

## **The Starter Activity**

The most important skill a substitute teacher can have when is to get the students immediately on task. This can best be accomplished by having a starter activity for them to work on the minute they walk through the doorway. A starter activity should only be about five to ten minutes in length and allow students to work individually and quietly.

Some ideas for effective starter activities are:

- Have students design nametags or executive nameplates for their desks.
- In a math class, you might provide students quarter sheets of paper and have them write five sentences about how they used math outside of the classroom in the last week.
- Provide students with quarter sheets of paper and have them graphically represent what they learned the previous day.
- In younger grades, have students draw pictures of their daily schedule. Then have them draw clocks listing what time they did the tasks.
- Put a large poster of a picture in the front of the room, have students study the picture. After three minutes, take the picture away and ask them detailed questions about the picture.
- Photocopy a worksheet of addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division facts; have students time themselves on how long it takes to complete a line of equations.
- Write a brainteaser on the board, and allow a few minutes for students to try to solve it.
- Provide students with a piece of paper and have them write a letter to the President of the United States.

The possibilities are endless for what you can do for a starter activity. It is best if you can relate the activity to the subject you will be covering for the day. Remember, starter activities aren't busy work. They need to have a purpose and feedback should be provided on student work. Instead of you grading the papers, have students trade with a partner and have the partner write something they liked about the other student's work at the top of the paper then hand back to the original owner.

By using a starter activity you will have time to take roll and prepare so that you may smoothly and quickly transitions to the first item on the lesson plan. The starter activity will also get students busy, thus decreasing the amount of downtime. Students who are on task don't have time to create classroom management problems.