



A Little Help Between Activities

Ready-to-use classroom cards and planning pages for grades 3-5

A few tools to make your own.

You already have a lot of moving pieces in your day. These printable cards and simple planning pages are here to take one small thing off your list. Borrow a page or two, adapt the wording, and keep what works for your class.

NO CLASSROOM OVERHAUL NEEDED

Your existing routines are the starting point. A familiar changeover, like partner work to independent writing, might be a good place to try a card. Paper and a pencil are all you need; print only what is useful.

An example to borrow

Page 2 follows a grade 4 reading activity. Page 3 leaves room for your own materials, first task, and familiar way to ask for help.

Ready-made or your own words

Page 4 has a ready-made student prompt; page 5 is yours to fill in. If a routine is new, a quick demonstration and practice together may help.

A few extra options

Pages 6 and 7 offer group roles and ideas for finishing a task. Page 8 is an optional place to jot down what you would keep or change.

YOU KNOW YOUR STUDENTS BEST

Use the language, pictures, pacing, and supports that already help your students. These pages can sit alongside your school routines and individual support plans. They offer a little practical help, not a fix for every classroom challenge.



From partner talk to writing

One possible grade 4 example | Fictional classroom | Borrow what fits

A FAMILIAR MOMENT

Partner talk has wrapped up, and a few questions pop up: “Where is my sheet?” “What do we write?” The teacher adds a short reminder so students can find the next step while the teacher checks in with a group.

A little setup in this example

The response sheet is waiting at each workspace. The board says: “Choose a character. Write or tell one choice they made.” Students have the response options and supports they normally use.

THE REMINDER STUDENTS SEE

1. Finish your sentence and place the shared story in the tray.
2. Go to your writing space with your pencil.
3. Start the character-choice response on your sheet.

A quick practice run, if it would help

For a new routine, the teacher might show the steps, then try them with the class: “Let’s see how this works.” A quick check of where to start and how to ask for help can reveal anything worth clarifying.

When someone needs help or finishes

Help: use the class help signal; the teacher checks in. While waiting, draw the character or mark a story detail you understand. Finish: reread your response and add a supporting detail if ready. Use the teacher-approved alternative when needed.

Sometimes a small change to the directions or materials makes the next step easier. Your students may have useful ideas, too.



Make a familiar routine easy to share

Optional planning page | A few notes are enough | Use only the parts that help

Class / grade: _____ Routine: _____

The moment I have in mind

For example: moving from partner reading to writing. What would I like the prompt to help with?

What is already in place?

Familiar cues, materials locations, and supports I would like to keep.

The steps in our own words

What to put away, where to go, and what to begin. Short phrases or pictures are welcome.

Help and finishing options

Our usual way to ask for help, something to do while waiting, and an option for finishing.

What would make this fit my class?

A practice together? Pictures or different wording? Space for the supports my students already use.



Our next steps

Student prompt | Example for partner reading to independent writing

1 Put the shared story away

Finish your sentence. Place the story in the tray.

2 Go to your writing space

Take your pencil. Find your response sheet.

3 Begin with one choice

Choose a character. Write or tell one choice they made.

NEED HELP?

Use our class help signal. While you wait, draw the character or mark a detail you understand.

For your classroom: this example is ready to borrow. Page 5 offers space for your own familiar wording and supports.



Our next steps

Your classroom version | Space for your own words and familiar pictures

We are moving from _____ to _____.

1

2

3

Our help route

Use this as a desk reminder or a classroom display, whichever suits your students. Fill in the steps together if helpful.



Working together

Cut-apart group-role cards | A starting point for groups of four | Adapt or share roles

Materials helper

Bring the agreed materials.
Keep them within reach.
Help return them at the end.

Ask: "What do we need?"

Step guide

Point to the current step.
Read it aloud if helpful.
Ask the teacher if it is unclear.

Ask: "Which step is next?"

Recorder

Capture the group's ideas using the agreed format: words, sketches, or labels.

Ask: "What should we record?"

Reporter

Check what the group wants to share.
Invite others to contribute in their preferred way.

Ask: "What did we find?"

ROOM FOR EVERYONE

These cards give each person a way to help while everyone contributes ideas. Roles can be shared, supported, or rotated. For pairs, you might combine materials/step guide and recorder/reporter.



Finished this part?

Cut-apart options | Choose the ones that fit your activity and students

Check one thing

Reread the directions.
Find one part of your work that answers the task.
Check for one missing part.

Explain your thinking

Add a label, sketch, sentence, or approved spoken explanation.

How does it show your idea?

Try another way

Choose one optional extension your teacher has offered.

Show a different example or explain a different approach.

Choose our next option

Use the agreed independent choice, such as reading, drawing, or another class option.

Keep materials available for others.

These are choices to make finishing feel straightforward, rather than a reason to add more work. Keep the options that suit your class, with familiar materials and supports available.

Our classroom choices: _____



Keep what helps

Change what does not | Optional notes after a few uses | No extra student paperwork

Routine: _____ Review date: _____

What felt useful?

A reminder students used, fewer repeated questions, or a step that felt easier. General notes are enough.

What would I change?

Perhaps a phrase, a materials location, or a support that would make the task easier to access.

One small thing to try

Your idea or a suggestion from students. No need to redesign everything.

Want a second pair of eyes?

You could share the prompt with a colleague: “Does this make sense without me explaining it?” A fresh look may catch a detail that is easy to miss when the routine is familiar.

Background and further reading

The approach draws on guidance to define, demonstrate, practice, and revisit routines. Examples and printables are original Commerce Street Cares materials; they have not been classroom-tested or endorsed by the organizations below.

[AERO: Teaching routines - their role in classroom management](#)

[Center on PBIS: Creating a Classroom Teaching Matrix \(2022\)](#)

Sources reviewed October 23, 2026. Your professional judgment and students' existing supports guide how you use these pages.