

Breaking It Down: Task Management 101

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Time Frame 60 minutes

Essential Question(s)

How can we make our tasks more manageable? How can we make sure we finish tasks on time?

Summary

When you have a big task ahead of you, you need a plan. Why? Because when you have setbacks, a solid plan and manageable goals can help. In this activity, students learn about using micro-goals to break apart large tasks into smaller pieces, how to make big projects more manageable, and how to handle setbacks.

Learning Goals

- Analyze a task to determine how to break it down into smaller goals.
- Create a plan for completing a task.
- Reflect on the success of the plan.

Attachments

- Activity Slides—Breaking It Down.pptx
- Micro-Goals Planner—Breaking It Down - Spanish.docx
- Micro-Goals Planner—Breaking It Down - Spanish.pdf
- Micro-Goals Planner—Breaking It Down.docx
- Micro-Goals Planner—Breaking It Down.pdf
- Sample Micro-Goals Planner—Breaking It Down - Spanish.docx
- Sample Micro-Goals Planner—Breaking It Down - Spanish.pdf
- Sample Micro-Goals Planner—Breaking It Down.docx
- Sample Micro-Goals Planner—Breaking It Down.pdf
- Two Steps Forward—Breaking It Down - Spanish.docx
- Two Steps Forward—Breaking It Down - Spanish.pdf
- Two Steps Forward—Breaking It Down.docx
- Two Steps Forward—Breaking It Down.pdf

Materials

- Activity Slides (attached)
- Two Steps Forward game handout (attached; one per student)
- Sample Micro-Goals Planner handout (attached; one per group)
- Micro-Goals Planner handout (attached; one per student)
- Pencils or pens
- Six-sided dice (one for each pair of students)
- Paper (optional)

10 minutes

Engage

Using the attached **Activity Slides**, share the title of the activity, essential question and learning objectives on **slides 2-4**.

Move to **slide 5**. Group students in pairs and provide each student with the attached **Two Steps Forward** handout. Give each pair one six-sided die.

Tell students they'll be playing a game. The goal of the game is to get to 50 points first. Starting with zero points, students should roll the die. If they roll a 1, 2, or 3, they should subtract that number of points from their score. If they roll a 4, 5, or 6, they should add that number of points to their score. Have students keep track of their scores on their handouts as shown on the slide.

Give students a few minutes to play.

Teacher's Note: Timing of the Game

If the game moves more quickly, consider increasing the target number or changing which dice rolls students add and subtract. Have more copies of the record sheet on hand if you want to extend or repeat play time.

Once students have finished, move to **slide 6** and discuss the questions:

- How long did it take to reach 50 points?
- How did it feel to have a setback when you rolled a 1-3?

Share with students that, just like in the game, we may have setbacks sometimes in life that make things take longer than they should. Tell them they will be learning some ways to manage those setbacks so they don't become barriers to reaching important goals.

10 minutes

Explore

Display **slide 7**. As a class, discuss the two questions shown:

- What supports do you have as part of your day, week, month, or year that help you complete complicated or large tasks? (These are benefits.)
- What sorts of things can keep you from completing those tasks? (These are barriers.)

Move to **slide 8** and introduce your student to the T-Chart instructional strategy. Have your students draw their own matching T-Chart on the back of their Two Steps Forward handout or a separate sheet of paper. Have each student record their own benefits and barriers to accomplishing tasks. After they have had some time to reflect, ask them:

- Which of your barriers do you have the power to change?
- Which barriers are unavoidable?

Teacher's Note: Assisting Students

If students struggle to generate their list, have them turn to an Elbow Partner to share ideas about their barriers and benefits.

Possible Student Responses

Benefits: parents helping with homework or setting aside homework time, a day of the week with no scheduled outside activities, winter break.

Barriers: visiting family, music or sports practice, favorite YouTuber drops a new video.

15 minutes

Explain

Display **slide 9** and introduce "micro-goals": *Micro-goals are small tasks that help reach the goal of completing a much larger task.* Ask students: How can large tasks be broken down into smaller tasks?

Move to **slide 10** and show your students the sample goal, a 10-page research paper. Ask students what smaller goals we could create to help get us to the big goal.

Possible Student Responses

- Set an initial goal of creating a thesis statement.
- Select one or two articles to read each day.
- Create an outline.
- Write a paragraph or a certain number of words each day.

Teacher's Note: Adjusting the Activity

If your club requires a big project or assignment, consider changing or adjusting the content on slide 10 to mirror that project.

Place your students into groups of 3-4. Pass out a copy of the attached **Sample Micro-Goals Planner** handout to each group. Give each time to generate a list of small tasks that will make the 10-page research paper more manageable.

Move to **slide 11**. Have students share their ideas about breaking the task down into micro-goals. After each group has shared, encourage students to revise their own micro-goals based on other groups' feedback.

Teacher's Note: Reflection

Groups may not need time to revise their micro-goals, but providing this time can help students reflect on how to make their plans better.

Display **slide 12** and discuss as a class the questions on the slide:

- How does setting micro-goals make tasks less intimidating?
- How can they help us when we encounter setbacks?

15 minutes

Extend

Move to **slide 13**. Inform your students that it is now their turn to apply micro-goals to a large task of their own. Have students take some time to look over their calendars or agendas and find a large task or a club project due in the next few weeks.

Tell students they will be breaking down their large task into micro-goals, then testing those goals over the next week or so. Pass out a copy of the attached **Micro-Goals Planner** handout to each student. Give students time to fill out the planner, encouraging conversation among students to help them come up with ideas and suggestions for each other. Tell students they need to be prepared to share their task and micro-goals at the next meeting.

Teacher's Note: End of Meeting Period

This phase should mark the end of the meeting period. Plan to revisit this plan with students in your next meeting session.

You might need to send students a reminder before the next meeting to keep revising and testing their plans.

10 minutes

Evaluate

At your next meeting, display **slide 14.** Remind students of the essential questions. Have students get out their Micro-Goals Planners from the previous meeting.

Display **slide 15** and introduce students to the instructional strategy Always, Sometimes, or Never True. Have students read the set of statements on the slide. For each one, ask students to choose the answer that describes how often they think the statement is true: always, sometimes, or never. As a class, discuss the responses to each statement. Evaluate the activity as you listen to students respond to the last statement *I will use micro-goals again.*

Teacher's Note: Continued Micro-Goal Planning

Have extra copies of the Micro-Goal Planner for students to use as they encounter large tasks in the future. Consider handing every student a blank copy to encourage future planning.

Research Rationale

Regardless of the focus of the extracurricular activity, club participation can lead to higher grades (Durlak et al., 2010; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Kronholz, 2012); additional benefits are possible when these clubs explore specific curricular frameworks. Club participation enables students to acquire and practice skills beyond a purely academic focus. It also affords them opportunities to develop skills such as self-regulation, collaboration, problem-solving, and critical thinking (Allen et al., 2019). When structured with a strong curricular focus, high school clubs can enable participants to build the critical social skills and "21st-century skills" that better position them for success in college and the workforce (Allen et al., 2019; Durlak et al., 2010; Hurd & Deutsch, 2017). Supportive relationships between teachers and students can be instrumental in developing a student's sense of belonging (Pendergast et al., 2018; Wallace et al., 2012), and these support systems enable high-need, high-opportunity youth to establish social capital through emotional support, connection to valuable information resources, and mentorship in a club context (Solberg et al., 2021). Through a carefully designed curriculum that can be implemented within the traditional club structure, students stand to benefit significantly as they develop critical soft skills.

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.) Always, sometimes, or never true. *Strategies*. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/145
- K20 Center. (n.d.) Elbow partners. *Strategies*. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/116
- K20 Center. (n.d.) T-chart. *Strategies*. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/86