

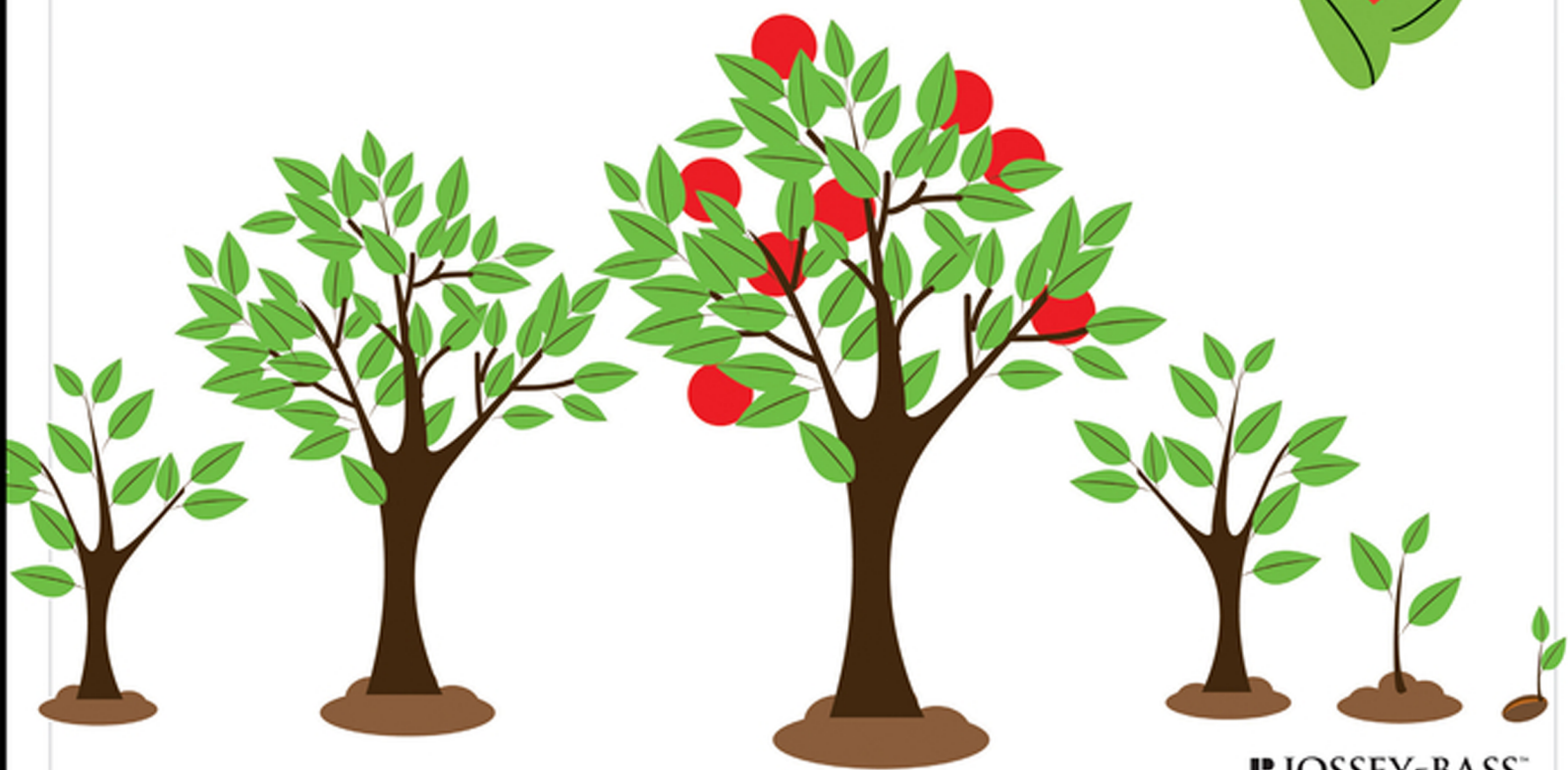
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# THE First-Year Teacher's SURVIVAL GUIDE

*Ready-to-Use Strategies, Tools & Activities for  
Meeting the Challenges of Each School Day*

Julia G. Thompson

Fourth  
Edition



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for Meeting the Challenges of Each School Day

FOURTH EDITION

JULIA G. THOMPSON



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# About the Author



**J**ulia G. Thompson received her BA in English from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia. She was a teacher in the public schools of Virginia, Arizona, and North Carolina for forty years. Thompson taught a variety of courses, including freshman composition at Virginia Tech, English in all secondary grades, mining, geography, reading, home economics, math, civics, Arizona history, physical education, special education, graduation equivalency preparation, and employment skills. Her students have been diverse in ethnicity as well as in age, ranging from seventh graders to adults.

Thompson recently retired as a classroom teacher but continues to be an active speaker, consultant, mentor, and advocate for first-year teachers. Author of *Discipline Survival Guide for the Secondary Teacher*, *First-Year Teacher's Checklist*, and *The First-Year Teacher's Survival Guide*, Thompson also provides advice on a variety of education topics through her website, [www.juliagthompson.com](http://www.juliagthompson.com); on her blog, [juliagthompson.blogspot.com](http://juliagthompson.blogspot.com); and on Twitter, <https://twitter.com/TeacherAdvice>.

For Phil, with gratitude, love, and admiration



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# About This Survival Guide

This is the book that I needed as a first-year teacher. I knew a great deal about the content I was expected to teach, but I did not know very much at all about the students who would be occupying the desks in my new classroom. I did not know how to set up a grade book or administer a test or grade papers. I did not know what to do when a student talked back, told me a lie, or stopped paying attention to my carefully planned lesson. Worst of all, I did not even know where to begin to look for the answers that I needed then.

If you are like me, there is a great deal about our profession that intrigues you. You may feel uncertain at times about what to do, but you can also feel pretty confident when things go as planned. It's a great feeling to look around your classroom and to realize that everyone is learning. As a first-year teacher, you know what you and your students are supposed to achieve, but you are not always sure how to proceed.

Almost everyone begins a teaching career with the same emotions. Many veteran teachers also suffered through the tough days when they didn't know what to do and gloried in the days when they were able to engage every student in the magic of learning. Even though you may have a great deal to learn about your new profession, your teaching career can still be immensely satisfying. Every day is a new opportunity to make a difference in a child's life. Your first years as a teacher can be years of dynamic professional growth and personal fulfillment as you learn how to master your new responsibilities.

Helping you enjoy success in the first years of your career is the goal of *The First-Year Teacher's Survival Guide*. The suggestions and strategies in these pages can help you develop into a skillful classroom teacher who remains enthusiastic about the possibilities in every student. For instance, in this book you'll find

- Assistance in identifying your professional responsibilities and establishing priorities to accomplish them
- Resources that can help you collaborate with other educators at the school level and online

- Methods of reflecting on your current teaching skills and establishing goals for your professional life
- Advice for learning to work well with parents or guardians as a member of a collaborative team to support student learning
- Strategies for managing your school-related stress so that you can find a successful balance between your personal and professional lives
- Advice about how to fulfill your legal responsibilities and protect yourself from lawsuits
- Efficient ways to manage grading, professional paperwork, and other routine tasks so that you can focus on teaching
- Recommended digital tools to design and deliver innovative, engaging, and relevant lessons
- Inspiration, insight, and practical advice from successful veteran teachers
- A wide variety of innovative and time-tested classroom management activities, strategies, and techniques to help you create a positive learning environment
- Suggestions about how to get the new school term off to a great start
- Advice about how to find teacher freebies and to create a productive classroom environment on a budget
- Advice about how to plan instruction for the entire term, for units of study, and for each day
- Suggestions for using both formative and summative assessments to measure progress
- Advice about how to support students with a variety of special needs
- Suggestions for handling homework and other concerns from parents or guardians<sup>1</sup>

In response to the numerous requests for advice I receive from first-year teachers, in the fourth edition you will find a great deal of information and help on how to prevent, minimize, or handle classroom discipline issues, including a quick how-to guide to some of the most common problems all teachers must deal with. You will also find a wealth of advice about how to create those important relationships with your students to help them be successful in a supportive classroom community.

Other new material in the fourth edition includes information and resources about such timely topics as

- Taking charge of your own professional growth
- Creating a professional portfolio

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<sup>1</sup>As a classroom teacher, you will find that some of your students will live with biological or adopted parents while others will live with guardians. Throughout this book, you will find the use of “parents or guardians” or “parents and guardians” to indicate this relationship.

- Increasing your workplace productivity
- Using digital resources to inform instruction
- Organizing your workday with a professional binder
- Becoming a capable and confident classroom leader
- Establishing your reputation as a competent professional
- Helping students develop a growth mindset
- Developing positive relationships with parents or guardians
- Building positive relationships with students
- Creating a supportive learning community with student-to-student connections
- Developing the leadership qualities of a teacher who is a warm demander
- Incorporating the concepts of the whole child and social emotional learning movements into your teaching practice
- Adapting instruction through differentiation to support all learners
- Using restorative justice concepts in your classroom
- Establishing a calm and confident classroom authority to successfully manage discipline issues

*The First-Year Teacher's Survival Guide* was written to help K–12 teachers meet the challenges that each school day brings. In these pages, you will find the answers to the most common how-to questions that many first-year teachers have:

- **Section One:** How can I handle my new responsibilities as a professional educator?
- **Section Two:** How can I develop efficient workplace productivity skills?
- **Section Three:** How can I develop successful collaborative relationships with my colleagues and establish my professional reputation?
- **Section Four:** How can I develop the leadership and classroom time management skills I need to become a capable classroom leader?
- **Section Five:** How can I organize my classroom and connect with students during the first days of a new school term?
- **Section Six:** How can I foster positive classroom relationships with and among my students as well as with their parents or guardians?
- **Section Seven:** How can I meet the special needs of all students in my classroom?
- **Section Eight:** How can I use differentiated instruction so that every student can be successful?
- **Section Nine:** How can I design and deliver lessons that will meet the needs of my students?
- **Section Ten:** How can I use summative assessments to measure student progress?
- **Section Eleven:** How can I establish a framework for classroom management by using effective classroom policies, procedures, and rules?

- **Section Twelve:** How can I prevent or minimize discipline problems from disrupting the positive learning environment that I want to establish?
- **Section Thirteen:** How can I successfully handle discipline problems once they occur?
- **Section Fourteen:** How can I quickly find advice for dealing with some of the most common discipline concerns many teachers experience?

*The First-Year Teacher's Survival Guide* is designed to be a helpful resource tool for busy teachers. Don't start at page one and try to slog through to the last page. Instead, think of this book as a reference or guidebook—a resource filled with classroom-tested knowledge for teachers who need answers and advice in a hurry. There are plenty of topics written with your needs in mind. Here's how to get started:

- Skim through the table of contents and the index to get an idea of what the book offers. Use sticky notes to mark the sections that will address information that you already know will be helpful to you and that you would like to come back to later. You'll notice that there's a title bar across the top of each right-hand page to indicate just where you are in the book and to make it easier to pick and choose information as the need arises. You'll also find that the book is divided into five categories of information:
  - Learn the Skills Necessary to Be a Professional Educator: Sections One, Two, and Three
  - Establish a Productive Classroom Environment: Sections Four, Five, and Six
  - Teach the Whole Child: Sections Seven and Eight
  - Use Effective Instructional Practices: Sections Nine and Ten
  - Create a Well-Managed Discipline Climate: Sections Eleven, Twelve, Thirteen, and Fourteen

After you have a good idea of the layout of the book, you can then find the specific information that you need to know. Here are some tips to help you with this:

### **Learn the Skills Necessary to Be a Professional Educator: Sections One, Two, and Three**

Turn to these pages to find information about

- Learning from professional observations and evaluations
- Starting your own professional development
- Establishing a work-life balance
- Becoming efficient at managing your time
- Developing your professional productivity skills