

Are Your Students Bored with Worksheets?

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Used wisely, worksheets can help students to make sense of content, practice important skills, and deepen understanding. Used inappropriately, worksheets can be a major source of boredom, discontent, and frustration for both students and teachers. When considering the use of a worksheet, teachers should reflect on the following questions:

What is the purpose of the worksheet?

Who is the audience?

How long should this worksheet take students to complete?

How will feedback be provided to students?

Teachers looking to engage their students (and come out from under the pile of grading and paperwork) can ramp up the effectiveness of worksheets by using these simple strategies:

- Prior to distributing the worksheet, designate certain questions or problems to be discussed with partners or small groups. When there is direct accountability to their peers, students are more likely to complete worksheets. In addition, tell students which problems or questions you will specifically focus on during a whole class review.
- Do a **Gallery Walk** with questions from the worksheet. Take questions from the worksheet and place them on posters around the room. Place students in pairs and have them walk to each poster in order to answer the questions or solve problems.
- Take questions or problems from the worksheet and use them to create **Envelope Questions**. Place students in partners or small groups and provide each with an envelope filled with cards or strips of paper that have the questions listed on them. Students take turns pulling the questions out of the envelope and the group solves the problem.
- After students have completed a worksheet, place them in pairs to conduct a **Partner Quiz**.
- Provide students an opportunity to give feedback about the content and process undertaken to complete the worksheet. This can be done during an informal Q and A session or students could be asked to **Color Code** sections of the worksheet according to criteria such as *easiest to complete*, *took the longest time*, or *most difficult to explain*.
- If appropriate, provide students the opportunity to complete the worksheet questions in whatever order they choose.
- When students have completed the worksheet, have them provide a summary of their understanding of the content. This summary could be in the form of **Circle, Triangle, Square, Ticket Out the Door**, or a **Quick Write**.
- Ask students to choose one question or problem from the worksheet in order to elaborate on it in more depth. This elaboration could be in the form of a **Journal Response** or a **Quick Draw**.

The effectiveness of worksheets can be increased by remembering a few key ideas:

- Assign only those worksheets that serve an essential purpose and align to the objectives of the lesson. Clearly state the objective so students understand how the worksheet relates to what they are learning.
- Different worksheets should be provided to different students based on their ability and skill level.
- When using a pre-printed worksheet such as one published by a company, review it carefully before distributing it to students. Eliminate any non-essential information or questions.
- When using worksheets as homework, carefully consider if students have the ability and time to practice successfully on their own.