



Teaching Threads

The 3 Gs for Good Looking Papers and Student Independence

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Written language instruction often follows a strong teacher-directed model in which teachers provide students with explicit directions and present models of finished products that guide students through each step. While very effective in teaching students new skills, teacher-directed instruction alone does not build student independence, and often leads students to wait for teachers to “tell them what to do.” This may be especially true for students unsure of their ability to succeed on their own. Teachers who combine teacher-directed instruction with self-management skills can effectively build student independence. The 3Gs strategy is an example of a simple mnemonic technique designed to build independent student work habits. This strategy focuses on improving the appearance and organization of student written assignments. The 3 Gs are Get Started, Get Working, and Good Looking.

The first step in the use of this strategy is for the teacher to determine their components of the 3 Gs. This strategy is designed to accommodate teacher individuality. Samples of Teacher A and Teacher B illustrate how two different teachers might apply this strategy to a traditional math assignment.

Once the teacher has determined the 3 Gs that are required of their students, these must be communicated and taught to the students. Teachers can use one or two lessons strictly devoted to teaching all students the 3 Gs strategy. Teachers can observe and guide students using the 3Gs as students complete assignments in the classroom. Posters stating the 3 Gs should be displayed in the classroom for easy reference.

After the students have shown their ability to complete the 3 Gs with teacher guidance, they can be taught how to use the 3 Gs independently. I have found that creating bookmarks is the easiest tool for both teachers and students. Bookmarks can highlight the main components of the 3 Gs. Teachers can provide students with two laminated bookmarks, one for their math book and one for their math folder, and instruct students to use their bookmarks when completing assignments.

Teachers can remind students to use their 3 Gs bookmarks and increase motivation to do so by incorporating the 3 Gs components when grading student assignments. By teaching students the skills needed to produce independently “Good Looking” papers student motivation and self-confidence are enhanced as students experience the success and satisfaction of doing it on their own.

Teacher A's 3 Gs

<i>Get Started!</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Begin with a clean sheet of paper with neat edges.2. Get a sharpened pencil and an eraser.3. Write your name on the top line.
<i>Get Working!</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Number each problem.2. Neatly copy each problem on your paper.3. Skip a line between every problem.

Teacher B's 3 Gs

<i>Get Started!</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Use a clean sheet of paper with clean edges.2. Use a pencil and eraser, no pens.3. Write your name, date, and assignment in the top right hand corner.4. Fold paper in half lengthwise.
<i>Get Working!</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Number each problem.2. Copy and complete each problem neatly on the left side of your paper.3. Show your process of checking your answer on the right side of your paper.

	4. Circle your final answer. 5. Skip a line between each problem.
<p>Good Looking!</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Neatly erase any mistakes, do not cross out. 2. Circle your final answer. 3. When finished, put your paper in your blue math folder. 	<p>Good Looking!</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Neatly erase any mistakes, do not cross out. 2. Avoid extras (drawings, scribbling, doodling), wrinkles, and tears. 3. Be sure to label all answers when necessary. 4. Check capitalization and punctuation. 5. When finished, put your paper in your folder to be handed in tomorrow.

Teacher A's Bookmark

Get Started!

1. Clean paper, neat edges
2. Pencil and eraser
3. Name on top line

Get Working!

1. Number problem
2. Neatly copy problem
3. Skip lines

Good Looking!

1. Neatly erase
2. Circle answer
3. Blue math folder

Teacher B's Bookmark

Get Started!

1. Clean paper, neat edges
2. Pencil and eraser
3. Name, date, and assignment
4. Fold paper

Get Working!

1. Number problem
2. Copy + complete on left side
3. Check answer on right side
4. Circle answer
5. Skip lines

Good Looking!

1. Neatly erase
2. Avoid extras
3. Label answers
4. Capitalization + punctuation

As always, my intent in presenting these activities is to help teachers answer this question -

What can I do to make it easier for my students to learn and behave?



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