggage dolly with a small basket.

Store supplies

Go through the storage and filing cabinets and decide where to store things to which students will have access and things to which only you will have access. Be careful with money, calculators and your grade book. Locate a secure spot for your personal valuables.

Schedule your time

Make a detailed schedule for the first few days, including times for each subject, restroom and lunch breaks and other times your students will leave the room.



KNEA Tips: First Day Jitters

Plan, plan, plan

Create lesson plans for the first few days. Plan at least twice as much as you think you can cover. Write down everything. Detailed plans will provide you with a feeling of security when facing the class for the first time.

Make procedural decisions

School will begin much more smoothly if you have decided in advance how to handle routine procedures. It is especially important for you to develop classroom discipline procedures that follow your districts' policy and guidelines. Elementary teachers should decide on a system for: taking attendance, book and paper distribution, money collection, restroom visits, fire drills, classroom entrances and exits, and bus loading. Secondary teachers need to decide how to: take attendance, deal with tardy students, make assignments, collect papers, handle make-up work, and give hall passes.

Get there early

On the first morning, arrive early so you'll have time to ask any last-minute questions, go over final plans, and relax before the students come in.

Greet your pupils

Be in your room when the pupils arrive. Have your name written on the chalkboard. Greet the students with a smile and a pleasant "Good morning."

Get down to business

Make opening exercises brief. Your goal for the morning is to get down to the business at hand.

Start the learning

Make the first day of school a real one. Accomplish some constructive learning with your students. A good start yields big dividends later on.

Specific Elementary Activities

- Greet the children at the door as they come in and give them name tags that are easy to read and affix. Allow them to choose desks, and then tape an identical name tag to the desk.
- Explain procedures for entering the room each morning: where to hang coats, when to be in seats, how much conversation is permissible.
- Tell how you will start each day-e.g., with the Pledge of Allegiance and a song-then have them do it.
- Describe how the lunch count, attendance, and other daily tasks will be handled, and explain procedures for children's absences and tardiness.
- Read the specific rules for behavior along with consequences and rewards. Point out the poster, bulletin board, or chalkboard where they are listed.
- Establish a specific location on the chalkboard or bulletin board for daily schedules, homework assignments, and reminders of events and deadlines.
- Discuss and outline the basis on which students' grades are determined.
- Plan a get-acquainted activity.
- Have each child draw a self-portrait; display them on the bulletin board.
- Schedule a restroom break 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.
- If you have non-English speaking students, try to seat them next to bilingual children. Even if you have no children who are bilingual in the appropriate languages, pair each non-English speaking child with one who does speak English who can serve as guide, tutor, and language instructor.
- For students who did not attend the school last year, try to seat them next to a student who is familiar with the school. It can be traumatic to worry all day that you won't be able to find the restroom or the right bus.
- Tell your class what is about to happen before they leave for physical education, lunch, or other outside activities. Tell younger children how you want them to line up and have them practice a couple of times.
- Vary activities and the pace of lessons the first day and every day; younger children especially need frequent breaks involving physical activity.
- Reserve the last 15-20 minutes the first day to clean up and review what has been covered-the content and procedures they've learned, the activities they performed. Remind them of homework assignments and describe briefly what they will be doing the next day.

Specific Secondary Activities

- Stand at the door to greet students.
- Introduce yourself, including your background and special interests in your subject, and then introduce the students to one another.
- Have students write on note cards their address, phone number and names of parents or guardians.
- Hand out any notices from the school office and have students complete forms required by the school.
- Outline your procedures for recording attendance and tardiness, giving assignments, collecting papers, makeup work, and hall passes.
- Post rules for classroom behavior on a bulletin board, poster, or-for the first few days-on a chalkboard. You might want to have the class help make rules but remember that they have no choice about some rules so don't pretend they do.
- Establish a uniform heading for papers.
- Discuss and outline the basis on which students' grades are determined. They must understand the procedure. Be sure that your grading procedure is consistent with the school and district policy.
- Tell the class your objectives for the week and for the year. Tell them what they will study and why it will be interesting and relevant for them in that particular grade.