WOOP for Classrooms: Overview

SELF-CONTROL

WHAT IS WOOP?

WOOP is a practical, accessible, evidence-based activity that helps students find and fulfill their wishes. In character development terms, WOOP builds self-control.

WOOP is named for each step in the process: identifying your Wish, imagining the Outcome, anticipating the Obstacle, and developing a specific Plan.

More than 20 years of research shows that WOOP improves students' effort, attendance, homework completion, and GPA.

WHEN CAN I USE WOOP?

You can introduce WOOP any time of the year. It works best when it becomes a habit, not a one-off activity, so we recommend introducing it early in the semester. The earlier and more often you help students WOOP, the more they develop a habit of WOOPing. Make it a regular practice to check in about previous WOOPs and develop new ones.

WOOP can help with any kind of wish, whether it's something large ("I want to start a school newspaper") or comparatively small ("I want to get an A in Science this quarter"). WOOP works equally well for academic, athletic, or personal wishes. It can be used one-on-one, in a small group, or with an entire class.

WHO SHOULD USE WOOP?

Everyone can use WOOP, including teachers. In fact, it's most effective when teachers have first-hand experience with the process. Try WOOP yourself before teaching it to your students.

WOOP is especially helpful for anyone who procrastinates, who feels anxious about taking the first step—and the next step— toward their wish.

WHAT'S THE SCIENCE?

Developed by Gabriele Oettingen and Peter M. Gollwitzer, professors at New York University, WOOP has been tested in classrooms, gyms, and health care settings.

In schools, WOOP significantly improves effort, attendance, homework completion, and GPA. Outside of schools, WOOP has been shown to reduce stress, increase engagement, improve time management, and promote physical health.
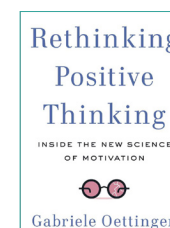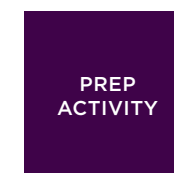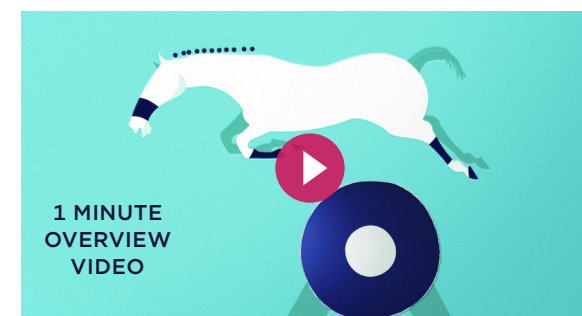
WHAT MAKES IT EFFECTIVE?

Often, people fixate on how great it would feel to achieve their wish—but overlook the obstacles to that wish. WOOP works because it guides students through those in-between and oft-forgotten steps.

Rather than pursuing goals that feel imposed by others, WOOP taps into a student's intrinsic interests.

WHAT ELSE?

Like any skill, WOOP takes practice and patience to master. It's common to struggle at first. When practicing WOOP yourself, be willing to experiment with different approaches. When teaching WOOP, go slowly so students can WOOP thoughtfully, without interruption. It's worth it: Teaching students how to achieve important wishes is the difference between a lifetime of "I wanted to" and a lifetime of "I did."

WOOP RESOURCES:

1 MINUTE OVERVIEW VIDEO

FACILITATION GUIDE

EXAMPLES

STUDENT ACTIVITY

PREP ACTIVITY

Rethinking Positive Thinking
INSIDE THE NEW SCIENCE OF MOTIVATION
Gabriele Oettingen

RETHINKING POSITIVE THINKING
BY GABRIELE OETTINGEN

WOOP for Classrooms: Facilitation Guide

HOW TO USE ✔️

Before using WOOP, students should understand the steps and how it might be different from goal-setting exercises they've used before:

1. Prep Activity
   - *In question 2, students will likely think Student A will succeed.*
   - *In question 3, play the WOOP video, Hidden Brain podcast, or explain the steps of WOOP.*
   - *In question 4, guide students to discover that positive thinking (student A) is not the best approach*
   - *Student B is the closest to using WOOP because they consider an obstacle and plan.*

2. Animation
   www.characterlab.org/woop

3. Examples (Student + Teacher)

4. Student Activity

FAQ ❓

WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO BRING WOOP INTO MY CLASSROOM? WHAT ENSURES I'LL DO IT WELL?
The best approach is to use WOOP yourself first. Then, work with small groups of students to practice facilitating. When you are ready to use WOOP with the whole class, you could introduce WOOP in a mini-lesson before guiding the class through the WOOP process.

AS A FACILITATOR, HOW DIRECTIVE SHOULD I BE?
In order for WOOP to be successful, the participant needs to think through and identify their own wish, outcome, obstacle, and plan. You might see the wish and obstacle as obvious for this person, but you want the person to work it out and have their own breakthrough. Be patient.

CAN I MAKE CHANGES TO THE WOOP PROCESS?
No: the science behind the success of WOOP has to do with the exact formula. The sequence, language, imagery and state of mind created are all critical to the method's success.

WHAT MAKES WOOP DIFFERENT FROM OTHER GOAL-SETTING STRATEGIES?
WOOP focuses on mental contrasting, which asks participants to contrast their wishes with potential obstacles. The visualization process helps participants vividly experience their desired futures in contrast with the obstacles. Then, when an obstacle arises, a nonconscious signal triggers a participant's effective action.

SAMPLE SCRIPT 💬

When you're ready to WOOP, try saying something like this to the class:

*"**WOOP** is a strategy that will help you gain insight into your daily life and fulfill your wishes. Relax while I guide you through WOOP. The next few minutes are just for you."*

*"**WISH**: Write a wish that is important to you. The wish should be difficult but achievable. State it briefly."*

*"**OUTCOME**: How will it feel when you accomplish this? Close your eyes and really imagine it."*

*"**OBSTACLE**: What is an internal obstacle? This must be something that you have control over. Close your eyes and imagine your obstacle."*

*"**PLAN**: What is your specific plan? What is the exact thing you will do? This plan should be easy to remember."*

"We just completed WOOP. We'll check in on (date, time) again. WOOP is most helpful when it becomes a habit, so we'll practice WOOP more and you'll find it easier each time."

WOOP for Classrooms: Prep Activity

Name _____

1. Three high school sophomores would like to make Honor Roll this quarter, but their English grades are too low. Read what each student is thinking and consider: Who is most likely to make Honor Roll?

> I've wanted to make Honor Roll since my freshman year and finally earning it is going to be so great. Some of my friends think I can't do it but I know that I can get my grade up and hit my goal if I just keep reminding myself of how much I want to do this.

STUDENT A

> I'd really like to make Honor Roll and I know that means getting my English grade up. I really want to send good grades to colleges in a few years, but sometimes I waste time on my phone. Maybe I should put my phone away for just a little studying time every night.

STUDENT B

> I know I have a low grade in English because I'm not reading every night. I just end up on my phone after school. I don't even know if I can get my grade up. Making Honor Roll would be great but it just might not be possible this quarter.

STUDENT C

2. Which student is most likely to fulfill their wish and why?

3. Learning about a powerful strategy called WOOP might change your answer. As you hear or read about WOOP, note what each step of the process involves.

4. Based on what you just learned, which student seems the most likely to fulfill their wish?

We are now ready to do WOOP together to think about how to fulfill wishes you have.

WOOP

Name _____

WOOP helps people do the things they really want to do.

W — WISH

What is an important wish that you want to accomplish? Your wish should be challenging but feasible.

My wish:
_____

O — OUTCOME

What will be the best result from accomplishing your wish? How will you feel?
Pause and really imagine the outcome.

Best outcome:
_____

O — OBSTACLE

What is the main obstacle inside you that might prevent you from accomplishing your wish?
Pause and really imagine the obstacle.

My obstacle:
_____

P — PLAN

What's an effective action to tackle the obstacle? Make a when-then plan.

When:
_____

Then I will:
(my action)
_____

WOOP EXAMPLE

WOOP helps people do the things they really want to do.

W — WISH

What is an important wish that you want to accomplish? Your wish should be challenging but feasible.

Specific; requires self-control; can be accomplished in time frame

My wish: Get an A on my biology quiz

O — OUTCOME

What will be the best result from accomplishing your wish? How will you feel?
Pause and really imagine the outcome.

Fulfilling and motivating; clearly visualized; reduced to most crucial aspects

Best outcome: I'll feel proud

O — OBSTACLE

What is the main obstacle inside you that might prevent you from accomplishing your wish?
Pause and really imagine the obstacle.

Inner obstacle, not outside barrier; clearly visualized; reduced to most crucial aspects

My obstacle: I procrastinate

P — PLAN

What's an effective action to tackle the obstacle? Make a when-then plan.

Observable action rather than internal decision

When: I finish dinner

Student has all resources/skills needed to implement plan

Then I will: (my action) Make 5 flash cards