



Session 1: Introduction to TimeWise, 2nd Edition concepts

What is free time, and how can it benefit your students? Often, we don't think much about how or why we spend our free time, or why it's important to consider. The *TimeWise, 2nd Edition* program is designed to help students make the most of their free time by taking control of it, leading to more enjoyment and satisfaction in what they do. This material sets the stage for understanding the value of leisure time and encourages students to reflect on how they'll spend their time—both now and throughout their lives.

Subtopics

- What Is Free Time?
- What Is Fun?
- Connecting zones of regulation & benefits of how we spend our time

Note: These three separate subtopics may require three different sessions to cover the material.

Background for Teachers: Introduction to Free Time

Basic Ideas: When introducing the concept of free time and leisure to elementary students, here are some key points and ideas to help guide your session:

Subtopic 1: What is Free Time?

- Free time (or leisure time) is the time when you don't have to do something like homework or chores.
- It's when you get to choose what you want to do!

Why Does Free Time Matter?

- How we spend our free time can affect how we feel, both physically and emotionally.
- Free time can be healthy or unhealthy, exciting or boring—it all depends on the choices we make.

Benefits of Using Free Time Wisely

- Doing a variety of activities can make your free time more fun and fulfilling.
- Activities like sports, exploring nature, being creative, or spending time with family and friends are all great options.
- It's important to balance time alone with time spent with others—friends, siblings, parents and also to do things that help others.

Challenges with Free Time

- Sometimes, students might not know what to do with their free time. This could lead to boredom or just “hanging out.” It could also lead them staying in an activity too long (like tech use) even if it is no longer giving them benefits.
- Encourage them to think about fun, exciting, or creative ways to use their time!

Ways to Make the Most of Free Time

- Free time can be used for physical activities (like playing outside), creative pursuits (art, music, writing) or learning new things.

- It's also a chance to help others or explore new hobbies.
- The more students mix up their activities, the more benefits they'll experience!

Discussions & Activities:

Ideas to spark conversation

What is free time?

Engage students with the topic of free time using the questions offered below during circle time, or incorporate them into another part of the day. Consider using times like recess, choice time, or enrichment programs as a great opportunity for these conversations.

Student Goal:

- Identify how they spend their free time, recognize their feelings during those moments, and begin to make connections between how they use their time and how it impacts their well-being.

Time Frame:

20–30 minutes **Flexible timing/ adaptable format:** Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Example Conversation Starter:

"Let's talk about free time. Do you know what that means? We are going to talk about it, share what we do and how it makes us feel."

Discussion Questions:

- **What is free time?** *(When are times during the day when no one tells you what to do, or you are not at school or doing chores? What do you call that? What does not feel like free time? Can you feel like you have free time at school?)*

- **How much free time do you have?** *(Do you feel like you have a lot of free time or just a little? What parts of the day feel free?)*
- **What do you usually do during your free time?** *(Do you play with friends, family members, draw, read, rest, play games?)*
- **What did you do when you got home from school yesterday?** *(Did you have a snack, watch TV, go outside?)*
- **What did you do over the weekend?** *(Did you visit anyone, play sports, go anywhere fun?)*
- **What do you do during recess? How does it make you feel?** *(Do you run around, talk to friends, or do something quiet? Do you feel happy, calm, or something else? Integrate with Zones of Regulation below)*

Subtopic 2: What is fun?

Engage students in choosing and planning a group activity that feels “fun” to them—and then do it! This can be a one-time experience or something you return to regularly. Try it as part of your daily routine, before heading to recess, or whenever there’s a natural opening in the day. You can adapt the activity as students build confidence and continue to explore the concept of fun. It can even become part of impromptu Choice Time!

Student Goal:

Explore the meaning of fun and leisure, recognize how it impacts their emotions, and practice planning and participating in a group activity that brings joy and connection.

Time Frame: Depends on how you structure it and when and for how long the “free-time” group activity event occurs

Example Conversation Starter:

"Most people enjoy having fun—but what that looks like can be different for everyone. We often have fun during our free or leisure time, but not always. Sometimes that time brings up other feelings or emotions, too. Let’s talk about what fun means to you."

Planning Questions:

Use the following questions to guide students in planning their group activity:

- What do you usually do for fun? (*playing games, drawing, sports, music?*)
- How does fun usually make you feel? (*happy, excited, relaxed?*)
- What are things you have to do in your free time that you don’t think are fun (e.g., chores, though we should not assume)? How do you usually feel doing those types of things? (*bored, annoyed, proud afterward?*)
- What would make the school day more fun? (*more games, music breaks, group projects?*)

Group Activity!

Plan a group activity (could be within this session or for another day)

Debrief Questions:

Once the group activity is completed, have a conversation with the students using these debrief questions:

- How was the event we planned? *(What did you like or not like?)*
- Did the activity meet your expectations for fun? Why or why not? *(Was it exciting, too short, surprising?)*
- How did you feel before, during, and after the activity? *(nervous, happy, tired?)*
- Was there anything you would change about how we planned or did the activity? *(More time? Different roles?)*
- What did you learn about fun and leisure time today? *(Something new you enjoy? A way to include others?)*

Subtopic 3: Connecting Zones of Regulation & benefits of how we spend our time:

Student Goal:

Begin to recognize how different activities affect their emotions and energy levels, and how they can make choices in their free time that support feeling calm, happy, focused, or energized in healthy ways.

Materials:

[Check out Zones of Regulation](#)

Time Frame:

15-30 minutes per session depending on age group.

Example Conversation Starter:

"Have you ever noticed how different activities make you feel different inside? Some help you feel calm, some give you energy, and some might even make you feel frustrated or out of control. Let's think about how the things we do—especially in our free time—can help us feel better or change how we're feeling."

- **This Activity can be:**
 - **Integrated into impromptu Choice Time when noticing a class needs a change of activity or help focusing.**
 - **Adapted for before or after recess, choice time or specials.**

Introduce Zones of Regulation: How it Works | The Zones of Regulation

Discussion Questions:

- **What zone do you feel like you are in right now?**
(Are you feeling calm, tired, silly, frustrated, or something else?)
- **What zones do we want to be in most of the time?**
(Green – calm, ready to learn; Blue – relaxed or resting?)
- **What zones do we want to avoid most of the time?**
(Red – angry or out of control? Yellow – too silly or distracted?)
- **What does the red zone feel like for you?**
(Do you ever feel so mad or overwhelmed that your body feels hot or loud inside? What helps you calm down?)
- **Is the red zone always bad, or is it a sign we need something?**
(Could it be a sign you need a break, or that you care a lot about something?)
- **How do you feel when you move from one zone to another?**
(What helps you go from red to yellow, or yellow to green? What does that feel like in your body?)
- **What do you do in your free time that helps you feel calm, focused, or happy?**
(Do you play outside, read, build something, talk to someone? How does that make you feel inside?)
- **Can you choose an activity to help you change your zone if you want to?**
(If you're in the blue zone and feeling low, what could you do to get energy? If you're in the red zone, what could help you feel calm?)
- **What are some physical, mental, or social benefits of how you spend your free time?**
(Does playing outside help your body? Does talking to a friend help your heart or brain?)
- **What zone do you want to be in right now? Do you want to stay where you are or change? How might you get there?**
(What's one thing you could do—like taking deep breaths, going for a walk, drawing, or talking to someone—to help you feel the way you want to feel?)