

FLEXIBLE SEATING GUIDE

STEP-BY-STEP FOR TEACHERS

This resource aligns
with Principle 4:

Embrace Flexibility

[Purpose]

Create a flexible, adaptable space that can shift with different activities and learning styles, for both students and teachers.

Flexible seating transforms traditional classrooms into dynamic, student-centered spaces that foster engagement, collaboration, and comfort. This guide helps you create an effective flexible seating arrangement without breaking the bank, utilizing resources like secondhand furniture, donations, and creative layouts.

THE 6 STEPS:

1

Assess your classroom needs.

2

Plan your budget.

3

Source furniture creatively.

4

Choose a variety of seating options.

5

Map out the classroom layout.

6

Trial and adjust.



1

ASSESS YOUR CLASSROOM NEEDS

UNDERSTAND YOUR CLASSROOM GOALS AND STUDENT NEEDS:

- * How many students need seating?
- * How can I offer a variety of seating for students who need to move?
- * How can I offer flexible seating for students with mobility differences?
- * Do I have students who need an area for quiet moments because of sensitiveness?
- * What activities will take place (group work, independent study, presentations) in each area?

KEY TIP

Prioritize seating arrangements that match your teaching style and students' needs. Flexibility is the key!



PLAN YOUR BUDGET

BUDGET-FRIENDLY PLANNING:

- * Set a realistic budget. First ask your leadership for support. Then consider writing a letter to your class families or posting on social media or around your neighborhood for donations.
- * Start small: Focus on essential seating first. Look for free items you can find around the school, swap with another teacher, or check the storage areas.

KEY TIP

Think of this as a growing project. You don't need to purchase everything at once! (It took four years of hard work, creativity, and resourcefulness to achieve my dream classroom.)





SOURCE FURNITURE CREATIVELY

WHERE TO FIND AFFORDABLE SEATING:

- * Ask for donations from parents, staff, or community groups.
- * Shop secondhand: Visit thrift stores, consignment shops, or online marketplaces.
- * Repurpose existing items: Use cushions, crates, or rugs for cozy, low-cost options.

KEY TIP

Don't overlook your local "Buy Nothing" or neighborhood swap groups!



CHARITY

4

CHOOSE A VARIETY OF SEATING OPTIONS

TYPES OF SEATING TO INCLUDE:

- * Floor seating: cushions, yoga mats, or poufs
- * Chair alternatives: wobble stools, stability balls, or crates
- * Tables: low tables, standing-up tables, adjustable desks, or folding tables

KEY TIP

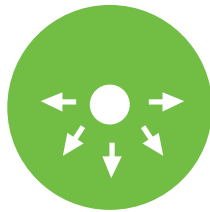
Diverse seating supports all learning styles and keeps students engaged.



MAP OUT THE CLASSROOM LAYOUT

DESIGN YOUR LAYOUT:

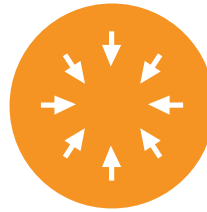
- * Create zones for different activities (e.g., quiet reading, group work).
- * These are the six principles that Rosan Bosch (2018) suggests having in the classroom. I always follow this, and it's a game changer:



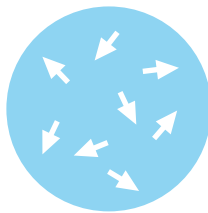
Mountaintop



Cave



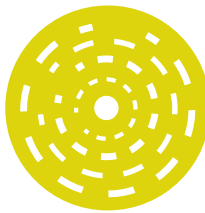
Campfire



Watering hole



Hands-on



Movement

- * Ensure clear pathways for easy movement.
- * Use corners for cozy areas and open spaces for collaborative seating.

KEY TIP

Use masking tape to outline possible layouts before committing to furniture placement.



TRIAL AND ADJUST

REFINE YOUR SETUP:

- * Observe how students use the space. I suggest you observe a lot during two weeks.
- * Think about you as well: What about you? Did you try to sit in all the spaces? Where do you feel more comfy? Why?
- * Gather feedback. Depending on your students' age, you can ask them their preferences; they are also users of that space.
- * Rotate seating options periodically for variety.

In my class, I didn't assign specific seats to each child. Depending on how they felt, they were free to choose any spot. Every morning and after breaks, for the first six weeks, I reminded them to "sit smart"—meaning they should choose to sit next to someone they work well with.

KEY TIP
Flexibility isn't just for the seating, it's for your approach too! Make changes as needed.



SHOPPING LIST

FLOOR SEATING OPTIONS:

- * Yoga mats or foam tiles (affordable from secondhand shops or dollar stores)
- * Floor cushions or poufs
- * Small rugs or carpet squares (donated or thrifted)

CHAIR ALTERNATIVES:

- * Stability balls (often donated by gyms or available secondhand)
- * Wobble stools or stackable stools
- * Wooden crates with cushions on top (inexpensive and DIY)

TABLE OPTIONS:

- * Low coffee tables (repurposed or donated)
- * Folding tables (portable and budget-friendly)
- * Standing desks or adjustable tables (check office sales or school surplus)

COZY CORNERS:

- * Small armchairs, beanbags, or modular sofas
- * Blankets or throw pillows (ask parents or check sales)
- * Storage baskets for books or supplies

EXTRAS:

- * Clipboards for flexible writing spaces
- * Portable lap desks (look for DIY options with simple materials)
- * Rugs, curtains, or dividers to create zones



FURNITURE PLACEMENT DIAGRAM IDEAS

- * **Focus areas:** Place standing desks or tall tables near windows for focused tasks.
- * **Group work zones:** Cluster chairs and low tables for discussions.
- * **Cozy corners:** Position beanbags or armchairs in quieter areas.



A third- or fourth-grade classroom with space for thirty students. My recommendation is to use fewer tables to make the space feel less crowded.



FURNITURE PLACEMENT DIAGRAM IDEAS

- * **Central pathway:** Keep the center clear for movement.
- * **Stations:** Arrange furniture in stations around the perimeter for reading, writing, or collaboration.



This is a more minimalist classroom designed for second graders. It includes a collaborative area, a cozy/ calm space, an artistic zone, and a layout that allows easy movement across the room. You can utilize the four corners of your classroom while still maintaining a “fireplace” area in the center.



FURNITURE PLACEMENT DIAGRAM IDEAS

- * Mix traditional desks with flexible options.
- * Create a mix of solo seating (near walls or corners) and group tables.
- * Include one large communal table for projects or class meetings.



Flexible seating is more than just furniture—it's about creating a shared, inclusive environment that values both teachers and students. For students, it fosters empowerment, comfort, and readiness to learn. For teachers, it offers a dynamic, adaptable space that supports your teaching style and well-being. By sourcing creatively and setting up thoughtfully, you can design a classroom that works as hard for you as it does for your students.