



Help your substitute teacher be prepared for any situation encountered.

By the time a student graduates from high school, that person will have spent the equivalent of a full year being taught by a substitute. The potential benefits of a substitute are often wasted because many districts do not have any training programs for these teachers. The caliber of plans and lessons conveyed by each teacher varies, but the reality is you are a substitute TEACHER by choice. It's up to you to make every minute count for the students who rely on you for learning.

- Arrive on time at least one-half hour before the first class is scheduled to begin. You should check in with the principal or school secretary to report for duty.
- Always dress professionally. A Phoenix substitute teacher says, "I dress to the 'T' as a substitute teacher. The kids hold the door for me. One on each side! That's pretty scary and wonderful that they are influenced so easily by appearance. My daughter's been on her job for only two weeks and she says they hold the door for her, also."
- Follow the teacher's lesson plan as given to you. Most teachers are responsible and want their students to learn. You are expected to carry the torch of academic excellence.
- Always have a back-up plan. This is your way to engage students in meaningful learning activities just in case no lesson plans have been left for you to follow.

As stated in *THE First Days of School*, the most important day for a teacher is the first day of school. If you are a substitute teacher, conceivably each time you walk into a classroom is YOUR first day of school. As an effective substitute you should be ready to institute a basic set of operating procedures as soon as class begins in case the classroom teacher has not left you with any directions or procedures on how the class is organized and managed. The two most important procedures are

1. how the students are to come to attention, and
2. what they are to do when they enter the classroom ("bellwork").

Classroom management overarches everything. You should not begin teaching until the classroom has been organized, any more than you would begin a surgical procedure in an operating room until all of the life-saving equipment is in place.

### Prepare a *SubPack* and a Substitute Teacher Checklist

A *SubPack* is like an emergency preparedness kit for the classroom. It should contain a variety of useful classroom supplies and materials. Check the *SubPack* at the end of every day, refill it with supplies if necessary, and keep it in the entry closet or in the car ready for your next day.

A Checklist helps you keep track of your day. Each day will be different for you, but there is a routine you will establish as you gain experience in your role as a remarkable substitute TEACHER.

The contents of a *SubPack* can be organized into three categories:

1. Personal and Professional Items
2. Activity Materials
3. Everyday Stuff

### Personal and Professional Items

- Clipboard
- Pen, pencil, and colored (non-red) marking pen
- Substitute teacher report (to leave for the permanent teacher)
- District information (maps, addresses, phone numbers, policies, starting times, etc.)
- A coffee mug or water bottle

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- A whistle (useful for P.E. and playground duty)
- A small package of tissues
- Energy snacks (granola bars, pretzels, fruit [chocolate's great, but it melts])
- An individualized Hall Pass to give to students (when necessary)
- A small bag for keys, driver's license, money (enough for lunch), and other essential items
- Band-Aids
- Headache medicine (for you only)
- Small sewing kit with safety pins

### Activity Materials

- Tangram games
- Bookmarks
- Picture books, puzzles, brainteasers, etc.
- A number cube or dice for games
- Estimation jar
- Timer
- Copies of a 5-minute filler activity (or early finisher bonus assignment)
- One class set for a short activity

### Everyday Stuff

- Chalk
- Colored markers, pencils, and/or crayons
- Labeled pens (red, blue, purple or black)
- Pencils and small pencil sharpener
- Glue sticks
- Transparent and masking tape
- Whiteboard markers and dry eraser
- Scissors
- Rubber bands, paper clips, staples, and a small stapler
- Post-it note pads (various sizes and colors)
- Ruler
- Calculator
- Lined and blank paper, file folders
- Name tag materials (address labels or masking tape will work)
- Paper

Use this **Substitute Teacher Checklist** to manage your time efficiently throughout the day.

### At Home

- \_\_\_\_\_ Organize several appropriate substitute TEACHER outfits in a section of your closet.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Compile a set of note cards with pertinent information about the schools where you may be assigned.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Keep paper and pencil by the phone you will be using to answer early morning calls.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Always answer your substitute TEACHER "hotline" yourself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Assemble a *SubPack* and keep it ready to go.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Leave your home to arrive at school at least 40 minutes prior to your assigned time, allowing time to report to the principal or school secretary a half-hour before class begins.

### Prior to Entering the Classroom

- \_\_\_\_\_ Report to the administration office.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ask about student passes and special procedures.



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- \_\_\_\_\_ Ask if there are any extra duties associated with the permanent teacher's assignment.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ask about schoolwide activities planned for the day, like assemblies, emergency rehearsals, etc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Find out how to refer a student to the office.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ask if any students have medical problems.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Obtain any keys that might be necessary.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Learn the procedure for reporting students who are tardy or absent.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Find the locations of restrooms and the teachers' lounge.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ask the names of the teachers on both sides of your classroom and, if possible, introduce yourself to them.

### **In the Classroom Before School**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Enter the classroom with confidence and with your *SubPack* in toe. (Tip: A portable carry-on "rolling" luggage is ideal for storing all your sub-supplies. Keep it packed at home and ready to go when the "hotline" rings.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Write your name (as you wish to be addressed by the students) in the front of the classroom.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Review the procedures, expectations or rules, if any are posted.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Locate the classroom evacuation map.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read through the lesson plans left by the teacher.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Locate the books, papers and materials you'll need throughout the day.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Study the seating charts. If you can't find any, get ready to make your own (don't allow students to take advantage of "substitute day" to sit where they want).
- \_\_\_\_\_ When the bell rings, stand at the door and cheerfully greet students as they enter the classroom.

### **Throughout the Day**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Greet the students at the door and get them involved in a learning activity immediately.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Carry out the lesson plans and assigned duties to the very best of your ability.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Improvise using the materials in your *SubPack* to fill extra time, enhance activities, or supplement sketchy lesson plans as needed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Be fair; judiciously carry out the rewards and consequences you establish.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Be positive and respectful in your interactions with students and school personnel.

### **At the End of Each Class Period**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Challenge students to recall projects and topics they have studied that day.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Remind students of homework.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have students straighten and clean the area around their desks.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Account for any classroom materials used during the day.

### **At the End of the Day**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete your Substitute Teacher Report and leave it for the teacher.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Neatly organize the papers turned in by the students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Close windows, turn off lights and equipment, and leave the room in good order before you lock the door.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Turn in keys and any money collected at the office.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Check if you will be needed again the next day.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Record a few notes to yourself about what was accomplished, how things went, and ways to improve if you are called again.



### Additional Resources for Substitute Teachers

The *SubPak* and the **Professional Substitute Teacher Checklist** shared have been modified with permission from the ***Substitute Teacher Handbook***. The ***Substitute Teacher Handbook*** for grades K–12 is a comprehensive book for all substitute teachers. It includes

- how-to information for classroom management and teaching strategies,
- analysis of legal issues affecting substitutes, and
- more than 100 pages of activities and lessons that can be used in a variety of classrooms and grade levels.

Copies are available from  
Utah State University's Substitute Teaching Division and Institute (STEDI)  
925 W 200 North, Suite A2  
Logan, Utah 84321  
435-755-7800  
<http://STEDI.org>

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