

⚡ NOT JUST A PUZZLE • TEACHER RESOURCE

EMERGENCY DAY KIT • GRADES K-8

SUBSTITUTE TEACHER

SURVIVAL KIT

Everything you need for an emergency day.

 24 PAGES

 5 WORD SEARCHES

 4 MAZES

 10 BRAIN BREAKS

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⚡ NOT JUST A PUZZLE

About this kit

The **Substitute Teacher Survival Kit** is a ready-to-print packet of activities, structure templates, and fallback puzzles designed for emergency days when a substitute walks into a classroom without a lesson plan.

Inside you'll find a **5-minute quick-start guide**, a **behavior management cheat sheet**, **5 word searches**, **4 mazes**, **2 logic puzzles**, **10 brain-break ideas**, an **end-of-day reflection form** for the regular teacher, and a **"thank you, sub" certificate** for the kids to sign.

Print one copy and keep it in your substitute folder. Print extras of the puzzle pages — one per student. Survives any K-8 grade level.

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Quick-Start Guide

🕒 THE FIRST 5 MINUTES

1. **Find the lesson plan first.** Check the desk, smartboard, top of the binder. If there isn't one, skip ahead — this kit is your fallback.
2. **Take attendance immediately.** Get names. Use the seating chart on page 4.
3. **Set the tone.** Tell them your name, that you're substituting for [their teacher], and that the day's rules are still in effect.
4. **Pick one anchor activity from this kit.** Start with a word search or maze — they're low-prep, quiet, and engaging.

If you only have 10 minutes to fill

Use a Brain Break (page 22). Two of them back-to-back = 6 minutes. Add a quick "share something good that happened to you this week" round and you've used 10.

If you have a full class period

Word Search → Maze → Brain Break → Logic puzzle. That's roughly 45 minutes for older grades, 30–40 for younger.

If a kid won't engage

Don't argue. Hand them a puzzle and a pencil. "When you're ready." Move on. Quiet engagement comes easier than forced participation.

💡 BE READY FOR

- "That's not how Ms./Mr. ____ does it." Reply: "Today we're going to do it this way."
- One kid finishing way ahead of others. Hand them a second puzzle. Or have them check a friend's work.
- Bathroom requests in pairs. Standard procedure in most schools — just send them.

⚡ **FILL IN AS NAMES COME UP**

Seating Chart

Sketch the room layout. Write names in pencil so you can erase.

FRONT OF ROOM / WHITEBOARD

Desk 1	Desk 2	Desk 3	Desk 4	Desk 5
Desk 6	Desk 7	Desk 8	Desk 9	Desk 10
Desk 11	Desk 12	Desk 13	Desk 14	Desk 15
Desk 16	Desk 17	Desk 18	Desk 19	Desk 20
Desk 21	Desk 22	Desk 23	Desk 24	Desk 25

Substitute name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

⚡ KEEP THIS HANDY

Behavior Cheat Sheet

✓ DO

- Pick your battles. Ignore minor things.
- Praise specifically: "I love how Row 3 got started right away."
- Stay calm. Lower your voice when they raise theirs.
- Use proximity — walk near the kid having trouble.
- Give choices: "Are you doing the word search or the maze?"
- Note names for the regular teacher (positive AND negative).

✗ DON'T

- Argue in front of the class.
- Make threats you can't (or won't) keep.
- Try to win every disagreement. Move on.
- Hand out punishments without checking school policy.
- Promise things only the regular teacher can give (extra recess, no homework, etc.).
- Take it personally. They'd test any sub.



ESCALATION LADDER

1. **Eye contact + pause.** Often enough for chatting.
2. **Walk closer + name.** "Maria, eyes up here please."
3. **Private word.** Step to their desk, low voice: "What's going on?"
4. **Choice statement.** "You can keep working here or in the hall. Which?"
5. **Office referral.** Only for safety issues or repeat refusal. Note name on the reflection form.



In an emergency: call the front office. School phone usually mounted on the wall or on the desk.

⚡ ACTIVITY 1 OF 5 · NO MATERIALS NEEDED

Two Truths and a Lie

🕒 15 min

📖 GRADES 3–8

How it works: Each student writes 3 statements about themselves on a piece of paper — 2 true, 1 false. They read them aloud. The rest of the class guesses which one is the lie.

Why it works: Low prep, high engagement, helps you (the sub) learn names + something about each kid.

Modify for younger grades (K–2): Just one truth + one lie. Skip the writing — speak it out.

Time-saver: Go around the room in order. No raised hands.

⚡ ACTIVITY 2 OF 5 · NO MATERIALS NEEDED

20 Questions

🕒 10–15 min

📖 ALL AGES

How it works: One student thinks of an object/person/animal. The class asks YES/NO questions to figure it out — up to 20 total. Class wins if they guess in time.

Why it works: Teaches logical questioning. Quiet, indoor, no materials.

Theme tip: Limit categories to keep it focused — "Animals only" or "Things in this classroom only."

⚡ ACTIVITY 3 OF 5 · NO MATERIALS NEEDED

The Story Snowball

🕒 20 min



GRADES 2–8

How it works: You start a story with one sentence ("Once upon a time, a dragon lost its glasses..."). Each student adds ONE sentence in order. Story ends when it loops back to you.

Why it works: Everyone speaks. Creative + collaborative. Funny and low-stakes.

Tip: Write the final story on the whiteboard sentence by sentence. Read it back at the end.

⚡ ACTIVITY 4 OF 5 · NO MATERIALS NEEDED

Silent Line-Up

🕒 5 min



ALL AGES

How it works: Students must arrange themselves in a line in a specific order — by birthday, alphabetical by middle name, height, etc. — WITHOUT SPEAKING.

Why it works: Great energy reset. Forces non-verbal communication. Easy to repeat.

Variations: Number of siblings, shoe size, distance from home to school, age you started a sport.

⚡ ACTIVITY 5 OF 5 · NO MATERIALS NEEDED

Would You Rather (Walking Vote)

🕒 10 min



GRADES 2–8

How it works: You read a "Would you rather..." question. Students walk to one side of the room or the other based on their answer. Then 1 person from each side defends their choice in 30 seconds.

Why it works: Movement + opinions + light debate. Fun even when the questions are silly.

Sample questions: Fly OR be invisible · No phones for a year OR no TV for a year · Always be 10 min early OR 10 min late · Ice cream flavors that change daily but you don't know what tomorrow's is OR pick one for life.

Animals

Find all 10 words. Up, down, diagonal, forward.

X	B	E	A	R	N	H	J	N	B	K	S	K	I
K	R	U	M	V	L	F	M	W	X	P	R	E	C
W	U	A	P	B	I	E	W	O	L	F	Y	X	E
R	Y	Z	P	A	O	M	Z	J	C	V	U	O	H
G	Z	M	C	E	N	L	T	I	G	E	R	T	V
V	L	E	H	G	U	D	B	S	O	T	G	T	P
J	M	N	B	N	O	S	A	F	A	A	P	E	T
Z	X	E	Q	R	J	T	M	H	R	U	V	R	B
R	F	L	Q	U	A	H	E	A	O	I	W	J	Q
O	Z	S	H	Y	F	A	B	K	R	R	W	L	I
U	S	I	N	G	G	B	I	Z	S	E	S	M	Z
F	Z	B	S	L	I	N	K	A	D	W	Q	E	M
K	C	J	E	T	U	A	X	Y	X	W	L	X	F
Q	B	T	O	R	L	T	Z	Z	Y	A	O	E	T

☐ LION

☐ OTTER

☐ RABBIT

☐ TIGER

☐ PANDA

☐ EAGLE

☐ BEAR

☐ ZEBRA

☐ WOLF

☐ HORSE

⚡ WORD SEARCH #2

Foods

Find all 10 words. Up, down, diagonal, forward.

P	F	X	L	J	S	C	F	K	G	O	S	G	O
G	B	O	V	C	U	B	M	E	Z	O	I	N	A
J	Z	U	U	H	Y	A	X	R	U	N	E	D	L
U	V	K	D	Z	P	G	V	P	S	M	C	W	C
H	J	S	Q	I	B	E	B	P	A	S	T	A	U
P	T	N	Z	R	G	L	E	B	H	F	T	Z	R
Z	R	Z	H	S	S	O	U	Z	W	A	I	C	R
W	A	L	Z	X	A	R	W	S	C	Q	M	M	Y
I	W	S	J	P	G	M	U	O	S	G	U	G	S
I	W	H	P	E	Y	D	X	O	S	F	S	A	W
G	L	W	R	O	Y	A	D	W	F	U	V	E	J
T	N	E	J	S	B	B	M	I	Q	P	S	O	A
S	A	L	A	D	V	U	N	E	L	L	T	H	Z
B	A	H	F	R	B	K	D	E	E	D	E	U	I

☐ PIZZA

☐ PASTA

☐ CURRY

☐ BURGER

☐ BAGEL

☐ SOUP

☐ TACO

☐ MUFFIN

☐ SUSHI

☐ SALAD

Sports

Find all 10 words. Up, down, diagonal, forward.

R	S	E	D	I	V	I	N	G	H	C	J	Q	B
Q	K	S	B	F	J	J	T	Q	Y	I	G	F	F
L	I	B	A	S	E	B	A	L	L	R	D	P	W
F	I	Q	V	K	K	D	M	V	I	S	I	B	W
E	N	E	T	D	R	T	F	J	B	D	C	O	Z
D	G	S	E	L	R	T	M	N	L	R	F	X	O
C	L	O	N	R	S	P	D	X	I	M	F	I	T
S	J	C	N	A	U	R	W	C	B	C	C	N	F
M	Q	C	I	G	L	G	K	T	X	X	L	G	V
H	R	E	S	K	C	E	B	H	G	C	M	T	A
J	C	R	H	H	T	V	G	Y	Q	P	N	C	S
B	X	S	X	V	H	O	T	O	G	T	N	D	J
J	I	F	D	I	L	J	V	H	O	C	K	E	Y
I	P	W	W	F	P	F	Q	M	Z	G	W	S	I

☐ SOCCER

☐ RUGBY

☐ BASEBALL

☐ TENNIS

☐ SKIING

☐ CRICKET

☐ GOLF

☐ BOXING

☐ HOCKEY

☐ DIVING

Music

Find all 10 words. Up, down, diagonal, forward.

P	X	F	I	F	F	V	N	E	Z	P	P	A	V
A	S	G	U	I	T	A	R	M	J	I	P	I	O
I	Q	G	Q	I	P	Y	T	A	A	C	O	R	E
C	Q	J	H	S	I	V	K	N	W	L	J	D	V
I	S	Y	M	T	C	Z	O	T	I	K	P	F	G
F	M	Y	P	A	Y	Q	U	N	D	B	Q	E	J
Y	U	E	B	G	S	I	P	D	R	U	M	S	S
E	U	A	C	E	T	E	M	P	O	E	O	A	I
T	N	Q	P	O	L	F	E	Q	L	C	C	Y	N
D	T	K	S	M	I	Y	A	O	C	J	J	I	G
D	E	J	P	K	R	V	D	R	F	M	X	K	E
K	C	H	O	R	D	Y	P	H	C	X	I	W	R
Q	P	P	K	F	O	H	B	B	T	P	K	Z	D
J	W	Y	Z	I	V	P	L	O	V	U	U	W	B

☐ GUITAR

☐ PIANO

☐ DRUMS

☐ VIOLIN

☐ BAND

☐ SINGER

☐ CHORD

☐ MELODY

☐ TEMPO

☐ STAGE

Outdoors

Find all 10 words. Up, down, diagonal, forward.

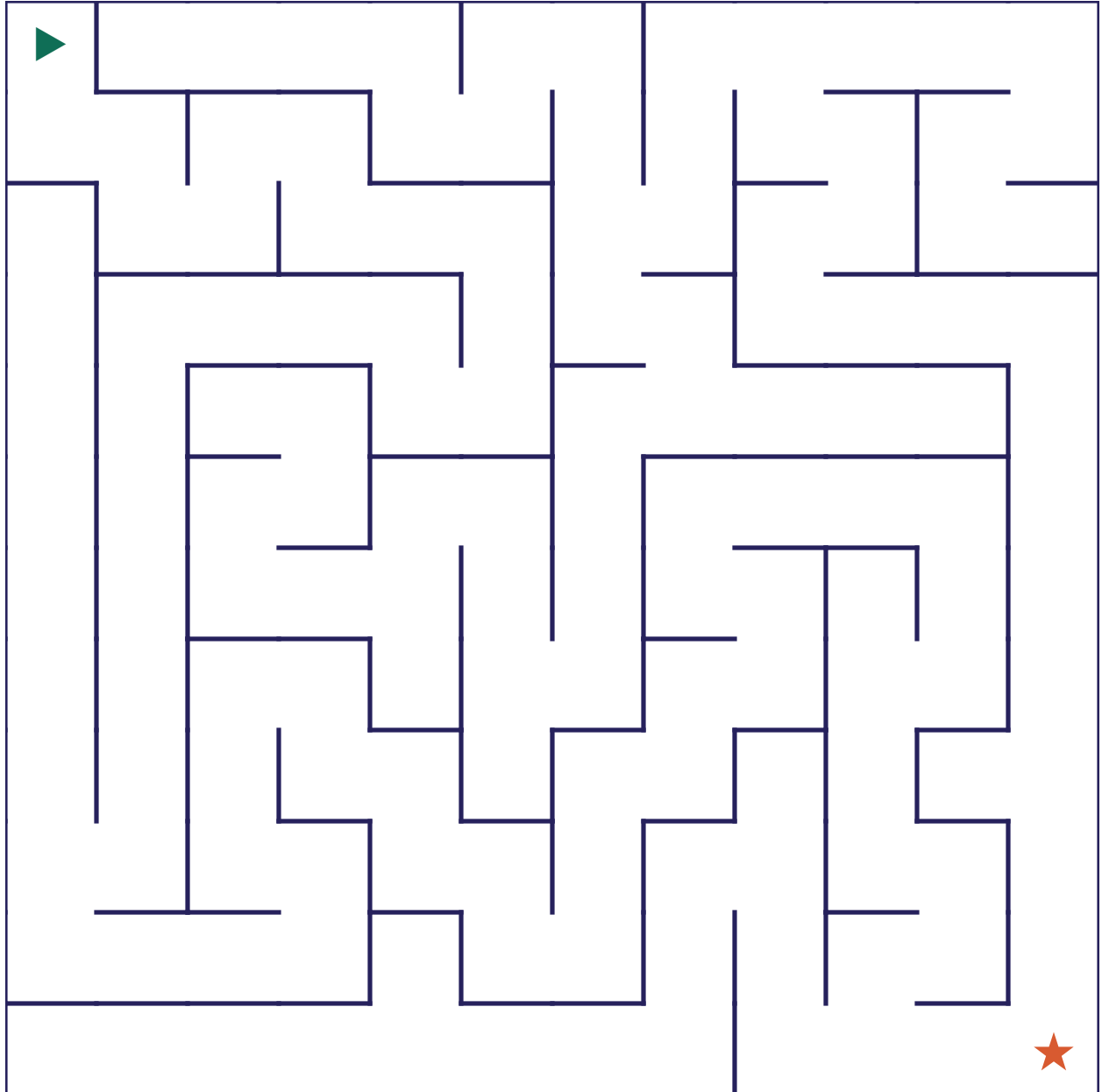
S	G	R	P	M	J	Y	B	J	O	N	I	Q	D
P	W	D	G	R	Y	G	O	B	W	P	W	M	S
I	E	K	B	I	G	L	A	C	I	E	R	O	X
T	X	G	D	V	H	N	H	T	M	C	I	N	A
G	P	Z	Y	E	X	V	L	B	A	A	W	B	R
I	R	N	F	R	S	P	A	N	U	Q	R	E	E
H	A	B	O	O	B	E	Y	L	T	S	O	A	J
Z	I	O	P	S	R	O	R	L	L	C	X	C	W
O	R	P	P	U	N	E	L	T	D	E	A	H	J
R	I	A	W	L	T	K	S	R	Q	K	Y	K	D
D	E	S	K	D	S	N	X	T	K	A	M	Z	A
U	M	E	A	D	O	W	P	N	U	H	N	E	K
E	I	Y	V	E	X	M	O	U	N	T	A	I	N
S	K	N	V	M	U	Q	F	E	J	W	L	Q	W

- ☐ FOREST
- ☐ RIVER
- ☐ MOUNTAIN
- ☐ BEACH
- ☐ DESERT
- ☐ MEADOW
- ☐ CANYON
- ☐ VALLEY
- ☐ GLACIER
- ☐ PRAIRIE

⚡ MAZE #1 · EASY

Find Your Way Out

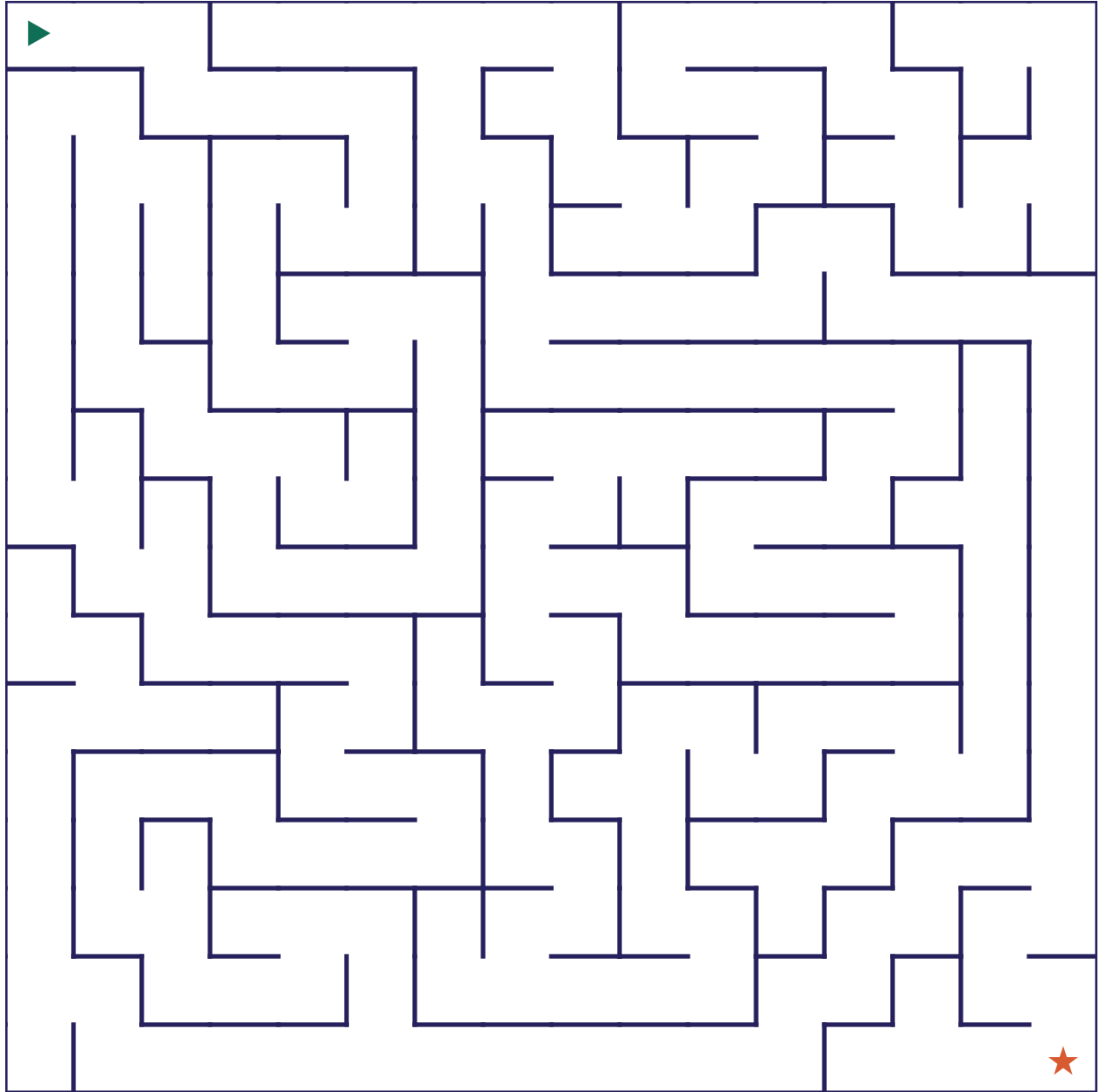
▶ Start top-left · ★ End bottom-right



⚡ MAZE #2 · MEDIUM

Find Your Way Out

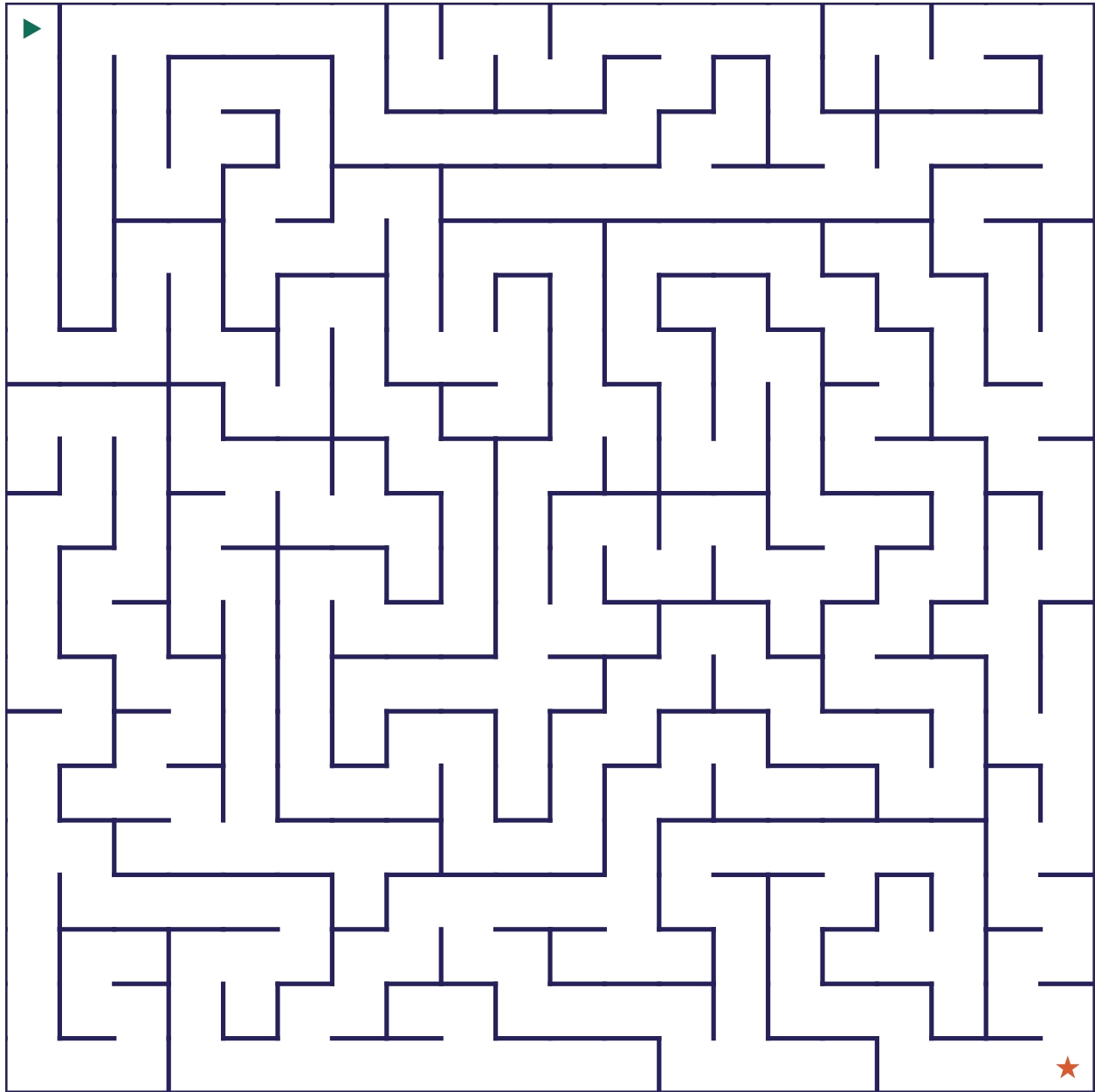
▶ Start top-left · ★ End bottom-right



⚡ MAZE #3 · HARD

Find Your Way Out

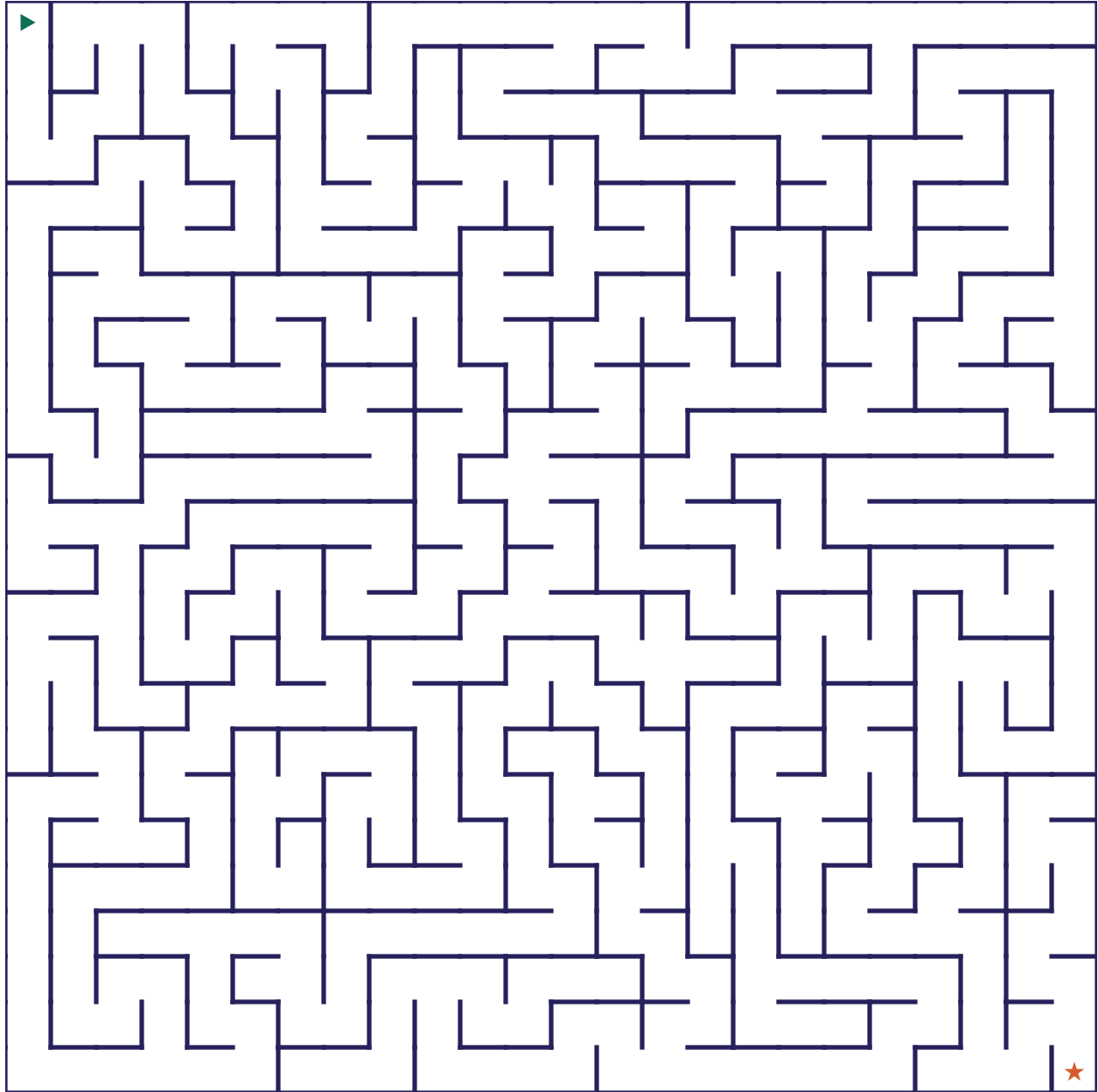
▶ Start top-left · ★ End bottom-right



⚡ MAZE #4 · HARD

Find Your Way Out

▶ Start top-left · ★ End bottom-right



Three Friends, Three Pets

THE PUZZLE

Alex, Sam, and Riley each have one pet. The pets are a dog, a cat, and a parrot. Use these clues to figure out who has which pet:

- Sam does **not** have the dog.
- Riley is allergic to cats.
- Alex's pet can **talk**.

YOUR GRID

	Dog	Cat	Parrot
Alex			
Sam			
Riley			

✓ **ANSWER (don't peek!):** Alex = Parrot · Sam = Cat · Riley = Dog

The Birthday Order

THE PUZZLE

Four friends — Maya, Noah, Priya, and Theo — all have birthdays in different seasons (Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter). Use the clues to figure out each person's season:

- Maya's birthday is in a **cold** season.
- Noah's birthday comes immediately **after** Priya's in the year.
- Theo's birthday is in **Spring**.
- Priya's birthday is **not** in Winter.

YOUR GRID

	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Maya				
Noah				
Priya				
Theo				

✓ **ANSWER:** Theo = Spring · Priya = Summer · Noah = Fall · Maya = Winter

10 Brain-Break Ideas

Use any of these between activities to reset the room.

#1

Stand + Stretch

Stand, reach up high, touch toes, roll shoulders 5x. Sit back down.

#2

Cross-body Taps

Right hand to left knee, left to right. 20 taps. Wakes up your brain.

#3

30-second Silence

Phones down, eyes closed. Count distinct sounds. Share the count.

#4

Power Pose

Stand tall, hands on hips, chin up. Hold 30 seconds. (Actually works.)

#5

Draw a Doodle

30 seconds: draw something using only triangles. Compare with a neighbor.

#6

Compliment Lap

Turn right, give the next person one genuine compliment. Then turn left.

#7

10 Deep Breaths

Together as a class. In through nose, out through mouth.

#8

Word Ladder

Start with CAT. Change one letter at a time: CAT→COT→COG→DOG. Aim for 4.

#9

Share One Thing

One thing each kid noticed this morning. Around the room. One word each.

#10

Rapid Riddle

"What has cities but no houses, mountains but no trees, water but no fish?" (A map.)

⚡ FOR THE REGULAR TEACHER

End-of-Day Reflection

Fill out before leaving. Leave on the teacher\'s desk.

Substitute: _____ **Date:** _____ **Class:**

What we did today:

Students who were especially helpful:

Behavior issues (if any) — please be specific:

Anything unfinished or needing follow-up:

General notes / anything good worth knowing:

Thank you! — sincerely, the Substitute Teacher Survival Kit



THANK YOU

to our substitute teacher

SIGNED BY THE CLASS

— from your students