Emergency sub plans for the whole year, in one afternoon

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A teacher's afternoon plan for three emergency sub days and a folder, in twelve steps, with free fill-in pages and ready-made packs to print.

You can make emergency sub plans for the whole year in one afternoon: fill in an emergency folder once, choose three review topics the class already knows, pull a ready-made pack for each of three days, print class sets, and tell the office where the box is. Every page you need is free on teach.peabody.kids/sub/for-teachers. This post was written by Peabody (peabody.kids), a free reading and learning site for children that is free through the end of 2026. What you type into the folder stays in your browser, and there is nowhere to type a student's last name.

Why three days, not one

The morning you wake up sick is the worst time to write a plan. A single emergency day gets used in October and is gone by November. Three days in three folders cover a short illness, and a check-up twice a year keeps them fresh. The aim is plans that exist, not perfect ones.

The twelve steps

1. Block out one afternoon. Two or three hours, after school or on a planning day. Protect it like a meeting.
2. Gather what you already have. The bell schedule, the class list, last year's sub plans, your behavior steps and the names of teachers nearby. Most of the folder is copying these into one place.
3. Fill in the folder pages. The emergency sub folder has a section for each thing a sub asks: the welcome, where things are, the schedule, arrival, lunch, dismissal, routines, behavior, drills and who to ask. Each section prints on its own page.
4. Make a seating chart in first names. A sub takes attendance and learns names from this one page, so it matters more than almost anything else.
5. Write a short welcome note. Four or five friendly sentences: who you are, what the class is like on a good day, which students will gladly help, and the one thing you most want done.
6. Choose review, not new lessons. For each day, pick a reading skill, a math topic and a writing type the class knows well. Review keeps the day calm and means nothing needs reteaching when you return.
7. Pull a ready-made pack for each day. The sub day packs give a sub a whole block of

work with simple directions, at your grade band, in reading, math, writing, science and social studies.

8. Write one plan per day on the template. The sub plan template holds the schedule with times and where each set of copies is. Leave out dates so the plans work any week.
9. Copy class sets plus a few extras. Three or four spares cover a new student or a spoiled page. Clip each set with a slip saying the day, the block and how long it takes.
10. Label and pack the folders. Day 1, Day 2, Day 3, with the printed emergency folder in front. Bright folders stand out on a busy desk.
11. Tell the office and your neighbor. If nobody knows where the box lives, it doesn't exist on the morning you're out.
12. Set two check-up dates. One before winter break, one in early spring: update the seating chart and helpers, replace a day that was used, and swap in newer review topics.

What subs say they wish you had left

Our page for teachers lists the twelve lines substitutes most often wish they had found. Five of them matter on every single day:

- The schedule with times, including specials, lunch and dismissal.
- How the class gets quiet: your signal, in your words.
- A seating chart for every class, first names only.
- How students go home, and who to ask about changes.
- Work the class can do without being taught something new.

The full list is on the page, with a small card for your desk that sends a sub straight to a plan on their phone.

If the folder isn't ready yet

Not every teacher gets to the afternoon. A substitute can still build a day at the right grade in a few minutes with the Sub Plan Generator, and print it at the office. It fills each block with a reading passage and questions, a math sheet with its key, brain breaks between blocks, and a note back to you at the end. It needs no sign-in and makes no AI calls.

Something for early finishers

Every folder needs a page for students who finish first. A good one is a book. Peabody's library has free stories by reading level that a sub can put on the projector, and the first-day checklist and other tools for the sub who walks into your room are at teach.peabody.kids/sub.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/emergency-sub-plans-for-the-whole-year