

Manage Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom

Learn Some Effective Classroom Management Techniques

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Teaching adults is very different from teaching children. If you are new to teaching adults, hopefully you have been provided with training in this area, but if not, you can prepare yourself. Start with [Principles for the Teacher of Adults](#). You will also find help here: [Crucial Skills for the Teacher of Adults](#)

Establishing Norms

Setting classroom norms at the very beginning of a class is one of the best methods of classroom management.

Hang a flip chart or poster or dedicate a section of white board if you have the space and list expected [classroom behaviors](#). Refer to this list when disruptions occur. Using a flip chart or whiteboard can be especially useful because you can involve students in the construction of the list on the first day and in that way get buy-in. Start with a few of your own [expectations](#) and ask the group for additional suggestions. When you all agree on how you want the classroom to be managed, disruptions are minimal.

Your list of norms may look something like this:

- Start and end on time
- Turn off or silence cell phones
- Save texting for breaks
- Respect the contributions of others
- Be open to new ideas
- Resolve differences calmly
- Stay on topic

Saving Questions for Later

It's always a good idea to address questions of any kind when they occur because curiosity provides fabulous teaching moments, but sometimes it just isn't appropriate to get off track.

Many teachers use a flip chart or white board as a holding place for such questions to ensure they're not forgotten. Call your holding place something appropriate to your topic. I've seen parking lots and flower pots. Be [creative](#). When a question being held is eventually answered, mark it off the list.

Managing Mild Disruptions

Unless you've got a completely obnoxious student in your classroom, chances are good that disruptions, when they do occur, will be fairly mild, calling for mild management. We're talking about disruptions like chatting in the back of the room, texting, or someone who is argumentative or disrespectful.

Try one, or more, if necessary, of the following tactics:

Make eye contact with the disruptive person

Remind the group of the agreed-upon norms

Move toward the disruptive person

Stand directly in front of the person

Be silent and wait for the disruption to end

Acknowledge the input, put it in your "parking lot" if appropriate, and go on

"You may be right."

"Thanks for your comment."

"How about if we park that comment and come back to it later."

Ask for help from the group

"What does everyone else think?"

Rearrange the seating if you think it will help

Call for a break

Handling Persistent Disruptions

For more serious problems, or if the disruption persists, use our [Steps to Conflict Resolution](#). Here's an overview:

Speak with the person privately

Confront the behavior, not the person

Speak for yourself only, not the class

Seek to understand the reason for the disruption

Ask the person to recommend a solution

Review your expectations of classroom behavior if necessary

Try to get agreement on expected norms

Explain any consequences of continued disruptions

Sharing Challenges

It's generally unprofessional to share frustrations about individual students with other teachers who may be influenced toward that person in the future. This doesn't mean you can't consult with others. Just choose your confidants carefully.

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