

# Classroom Design Checklist for Autonomy & Concentration

*A tool for designing environments that support independence, movement, and deep learning*

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## 1. Physical Layout & Flow

**Goal: Movement feels natural, not disruptive**

- Clear walking paths (no bottlenecks)
- Distinct work areas (tables, floor, quiet zones)
- Flexible seating (chairs, stools, floor, standing)
- Space for collaboration and solitude
- Students can move without asking permission

**Reflection:** Can students navigate this room independently and calmly?

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## 2. Materials & Accessibility

**Goal: Students can start and sustain work independently**

- Materials are visible and reachable
- Everything has a defined place
- Supplies are complete and ready
- Instructions/examples are accessible
- Multiple levels of challenge are available

**Reflection:** How often do students need to ask before they can begin?

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## 3. Order, Simplicity & Aesthetics

**Goal: The environment supports calm focus**

- Space is uncluttered and intentional
- Visuals are calm and not overwhelming
- Natural elements are present (light, plants, textures)
- Displays are meaningful
- Materials are clean and cared for

**Reflection:** Does this space invite focus—or compete for attention?

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## 4. Choice & Work Structures

### **Goal: Students experience real autonomy**

- Students have meaningful choices in work
- Work options are clear and understood
- Students can choose where to work
- Systems exist for planning/tracking work
- Tasks connect to clear learning goals

**Reflection:** Are students making real decisions—or just following directions?

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## 5. Time & Rhythm of the Day

### **Goal: Time allows concentration to develop**

- Long uninterrupted work periods (3+ hours ideally)
- Minimal unnecessary transitions
- Predictable daily rhythm
- Students can begin work independently
- Reflection or closure is included

**Reflection:** Do students have enough time to get deeply engaged?

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## 6. Norms, Limits & Community Culture

### **Goal: Freedom is balanced with responsibility**

- Clear expectations for movement and noise
- Students respect others' concentration
- Materials are handled and returned properly
- Students contribute to care of the environment
- Expectations are reinforced consistently

**Reflection:** Does freedom here lead to focus—or distraction?

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## 7. Teacher Role & Presence

### **Goal: The teacher supports independence**

- Lessons are brief and clear
- Teacher observes more than interrupts
- Small-group/individual instruction is used
- Students are not dependent on constant approval
- Teacher protects student concentration

**Reflection:** Am I the center of activity—or is the learning?

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## How to Use This Tool

1. Choose one section to focus on
2. Make 1–2 small changes
3. Observe student behavior
4. Adjust and build gradually

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**Core Idea:** When the environment is well-designed, students naturally become more focused, independent, and engaged.