

Lesson Plan
“Doodle Break”

Class: **Graphic Arts**
Grade Level: **9-12**
Time: **Daily, for 5-10 minutes in the middle of class**

Objectives:

- Give students “settling time” to allow the integration of new knowledge and skills in their brains
- Provide a screen-break and some hands-on, analogue experience
- Allow students time for more “mindfulness” practice
- Encourage free-thinking and playfulness
- Reduce students’ anxieties about “drawing”
- Prepare students for quick, uninhibited thumbnail sketching that is necessary for brainstorming
- Develop fine motor skills

Background Information:

This “lesson” is intended to be a break in the middle of daily lessons. It is for use in computer labs where students are spending the majority of their time working on computer screens. Students complete their doodles in small, pocket-sized sketchbooks they create and assemble at the beginning of the year. These sketchbooks can also be a place for students to do thumbnail sketching and complete other visual exercises throughout the year. A perfect box (3.5 inches square) will be pre-printed on the doodle pages, to give students a defined space to work within, and a literal box to eventually think outside of.

Materials and Resources:

- Students’ pre-made sketchbooks
- Pencil and/or pen
- Pre-planned teacher verbal prompts (search “zen doodle” or “zentangle” for ideas)

Procedure:

- Set an alarm to go off half way into class time (for yourself only; don’t turn your class into a factory)
- “It’s time for our doodle break. Please save your files and turn off your computer screen, pull out your sketchbook and a pencil.”
- The room should be silent, or play non-vocal, minor-key music that will enhance a particular mood
- Give students staggered verbal prompts for what to doodle. Example:
 - Draw a circle.
 - Is it a perfect circle? Does circling around it more and more make it more circular or less circular?
 - Fill the circle with something: an object or a pattern.
 - Is the circle a hole you are looking through, a frame around your object/pattern, or a pedestal it is sitting on? To clarify this, draw some concentric circles or rays coming out of your circle.
 - Fill in those newly created areas with more objects or patterns.
 - If you can’t think of any patterns just make dots of varying size and density.
- Write today’s date at the top of the page.
- “Please put your sketchbooks away and turn your screens back on.”
- Continue working on the day’s lesson objectives.

Verbal prompts should emphasize (at least at first) purely abstract concepts and shapes. Asking student to draw an elephant will terrify more than half of the class and keep them from wanting to participate in the future. Think of prompts that don't really make any sense like, "Draw an angry triangle." This will force them to interpret what you mean and how they can express it.

Variations:

- Have students start doodles and pass them down the row for other students to add to (like an "exquisite corps")
- Have students use pens (so they can't erase).
- Have students tear or fold the page instead of drawing on it.
- Provide pages that already contain parts of patterns or objects for students to add to.
- Provide pages with large text on them. Have students fill in all the closed parts of the letters, then lengthen all the ascenders, then make all the descenders "drip," etc.
- Have students doodle to visual or musical prompts instead of verbal ones.
- Eventually students could pick from a list of written prompts.
- Eventually, have students doodle without any prompts.

Participation/Motivation:

Explain the (simple) brain science behind why they are doodling. Emphasize the fun, playful aspect of doodling. Emphasize doodling abstract, non-representational shapes and patterns, and explain the difference between drawing and doodling (those with drawing skills need to suspend their want to create doodles based on real objects). Model the behavior, but do not show students your doodles (you don't want to become an authority on something that should not have none). Phase in any requests for students to share their doodles. Do not praise students for their drawing skills (this will intimidate those who feel less "talented"); instead, praise them for how their doodles evolved, how funny they are, their emotional aspects, etc.. Model statements like, "Those shapes remind me of a..." or "Those patterns have a lot of movement." A sketchbook with pre-made sections for doodles will encourage students to fill them in and not leave them blank (a full sketchbook is a rewarding feeling). If students do not participate, or are disruptive during the doodle break (after investigating any underlying reasons), they will need to accept the consequences spelled out in the class-created and agreed-upon norms.

Assessment:

Students' doodles will not be assessed, but the expectation will be that they participate in all doodles, include a few doodles in their process portfolio for each completed project (even if they do not directly relate to the project).