



Computer Lab Routines Planner

Free Library · Set up a calm lab

The moment students touch keyboards, half your attention-getting tools stop working. This planner sets up a calm computer lab: pick one attention signal and drill it, lock in entry and exit routines, keep students on task, and give fast finishers somewhere to go. Fill in the "My lab rules" page and the seating tracker, then print the wall poster. Edit any of it in the Word version.

HOW TO USE IT

Read this guide first and choose your one attention signal today. Fill in the "My lab rules" page with your class, then post it next to the wall poster. Print the seating and login tracker for your desk. Drill the signal and the entry routine every day for a week until they run themselves.

YOUR ATTENTION SIGNAL: PICK ONE, DRILL IT

TEACHER

You cannot teach over thirty glowing monitors. Before anything else, choose a single screens-down signal and make it non-negotiable. Pick from the menu below, or write your own, then drill it until it is automatic. One signal, taught to the point of reflex, beats five you use half-heartedly.

Signal	What you say	What students do
Lids at 45	"Lids at 45"	Tilt laptop screens halfway shut, hands off, eyes up
Monitors off	"Monitors off, eyes up"	Press the monitor power button, look at you
Hands on heads	"Hands on heads"	Both hands off the keyboard and onto their head
Countdown	"Screens down in 3, 2, 1"	Screens down and quiet by zero, every time

DRILL IT LIKE A FIRE DRILL

Practice the signal cold three or four times on day one, before you need it. Praise the fast, quiet response. If it drifts later in the term, stop and re-drill. Reflexes fade without practice.

Entry routine (the first two minutes)

- 1 Decide what is on screen before students arrive: a warm-up slide, the day's file, or a locked login screen so nobody free-rooms before the bell.
- 2 Students log in, open only the task, and start the posted warm-up without being told.
- 3 You take attendance from the back of the room while scanning screens, not from your desk.

Exit routine (the last three minutes)

- 1 Call the attention signal and give the shutdown steps out loud the first few weeks.
- 2 Students save their work, then log off or shut down the machine fully.
- 3 Headphones coiled, cables tidy, chairs pushed in, and area clear before anyone lines up.

Stay-on-task moves

- Circulate behind students, not in front. You see their screens; they feel you nearby.
- Set a visible-work rule: the assigned task stays on screen and ready to show at a glance.
- Keep a clear now / next board so anyone who drifts can self-correct without asking.
- Tabs closed except the ones the task needs. No background games or video.
- Narrate what on-task looks like: "I see three tabs open and the doc up. That is it."

Students who finish early will find their own entertainment if you do not hand them something first. Stock a short menu of on-task extensions and point to it before anyone drifts to games. Post the menu near the board so "I'm done" is always answered by the wall, not by you.

When they finish	The move	Why it works
Same task, harder	A challenge version: more constraints, a harder dataset, a tougher client brief	Keeps them in the same skill, no new setup
Build real speed	A typing or keyboard-shortcut drill you have bookmarked	Quiet, self-paced, and genuinely useful
Help a peer	Review a classmate's work against the rubric and give one fix	Reinforces the standard for both students
Approved practice	A curated "if you finish" folder of skill-building you have vetted	Everything in it is on task by design

MAKE IT THE DEFAULT, NOT A REWARD

Fast finishers should reach for the menu automatically. Teach it the same week you teach the entry routine so "done early" never means "free time."

Fill this in together as a class, then keep a copy posted. Everyone signs the bottom so the rules belong to the room, not just the teacher.

Attention signal we use _____

Food and drink

Headphones

When you are stuck (ask three, then me)

Try it yourself, check the now / next board, then ask a neighbor before you raise your hand.

Finished early

Shutdown routine

Student signature _____

Date _____

Assign each student a station so logins, damage reports, and "who was here last period" are never a mystery. Fill in names and note logins, password hints, or seat changes.

Class or period _____

Station #	Student name	Login / notes
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		

WANT THE ROUTINES ALREADY BUILT IN?

This planner is a starting point. The editable technology curriculum in the shop folds lab routines, warm-ups, and fast-finisher extensions into every unit, so the structure is done for you before day one.