Homework ‘habit’ journals & classwork trackers

_Increasing classroom rigor and student empowerment_

NEW!

Ingrid Sbacchi Bairstow

MiraCosta College

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Introduction
Successful people are simply those with successful habits.

Brian Tracy
Habits

**Good**
- Brushing your teeth at night

**Bad**
- Playing on your phone before bed
Ice breaker

➔ Find a partner
➔ Discuss a good habit you have or want.
➔ What have you done to create it?
➔ Have you been successful? If yes, why? If no, why?
➔ 2 minutes
➔ SHARE
➔ Some reasons for why you are successful/ why you are not
HOW DO WE MAKE HABITS STICK?

Mini-Habits

“A mini-habit is a very small positive behavior that you force yourself to do every day.

It has to be ‘stupid small’ or ‘too small to fail.’”

By Stephen Guise
How to help our students create these habits---

...that is the *goal* of the Homework Habit Journal
Defining terms:

Habits

“A settled or regular tendency or **practice**, especially one that is hard to give up.”

Synonyms: practice, custom, routine, pattern, norm

--Webster’s Dictionary, 2017
Defining terms:

Homework

“Schoolwork that a student is required to do at home.”

--Webster’s Dictionary, 2017
To give or not to give homework:

Some research has shown that traditional homework (worksheets, etc) that is counted towards a grade, may not be helpful for the adult ELL and actually a hindrance.

Good homework that is not a communicative, social activity is not helpful.

--Kristen Lindahl
Homework

The correct balance

“A good way to think about homework is the way you think about medications or dietary supplements,” he said. “If you take too little, they’ll have no effect. If you take too much, they can kill you. If you take the right amount, you’ll get better.”

--Harris Cooper
Combining good Habits as Homework:

The journal (tracker) is the place for a student to keep track of small language ‘habits’ they do outside of class, which we call homework, because it’s done at home.
One of the most important aspects of this journal is that it puts the ownership of language learning back on the student—*they are ultimately responsible for their actions that lead to successful learning*. This is one of the definitions of what linguists call, “agency.”

“Language learning is anchored in agency, as all of life is. Teaching in its very essence is promoting agency.” -Leo Van Lier (2011, in Lee p. 88)
First creation:

Habit Book Journals

- A way to practice English Outside the classroom
- Teacher guidance on “what” habit to begin
- Allows students to ‘track’ the practice towards creating the new habit

Updated creation:

Classwork tracker

- A way to organize classwork
- AND track outside practice
- Tracks their progress - grades on writing and tests
- New version added organization to habits
Detail of the habit book (homework)

First half: Administrative pages

- Cover page
- Attendance
- Student information
- Competencies
- Student contract
- Casas scores and descriptors
Overview of Second half of the habit book: the tracking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Divided by week</th>
<th>So that by week 4, they are practicing all four areas every day -- or at least the areas in which they need most help</th>
<th>Important not to ‘shame’ or scold students who do not have time to work on ‘homework,’ but to encourage them by seeing how the others are improving…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adding one learning area every week</td>
<td>Some will do all areas, some will not, but usually, they will be doing more than they would have without the tracker at all</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are the four cornerstones of language learning.

How I use these areas --
(suggestions, think of how you would use them)
Students write vocabulary words every day in journals.

Words are learned only after they appear several times--up to up to about 20 exposures are needed to learn a new word.
Speaking

- I pick out a phrase/expression for them to practice every day outside of class (based on lesson)
Listening

Many ways to do this:

- provide a list of things to listen to online
- send out a link to a youtube video
- send out a link to a song

Examples:

- Ask for suggestions from students, have them share what they listen to
Reading

- may have to start out with specific readings
- After a couple of weeks getting used to reading, take them to the library, if possible.
- provide them with other ideas: read with their children, read advertisements while sitting in a waiting room, etc.
Overview of classwork tracker

Objective is to add organization as a good habit for learning

AND continue encouraging homework outside the classroom.
First part of classwork tracker

Organizing administrative aspects:

- Name of class
- Name of teacher and how to contact
- Casas scores
- Syllabus
- CANVAS and SURF codes
- Whatever you think your student needs to keep organized
Keeping track of their attendance

- Looking for retention
- Motivation to come to class -- communicate when cannot come
- Point system --
  - pro: encourages autonomy and responsibility
  - Con: a lot of work for teacher
  - Ideas: Small prizes/stickers/praise for weekly ‘winners’

Early observations: much higher attendance this term than last term
Tracking assessments

- Students enjoy keeping track of their assessments: weekly quizzes, midterms, paragraph assessments, etc.
- They can see progress or lack of progress
Daily practice and reference sections

- Daily practice is just one page
- Reference sections for vocabulary (depends on class)
- Reference sections for pronunciation
- Can add other types of reference sections: verbs, etc. so everything in one place
## Observations

Those who consistently use the tracker perform much better than those who don’t:

- vocabulary tests
- dialogues in class
- video projects
- CASAS scores!
- CLASSWORK TRACKER - increased attendance, increased organization (spend more time on working not looking for papers)
Happy trackers!
Student feedback

“It was challenging and motivating” -- Martha, 36, from Mexico

“Good motivation; taught me how to study. I liked keeping track of my scores,” -- Maria, 44, from Mexico

“Motivated me to study,” -- Juana, 52, from Mexico

“Challenged me to reach my goals,” -- Luis, 19, from Mexico
Final words

- These trackers are work in progress
- Adapt for your own class and students
- May be frustrating, confusing for students at first--
- Model, model, model how to use this
- Provide concrete examples of what to do outside of class---soon they will be asking if they can do their own speaking, reading, listening, etc.
- Have fun!!!!
Breakout session

In groups of 2-3

How would you adapt this template for use in your class?

2 minutes -

1. what is one thing you would use in your class;
2. what is one thing you would add

Consider:

- Level
- Survival vs academic English