



STUDY GUIDE FOR

THE FIRST-YEAR TEACHER'S CHECKLIST

A QUICK REFERENCE FOR CLASSROOM SUCCESS

The First-Year Teacher's Checklist: A Quick Reference for Classroom Success is a quick and easy-to-use resource for beginning teachers. As a new teacher you don't have lots of free time. One way to find the time to read and study the material in this book is to be self-disciplined in your approach, even though your first year will be an overwhelmingly busy one. Spending a few minutes each day in reflection, review, and professional study will make it easier for you to improve your professional skills. Learning how to be a good teacher will keep you from being discouraged and overwhelmed.

Almost everyone learns better through a combination of discussion and direct experience, and beginning teachers are no exception. Get involved with a network of other professionals to create a study group. Together with your colleagues you can work with the material in *The First-Year Teacher's Checklist*.

When you are working on a section of the book with your mentor or coworkers, discuss the strategies that appeal most to you and the ways you can implement them successfully in your class. Talk over any potential problems with your mentor or colleagues, making sure always to have a backup plan, just in case an activity just does not work well for your students.

Finally, if you would like to ask the author a question, make a comment, offer suggestions, or give helpful feedback, please e-mail her through her Web site, <http://www.juliagthompson.com>.

SECTION ONE: BECOME A PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR

Chapter 1 Professional Development Begins with You

1. After reading the three guiding principles of professionalism in List 1.1: Be Guided by the Principles of Professionalism, which of the principles included here do you find most important? Which do you believe will have the greatest positive impact on your career? Are there other principles that you would like to add?
2. As you read List 1.2: What Is Expected of You, do any of these expectations surprise you? Select five of the most important expectations and prioritize them according to their potential impact on your new profession. How will these expectations and your treatment of them affect your teaching practices?
3. What realistic professional goals can you establish for yourself this year? Use List 1.4: Set Professional Goals with These Easy Steps, to guide you as you approach the challenging task of making the best possible professional development decisions all year long.
4. On page 15 the author defines the term *best practices* as it relates to education. As you examine the list, select a practice that you would like to incorporate into your instructional repertoire and make a plan to accomplish this. What are the steps you need to take to incorporate this practice into your class?
5. After reading the lists in this chapter, what proactive steps can you take to take charge of your career and manage your professional responsibilities with confidence?

Chapter 2 Learn to Work with Other Educators

1. What skills do you already possess that make it easier for you to work well with your new colleagues? As you skim this chapter, review your personal strengths and look for suggestions on how to enhance the vital attributes that will help you become a valued coworker to those around you.
2. After reading List 2.5: Professional Courtesy, which of these suggestions do you find helpful as you work to adapt yourself to the culture of your new school?
3. Do you have a well-organized binder of emergency plans and information prepared in case you have to miss school? If not, use the list on page 29 to put one together. You, the substitute teacher, and your students will all benefit from this advance preparation.
4. How can you apply the advice in Lists 2.9: How to Deal with the Demands of Your Colleagues, and 2.10: Dealing with Difficult Colleagues, to work effectively with all of your colleagues?

5. Spend some time exploring the online learning communities described in List 2.11: Join Other Educators in Online Learning Communities. Which of these sites do you find helpful and appropriate for your professional needs?

Chapter 3 Create a Link Between Home and School

1. Why should teachers take the initiative to establish a positive relationship with the parents or guardians of their students? What can you do to create this bond with your students' families? Which of these strategies are most appropriate for the parents or guardians of your students?
2. Skim List 3.3: What Parents Expect of Their Child's Teacher. Explain why it is important to understand fully the expectations they have of you. Do any of the expectations in this list surprise you? What can you add to the list from your own experience?
3. List 3.6: Strategies for Managing Formal Conferences Successfully, contains information that can assist you as you meet with parents or guardians of your students. What are your current concerns about these conferences? What can you do to resolve your concerns?
4. As you read List 3.7: How to Handle Conflicts with Parents or Guardians, what conflicts can you anticipate? What plans can you make to resolve them?
5. Because paperwork is such an important part of any teacher's workday, List 3.9: How to Manage Student Information, deals with an issue that concerns many teachers. Do you agree with the suggestions in this list? Do you know of other methods that are also helpful? What do you need to do to ensure that the way you handle this type of paperwork is as efficient as possible?

SECTION TWO: CREATE A POSITIVE CLASS CULTURE

Chapter 4 Make Your Classroom a Productive Learning Environment

1. The requirements of any learning environment will vary depending on the school, a teacher's personal preference, the subjects under study, and other factors, such as the ages and abilities of the students in the room. How can you apply the information in List 4.1: The Essentials of a Productive Learning Environment, to your teaching situation? What obstacles do you have to overcome to create the learning environment you want for your students? How will you accomplish this?
2. In List 4.3: Create a Safe Classroom, the author states that the most important aspect of a learning environment should be student safety. Identify the items in this list that can apply to your classroom. How can you use the information in the list to make sure your students are safe at all times while under your care?

3. As you review the information in List 4.5: Create Effective Seating Arrangements, consider the factors you should attend to when you design seating arrangements for your students. What do you need to do to make sure every student is seated in the best possible spot for them in your classroom?
4. Read List 4.4: Make Your Classroom Greener by Using Paper Wisely. How green is your classroom? What is your district's paper waste policy? What can you do to accommodate your students' needs while reducing the amount of paper waste in local landfills? How can you involve students in this effort?
5. This chapter offers many free and inexpensive strategies for creating an inclusive classroom in which the decor shows students they are clearly valued while it provides indirect instruction. Which strategies appeal to you? Which ones can you incorporate into your daily routines?

Chapter 5 Forge Positive Relationships with Students

1. After reading the information in List 5.1: Characteristics of an Appropriate Teacher-Student Relationship, identify the measures you can take to ensure that the relationships you have with your students have acceptable boundaries while remaining mutually beneficial.
2. How can you use the information in List 5.3: The Greatest Gift: High Expectations, to establish challenging, attainable, and inspirational expectations for your students that are at the same time achievable? How can you communicate these expectations to your students?
3. Think of an incident in your past when you observed a teacher treating a student with disrespect. What was the effect on the student involved? What was the effect on the other students? What can you do to ensure that you treat all of your students with dignity? Which of the suggestions in the list on page 64 will be helpful to you?
4. Identify the students in your class who struggle to find school success because they have special needs, have an attention deficit, or are reluctant learners. Which strategies from the lists in this chapter can assist you as you work to help these students?
5. Review the information in List 5.10: Make Every Child Feel Valuable, to decide how you can create a welcoming and inclusive classroom. Which of these strategies are you already using? Which can you add to your repertoire?

Chapter 6 Create Opportunities for Student Success

1. Carefully read the motivation principles in List 6.1: The Principles of Motivation. As you study this information, determine the priority that you would assign to each principle. Which of them do you feel confident that you already have in place? Which ones would you like to implement in the future?

2. On page 73 the author states, “Because students will rise to their teacher’s expectations, it is crucial that those expectations be high.” How much importance do you place on a positive teacher attitude? How do teachers unconsciously convey their attitudes to their students? What are your current strengths in this area?
3. Lists 6.3, 6.4, and 6.5 are all composed of questions designed to help you motivate students by increasing their confidence, enjoyment, and sense of belonging. As you read these questions, earmark a few that can help you spark excitement and increase the opportunities for your students’ success.
4. After reading List 6.7: Suggestions on Using Rewards and Praise Effectively, determine what problems there are with using both of these techniques as motivational tools. What can you do to avoid these problems as you motivate your students to succeed?
5. On the basis of the information about intrinsic motivation you found in this chapter, which strategies would appeal to your students? How can you incorporate these strategies into your instructional practices?

Chapter 7 **Take a Proactive Stance to Prevent Misbehavior**

1. As you read List 7.2: Prevent Misbehavior with These Commonsense Strategies, identify which ones are already in place in your teaching practices. Which ones should you improve? Are there other helpful strategies that you find effective in preventing misbehavior?
2. In List 7.3: Avoid These Discipline Mistakes, you’ll find a list of common mistakes that teachers make. Do you recognize any that may be part of your classroom discipline practices? How can your awareness of these mistakes improve the way you manage your class?
3. Carefully planned and consistently executed classroom procedures are a critical part of a proactive stance in dealing with misbehaviors. Which of the procedures in List 7.5: Make Things Run Smoothly with Classroom Procedures, do you find necessary in your classroom? Are there other effective procedures that are not in this list that you use to keep your classroom running smoothly?
4. On page 90 the author asserts that there are many benefits to a united effort by all teachers in a school to enforce the school’s code of conduct. Do you agree or disagree? Are there rules that are particularly troublesome for some teachers at your school? If so, how do you handle this problem?
5. In List 7.14: How to Have Fun with Your Students, the focus is on enjoyment. Why is this an important part of motivation theory? Which of the activities in this list would appeal to your students?

Chapter 8 **Minimize Disruption Caused by Misbehavior**

1. Identify the misbehaviors you have to manage most frequently in your classroom. Which ones are the most disruptive? What strategies are currently successful? Which strategies in this chapter would you find useful?
2. Use List 8.2: Misbehaviors You Should Handle Yourself, to decide how to regard various types of misbehaviors. Why is it important to know how to categorize misbehaviors? How would you classify them? Which behaviors would you add to this list?
3. How would you rate the potential for violence in your school? As you examine the behaviors in List 8.5: Be Alert to the Potential for Violence, do you recognize any from your teaching experience? Are there any that you would add to the list? What procedures should you follow at your school if you notice students engaging in a behavior with the potential for violence?
4. How can you develop grace under pressure when students misbehave? Use the suggestions in List 8.8: Control Your Reactions When Students Misbehave, as a guide to make sure your own reactions to student misconduct are appropriate. How else can you manage your stress levels?
5. The final list in this chapter, List 8.9: Questions to Ask Yourself When Students Misbehave, implies that the teacher is responsible for many student behaviors. How does this attitude give the teacher control of a classroom? What are the advantages of this belief?

SECTION THREE: BE A DYNAMIC TEACHER

Chapter 9 **Plan Effective Instruction**

1. As you read the information in List 9.1: Your Goal: An Active Learning Community, which items seem most important to the smooth running of a classroom? Select a few that appeal to you and then prioritize them according to their importance so you can plan how to implement them.
2. Why is it necessary to assess your students' prior knowledge? Use the list on page 116 as a guide to determine the strategies that are appropriate for your students. What can you add to this list?
3. What type of learners make up your classroom? Why is it important to adapt lessons to meet the needs of your students rather than have them accommodate themselves to your lesson? Why do you think the author suggests that there are only two areas of instruction to differentiate in the list on page 117? Do you agree or disagree?

4. How can you use the concept of an effective backup plan to improve your instruction? Use List 9.11: How to Create Backup Plans, to collect a variety of backup plan ideas that would be effective for engaging your students if your original plan is not working.
5. What types of activities do your students enjoy and find useful? Why is it important to have lively and engaging instruction? Choose one of the strategies in List 9.8: Include Activities That Will Appeal to Your Students, to design a lesson that will engage your students.

Chapter 10 Deliver Effective Instruction

1. In List 10.3: How to Build Background Knowledge, the author states, “Building background knowledge is a crucial element in instruction because it allows students to make sense of new material.” How do you help your students build background information? Which of the strategies in the list would appeal to your students? How will you implement them?
2. Several of the lists in this chapter involve making your presentations as interesting and engaging as possible. How is this a proactive step in preventing discipline problems? What types of activities do your students find interesting and engaging?
3. There are several suggestions in this chapter to incorporate technology into instruction. Which of these suggestions would benefit your students? What can you do to make using technology as user friendly as possible for your students and yourself?
4. Activities in which students collaborate in various ways can often be noisy. Which of the suggestions in List 10.14: How to Help Groups Control Their Noise Levels, would work well with your students? What tips have you observed in your own teaching experience that you could add to this list?

Chapter 11 Assess Your Students’ Progress

1. Which types of assessments do you use in your class? Use the information in List 11.1: Types and Purposes of Assessments, to ensure that you know how to create both summative and formative assessments.
2. Many different types of alternative assessments are available for teachers of students in all grade levels. Think of the needs of your students as you read the list of alternative assessments on page 151. How can you use the information in this list to improve the assessments you offer your students?
3. Which types of questions do you use most frequently? Use the information in lists 11.4: How to Create Beneficial Tests, 11.5: Traditional Questions Types, and 11.6: The Versatile Multiple-Choice Question, to expand the variety of question types you offer on different assessments in your class. As you read these lists, note the question types that you may not be using frequently but that could help you assess your students.

4. It is highly likely that you will have to administer standardized tests to your students at some point in your early years of teaching. What problems can you anticipate? Where can you find more information about how to make the process as pleasant and useful as possible? Refer to the list on page 159 as you determine how to handle successfully the administration of standardized tests.
5. Managing the grading of paperwork is one of the most daunting tasks any teacher faces. Which of the tips in List 11.12: Keeping Up with Grading Paperwork, seem most beneficial to you? What other strategies have you learned from other teachers that will make this task easier?

SECTION FOUR: LOOK TO THE FUTURE

In Chapter 12, “Twenty-First Century Issues for All Teachers,” you will find eleven lists of recent trends that will have impacts on your educational practices for years to come. Which of these trends are already part of your school day? How can you use the information presented here to manage your professional responsibilities successfully?

SECTION FIVE: RESOURCES TO HELP YOU BECOME A BETTER TEACHER

In Chapter 13, “Resources to Help You Become a Better Teacher,” you will find seven lists of various types of resources that can make your professional life easier. As you review each list, select at least one of the Web sites, organizations, periodicals, or books that could assist you in fulfilling your professional duties.

In Chapter 14, “Resources to Help You Work with Students,” you will find three lists of resources that are geared to helping you work well with your students. As you review each list, select at least one of the Web sites, organizations, periodicals, or books that could assist you in dealing successfully with your students.