

Tips for Creating Class Assignments

The purpose of any assignment that you give your students should be to reinforce the main objective by either practice or assessment. Whether an assignment is given as homework or as part of the introduction, guided practice, or independent practice phases of your lesson plan, it should always be meaningful and relevant to the objective.

Some suggestions for developing assignments:

Build your assignments into the lesson unit and into the lesson plans. When creating a lesson unit, decide ahead of time what kind of assignments you want the students to complete. This is the best way for you to check to see if the students are mastering the objectives you have laid out.

Make sure you plan an adequate number of assignments for your grading period. Regardless of what grade you teach, it is a good idea to have a minimum of two or three graded assignments per week.

Make sure the student understands the purpose for the assignment. All of your assignments should be related to the lesson objective. To make it more relevant, make the assignment an extension of the content of your lesson.

Model the first part of the assignment as a whole group. Getting started is often the most difficult part of any assignment. This is an excellent opportunity to make sure that the students have read and understood the instructions for the assignment. Understanding and following directions is a skill that affects almost every aspect of a student's success.

Avoid "busy work." The main purpose of an assignment is for practice or assessment, not behavior control or filling time.

Go for quality, not quantity. Students only need what is necessary for practice or for you to assess what they have learned. Remember the law of diminishing returns: at some point, the more you put into something, the less you get out of it.

Always try to provide feedback. There can be nothing more disheartening than to put a great deal of work into an assignment only to find out that the teacher never even look at it. Put as much work into providing feedback to an assignment as the student did in completing it. You will find that your students will be far more cooperative and eager to complete future assignments.

Post and publish student work. When students know that whatever they complete will be viewed by others, especially their peers, it makes a big difference in the amount

of thought and care they put into the assignment. Post or publish student work frequently and spotlight those who have done the best work. It does wonders for student productivity and morale.