



**Daniel H. Pink**



**WHEN**

**THE SCIENTIFIC  
SECRETS OF  
PERFECT TIMING**

*Discussion Guide for*  
**EDUCATORS**





1. Pink's central argument is that individuals and organizations pay too little attention to "when" compared with the attention they lavish on "what," "who," and "how." Is that true of schools? Of your school?
2. Think about your own experience teaching. When during the day are students at their best? When do they struggle?
3. Are you a lark, a third bird, or an owl? How does that affect your work?
4. In Chapters 1 and 2, Pink describes a large study in which students performed worse on standardized tests later in the day – but saw their scores rebound if they had a break before an afternoon test. What are the implications of this study for your school?
5. What is your school's approach to recess? Should that approach change? Why or why not?
6. Since it's impossible to fashion a schedule that satisfies everyone, what are smaller ways you can take advantage of the hidden pattern of the day – or at least mitigate its downside?
7. Students often start a semester eager and motivated. But as the weeks wear on, performance can dip. What are some ways to introduce fresh starts to renew their motivation?
8. Even though pediatricians recommend that schools start no earlier than 8:30 am for teenagers, the typical start time in most American schools is far earlier. Is this a problem in your community? If so, is it something educators, parents, and policy makers can change? What's the first step?
9. Research on teams shows that groups often don't begin serious work on a project until they reach the halfway point. What can educators do at the middle of a week, a semester, or a year, or a school project to help students jump rather than slump at midpoints?



10. Burnout is challenge for educators, who are always asked to do more with less and to do it within an unforgiving system. How has your own passion for teaching differed at the beginning, middle, or end of your career?
11. In Chapter 5, Pink describes how four teachers have created endings that elevate. Did these ideas resonate with you? What are a few ways you can be more intentional and uplifting with endings in your own school or classroom?
12. Educators often try to soften negative feedback by starting with good news, yet Pink shows that most people, and presumably most students, prefer to receive the bad news first. How can you use this insight to provide students better feedback?
13. Pink marshals research showing that choral singing is as good for people’s physical and mental health as exercise. If your school has a choir, have you seen positive effects? If your school does not have a choir, should it?
14. What other opportunities does your school offer for students to achieve a “syncher’s high?”
15. Indian dabbawalas deploy three techniques to build group cohesion: codes, garb, and touch. Meantime, research shows that a crucial factor in student success is feeling a sense of belonging. What techniques does your school use to build social cohesion? How can you improve or extend these techniques to deepen students’ sense of belonging?
16. In the final chapter, Pink discusses how difficult it can be to reconcile the “me” of the present with the “me” of the future. What are some ways you can help students integrate these differing temporal identities and steer their current behavior toward their long-term goals?
17. What is one thing you’re going to do tomorrow based on the ideas in this book?

## NOTES

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