

Fast Finishers

Calm, useful things to do when the work is done

Some children finish early, every single day. Fast Finishers give them a calm, useful next thing to reach for, so there is no idle time, no 'I'm done, what now?', and no busywork. Print them, cut them out, and let the class run themselves.

The idea in one line

Finished and checked? Choose a Fast Finisher and get on quietly.

1 Finished?

the work is really done

2 Checked it?

name on, read back, best work

3 Choose a card

pick one, work on quietly

How to print and use it

- Print at A4 or US Letter on normal settings. Colour or ink-saver, both work.
- Laminate the cards so they last all year, and put a small set on every table.
- Keep blank cards handy so children (and you) can add new ideas.

The golden rule: finished, then checked, then choose. A Fast Finisher is not a reward for racing, it is a calm next thing for a busy mind.

Always Something to Do

Cut these out for the ring or the table box

Nine no-prep tasks for any day. None need marking, none need a screen, and every one is worth doing. Cut them out and keep a set where children can reach them.



1

Read your book quietly, or read it to a soft toy.



2

Write ten words that rhyme with 'play'.

12

3

Write the times table you are learning, then check it.



4

List twenty things you could find in a kitchen.



5

Draw and label a machine you would invent.

12

6

Make five sums that each equal twenty.



7

Write one sentence that uses all of your spelling words.



8

Draw a map of our classroom as if you were a bird above it.



9

Copy a sentence from your book in your very neatest handwriting.

Have You Really Finished?

The five-second check before you say 'done'

Half of 'I'm finished' is really 'I've stopped'. Pin this up where children work. They run the check themselves, and only then choose a card. It saves you the same five reminders, all day long.

My name is on my work.

I have read it back to myself.

I used my best handwriting.

I checked my sums, or my capital letters and full stops.

I have done my best work, not just my fastest.



All ticked? Choose a Fast Finisher card and work quietly. Not yet? Go back and make it your best, that part is never the fast bit.

Brain Stretchers

For the ones who finish early and want a challenge

Nine open-ended challenges with no single right answer, so a quick finisher can dig in instead of racing on. Cut them out and keep them with the others, or save them for your fastest workers.



1

How many smaller words can you make from the letters in BIRTHDAY?

12

2

Carry on the pattern: 3, 6, 9, and keep going up to 60.



3

Write clear, step-by-step instructions for making a sandwich.



4

Invent a brand-new animal. Name it, draw it, and label two parts.

12

5

Estimate how many books are on the shelf, then count to check.



6

Write five questions you would love to ask an astronaut.



7

Design a maze on squared paper for a friend to solve.



8

What if it rained sweets? Write three good things and three problems.



9

Make a word chain: each new word starts with the last letter of the one before.

The Fast Finisher Menu

Print big for the wall, and a log for each child

Put the menu on the wall so the answer to 'what do I do now?' is always in the room. The log lets a child keep their own quiet record, no marking needed.

When you finish

1

Check your work, all five things.

2

Choose one Fast Finisher card.

3

Work quietly, on your own.

day

what I did

My Fast Finishers

name: _____

Make It Work in Your Room

A few minutes to set up, then it runs itself

Everything you need to get Fast Finishers humming, plus the short reason they help. A practical classroom routine, not a programme.

Setting it up

- Print the cards, cut them out, and keep them on a ring or in a 'Fast Finisher' box on each table.
- Teach the rule once: finished, checked, then choose. After a few days it runs itself.
- Swap a few cards each term so they stay fresh, and write your own on the blank cards.
- No marking. Fast Finishers keep minds busy and hands quiet, they are not for the grade book.

Why it helps

- Short bursts of independent practice keep learning ticking over and head off the idle wait that so often turns into wobble.
- Coming back to spellings, tables and writing little and often helps them hold (retrieval and spaced practice).

The thinking behind it

Rosenshine, B. (2012). Principles of Instruction - independent practice. American Educator.

Dunlosky, J. et al. (2013). Improving students' learning - retrieval and spaced practice. Psychological Science in the Public Interest.