

DISCIPLINE PLAN

One of the keys to having effective classroom management is to have a discipline plan. One component of a discipline plan is to establish effective classroom rules at the beginning of the year. Students need to know rules, routines, and procedures at the beginning of your class, before you even start to tackle any content.

Establish rules and procedures the first day of school. Students need to know your expectations from the beginning. They need to know your expectations for behavior and daily classroom procedures and routines. Even though the first day is hectic, it should model a regular day as much as possible so that students know what to expect. If you plan to do a sponge or entrance activity, then do it on the first day. You may need to model it for them to get the desired result. Show them how you want it written, how the game is played, where the activity needs to be turned in, etc.

Let students have a part in establishing classroom rules. This gives students more ownership in the process and makes them more likely to hold each other accountable. Be careful, however, because student-set rules tend to be strict to the point of unmanageability for you.

Make sure rules are positive in nature. When a student is told to not do something, it makes them want to take the action even more. When we phrase our rules to say things like, “Don’t get out of your seat during class without permission,” many students take that as a personal challenge. They decide to do what we’ve told them not to, just to see what the outcome will be. Instead, try stating your rules in terms such as, “Be sure to ask for permission before getting out of your seat during class.”

Rules must be short and simple, yet well defined. You might have a rule that states, “Be respectful to your teacher and your peers.” While this meets all requirements of a good rule, your definition of respect and your students’ definition of respect may be totally different. Have students provide examples and non-examples of this behavior to make sure there is an understanding between teacher and students.

Keep the list short. Limit yourself to three to five rules. Students will be much more likely to remember a shorter list of more general rules than a long list of very specific ones. In order to obtain desired behaviors, you may have to make rules broad enough to cover a wide range of situations.

Reflect your values in your rules. Make sure your rules are all in place in order to make your classroom a more effective learning climate. While it’s tempting to develop a list of rules to prevent students from pushing us into insanity, if we focus on rules that will support our students as learners, we will get a much better response.

Enforce the rules. You could have the most perfect set of classroom rules in your school, but if you don’t enforce them completely and consistently, they will be useless. Classroom discipline and management causes the most fear and consternation in new teachers. However, classroom management is a skill that is not only learned but practiced daily. Here are ten tips that can lead to successful classroom management and discipline. These tips can help you cut down on discipline problems and leave you with fewer interruptions and disruptions.

Discipline, Management and Motivation

Classroom discipline and Management causes the most fear and consternation in new teachers. However, classroom management is a skill that is not only learned but practiced daily. Here are tips that can lead to successful classroom management and discipline. These tips can help you cut down on discipline problems in and out of the classroom.

1) It’s Easier to Get Easier

Many teachers make the mistake of starting the school year with a poor discipline plan. Students quickly assess the situation in each class and realize what they will be allowed to get away with. Once you set a precedent of allowing a lot of disruptions, it can be very hard to start better classroom management and discipline techniques. However, it is never tough to get easier as the year goes on.

2) Fairness is Key

Students have a distinct sense of what is and what is not fair. You must act fairly for all students if you expect to be respected. If you do not treat all students equitably, you will be labeled as unfair and students will not be keen to follow your rules. Make sure that if your best student does something wrong, they too get punished for it.

3) Deal with Disruptions with as Little Interruption as Possible

When you have classroom disruptions, it is imperative that you deal with them immediately and with as little interruption of your class momentum as possible. If students are talking amongst themselves and you are having a classroom discussion, ask one of them a question to try to get them back on track. If you have to stop the flow of your lesson to deal with disruptions, then you are robbing students who want to learn of their precious in-class time.

4) Avoid Confrontations in Front of Students

Whenever there is a confrontation in class there is a winner and a loser. Obviously, as the teacher, you need to keep order and discipline in your class. However, it is much better to deal with discipline issues privately than cause a student to 'lose face' in front of their friends. It is not a good idea to make an example out of a disciplinary issue. Even though other students might get the point, you might have lost any chance of actually teaching that student anything in your class.

5) Stop Disruptions with a Little Humor

Sometimes all it takes is for everyone to have a good laugh to get things back on track in a classroom. Many times, however, teachers confuse good humor with sarcasm. While humor can quickly diffuse a situation, sarcasm may harm your relationship with the students involved. Use your best judgment but realize that what some people think as funny others find to be offensive.

6) Keep High Expectations in Your Class

Expect that your students will behave, not that they will disrupt. Reinforce this with the way you speak to your students. When you begin the day, tell your students your expectations. For example, you might say, "During this whole group session, I expect you to raise your hands and be recognized before you start speaking. I also expect you to respect each other's opinions and listen to what each person has to say."

7) Over plan

Free time is something teachers should avoid. By allowing students time just to talk each day, you are setting a precedent about how you view academics and your subject. To avoid this, over plan. When you have too much to cover, you'll never run out of lessons and you will avoid free time. You can also fill up any left over time with mini-lessons as described elsewhere on this site.

8) Be Consistent

One of the worst things you can do as a teacher is to not enforce your rules consistently. If one day you ignore misbehaviors and the next day you jump on someone for the smallest infraction, your students will quickly lose respect for you. Your students have the right to expect you to basically be the same everyday. Moodiness is not allowed. Once you lose your student's respect, you also lose their attention and their desire to please you.

9) Make Rules Understandable

You need to be selective in your rules (no one can follow 180 rules consistently). You also need to make them clear. Students should understand what is and what is not acceptable. Further, you should make sure that the consequences for breaking your rules are also clear and known beforehand.

10) Start Fresh Everyday

This tip does not mean that you discount all previous infractions, i.e. if they have three tardies then today means four. However, it does mean that you should start teaching your class each day with the expectation that students will behave. Don't assume that because little Johnny has disrupted your class everyday for a week, he will disrupt it today. By doing this, you will not be treating little Johnny any differently and thereby setting him up to disrupt again (like self-fulfilling prophecy).