

Organizing Your Study Space

About Study Spaces

This lesson encourages students to think about the importance of studying in a quiet, orderly space. The goal is for students to come to the conclusion that noisy, poorly-lit, and chaotic spaces do not allow them to do their best work. While every student will not be able to find an ideal space for study, it is important that students realize that they can control some factors in their physical environment. You may wish to distribute copies of the Tips for Parents (page 9 of this Teacher Edition) to the parents of your students.

Pages 4–5

◆ Set the Stage

After students read the introduction, direct their attention to the picture. Discuss the “props” the girl used to set the stage for efficient study and how she has improvised in order to be organized without spending a lot of money.

◆ Where Do You Stand?

Have students complete the activity on their own. Then ask them to describe their favorite places to study—at home, at school, or at an after-school center.

◆ Plan Your Ideal Study Space Put Your Plan Into Action

Ask students to complete both activities on their own. In a follow-up discussion, encourage students to talk about the features of an ideal study space. Guide them to understand that we all study in different ways, and explain that good organizational skills will help them throughout their lives. Reinforce this point by sharing some of your own strategies for creating a good work space (see *Teacher Modeling*).

◆ Plan a Homework Survival Kit


Tell students to work with a partner to complete the activity. Emphasize that it’s not necessary to have expensive school supplies to be a good student.

1

LESSON

Organizing Your Study Space

Set the Stage



Set the stage for successful study by organizing your study space.

It takes a lot of work to put on a play. Before opening night, the stage must be set, with the right scenery and props in place. Then the action can begin! Knowing how to set the stage can help you with homework, too. To study efficiently, you need to prepare the setting and props that are right for you. Doing homework in the same place every day will help you improve your study skills—and make you a homework star!

Where Do You Stand?

Begin the task of designing a setting for homework success. Think about your study space. What is it like? Put a check mark next to each statement that describes the place where you usually do homework.

- I study in the kitchen or dining room.
- I study in the living room or family room.
- I study in my bedroom.
- I study on the porch, the deck, or outside.
- I study at a desk.
- I study anywhere in the house.
- I study in the bus, the subway, or the car.
- I study at the library or at an after-school center.
- I study with the television, radio, or stereo on.
- I study with other people in the room.
- I study alone.

Plan Your Ideal Study Space

An ideal study space is a place you can use regularly. It is a place where you can keep handy the things you need for studying. If you could have the ideal study space, what would you want? Write 1, 2, or 3 to show your preferences.

1—really important
2—nice, but not necessary
3—not important at all

- Quiet with no distractions such as television or people talking
- Good lighting that doesn't strain my eyes or cast dark shadows
- An uncluttered space so I can spread out my books and papers
- A sturdy chair the correct height for my desk or table, with a back for support
- Bookshelves for keeping reference books such as a dictionary
- Drawers, files, or boxes to keep notes, papers, and tests organized
- A bulletin board or wall space where I can post homework assignments, schedules, and important reminders

Put Your Plan Into Action

Most people can't have the ideal study space. But most people can improve the space they have. Complete the sentence to tell how you can improve your study space.

I can improve my study space by _____

Plan a Homework Survival Kit

Imagine yourself working on a social studies project. It's taken a long time, and you're glad it's almost done. Then you realize you don't have the markers you need to draw a map. You'll have to stop working and find them. Will you ever finish this project?

When you can easily find what you need, you will study more efficiently. You can use the time you once spent looking for things to do other activities you enjoy.

With a partner, discuss the homework supplies listed below and circle the items you think are most useful to have on hand. Also discuss where you might go to borrow the items you need less often.

HOMEWORK SUPPLIES

pencils	graph paper
pens	index cards
erasers	correction fluid
colored pencils, crayons, or markers	hole punch
pencil sharpener	ruler
tape	dictionary
scissors	highlighting pens
paper clips	self-stick notes
stapler and staples	calculator
lined writing paper	scrap paper

4 Level A • Gain Experience

Unit 1 • Managing Time, Materials, and Space 5

Pages 6-7

- ◆ **Five Ways to Improve Your Study Space**
Read the five tips with your students. In a follow-up discussion, ask volunteers to give examples of ways they've used any of these techniques themselves.
- ◆ **Turn It Off (Or On!)**
Encourage students to do this experiment over the course of a week. Later, give students the opportunity to talk about whether they think background music affects their concentration. Explain that background music with words tends to be more distracting than instrumental music. New, popular songs can be the most distracting since students may concentrate on the lyrics rather than on their work.
- ◆ **Where Are You Going?**
Ask students to write a goal that includes some organizing strategies they will try in the future.

Teacher Modeling

You may wish to use or adapt these examples of teacher modeling.

To keep my classroom space organized:

- ◆ I organize all my papers, put them in files, and keep them in a filing cabinet.
- ◆ I try to keep my desk uncluttered so I'll always have space to write.
- ◆ I have an organizer to keep my pens, paper clips, scissors, and other supplies handy.
- ◆ I keep a notebook with my daily teaching plans right in my desk.

Since I concentrate best in a place with few distractions:

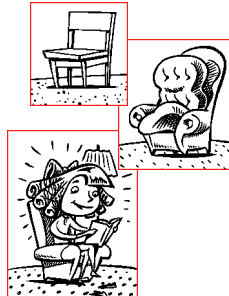
- ◆ I write lesson plans and make notes at the end of the school day after students leave.

Five Ways to Improve Your Study Space

1 Sit on It


Just like Goldilocks, you need to find a chair that's just right for you—not too hard and not too soft. If your study chair is uncomfortable, you won't be able to concentrate. If it's too comfortable, you may daydream or fall asleep. Once you've found the perfect chair for you, use it every time you sit down to do your homework.

Then look for other ways to make your study space more comfortable. Avoid drafts or keep a sweater handy. Rearrange your position or a lamp so lack of light doesn't strain your eyes and make them tire quickly. Just make sure you don't get too comfortable!



2 File It


Keeping a file folder for each class can help you get organized and stay organized. In each file, place the papers you save to study for tests, such as old tests and homework assignments. Keep stories and research papers you've written. You may also want to save interesting newspaper or magazine articles about topics you're studying in class. Store the file folders in a drawer, cabinet, or box.



3 Turn It Off (Or On!)

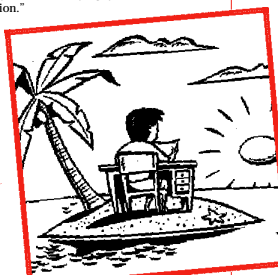
Do you think you study better with music in the background? Or do you think music keeps you from concentrating? The effect of background music on learning may depend on your own personal learning style. Research shows that many people concentrate better with less noise. Other people find that music, especially classical music, helps them focus on their task. Background noises from television and people talking are likely to be distracting no matter what your learning style is.

Experiment! If you usually study with music in the background, try studying in a quiet area for one week. If you usually study in a quiet space, add some background music, especially classical music. Find out whether or not background music makes a difference in how well you concentrate and study. Use what you learn about your own learning style to study more efficiently.




4 Leave It All Behind

Use your imagination to turn your study space into your own private island. As you sit at your desk, you have everything you need: good light, homework supplies, your assignment sheet, and books. Your island is quiet, and you are alone. Tune out everything but your homework. As soon as you finish studying, you can "return to civilization."



5 Make It a Habit

Once you've set up a good study space at home, spend some time there every day, even if you don't have any homework. You can review your notes, plan for a project you know is coming up, write in your journal, or read. Treat studying as a job with regular work hours and your study space as your office. Getting into the habit of studying every day will make you a better student.



Where Are You Going?

Summarize what you learned in this lesson.

Now use your summary to write a **Take Charge!** goal that will help you become a better student.

6 Level A • Gain Experience

Unit 1 • Managing Time, Materials, and Space 7