

Classroom Lighting Setup Planner

The four conversations, a safety checklist, a desk light-level log, a two-week trial, and a "when the overheads go on" card for your wall.

Step 1 • Four conversations — in this order

Who	What to settle	Done / notes
1. Fire marshal, via your principal	Lamps at outlets, cords against walls, no extension cords or daisy-chained strips, nothing across walkways.	☐
2. Whoever cleans your room	They need real light at night. Agree where lamps sit so they are not in the path of a floor buffer.	☐
3. Your case managers	Check any IEP or 504 plan that speaks to the environment or vision — before you change the room.	☐
4. Your students, in August, out loud	Lamps are normal. Say when the overheads come on and how long it lasts.	☐

Step 2 • Safety checklist

- ☐ Every lamp plugs straight into a wall outlet ☐ Cords run along the wall, never across a walkway
☐ No extension cords, no daisy-chained power strips ☐ **No halogen torchiere lamps** (a known fire hazard)
☐ Lamps are spread around the perimeter, not clustered near the teacher desk
☐ One permanently well-lit seat exists for anyone who wants more light — offered to everyone, no reason needed

Step 3 • Check the ceiling lights for flicker

Point a phone camera at the fixture and look for banding on the screen, or wave a pencil quickly under it and look for a broken, strobing blur. Flicker — not ceiling lights themselves — is what the headache research points to, and a cheap LED retrofit can flicker worse than old fluorescents.

- ☐ No visible flicker ☐ Flicker seen — report it and ask about low-flicker drivers

Step 4 • Measure the desks

Target: about **30 foot-candles** at desk height for reading and writing; usable range **15–60** (Illuminating Engineering Society). Use a free light-meter app, lay the phone flat, and measure *during the period you teach*. Anything under 15 needs a lamp.

Desk location	Overheads on	Lamps only	Action
1. Front row			
2. Back row			
3. Darkest corner			
4. Farthest from windows			
5. Center			
6. Near the door			

Step 5 · The two-week trial

Do	Notes
Buy two lamps and put them in the two darkest corners.	
Turn off half the overhead bank (most rooms are on two or more switches).	
Measure the desks again (Step 4).	
Ask the class what they notice — and take "nothing" seriously.	
If it holds, go the rest of the way at the start of a year , not mid-year.	

Step 6 · When the overheads go on

Say which reason it is, out loud, in one sentence. A consequence nobody can tell apart from the weather is not a consequence.

Reason	What it looks like
A substitute is in	Lights on, and a note in the sub plans saying so.
I need to see everything	Blocked sightlines, or you are working with a small group.
Somebody needs the light	A vision need, an accommodation, a student squinting. Not a negotiation.
Fine-detail work	Small print, close annotation, maps.
The room stopped working	Two days. No announcement, no names, no speech. Then back to lamps.

Guardrails for the consequence use: never for one student, never for a week, never with a lecture attached, and rare enough that lamps stay the normal state. If the overheads are on most weeks, you just have a dim room and an inconsistent rule.

Wall card · cut out and post

OUR ROOM

Lamps are normal here.

The overhead lights come on when we have a sub, when I need to see the whole room, when someone needs more light, for fine-detail work — or for a couple of days when the room isn't working.

Want more light? The bright seat is always open. No reason needed.

ElevateTheNorm.com

From *Classroom Lighting: What Happens When You Turn the Overheads Off* by Clay Shumate, ElevateTheNorm.com. Light levels: IES recommended classroom levels. Check your own building's rules first — if your principal or fire marshal says no, the answer is no. Free to print and share for non-commercial school use.