

Tips for maintaining discipline in the classroom

A disciplined classroom is essential for learners and teachers to succeed. Any teacher will tell you that having a loud, unruly class with a lack of discipline is not conducive to successful learning. Developing your classroom management skills is the key to maintaining a respectful and learning-positive environment. A bit of skill and planning, as well as getting pupils on board with your expectations and the consequences of their own actions, will pay dividends in the attention span and overall engagement in your lessons.

Why is maintaining discipline important?

A well-disciplined classroom means a more positive learning environment. Children, especially younger children, are naturally active creatures for whom sitting at a desk for 5 hours a day will not come naturally. Discipline doesn't have to mean children sitting silently and listening to the teacher but it does mean contributing in a way that's respectful to other members of the class. Removing distractions of unruly behaviours will enable all of your learners to concentrate on the lesson being delivered.

Five ways to manage classroom discipline

1. Create consistency

Students of all ages will react positively to a consistent approach to discipline. It's essential that your pupils know what is expected of them. Make it clear from the start what your expectations are for behaviour in your class. Ensuring that your pupils know the rules and why they are in place should be enough to stem most casual behaviour issues. If students are aware of the consequences of their actions they are less likely to misbehave in the first place.

2. Differentiate between punishment and rewards

Involving students in the creation of rules or codes of conduct for the classroom, such as by designing a poster or reward system for a display is a way to build your expectations into the class culture. Display the class code of conduct prominently in your classroom. Make sure that there are rewards for good behaviour as well as punishments for negative behaviours. For primary school children, a treat such as being able to wear their slippers for the day, getting to give out worksheets, or being the first to choose a book will often be enough to motivate good behaviour. For older children, an end-of-term pizza or Friday afternoon movie might be a suitable reward.

3. Dont reward disruption with attention

Most of the time, pupils act badly through boredom, disengagement or because they are seeking attention. Although it's hard, try not to give the perpetrator too much of your attention. Deal with the culprit appropriately and in line with the class code of conduct. Don't allow bad discipline to take over the lesson deal with the incident and move quickly back to the learning activities you have planned.

4. Keep things exciting

Great classroom discipline goes hand in hand with lessons that capture your pupil's interests. Get to know your students and their interests so that you can tailor lessons to be as engaging as possible for them. Does your class love Minecraft? There are some fantastic minecraft-based challenges here designed around in-person and remote learning. Do your students light up when they are outside? Find some great outdoor activities for older pupils here. Although it's not always possible, planning engaging lessons that involve movement will reduce the likelihood of discipline issues, especially if your class can expend some energy at the same time!

5. Wipe the slate clean

Once a pupil has suffered the consequences of their actions, there is no point in dwelling on bad behaviour. No students are inherently 'bad' and it's important that your pupils come to school with a fresh outlook each day. Make it clear to your pupils that you wipe the metaphorical slate clean daily and everyone gets a fresh chance each day.

Very few classes need zero behaviour monitoring, if you do get one, you can consider it a very rare find! Most classes have a wide mix of personalities and work ethics and it's important to balance individual needs with the needs of the whole class. A consistent approach and great planning can reduce the amount of time you have to spend monitoring behaviour and develop a culture of good behaviour which will positively impact your student's entire school career.

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