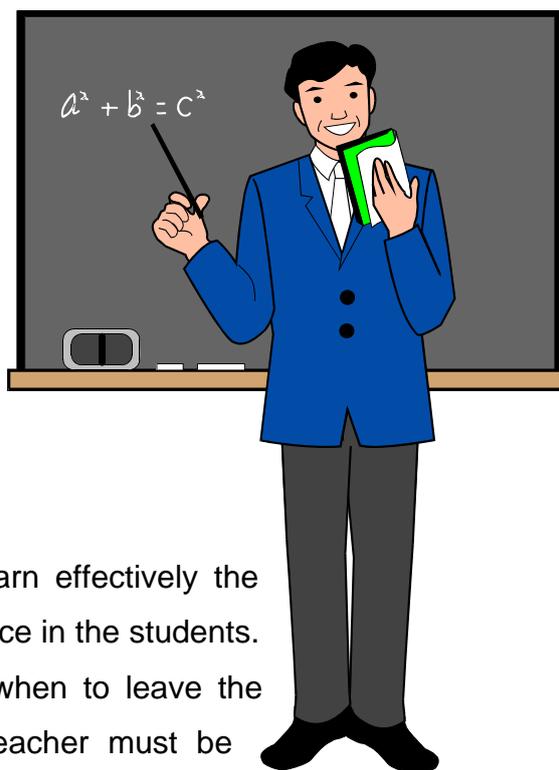


Classroom Management - Introduction

Contrary to popular belief, it is not true that you have to be an extrovert to be a good teacher in the classroom. Some good teachers are very low-key, while other teachers, both lively and amusing, are regarded as nothing more than entertainers. You will find your own style of teaching through practice in the classroom.



However, for a class to be able to learn effectively the teacher must be able to inspire confidence in the students. We must know when to be firm and when to leave the students alone. In other words the teacher must be flexible and change his/her role according to the activity and situation without being dominant or leaving the students uncertain.

Classroom Management is the skill of organising and managing the class, having a friendly, relaxed manner and maintaining discipline.

After thoroughly reading through this unit, complete the worksheet as usual.

Eye contact, gesture and the voice

As we all know it is very difficult to speak to someone who is always looking elsewhere or someone who looks us in the eye all of the time. Also, we are aware that eye contact can convey messages.

Good eye contact in the classroom is essential to establishing good rapport with the students. A teacher who never looks students in the eye will appear to lack confidence and could then have problems with discipline – on the other hand, staring at the students is not very productive either.

How can eye contact be used in the classroom?

- To show students that they are all involved in the lesson.
- To ensure that students understand what they are supposed to do and what is going on.
- To indicate who is to speak (often with a nod of the head).
- To encourage contributions.
- To hold the attention of students who are not being addressed.
- To maintain discipline.
- To signal students to start, stop or get a move on.
- To indicate that something is correct or incorrect.
- To check that everybody is participating.

Bear in mind that eye contact should be avoided during any activity which is not teacher-centred (an activity where the focus is on fluency, or the students are working together in pairs/groups).

Gesture

Good use of gestures (at least commonly understood international gestures) can be effective and useful in the following ways:

Convey the meaning of language

Manage the class – e.g. to reinforce instructions

To add visual interest

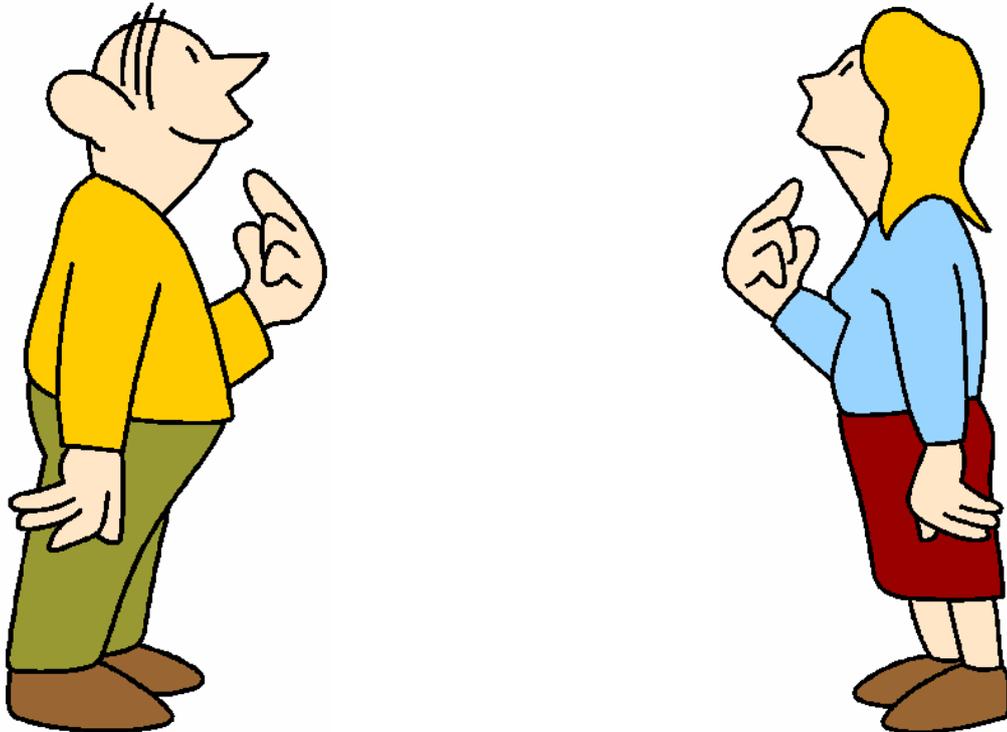
To increase the pace of the lesson

To reduce the need for verbal explanation

Think about which gestures you could use for the following situations.

- listen: *Put your hand behind your ear*
- repeat in chorus:
- get into pairs:
- stop:
- good:
- not right:
- nearly right:
- unusual idea:
- identifying a student:

Gestures should only be used if they are obvious in meaning or the meaning has already been established with the students.



The voice

If your voice does not have the correct clarity, range, variety or projection, you will have a difficult time in making your instruction / explanations understood to all members of the class.

Your voice should change naturally according to the circumstances, e.g. individual tutoring lesson or 16 young children. Obviously greater projection will be necessary in a large, noisy classroom than a small quiet room. An effective teacher will also adapt the complexity of his/her language to suit the level and ability of the students.

As a class often follows the lead of the teacher, the lesson can be livened up or quietened down by an alteration in the teacher's volume.

The greater the variation of the voice, the greater the effectiveness. A dull monotone will only create boredom and lead to students not paying attention and misbehaving.

Using students' names

Student's names can be used when you want to:

- organise an activity
- acknowledge the students
- indicate who is to answer or respond
- get the attention of a student

The name of a student should be used at the end of the question, not at the start. This keeps the whole class alert, as they do not know who will have to answer.

Grouping students

There is no real limit to the way a teacher can group students, though factors such as class size and classroom furniture can be problematic. Activities geared to the whole class, students working alone, pairs and larger groups are all appropriate and each has its own place in the classroom.

Whole-class grouping – pros and cons

- Creates a sense of belonging among the group.
- Allows students to interact with any other class members.
- Suitable for activities where the teacher needs to be in control/have the attention of the class as a whole.
- Quicker and easier organization.
- Reduces opportunities for students to speak.
- Can be off-putting to shy students who may not wish to participate in front of the whole class.

Students working on their own – pros and cons

- Allows teachers to respond to individual differences in pace of learning, ability etc.
- Less stressful for students than contributing in front of the whole class.
- Helps the student become more self-reliant.
- Restricts possibilities for student to student interaction and group belonging.

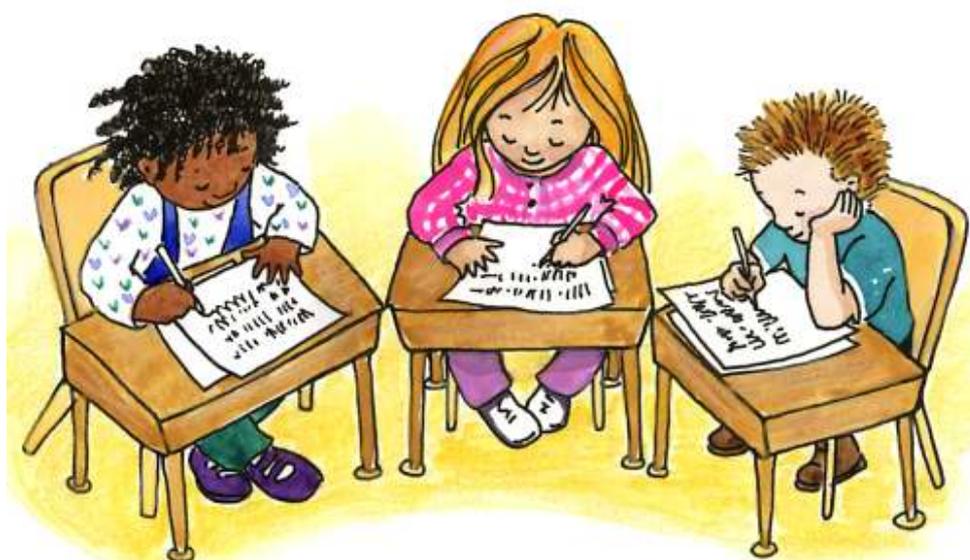
Pairwork – pros and cons

- Dramatically increases opportunity for student talking time and student to student interaction.
- Allows teacher to work with certain pairs while others continue working.
- Gives students a safe environment to try out ideas before sharing with the group.
- Allows students to share ideas and thoughts.
- Allows stronger students to help and support weaker ones.
- Allows students to share responsibility for work and removes the burden from the individual.
- Quick and easy to organize.
- Can be rather noisy. Students may try to revert back to their native language and avoid using English.
- Some students prefer to communicate only with the teacher and don't like interacting with another student.
- Students may find themselves working with a partner they don't particularly like.

Groupwork – pros and cons

- Like pair-work, it can visibly increase student talking time and student to student interaction.
- Personal problems are less problematic than in pairs.
- Encourages students to cooperate and negotiate in English.
- Students are able to choose their level of participation.
- Sometimes is very noisy.
- Can take longer to organize and get started.
- The exchange of ideas among group members can slow activities down too much.
- Some group members may dominate and passive students don't get adequate opportunity to participate.

The grouping you choose is likely to be very much dictated by the class size and type of activity. It is a good idea, where possible, to mix things up to create as much variety as possible. In order to allow sufficient opportunity for student talking time and active participation, a fair amount of pair and group work should be used, particularly in study and activate stages.



Classroom arrangement

The way in which you organise the position of the students and yourself is of great importance and largely depends on the following:

- Space available
- Type of chairs / tables
- Age of the students
- Nationality
- Student personality

You may feel that it is better to put a weak student together with a stronger one for pair-work activities. In any group you will, at least occasionally, want to mix pairs as it adds variety if the students get to work with different people and personalities. The mixing of pairs is also an effective way of dealing with pairs who do not work well together or become problematic when working with each other.

As a teacher you have the authority to move the students for the benefit of an activity, cohesion or discipline. This should be done firmly but politely, and from the start of the course, so that the students do not get too used to sitting in one place. However, students should not be moved without reason. There must be some purpose to it that the students can see.

Where the teacher has the space and conditions to be able to vary the seating arrangements he/she will need to consider a number of issues. The type of activity and the answer to the following questions should help the teacher decide which is the most suitable for each lesson or stage of the lesson.

- How are the teacher/student relationships likely to vary in each case?
- How will it affect the classroom atmosphere?
- Which arrangements are the most conducive to the teacher maintaining effective control over the class?
- In which situation will the teacher dominate most? What will the teacher's role be in each case?
- Which arrangement is the most suitable for the students to be able to talk to each other?
- Which arrangements allow the students to communicate without interference from the teacher?
- How will the size of the group affect the arrangement?
- What activities might be suitable for each possible arrangement?

Orderly Rows

This has been the traditional form of seating for many years in most schools. The teacher has a clear view of all the students and all the students can see the teacher. It makes lecturing easy, enables the teacher to maintain eye contact and helps reduce discipline problems. If the rows are well-organized the teacher should be able to move freely around the classroom. Such seating is particularly effective for whole class activities. In larger classes of twenty five or more students it is often the best and only solution.



Circles and horseshoes

Often used in smaller classes where the teacher and board are situated at the open end of the arrangement. The teacher's position is less dominating and there is less of a feeling that a student is at the front or back of the classroom. This often allows students to be more focused on the lesson. These arrangements often make pairwork easier and allow students to have eye contact with all other class members. The classroom in effect becomes far more intimate.

Separate tables

When students are seated in small groups at individual tables the classroom becomes even more informal. It is easy for the teacher to work at one table while the other groups continue their work. This is particularly useful for groupwork but can create discipline problems when students feel that they are part of a small group rather than the class as a whole. The teacher will probably be unable to maintain eye contact with all students.

The teacher's position

Students are often sensitive to your position in the classroom and whether you are sitting or standing. It can tell them:

- What kind of activity it is
- What the teacher's role will be
- What the students are expected to do

If you stand, then you will be able to be seen by all students, move around the classroom and control the class. However, it can be tiring and make the students feel dominated. If you sit, you are slightly relaxing control of the class, you can have your materials at hand and make the classroom atmosphere feel more intimate. When monitoring the students' work, try to do so without intruding and stopping the flow. Monitor at the start of the activity to check that they have understood, and again about halfway through to check on progress and pace.

What should the teacher's position and movement be during the following lesson stages?

Language presentation – the teacher will probably want the attention of the whole class, so standing is the best option.

Giving instructions – As above the teacher needs the attention of all students.

Reading activities – When students are reading there is no real need for the teacher to dominate so much. Sitting and occasional monitoring of progress would be appropriate here.

Activation stage – The teacher should relax control completely and be available if needed. The teacher should remain at a distance from the activity, preferably seated.

Controlled practice – Occasional monitoring but otherwise the teacher should allow the students to focus on the activity.

Checking work in progress – The teacher will want to move from group to group but without intruding and stopping the flow of the work.

Writing on the board

Unfortunately, there is no way you can avoid turning your back to the students during board-work. There are, however, a number of ways in which you can reduce the amount of time you spend with your back to the class.

- Use an overhead projector (OHP) if possible
- Prepare cards with vocabulary
- Invite the students to write on the board for you
- Write on the board whilst students are engaged on a different task
- Write in small sections and turn around to face the class every now and again.
- Make sure that you always have chalk, board pens or OHT markers and erasers to hand – they often get mislaid, 'borrowed' or worn out!
- Have board work already up before the class starts. If you don't want the students to see this immediately, you could always cover it with a sheet of paper until it's needed.



Giving individual attention

- Make sure you know all the students' names. Don't just pick on the students whose names you know.
- If necessary, spend longer with students who do not understand or who cannot do the task, but try to keep the other students occupied by giving them a task to get on with.
- Don't teach exclusively to only the strong or weak students.
- Don't go around the room asking students in order. It is very predictable and students will not pay attention until they have to. If you don't use any regular order, then the class will be kept on its toes.
- Don't allow individual students to "hog" your attention or the limelight.
- Remember to include all students equally in any activity.
- If students do not want to, or cannot contribute, it may be better to let them remain silent. They should never feel that they are being picked on. To help build such a student's confidence, ask him/her simple questions that you know he/she is likely to be able to answer correctly, giving praise when he/she responds.

Teacher talking time and Student talking time

The balance between TTT and STT largely depends on the type of lesson / activity, and on the level of the students. In the classroom the teacher will speak more when:

- Presenting, checking, modelling or clarifying
- Providing language input
- Giving instructions, setting up activities
- Establishing rapport

Advantages of TTT

A vital component of learning a language is exposure to it. The teacher should be able to provide the students with a source of natural, correct English that is specifically geared to the students' ability. Very few other resources can provide such comprehensible language input.

Disadvantages of TTT

Whenever the teacher is talking the students should be listening and therefore not talking themselves. This reduces the amount of time available for students to speak and actively participate in the class. We should therefore try to keep TTT to minimal levels while still realizing that it plays a useful role.

How to avoid unnecessary TTT

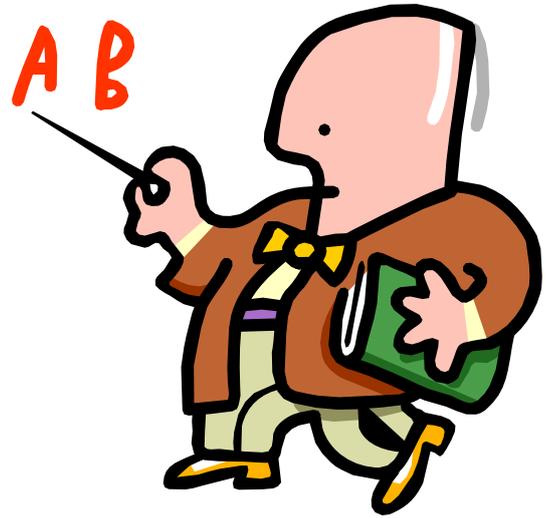
- Choose carefully the language for explanations and instructions
- Avoid TEFL jargon
- Use gestures, mime or pictures
- Don't over-elaborate
- Use language that is below the level being taught.
- Basically, keep it simple!



Giving instructions

How can you make your instructions effective?

- By attracting the student's attention.
- Making sure everyone is listening and not working. Don't give out handouts that may distract attention.



Using simple language

- Use language at a lower level than that being taught.
- Longer more complex language wastes time, slows the students down and is prone to misunderstanding.

Being consistent

- Use the same set of words for the same instruction (everybody, again, look, listen, repeat, say, turn to page ...)
- With beginners, teach them the necessary language for following instructions.

Using visual clues

- Reinforce instructions with visual clues; realia (real objects brought into the classroom), mime, gesture and pictures
- Write the instructions on the board (or use cue cards) if you want the students to do different things. Give one instruction at a time. Don't weigh the students down with numerous, lengthy instructions that will not be understood or will be forgotten by the time they come round to doing the task.
- Give a demonstration as an example. Usually, showing is more effective than telling.

Checking the instructions

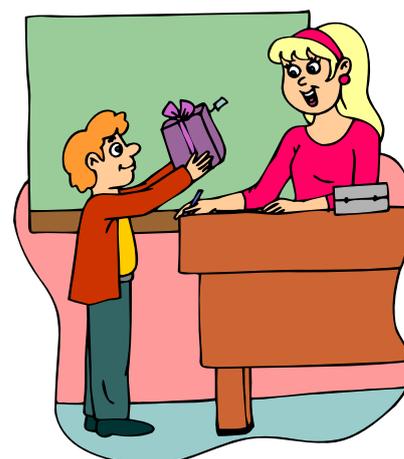
- Ask questions to *check* they understand the instructions. "Do you understand?" is not an acceptable question as it does not check. Asking students to explain back to you is far more effective and does check if they have understood.
- Monitor to see if they are following instructions correctly.

Establishing rapport

Rapport between the teacher and students (and between the students themselves) plays an important part in determining if a class is successful and enjoyable. Students are more likely to contribute and take part in the lessons when the atmosphere is relaxed and they get on well with the teacher. While the students play a large part in setting the atmosphere in the classroom, it can be encouraged and stimulated by the general attitude and approach of the teacher.

Here are some practical ways to help establish rapport and class spirit:

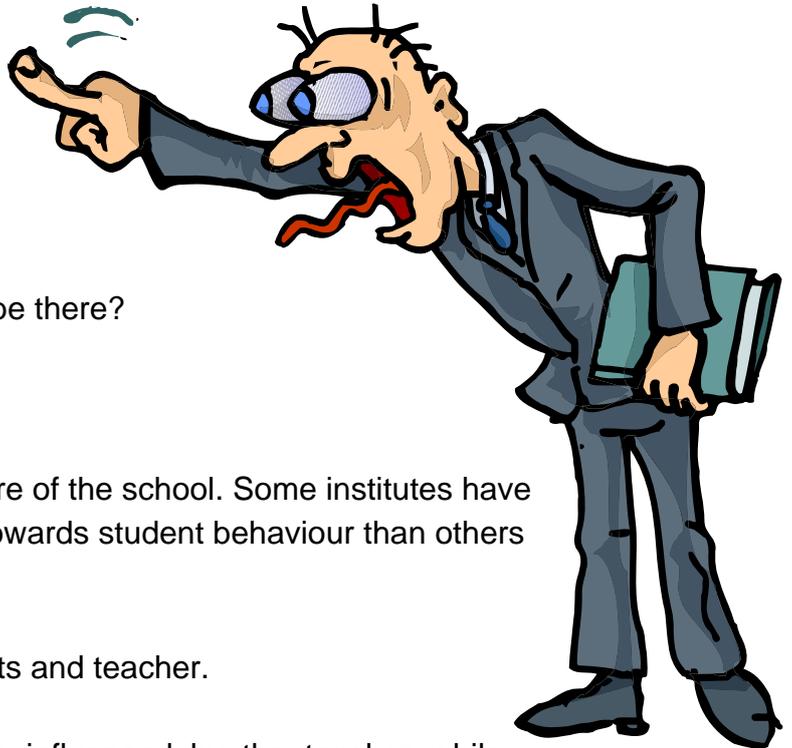
- When making seating arrangements, be aware of which students get on well together and which do not.
- Make sure the students know each other's names and a little basic information about each other.
- At the beginning of a course have an ice breaking activity.
- Choose materials and activities that involve the students talking to each other and sharing personal opinions / ideas.
- Use plenty of pair-work and group-work activities.
- Change pairs frequently so that students have a chance to work with a variety of people.
- Get the students to help each other.
- Let students correct each other.
- Do not let individual students dominate the group (or yourself).
- Do not supply everything yourself. Elicit from the students and get them involved.
- Give clear instructions.
- Look as if you enjoy the job.
- Have the right manner.
- Be positive in everything you do.
- Show personal interest in the students.
- Personalize activities to students' surroundings and interests.
- Ask for comments and opinions from the students.
- Don't forget to smile!



Maintaining Discipline

The degree to which you will have to maintain discipline will largely depend upon a number of factors:

- Age of the students.
- Reasons for learning (motivation).
- Do the students want to be there?
- Class size.
- Principles and atmosphere of the school. Some institutes have a much stricter attitude towards student behaviour than others do.
- Respect between students and teacher.



Some of these factors can be influenced by the teacher while others cannot. It is important that the teacher strikes the correct balance between exercising control and encouraging a relaxed, friendly atmosphere conducive to learning. When in doubt, err on the side of control initially, especially with children and teenagers. It is much easier to relax control at a later stage than to exert it.

Reasons for problem behaviour

There are many reasons why disciplinary problems can occur in the classroom. These can often include:

- Family problems
- Low self-esteem
- Boredom
- Peer pressure
- Lack of respect for the teacher/other students
- Class size

Some of these problems are out of your hands but many disciplinary issues can be prevented by the teacher.

Preventing problem behaviour

You can help stop problems arising in the first place if:

- you are punctual
- you are well prepared
- you are consistent and fair
- you do not let personal feelings influence your treatment of students
- you never make threats that you cannot or are not prepared to carry out
- you return homework promptly
- you never lose your temper
- you show the same respect for your students as you expect from them
- you make your lessons interesting and varied
- you are enthusiastic about your teaching
- you establish rapport with the students

Responding to problem behaviour

If you have done everything possible to prevent problem behaviour, what can you do if it still arises?

- Act immediately – don't wait for the problem to worsen. This could simply involve stopping and looking at the student. However, sometimes stronger action may be necessary.
- Focus on the behaviour and not the student.
- Change the classroom dynamic – reseat the students if necessary/appropriate.
- Keep calm – shouting almost never helps.
- Keep the problem student behind after class and reprimand in private.
- Keep to the school's disciplinary code and don't make threats that you cannot enforce.
- Use the knowledge of your colleagues. They have probably been in the same situation before and should be able to offer suggestions. Don't be too proud to ask for advice.
- Bear in mind that it's possible to go 'over the top' with rules.

