

Fourteen Reasons Why Teaching Is So Hard (and some ways to make it easier)

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Teaching is hard because...it takes commitment.

- a. Write down one thing at the beginning of each day that you will do that will make you a better today than you were yesterday.
- b. Observe another teacher in action, and see what you can learn from them.
- c. Identify one long-term goal you have for your teaching, and label the steps that will help get you there.

Teaching is hard because...it's always a bit stressful.

- a. Use a calendar to keep track of all upcoming meetings, due dates, and events.
- b. Have a well planned lesson for each day of your current unit.
- c. Try to get out of your building for fifteen minutes per day.

Teaching is hard because...the right tools are essential for success.

- a. Offer one piece of praise every five minutes. And don't always pick the same three kids!
- b. Create a unit that is completely based on student-interest. This is super-scary the first time you do it.
- c. Positively recognize three students a day for non-academic reasons. It's even better if you do this outside of your classroom.

Teaching is hard because...you have to push your boundaries.

- a. Add a new text (book, song, video clip, movie, etc.) to a unit you teach based on student interest and input, and monitor whether their engagement level increases as a result.
- b. Look up alternatives to traditional desks and rows, and poll your students to see if they have any interest in trying flexible seating arrangements.
- c. Allow students to do a self-assessment on an upcoming assignment. Make sure that you give them a place to explain their reasoning for the grade. Determine whether this change in process also changes the feel of the classroom and the effectiveness of the project.

Teaching is hard because...opportunities to learn are everywhere.

- a. Join Twitter and follow some of your favorite educators. Once you become comfortable with the platform, participate in a Twitter chat with other educators based on your content area, grade level, or personal interests.
- b. Go observe a colleague teach. Once finished, try to share what you saw with them.
- c. Re-watch your favorite teaching movie and implement one strategy from the film.

Teaching is hard because...if it was easy, everyone would do it.

- a. Identify one way that you sacrifice for your students, and reflect on the positive ways this has paid off.
- b. Think of an example when you put in extra time with a student. How did this additional effort on your part improve the student's skills, and how did it make you a better educator?
- c. Write a thank-you note to someone within your school community who gives of themselves in order to enhance the experiences of others.

Teaching is hard because...you learn a variety of useless skills.

- a. Respect that students need to go to the bathroom! Let them use it until they abuse it!
- b. Try using your keen hearing to seek out positive comments that students say to one another. When you hear some, let those students know that you appreciate their upbeat attitudes.
- c. Expand your facial cues to your students to include positive responses such as smiling. Remember, positive, non-verbal signs can be just as effective as the negative ones.

Teaching is hard because...inspiration is needed.

- a. Watch an inspirational YouTube video. As a starting point, try Sir Ken Robinson's TED Talk, "Do Schools Kill Creativity?"
- b. Talk with/email/text someone within your professional learning network that you admire, and thank the person for motivating you to become a better teacher.
- c. At the end of each day, reflect on one piece of greatness that you witnessed. If it was from colleagues or students, send them (or the student's parents) an email letting them know that you appreciate what they did.

Teaching is hard because...it's expensive.

- a. Check in with your administration to see if you have a classroom budget. If so, use your skills to create a list and prioritize where that money needs to be spent, to minimize the amount of money you spend yourself.
- b. Research crowdfunding sites like donorschoose.org or your school's parent/teacher association and see if they can help offset some of your classroom expenses.
- c. Talk with other teachers within your school and see if you can pool your resources. The items you need may be available just down the hall.

Teaching is hard because...life balance is hard to keep.

- a. Set a bedtime for yourself that allows you to get eight hours of sleep. Stick to it for a week, and monitor how you respond both in and out of the classroom.
- b. Establish two nights per week when you don't grade work at home. Track how this impacts your attitude within class on the following day.
- c. Go for a walk/run/hike each day after school. Use this time to transition from school life to home life.

Teaching is hard because...it's easy to compare yourself to others.

- a. Creating lessons that play into your strengths.
- b. Write down three of your personality traits, and identify how they help make you an effective teacher.
- c. Share stories from your life with your students. They want the authentic version of you more than an imitation of someone else.

Teaching is hard because...you need to be ready for anything.

- a. Update your sub plan to make sure that it's clear, easy to follow, and sets the sub up for success. Your class should run *almost* as smoothly without you there as it does when you are present.
- b. Create three stand-alone lessons that you can implement quickly and easily at any time. Use them as a change of pace for emergency purposes.
- c. Prep your students for what to do if you are absent, including how to act and where to access assignments when you have a sub.

Teaching is hard because...some days you just have to persevere.

- a. Create a weekly "Why I Love Teaching" Post-it and announce your reasoning to your students. Saying it aloud will solidify the reasoning even more.
- b. Locate as many notes from former students as you can. At the beginning of each week, set one of those notes on your desk and refer to it as needed throughout the week.
- c. Build a "Teacher Jams" playlist with five of your all-time favorite songs. Label it "Songs That Make Me Happy" and start each day by playing it. You could even use this as the entrance music as students walk into your class.

Teaching is hard because...people won't understand why you do it.

- a. Talk to colleagues about why they became teachers. Follow up by asking them about the funniest thing anyone has ever said to them about their career choice.
- b. Identify three teachers you admired growing up, and think about why you looked up to them. If possible, try to contact them and thank them for making such a positive impact on your life.
- c. Write down your proudest moment as a teacher and how it made you feel. Follow this up by considering other ways you could recreate this experience and feeling.

