

# Clean Desk Detectives

This lesson focuses on self-discipline and how responsible actions affect ourselves first and foremost. Depending on when you complete this unit and lesson, some classroom routines may need to be reestablished, especially around organization and keeping things neat and tidy. This lesson focuses on self-discipline related to each student's desk. **NOTE:** This lesson gives you an option to use your desk as a model for how to tidy up a messy space, so you may need to make some adjustments if your desk is neat and organized.

## Caring Sub-Concepts

Self Discipline, Kindness

## Lesson Timeframe

45 minutes

## Required Materials

- ❑ *Mrs. McBloom, Clean Up Your Classroom!* by Kelly DiPuchio
- ❑ Clean Desk Checklist

## Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.



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[See last page for details.](#)

## Lesson Objective

Students will be able to:

- Explain the difference between responsible and irresponsible actions.
- Practice activities in the classroom that require responsibility to one's self.

## Teacher Connection/Self-Care

Whether you're a first year teacher or a veteran, you owe it to your students to plan. Try sorting your students into groups based on learning style instead of academic level. How does this change your groupings?

## Tips for Diverse Learners

- Create a diagram of the ideal clean desk to help students organize their own desks.
- Draw a simple picture next to common words used in the illustrations: pencils, crayons, binder, etc.
- Allow students to dictate the important parts of their picture to you as needed.



## Share

5 minutes

### Play: 2 Truths and a Story

Explain how to play: The teacher says three things about themselves. Two of them are true and one is a story they are making up, and it is *not* true. The class must vote on which statement is the story. Repeat two more times with different statements. Here is an example:

- I visited Hawaii.
- I rode a unicycle.
- I went hunting for dinosaur bones. (story!)

After playing reflect on the game:

- How did it feel to know that some of my words were only stories and not all true?
- Could you tell when I was making something up? How?
- Why should we always tell the truth?
- How can telling stories rather than the truth make it harder for people to trust us?

People want to trust your words. When you tell stories and pretend that they are the truth, it can be hard for others to trust you!



## Inspire

12-15 minutes

### What is Responsibility?

Define the word **responsibility**. According to the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation, responsibility means *being reliable to do the things that are expected or required of you*. This means people can count on you! You do what you say and you say what you do. Let's practice responsibility by working together to finish these sentences:

When I take out a toy, I \_\_\_\_\_ (put it away).  
When I make a mess, I \_\_\_\_\_ (clean it up).  
When I borrow something, I \_\_\_\_\_ (return it).  
When I break something, I \_\_\_\_\_ (fix it, tell a grown up).

### What is Self-Discipline?

Explain that self-discipline is a big word that means we are responsible for our own behavior. We pay attention to how we act and how we treat ourselves and others. We can control our emotions. For example, when you get really angry, can you control yourself by taking deep breaths or walking away? If so, you are practicing self-discipline! Self-discipline takes lots of practice, so don't be discouraged if you need to keep trying! Even adults must practice this skill every day. (Provide a personal example, if desired).

**Read Aloud:** "Mrs. McBloom, Clean Up Your Classroom!" by Kelly DiPuchio

**Read Aloud Link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqiYJAp7z4>

(10 minutes)

This story is about an exceptionally messy teacher and her messy classroom.

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She isn't very invested in cleaning her classroom until she is finally convinced to tidy up just before retirement. The students themselves are the ones who wind up helping her!

- Why do you think Mrs. McBroom asks the students for ideas on how to clean up her room?
- Have you ever felt overwhelmed by the mess you have created?



## Empower

10-15 minutes

Students will practice self-discipline and responsibility by exploring a messy versus a clean desk.

Explain that we practice self-discipline and responsibility every single day in class. We are each responsible for our own desk space. Today we are going to create a sample of what our clean, tidy desks should look like. When we practice self-discipline and responsibility, our areas reflect that. As your teacher, I must also practice these skills.

**OPTIONAL:** *Let's take a look at my messy desk and talk about what I could do to tidy it.*

**Explain:** *This desk is so messy because, like Mrs. McBloom, I chose to not be responsible with my belongings. I was not practicing self-discipline. Today we will take time to practice self-discipline and responsibility by organizing our desks.*

### Clean Desk Detectives

Provide each student with a Clean Desk Checklist, or project it using the whiteboard if you don't want to make copies.

As a class discuss the important components of the clean desk:

- All loose papers are in the proper folders.
- All notebooks and folders are stacked.
- All pencils and crayons are stored properly.
- There is no trash!

### Instructions:

1. Explain that the students are going to be "Clean Desk Detectives" and, using the checklist, will inspect their desks to see how clean they are.
2. Allow everyone 5-10 minutes for students to inspect and also clean up their desks and organize them using the checklist. Walk around and help students that require organizational assistance.
3. Explain that at the end of each day after all the students go home, you will start doing desk checks. The student with the neatest desk will receive the "Responsibility Reward" box with several small items to play with after they finish their work the next day. (Items to include could be a stress ball, clay, etc.) You can use a different reward system if you want to.
4. After everyone is done, go around the room and highlight at least one way each student was able to organize their desks.



## Reflect

3-5 minutes

Self-discipline and responsibility take practice. We have the opportunity to practice these skills *daily* with our desks. Let's work together to keep our classroom and our desks clean and organized. The more we practice, the better we will become!



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The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been reviewing evidence-based SEL programs since 2003. Kindness in the Classroom® meets CASEL's SElect Program and is included in the CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs.

Kindness in the Classroom® met or exceeded all of CASEL's criteria for high-quality SEL programming. Kindness in the Classroom® received CASEL's highest designation for high-quality SEL programming.

<https://casel.org/guide/kindness-in-the-classroom/>

# Clean Desk Checklist

Use the following checklist to investigate whether or not you have a clean desk! If you find something on the checklist that you cannot check the box for, take care of it right away and then check the box with pride! *\*Blank spaces available for teachers to add additional items to the list.*

- 
- ☐ My desk does not have any trash on top or inside.
  - ☐ My pencils and crayons are put away where they belong.
  - ☐ My books are stacked neatly.
  - ☐ My papers are in their correct folders.
  - ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

Draw a Picture of your Clean and Tidy Desk:

