

Closing a lesson

OVERVIEW

The lesson shouldn't end like it does on TV, with the teacher shouting random instructions after the bell rings. Good lesson endings provide students a chance to reflect on what they learned. Every lesson should close by returning to the learning target. This is not a formality: It is the point of the whole lesson. This is the moment they reflect on what they should have learned and discover that they did, in fact, learn it.

PROCEDURE

1. **Reserve time at the end of class** for the closing. Protect that time. Cut content before you cut this.
 - a. The length of time you need depends on the lesson. Most will need 3-5 minutes. Some will need longer. Very few will need less time than that.
2. **Revisit the learning target.** Students can hear it, say it, or read it again.
3. **Choose a closing method** (see below). Using the same method consistently makes it routine, but you can also change it as needed. Here are four options:
 - a. *Demonstration:* Students produce something small. This could be one solved problem, a single summary sentence, or a quick diagram. An exit ticket is the most common version.
 - b. *Quick Write:* Students write one sentence explaining the target in their own words. Teachers are sometimes tempted to “grade” these in detail. Instead, sort them into three piles: got it, almost, and not yet.
 - c. *Peer Recap:* Students explain the target to a neighbor. This only works if every student is expected to speak. You will need to provide them a prompt, like this one: “*One thing I can now do with _____ that I couldn't before is...*”
 - d. *Ranking:* Students rate their own confidence on the learning target using numbers or colors. It needs to be fast and private. Just be aware that this tells you how they feel about their learning – not whether they actually learned it. Still, sometimes that's very useful information.
4. **Use what you learn in the closing to plan tomorrow.** If most students got it, move on. If a handful didn't, build in a short recap at the start of next class. If most didn't, reteach before you move forward.

TIPS/TRICKS

- **Silence is not reflection.** Every closing method should require every student to *produce* something. This could be written, verbal, typed, drawn, whispered, gestured, danced...
- **Don't run out of time on this.** However, in a very extreme pinch (unexpected announcements or a fire drill interruption, for example), return to the closing tomorrow and discuss it.
- **Don't penalize students for wrong answers in the closing.** If they got it wrong, they need reteaching, not a grade penalty. You can, however, hold them accountable for completing it – if the school/district policy allows it.