

Orbital Studies

What are they?

An orbital study is simply an independent course of study that participants design and complete based on criteria published by the instructor. They are called Orbital Studies because they are extensions of a unit of study on a specific topic that students wish to learn more about. Every orbital study should revolve around the unit's essential understandings. Orbital studies are independent investigations that may last for up to 3-6 weeks. Orbital topics are selected from the curriculum and students choose one of several selected topics to research. The teacher helps in the development of a plan, method of presentation, and rubric for assessment. Students keep logs on their time, the resources they used, and reflections of what was learned.

Why choose Orbital Studies	How to use Orbital Studies	Benefits of Orbital Studies	Challenges of Orbital Studies
<p>This learning tool typically involves students designing a short-term independent project in order to delve deeper into topic that they are already studying in class.</p> <p>The content, process, and product are differentiated by student choice rather than by teacher choice. This leads to a much higher level of engagement.</p>	<p>Teacher assumes a key role in monitoring students' choices, and progress, as well as coaching them for high-quality work.</p> <p>Encourages early finishers to work productively.</p> <p>Students would be much more interested in working on a project that they chose and designed rather than working on something that the teacher gave them.</p>	<p>Focuses on a topic of student interest related to some facet of the curriculum</p> <p>Teachers help students develop a clear question for study, a plan for research, a method of presentation, and criteria for quality</p> <p>Provide much flexibility</p> <p>Ideal way to address both commonalities and differences among learners.</p> <p>When class-work is completed, students have a focus to spend extra time on.</p> <p>Students will be engaged because they will feel they have some ownership.</p>	<p>Much of the work on Orbitals is completed at home, which could be difficult if there is not adequate support at home.</p> <p>Orbitals require a high level of teacher guidance, which could be a deterrent for some teachers and would definitely provide extra challenges for any busy teacher.</p> <p>Students who need help may not ask.</p> <p>What types of extensions could teachers use to make sure that some Orbital topics are challenging enough for gifted learners.</p>