



Robert's Rubric

Tips for Substitute Teachers

Anyone who has ever substitute taught knows that it can be rewarding, yet hard, work. It is extremely important that prospective substitute teachers are aware of a pre-requisite trait you must possess..... you like kids!!!!!! I think substitute teaching is tougher than student teaching in many aspects. I remember from my student teaching experiences I was able to spend time with the students and develop a rapport with them. A substitute is in-and-out. Usually it's a one day shot. Often they don't know you, and you don't know them. The students have become familiar with their classroom teacher, and then they get this "stranger" for one day. All that disruption can become more than they want to handle....

And, if that isn't tough enough--If the classroom teacher is unhappy with what they find when they return, they can (and will) request "that substitute teacher" NEVER set foot in their classroom again. The flip side is, if they are happy with what they find when they return, they will personally request for the substitute the next time they have to be absent. SO.....

1. Always, ALWAYS, follow the classroom teacher's lesson plans (or whatever substitute instructions they have left.) The top complaint I have heard from teachers, about substitutes, is that they do not follow the lesson plans.

2. Take time before school to review material that is unfamiliar. If that still does not help, try to find another teacher who will explain it to you. (The second most complaint I have heard from teachers, about substitutes, is that they did not know anything about the subject, and confused the students. Make every attempt to understand the lessons to be active in the teaching/learning process.)

3. Make a discipline plan. Get input from classroom teachers and principals. Develop your own philosophy for your guidelines/rules for effective discipline. Of course, if the teacher has a classroom plan to follow, you should be aware of this. (Another common complaint about substitutes is lack of classroom control.) A quick review of best practices for classroom management (consult your sub training packet) will be a great help to avoid discipline confrontations and concerns. A good practice is to post the rules at the front of classroom before the students arrive. As far as rules/guidelines go, I have found 4 to 5 more than enough. Often students will see the rules/guidelines poster as they enter the room, and ask about it. At the start of class I explain my guidelines briefly, and mention some common consequences for breaking the rules. (Some students may object by saying that's not the way their

teacher does things.) My standard reply is “I know it is a challenge to have a new person walk in. Nevertheless I am YOUR Guest Teacher, and these are the rules I bring with me every time I substitute. The guidelines/rules are posted to help promote we will have a successful day if we all work together.” At the elementary level, bring work for students to do in case you keep someone in for recess. At the high school level, subs always have to consider when there is need to send disruptive students to the office, if necessary.]

4. Bring some fun extra things the students can do when, and only when, their work is done. At the elementary level, I bring "fun sheets" for the students. Fun sheets can be pictures to color, dot-to-dots, word searches, mazes, or something else along that line. At the secondary levels, I might bring word puzzles, brain teasers, and magazines with appropriate material for work/discussion.

5. Leave a note for the teacher at the end of the day. Let the classroom teacher know how the day went. Did the students struggle with a lesson? If so, let the teacher know. Did the students have fun with an activity? Again, let the teacher know. Remember to include the positives of the day as well as the negatives.

6. Make sure the room is in order before leaving. Another common complaint is that the teacher can never find books and papers when they return. Make an effort to stack handed-in assignments in a neat and organized manner where the teacher can easily find them. Put all books away where they were at the start of the day. Be sure the room in general looks orderly.

7. Bring your professionalism with you every day to the classroom. The expectation is that you are the Guest Teacher and you conduct yourself professionally in your actions, thoughts, comments, mannerisms and appearance. You have elected to accept the teaching job at the assigned school and all the “teacher” responsibilities for the assigned classroom. Accept that you are the adult mentor in this classroom of students and rise to the challenge.

8. Be prompt! It’s very important you’re on time. Be there early enough to ask about any teacher duties for the day you may not know about. Always check out through the office to let them know if you leave the building anytime during the day you do not have responsibilities. You arrive early so you can plan and organize your day for students effectively.