

**Are You Wasting  
Valuable Class Time?**

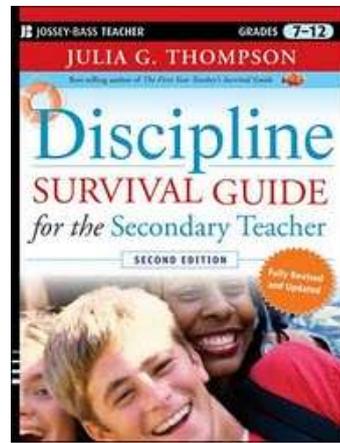
by

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In my professional life, I am lucky to have the opportunity to be a teacher. I am the author of *First-Year Teacher's Survival Guide*, *First-Year Teacher's Checklist*, and *Discipline Survival Guide for the Secondary Teacher*.



This book is available from Amazon

## **Are You Wasting Valuable Class Time?**

**Scenario:** You have too much curriculum and too little useful class time with students. Not only are you required to cover enormous amounts of information, but you are expected to do so in ways that ensure that all students are engaged and able to master the material. You feel as if you just do not have enough time in each class to get ever thing done. To make matters worse, although other teachers complain about the lack of time, they seem to be covering the material with greater speed and more success.

**Your Goals:**

- To eliminate the ways that you personally waste class time
- To eliminate the ways that your students waste class time
- To figure out ways to cover material so that your students master it quickly

### **Some common-sense suggestions for using school time wisely:**

1. Have all handouts and other learning materials prepared before class so that students do not have to miss instructional time waiting for materials.
2. Check to make sure that all equipment is in good working order before class.
3. Be flexible. Interruptions happen. Things do not always go as planned.
4. Don't allow small misbehaviors to continue or escalate.
5. Raise your students' awareness of how they use class time. Be open in discussing what went well and what did not in class.

- 6. Hold students accountable for how well they use the time that they are in class. Promote self-discipline and time management.**
- 7. Establish and follow a routine for the start and ending of class so that students use every minute that they are with you.**
- 8. Delegate as much as you can. Students are often eager to help and can be surprisingly good at managing classroom chores.**
- 9. Don't ever call roll out loud. Use a seating chart and look around the room as students are working.**
- 10. Try to photocopy extra copies of handouts for those students who lost theirs or who left them at home.**
- 11. Make sure students know the rationale for studying a particular topic. This will encourage them to stay on track.**
- 12. Prevent as many interruptions as you can.**
- 13. If a misbehaving student has caused a disruption, do your best to keep the disruption small so that valuable class time is protected.**
- 14. Establish routines for predictable interruptions.**
- 15. Know what to do in a fire drill. Students should be able to exit the building and return in a timely fashion and with a minimum loss of class time.**
- 16. Give students a long-term project (sometimes called an anchor assignment) to work on if they finish an assignment early.**
- 17. If you place students in study teams, often they will work more efficiently together than they would if they were working alone.**
- 18. Set time limits for completing tasks within a class period. This will encourage students to work toward a goal.**
- 19. Have students pick up handouts and other materials as they enter the room rather than waste time tediously passing back papers.**
- 20. Give students checklists of assignments so that they can work on a series of assignments rather than having to check in with you after each step.**
- 21. Ask students to stop every now and then and share questions or what they have learned with classmates.**

- 22. Make sure that the activities you plan to cover the curriculum will meet the learning needs of your students.**
- 23. Be sure that your students know that you are the person who will decide when class will end—not a bell. This will ensure that they work productively and not fall into disorder near the end of class.**
- 24. Monitor constantly so that your students stay on task.**
- 25. Don't waste time assuming that you students will all learn at the same rate. Assess your students' readiness levels and differentiate accordingly.**
- 26. Stay on topic. Resist the temptation to be drawn off topic during a lesson.**
- 27. Overplan. Overplan. Overplan. Always have a backup plan.**
- 28. Make learning to follow directions a focus point until your students have mastered this important skill. Students who know what to do and how to do it will not be as likely to waste time as those students who are not sure what to do.**
- 29. Create and then enforce a reasonable policy concerning how your students may leave the room. Students who lollygag in the hallways during class are not learning anything.**
- 30. Reduce the distractions that may be drawing your students' attention away from a lesson.**
- 31. If an upcoming event is causing distractions and subsequent misuse of class time, then make use of student interest in that event. Channel energy when you can instead of opposing students.**
- 32. Pace lessons so that there is another assignment waiting for students who finish early.**
- 33. Assign an appropriate amount of work. Students should not waste time practicing what they already have mastered.**
- 34. Realize that students of all ages can have trouble changing from one activity to another. Plan effective transitions between assignments.**
- 35. Teach to an objective. Focused instruction will be much more efficient than merely covering material.**

- 36. Use formative assessments to determine your students' readiness for a particular unit of study.**
- 37. Use signal words to call students to order, direct their attention, or change tasks. This will save time by making sure that students know what to do.**
- 38. Use exit tickets to ask students to reflect on how well they used their time in class. This will help raise their awareness of the importance of making every minute count.**
- 39. Display inspirational posters and reminders to help students use time wisely.**
- 40. Use the small blocks of time that are available to you and your students. Often the time at the beginning and ending of class is the most productive time for student retention of knowledge. Take advantage of this and pack those few minutes with interesting activities.**