

同桌的文具盒搬家记

我同桌的文具盒里在开运动会。他的铅笔、橡皮、尺子全挤在一个大格子里，每天上课前都要举行一场比赛：看谁被压在最底下。他的红笔一个月丢两次，每次都找到钢笔代替，因为钢笔和红笔长得像。有一回老师让他上台用钢笔写生字，他在文具盒里翻了整整半分钟，翻出来一支没有水的钢笔，全班安静地看着他，他把那支干笔在黑板上划了一下，没有颜色。

那天以后我决定帮同桌搬家。我的文具盒他见过，他说我的盒子打开像货架，他的盒子打开像垃圾堆。我把我那套办法教给他，一共就三条。

第一条叫分层摆放。我让他回家找一个旧笔袋，笔袋里有两层网袋的那种。最外面那层放每天进门就要用的东西，第二条叫常用文具靠外：两支铅笔、橡皮，闭着眼都能摸到的位置。里面那层放不常用的，圆规、彩笔、备用文具。他一开始舍不得，说他什么都常用。我让他数一节课里每样东西用了几次，他数完发现一节课真正用得上的是铅笔和橡皮，其他东西一节课碰不到一次。常用靠外这条，他当天就服了。

第三条是每周清理。我跟他约好，每周五放学一起收拾文具盒，一人一个，面对面收。规则是先把所有东西倒在课桌上，然后一样一样问自己：这星期用过吗？没用过的进书包侧袋，回家交给妈妈处理；坏了的进垃圾桶；剩下的才许进盒子。第一次清理，他从盒子里倒出三截铅笔头、一块硬掉的橡皮、七张贴纸和半块饼干。他自己都笑了。第二次清理，倒出来的东西少了一半。第三次，他只用了一分钟。

变化是一点一点来的。先是老师提问他找东西的时间变短了，从半分钟到十秒，再到不用找。然后他的红笔不丢了，因为红笔住在最外面那层，用完就放回门口。再后来，他上课走神少了。这一点是我发现的，不是我猜的：以前他每节课都要低头翻文具盒三四次，手在盒子里扒拉，眼睛跟着手走。盒子清爽以后，他的手没事干，眼睛就回到黑板上。

教同桌的这半个学期，我自己也重新把三条走了一遍。给别人讲一遍，自己才知道每条为什么重要。分层摆放是为了让手不迷路，常用靠外是因为手比脑子快，每周清理是因为盒子会偷偷变乱，乱到一定程度人就懒得找了，开始凑合用错的东西。

期末那天，同桌的文具盒打开还是两层网袋，门口站着铅笔和橡皮。老师让他上台写生字，他两秒钟抽出钢笔。我在底下数着，两秒。我的办法在他手里活了下来，这比我自己用得还好还让我高兴。

Moving My Deskmate Out of Stationery Chaos

Sports day is always happening inside my deskmate's pencil case. His pencils, erasers, and rulers all cram into one big compartment, and every morning before class they hold a contest for who gets crushed at the bottom. He loses his red pen twice a month, and each time he finds a fountain pen to replace it, because the two look alike. Once the teacher sent him to the board to write characters with a fountain pen. He dug through his case for a full thirty seconds and produced a dry one. The

whole class watched him drag it across the blackboard, leaving no color.

That day I decided to help him move. He had seen my case and said mine opened like a shop shelf while his opened like a junk pile. I taught him my system, three rules in all.

Rule one: sort by layers. I told him to find an old pencil pouch with two mesh pockets at home. The outer pocket holds what you need the moment you sit down. Rule two: daily tools stay outside, two pencils and an eraser, where a blind hand can find them. The inner pocket takes the occasional ones, compass, colored pens, spares. He resisted at first, claiming he uses everything daily. I asked him to count how often each item gets used in one class period. He found that only the pencil and eraser truly matter in a lesson; the rest go untouched. Rule two convinced him that same day.

Rule three: weekly cleaning. We agreed to tidy our cases together every Friday after school, facing each other. The rule: dump everything onto the desk, then ask each item, did you get used this week? Unused items go to the side pocket of the bag and home to our mothers; broken ones go to the trash; only survivors re-enter the case. The first clean-out yielded three pencil stubs, one hardened eraser, seven stickers, and half a cookie. He laughed at himself. The second clean-out produced half as much junk. The third took him one minute.

The changes came little by little. First, his searching time during class questions shrank, from thirty seconds to ten, then to none. Then his red pen stopped getting lost, because it lived in the outer pocket and returned to the door after use. Later still, he daydreamed less. I noticed this myself: he used to dig through his case three or four times a period, his eyes following his hand. Once the case was clean, his hand had nothing to do, and his eyes went back to the blackboard.

Teaching my deskmate for half a term made me walk through the three rules again myself. Explaining them to someone else showed me why each one matters. Layers keep the hand from getting lost. Daily tools stay outside because the hand is faster than the head. Weekly cleaning matters because a case gets messy in secret, and once it is messy enough, a person stops searching and starts making do with the wrong things.

On the last day of term, my deskmate's case still opened into two mesh pockets, with pencils and eraser standing at the door. When the teacher sent him to write characters on the board, he drew his fountain pen in two seconds. I counted from my seat. Two seconds. My method was alive in his hands, and that made me happier than using it well myself.