

Using PowerPoint Timers to Improve Student Behavior and Learning

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Timers help students to become time-conscious and ultimately to become better 'time-managers'.

NOTE: You can download free timers that can run in PowerPoint for use in your classroom at:

<http://www.interventioncentral.org/interventions/timers.php>

Here are some ideas for using count-up and countdown timers inserted into PowerPoint presentations to encourage punctuality, positive student behavior, and active academic engagement.

- *Get Students to Class on Time.* Start the 5-minute count-down timer as students are passing between classes. Students who are in their seats ready with necessary work materials when the timer expires earn bonus points toward their grade or some other incentive.
- *Speed Up Classroom Transitions.* Start to 1-minute timer as student's transition (e.g., from one learning activity to another, to line up at the door, etc.). Praise students who transition successfully within the time limit.
- *Encourage Active Student Engagement in Large Groups.* Pose a question to the class and direct each student to think of a possible answer. Start the **1-minute** countdown timer. After the minute is up, call randomly on a student.
- *Help Students to Monitor Their Work Time.* When students are working in cooperative groups or independently, start the 5-, 10-, or 15-minute PowerPoint timer. Inform students that at the end of the timed period, you will collect student assignments, check in with spokespersons from each group, or otherwise monitor work completed. Be sure that the timer is visible to all students in the room.
- *Increase Student Work Fluency.* Give students worksheets or short assignments containing academic skills in which you would like to see them build fluency. Start a count-up timer of the appropriate length for the assignment (e.g., 5- or 10-minute count-up timer). Tell students to work as quickly as possible on their 'speed' assignment. When finished, each student should note at the top of the worksheet the time it took him or her to completed the task. (The student's work time will equal the number of minutes displayed on the count-up timer when the assignment is finished.) Students can be motivated even more by graphing their own fluency data across multiple days, including percent of items that they got correct and time required to complete each assignment.
- *Boost Student Motivation by Posting Time Remaining in the Lesson.* Students who are bored or restless are generally not motivated to work very hard. For 'hard-to-teach' classes, announce that if you see that the class makes their best effort to engage in learning for a fixed period of time, they can then engage in a more fun, preferred activity. Then start a timer (e.g.,

15-minute count-down timer) and begin the instructional lesson. Students will be motivated to engage academically both because they want to earn the desired activity for good performance and because they can see via the timer that the lesson will last only a finite (and manageable) amount of time.

- *Provide Specific Time for Student Planning in Assignments.* Students do much better on complex tasks such as writing assignments when they take time first to create a work plan. Use a count-down timer of **10 to 15** minutes. Tell students that they will be allocated time to create a plan for how they will complete their assignment. Start the timer and direct students to begin working on their 'work plan' (alone, in pairs, or in groups) while you circulate the room offering assistance and providing feedback to students on their plans.
- *Improve Classroom Behaviors by Deducting 'Time Owed' for Misbehavior.* Tell your class that if problem behaviors in the room escalate to the point at which they interfere with learning, the class will 'owe' you for any lost instructional time. Whenever classroom behaviors get out of hand, start the **15-minute** count-up timer and wait quietly until students get their behaviors back under control. Then stop the timer and note on a chart the number of elapsed minutes and seconds that instruction was interrupted. Repeat this sequence as often as needed during the lesson. At the end of the class period or school day, add up the total amount of time lost through student misbehavior. Inform students that they must 'pay' this time back (e.g., through loss of recess time, having to stay after class, being assigned additional homework to make up for lost class time, etc.).