

11 ways to maintain classroom discipline

Helping students to govern their own behavior in ways that help them learn is a long-standing goal of all teachers. There are a number of ways in which a teacher can promote good discipline.

Be friendly. Be the kind of person children like and trust. Be firm, fair, friendly, courteous, enthusiastic, confident, and orderly. Keep your sense of humor.

Get to know your students. You will soon develop almost a sixth sense for anticipating trouble before it begins, and do not act as though you expect trouble or you will almost certainly encounter some.

Make education interesting and relevant to the students' lives. Poor planning and a full curriculum can provoke disruption.

Don't use threats to enforce discipline. Never humiliate a child.

Avoid arguing with a student. Discussions about class work are invaluable, but arguments can become emotional encounters.

Let students know you care. Determine jointly with the class what is acceptable in terms of behavior and achievement and what is not. Show interest in what students say.

Develop class rules.

Use approximately five rules.

State them clearly.

Make them short and easy to memorize.

State them positively.

Get a commitment (show of hands, vote, contract, bulletin board display).

Teach each rule (share expectations).

Establish a plan with no more than five consequences for behavior. A warning, a timeout, a longer time-out, calling the parents, going to the principal. Make sure your students know and understand the consequences.

Notice good behavior. Children need to know that they are doing well in addition to knowing the things they need to change. Catch children when they are sharing, helping other children with hard tasks, and dealing with frustration—and immediately compliment them.

Give reasonable assignments. Don't use schoolwork as punishment. And give clear directions.

Be fair to your students. Here are some ways to help you win the respect of your students:

- ◆ Be consistent in application of discipline and just in your requirements and assignments.
- ◆ Don't refuse to let a student tell you his or her side of the situation. Be willing to consider mitigating circumstances.
- ◆ Ask the student what she/he would do in your place.
- ◆ Don't talk about the misdeeds of students except to those who have a right to know.
- ◆ Don't openly compare one pupil to another.
- ◆ Apologize if you've treated a student unjustly.
- ◆ Make sure punishments are appropriate for misbehavior, and explain to the student why he or she is being punished.