

The First-Year Teacher Playbook

Classroom management and sanity, year one

Your first year of teaching is the hardest. The teachers who thrive nail two things early: relationships and routines. This guide focuses on what actually moves the needle.

Set up management before content

- Teach routines explicitly in week one (entering, transitions, materials, attention signal).
- Be consistent — students test boundaries; calm, predictable consequences win.
- Relationships first: a student who feels seen rarely fights you.

Protect your time

- You cannot grade everything — give feedback strategically, use rubrics.
- Steal/adapt resources; don't reinvent every lesson from scratch.
- Set a hard 'stop work' time most nights. Sustainability is the job.

Survive and grow

- Find a veteran mentor and your 'people' on staff.
- Communicate early and positively with families before issues arise.
- Keep a 'good moments' folder for the hard days — you'll need it.

Insider glossary

Classroom management — Systems/routines that keep learning running smoothly.

Differentiation — Adjusting instruction for varied student needs.

Rubric — A scoring guide that speeds and standardizes grading.

Formative assessment — Quick checks for understanding during learning.

Starter checklist

- Routines planned for week 1
- An attention signal
- Rubrics for big assignments
- A mentor
- A hard nightly stop-time

Survived another year — teacher-life merch in the L5D0 vault