

Building Independent Work Stamina

A Management Strategy for
Beginning Independent Work Centers



We can work independently!

Objective: to get students to work independently at centers (without interrupting the guided reading/math group) for 20-30 minutes.

Suggestion:

1. Divide students up into groups (see options.)
2. Set a goal for how long you would like students to work independently at centers without disturbing the guided reading group.
3. Consider setting up a reward system. There can be one class reward at the end for meeting the overall goal but it may also be a good idea to set mini-awards along the way. For instance, reward students for milestones such as working 5 minutes or 10 minutes independently.
4. Tip: Have something easy and non-essential for your guided reading/math groups to work on. Remember, they will probably not finish.



Week 1:

All students work at centers but all doing the same center. Teacher takes guided reading group.

1. Explicitly give students directions for the one center (note: tell students they **MAY NOT** work with other centers. They should pretend they are doing different centers.)
2. Display a stopwatch so the whole class can see.
3. Pull your guided reading group and when instruction begin, hit start on your display stopwatch.
4. As soon as there is "an interruption", stop the stopwatch and record the amount of time on the stamina thermometer.
5. Option: Call students as a group and create a t-chart (what happened/what should be happening). This will help them reflect on what may have gone wrong and steps they can take to help improve their independent work stamina.
6. Now try round two. You may need to explain centers and behavioral expectations again. Explain to the students that they are still trying to reach their goal on the thermometer.
7. Start centers and your stopwatch again, hitting stop when there are any interruptions. Record any progress on your thermometer.
8. You can continue this same format until your guided reading/center time is over (typically 20-30 minutes.)

9. Each day this week, continue with this same format. Try to reach your target stamina goal by the end of the week.

Week 2:

All students work at centers with 2 groups doing one activity and 2 groups doing a different activity. Teacher takes guided reading group.

1. Display thermometer and tell kids about building independent work stamina. The class goal is to allow the guided reading group to work with the teacher without interruptions.
2. This week, you will introduce two centers so that you will have 2 groups working on the same center and 2 groups working on a different center.
3. Continue using the same "stamina building strategy" you used in Week 1. Start the students working, stop the stopwatch with any interruptions and record any progress.

Week 3:

All students work one of four different centers. Teacher takes guided reading group.

1. You will once again display thermometer and tell kids about building independent work stamina. The class goal is to allow the guided reading group to work with the teacher without interruptions.
2. This week, students will be working on all different centers. Be sure to explain not only center directions but behavioral expectations for each center. Students should also be aware of where they can get extra materials or supplies. You may even consider appointing a "Junior Teacher" who students can go to with any issues.
3. Use the same procedure of starting/stopping the stopwatch and recording progress.





