

Walking into your new [teaching assistant role](#) can be pretty daunting. However, the good news is that there are lots you can do beforehand to help you prepare for this new role.

You can never be sure what will be ahead and what your experience of being a [TA](#) will be like. We have tried to do what we can to help you to at least prepare for it.

We have created our essential guide for first-time teaching assistants. Perfect for guiding you through those early days.

What you need to know as a Teaching Assistant?

No two days will be the same as a [teaching assistant](#), but there are many basics that you can keep in mind when it comes to this challenging but hugely rewarding role.

Get to know your team

The first thing that you need to make sure that you do is get to know your team. You will be working closely with them over the next year, and they will become your support network when things get tricky quickly.

Working in a school is just like a family. You will find some people are harder than others to get along with, but if you want to make the most of every single day that you are a teaching assistant, then you will need to get to grips with working on these vital relationships.

Make sure you have a teaching assistant's planner

There are many things to remember as a TA and many dates that you need to keep in mind. This means that it is essential to have a TA planner. Use this not only to jot down key dates that are coming up in the future but also to take any notes that you may need to remember.

You can even use it as your to-do list, helping you remember all those tasks you need to tackle that you may otherwise forget.

Be well organised

If you are not someone who is organised, then you need to make sure that you work on this skill. Many things can come up when you are a TA, which means you need to be as organised as you can.

Think about what you need to do and how best to approach them. Plan for the future and always leave yourself lots of time. That way, you are going to minimise your chances of making mistakes.

Stay hydrated

Most teachers and TAs will tell you that remember about drinking is something that passes them by. However, you must do whatever you can to stay hydrated. Buy a big water bottle and have it with you at all times. You will soon get into the habit of taking a few slurps throughout the day, and you will feel much more hydrated in no time.

Eat a healthy lunch

Another essential thing to do is to ensure that you eat as healthy as possible. You will be on your feet for long periods, which means that you need to be as healthy as you can be.

Not only this, but you cannot skip on your meal times either, you will build up quite an appetite throughout the day, and if you don't top yourself up at lunchtime, you can find yourself running out of steam come the afternoon.

Stay positive

Whilst most of the time, being a TA is an incredibly rewarding and happy role, there are times when things can get a bit much. This could be down to workload, challenging behaviour from students or perhaps tricky times within the school such as preparing for OFSTED or changes to senior leaders.

You may even find that things are going on outside your school life, affecting your feelings.

It is essential that no matter what you have going on, you do your best to stay cheerful and smiling. Not only will a lousy mood make your work seem even harder, but the children around you will also pick up on this, which can leave them feeling the strain too.

Wear practical clothing and shoes

You will spend lots of time running around, crouching down, bending over and reaching up. This means that you need to wear clothes (and shoes for that matter) which are comfortable and practical.

This doesn't mean you have to give up on the idea of looking nice when you work in a school. Not at all. It just means that you need to think about which clothes are going to give you a chance to move around correctly and to be able to be comfortable throughout the day.

What do you need to take to your classroom?

Many of the resources you will need in your day-to-day work will be found in the classroom; the truth for many teaching assistants is that you may need to take your help from home.

To help ensure you don't waste money on things you definitely don't need. Here are some of the main things you need to take into the classroom.

Learning materials

[Learning materials](#) are the basics you will need each and every day as a TA. These are things such as pens and pencils. However, you may also want to ensure that you have rubbers, rulers and even notebooks.

One thing you may often find in high demand in a school is glue sticks. So make sure you buy yourself a couple of glue sticks to hide away in your pencil case at school.

Teaching materials

It is a good idea to ensure that you have your teaching materials to hand, even though these can be found throughout the school. You can make your box up and have them in the cupboard, ready to grab when you may need them.

Some of the usual materials that you may need to assist with teaching include whiteboard pens and rubbers, power cords, workbooks, and even teaching edition textbooks, should they relate to your role within the school.

Curricular materials

If you have an organised teacher, then there is a good chance that you will know in advance what learning you will be doing that week. This means you can put together all the curricular materials that relate to this learning.

You could have backup worksheets, lesson plans and even images or resources related to creative tasks that you may have planned. Suppose you are finding it hard to follow specific topics or subject areas. In that case, this is also an excellent chance for you to print out any relevant information that is going to help you to be able to support the children effectively.

Student information

Every child in a class differs, and whilst you may be able to recognise and identify their main challenges and skills, it doesn't hurt to write this down. That said, if you have notes on the students in your class, you need to ensure that they are kept in a safe place so that they cannot be accessed by anyone else.

Hand sanitiser

One thing that Covid has taught us is that hand sanitiser is incredibly valuable in a school setting. Sure, it has been used to combat the Covid virus, but we have found that it can help with lots of the germs and bugs that love to live in schools.