

# Set a Purpose for Learning

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## UNDERSTAND (Why?)

When students take time to set a purpose for learning, they become more focused, engaged, and intentional in their work. Identifying the “why” behind a lesson helps them connect new information to what they already know, increasing comprehension and retention. This lesson supports students in developing the habit of pausing to consider their purpose—turning passive learning into active discovery.

## PREPARE (Students)

Class, today we are going to learn how to set a purpose for learning. Before we dive into today’s lesson, I want to share a little secret to success—ready? It’s this: learning works better when we know why we’re learning. That means before we even start, we pause and ask, ‘Why am I learning this?’ Is it to discover something new? To help us do something important? Or maybe just because it’s interesting and fun? Once we figure that out, we can make a plan for how to learn it. When we have a purpose, we listen closer, think harder, and remember more. Let’s try it together today!

## TEACH (Explicitly)

Now that we know it’s important to set a purpose before we start learning, let’s learn how to actually do that. Our brains are amazing, and they do their best work when they know what they’re trying to do. Before we begin a lesson, read a book, or even watch a video, we can stop and ask ourselves: Why am I learning this?

Sometimes, we learn to gain information—like when we’re reading about space or animals. Sometimes, we’re learning how to do something new, like how to write a letter or solve a math problem. Other times, we’re learning so we can figure something out, form an opinion, or just enjoy a good story.

Let’s practice. I’m going to show you a book (or video, or activity). Before we open it, ask yourself:

- What do I already know about this topic?
- What do I think I might learn?
- What’s my purpose—am I learning for fun, to find information, or to learn how to do something?

When we know our purpose, it changes how we learn. For fun, we might read faster and just enjoy. But when we're learning something new or important, we slow down, take notes, and ask more questions.

Let's try setting a purpose together for today's learning. Then, as we go, I'll remind you to check back in with that purpose. That way, we stay engaged and make the most of our time together!"

## SUPPORT (Pivots)

- Encourage students to state their purpose for learning at the beginning of each lesson or activity. This can be done aloud, with a partner, or quietly to themselves. Over time, this routine helps build metacognition and intentionality.
- Provide a space where students can write down their purpose and return to it during or after the lesson to reflect. They may discover that they need to shift their approach—maybe reading more carefully, asking more questions, or rereading to deepen understanding.
- Facilitate short discussions about how setting a purpose helps them stay focused and engaged. Invite them to share whether knowing their purpose made it easier to stick with a book or task.
- Differentiate by offering various ways for students to express their purpose: verbally, in writing, through drawings, or using sentence frames.
- Consider individual needs by adjusting materials, instruction, or the environment. Some students may benefit from visual aids, simplified texts, or one-on-one check-ins to clarify purpose and support comprehension.