

Mistakes That Beginning Teachers Often Make

These are mistakes you want to avoid making.

1. Aiming to Be Buddies With Your Students

Inexperienced teachers sometimes really want their students to like them. But if you're not careful, this will cause problems with managing your classroom. Instead, be a good teacher ... be tough but fair. Be the adult in the room. You'll get their respect and appreciation ... and they will like you for that!

2. Being Easy On Discipline

Sometimes teachers start out the year without a plan for discipline, and end up being way too lax, and ignoring behaviours they shouldn't. Start out firmly (but fairly) ... you can always relax your rules later. Tightening up on discipline after problems have arisen is next to impossible.

3. Not Being Organized

Organize your plans, assignments and other documents. Use labelled notebooks and file folders, and colour-code things. If you use a laptop, do the same.

4. Not Asking for Help

As a beginning teacher, other staff members want to help you. Take advantage of it. If you know any teachers, give them a call ... they want to help you. Take advantage of it. And of course, if your parents are teachers, take advantage of that too!

5. Avoiding Parents

Don't make the mistake of avoiding talking to the parents of the students you teach. Call parents frequently. Make 'good news' phone calls where you report on the good work a student has done. Communicate clearly with your parents from the beginning and you'll have supporters!

5. Getting Involved in Staff Gossip

Yes, it happens. Do yourself a favour; don't listen to gossip, and don't take sides in disputes. Keep your interactions with staff members friendly and neutral. Focus on the students.

6. Remaining Isolated from the School Community

Don't hide in your classroom. Let people get to know you. Attend staff social events. Eat lunch with other teachers. Say hello to people in the hallways. Offer your help.

7. Working Too Hard and Burning Out

Teaching is a demanding career. Beginning teachers will face a heavy work load in the evenings. Remember to take time for yourself. Plan your time well. Don't let classroom problems affect your ability to enjoy life away from school. Eat healthy!

8. Being Overly Optimistic and Too Easily Discouraged

Beginning teachers sometimes have this problem. No matter how enthusiastic and idealistic you are, there will be tough days, and times when your best efforts don't seem to be enough. Remember that the first two years of teaching are like an apprenticeship ... that's when you really learn how to do the job.

9. Being Too Hard on Yourself

Teaching is hard enough without being hard on yourself over slip-ups, mistakes, and imperfections. Nobody's perfect. You will get better.