

Classroom Management Tips

Room Arrangement

Your organization, or the lack thereof, will directly impact your teaching and the learning of your students. The environment should captivate their interest and motivate them to learn. Effective teachers have their room ready, the work ready, and themselves ready.

Keys to Successful Room Arrangement:

- Use a room arrangement consistent with your instructional goals and activities.
- Keep high traffic areas free of congestion.
- Make sure that you have easy access to all of your students.
- Be sure students are easily seen by the teacher.
- Keep frequently used teaching materials and student supplies readily accessible.
- Be certain students can easily see instructional presentations and displays.

Room Arrangement Checklist

To organize and keep track of your activities as you arrange your room and get supplies and equipment ready, you might find it helpful to use this checklist.

Bulletin Board and Walls

Floor Space

- Student Desks/Tables
- Teacher's Desk
- Equipment
- Bookcases
- Work Areas
- Centers

Storage Space and Supplies

- Textbooks
- Frequently-Used Instructional Materials
- Teacher's Supplies
- Other materials
- Equipment
- Seasonal Items
- Special Project Materials

Various Types of Room Arrangements for Consideration

How you interact with your students and how they interact with you is greatly determined by the set up of your room.

The Traditional Classroom

Advantages:

1. Focuses the students' attention on the teacher and/or chalkboard
2. Permits easy teacher-student interaction

Disadvantages:

1. Teacher-centered
2. Not conducive to cooperative learning

Cooperative Learning (Groups)

Advantages:

1. Student-centered
2. Promotes cooperative learning and group interaction

Disadvantages:

1. Creates opportunities for off-task behavior
2. Some students may have their backs to a central point during instruction

Pairs

Advantages:

1. Combines advantages of traditional and group arrangements
2. Allows students

Disadvantages:

1. Not fully conducive to independent practice
2. May be difficult to pair students in the right combinations

Facing Rows

Advantages:

1. Permits easy access for teacher to students

Disadvantages:

1. "Red Rover" effect: students may interact as two opposing groups; may promote socialization and off-task behavior
2. May be difficult for some students to focus on a central point during instruction

Semi-Circle

Advantages:

Permits easy access for teacher to students

Permits easy focus on a central location

Disadvantages:

Difficult to use with a large class size

May be difficult to keep chairs in order from class to class

Learning Centers

Advantages:

Allows students to engage in meaningful exploration

Permits easy access for teacher to students

Disadvantages:

None to the student.

Requires thorough planning on the part of the teacher

Classroom Rules vs. Procedures

The number one problem in the classroom is not discipline; it is the lack of procedures and routines. Classroom rules and procedures are often confused.

A rule is a specific way to behave or not to behave. A procedure is how you want something done. The number of rules in classrooms is usually limited to between five and eight. However, there is no limit to the number of procedures.

Another key difference between rules and procedures is what happens when they're not followed. When students fail to follow classroom rules, negative consequences usually result. When students fail to follow a procedure, teachers need to take time to reteach and talk students through the steps again.

Classroom rules define your expectations of appropriate student behavior.

These rules reflect the behaviors you want to see habitually practiced in your classroom. They communicate which behaviors are most important for students to follow. You set limits on your students' behavior by enforcing these rules.

When students fully understand what's expected and know the rules will be enforced, they behave appropriately. They appreciate the fairness of a uniform set of rules that everyone follow and the sense of security they gain when they know the teacher is in control, providing guidance and direction.

Rules can be general or specific. General rules – like codes of conduct- are stated globally and encompass many different behaviors. In contrast, specific rules refer to one behavior. For example, a general rule is “Be Polite,” whereas a specific rule is “Say please when asking for something and thank you when receiving it.” There are advantages and disadvantages to both types of rules.

General rules offer flexibility in their interpretation. General rules like “Be Kind,” “Be Safe,” and “Respect Others” address many behaviors. This eliminates student-teacher argument about whether or not a specific behavior is against the rules. A drawback to general rules is that they must be clearly explained so

students know precisely what behaviors the rule encompasses. They need to be made behavioral and observable. For example, students need to know that “Be Respectful” means using polite language with you and their peers, asking before they borrow something, cleaning up materials, and taking special care of property belonging to others.

Specific rules, on the other hand, address individual behaviors. The advantage to specific rules is that they clearly state expected student behavior. Students know exactly what is and isn’t allowed. Examples of specific rules include “Be in your seat at 8:30,” “Stack your notebook on top of your workbook when you finish assignments,” and “Keep your hands to yourself.”

Whether general or specific, the classroom rules need to be applicable in all classroom situations and consistent with the school-wide rules.

How to Write Rules

Set a limit of three to five classroom rules. Having more than five rules typically results in both you and your students having difficulty remembering all the rules, which makes your rules hard to manage. If you have to consult a lengthy rulebook before asking students to change their behavior, you might have too many rules! Keep in mind, that you can teach an endless number of procedures. If you have more than five rules, post only five at a time. If you find you need a new rule, replace an older one with it. The older rule becomes an “unwritten” rule – one that everyone in the classroom understands is still enforced. The rule that is replaced should be one that students have internalized.

Because you should try to keep the number of rules in your classroom to fewer than five, carefully consider what rules you’ll post and enforce. To determine what rules you’ll use, think about what you want to accomplish in your classroom in the short-term and in the long-term. Think in terms of “if students would only...” This activity will help you identify what students will be realistically able to do. For example, if you hold many whole class discussions and you want one of your rules to be, “Raise Your Hand.” You might rather have a rule that says, “Only one person speaks at a time.” On the other hand, if your teaching style involves many question and answer sessions, you may want to use “Raise Your Hand” as a rule. Or, you may begin the year with the rule “Raise Your Hand” and progress to “Only one person speaks at a time” when students are ready.

Effective rules need to be understandable by your students. When composing rules, consider what vocabulary is appropriate for your students, and be sure to write them in positive and behavioral terms. They tell students what to do, not what they shouldn’t do. “No Hitting” becomes either the specific rule, “Keep your hands to yourself,” or the general rule, “Respect Others.” Positively stated rules imply that the negative behavior is prohibited. For example, “Leave the classroom only with permission,” implies that leaving the room without permission is not allowed. Or, “You may talk when given permission,” implies, “Don’t talk without permission.” Exceptions include rules that are incontestable like, “No fighting,” “No weapons,” “No smoking,” “No drugs,” or “No gang

behavior.” Present these statements as givens, rules that are non-negotiable and are understood by everyone.

Academic behavior should not be on your list of rules. Passing in homework, completing in-class assignments, using a pencil in math class, and keeping notebooks up-to-date, should all be covered through teaching of classroom procedures. Your rules should deal with behavior, not academic work.

Here are some examples to consider:

In class behavior

- Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
- Have permission before leaving your seat.
- Use kind words when speaking to others.
- Respect other people’s property.
- Take responsibility for your actions.

Complying with teacher directions

- Do what the teacher asks.
- Follow teacher directions the first time they are given.

Transitioning

- Keep your hands at your sides when in line.
- Stay in a straight line.
- Keep voices low.

Talking in class

- Raise your hand for permission to speak.
- Talk to friends only during free time.
- One person speaks at a time.

Classroom rules guide the behavior of your students. Your rules should reflect your highest priorities as well as the current abilities of your students. They should be written in clear, positive, behavioral terms so students know exactly how to behave in your classroom.

What should I establish procedures for?

Start of the Day/Class

- Entering the classroom
- Completing “Do Now” or “Bell Work” activities
- Finding directions for procedures and assignments
- Attendance check
- Previously absent students

- Tardy students
- Storing personal belongings
- Reporting lunch needs

Class Participation

- Listening
- Responding to questions
- Asking questions
- Participating in class discussions
- Responding to attention signals
- Obtaining help
- What to do when done

Assignments

- Organizing and maintaining notebooks
- Writing correct headings on papers
- Handing in homework
- Handing in class work
- Selecting appropriate activities after completing assignments

General

- Using the bathroom
- Using the water fountain
- Listening to intercom announcements
- Greeting classroom visitors
- Reporting illness or accidents
- Behavior during interruptions
- Returning to a task after an interruption
- Returning to school after an absence
- Exchanging papers for correcting work
- Housekeeping and Materials
- Keeping desks orderly
- Checking out classroom materials
- Returning classroom materials
- Sharpening pencils

End of Class Routines

- Responding to end-of-period class dismissal signal
- Cleaning up
- Getting homework assignments
- Packing up personal belongings

Moving Around the School

- Lining up
- Transitioning to/from cafeteria
- Transitioning to/from library
- Transitioning to/from physical education
- Transitioning to/from the auditorium
- Walking in the hall during class time

Emergency Procedures

- Responding to a fire drill
- Responding to an earthquake
- Responding to a severe weather alert

Assemblies

- Getting seated
- Showing appreciation

Lunchroom

- Waiting in lunch line
- Getting seated
- Using quiet voices
- Taking care of trash

Field Trips

- Returning permission slips
- Preparing to leave the school