

Classroom management skill

Circulation

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Effective classroom management creates safe and supportive learning environments for all students. This practice resource is part of a suite of foundational resources for beginning teachers, teachers working in new environments, or experienced teachers who want to refine or refresh specific elements of their classroom management practice. They can be used to individually reflect on and refine one's own practice, or as shared resources to support mentoring and other collaborative and whole-school approaches to improving classroom management.

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO)'s guidance is based on a [synthesis](#) of the most rigorous and relevant research evidence and guidance on classroom management from a wide range of research experts and expert practitioners across Australia and internationally.

Circulation is a skill that supports and maintains positive student behaviour. Related practice resources to refine other skills focus on [acknowledgement and praise](#), [clear communication](#), [deliberately pausing](#), [non-verbal correction](#), [scanning](#) and [voice control](#).

Intentional circulation is systematically moving around the classroom and standing in key places to observe and actively interact with students.

The importance of circulation

Circulation helps establish and maintain a positive classroom culture by intentionally monitoring, connecting with, encouraging, guiding and supporting all students to demonstrate expected behaviours and engage in learning tasks. Whilst circulating you can focus on [acknowledging](#) students demonstrating expected behaviours, [praising](#) students exceeding behaviour expectations specific to them, moving closer to students to encourage expected behaviours, assisting students, and [responding to disengaged or disruptive behaviours](#) in a more discreet, personal and less distracting manner, maintaining positive relationships. This supports students to engage in expected behaviours, reducing learning time lost due to misunderstanding, disengagement or disruption.



Rehearsing circulation prior to a lesson

It's important to rehearse circulating your classroom without students present. The elements for success in this section provide a clear picture of how to effectively implement this skill. They also provide a focus for feedback and reflection to improve your use of this skill.

Further guidance on effective rehearsal can be accessed in the [Classroom Management Resources: User Guide](#).

Elements for success

Ensure your circulation has a specific focus.

[Pause](#) and [scan](#) before circulating the classroom.

Ensure you can see the majority of the class as you move around the room.

[Scan](#) while you circulate to monitor all students.

Finish where you started, [pause](#) and [scan](#).

As your practice improves, consider combining more than one focus for circulation.

Rehearsing on your own

- Know where your students sit. Print off or draw a seating plan to map your route for circulating the classroom.
- Plan your first route around the classroom to focus on students who frequently need support to start work.
- Establish a focus for your second circulation around the classroom and plot your route accordingly. This could be:
 - acknowledging students demonstrating the behaviour expected of them and praising students exceeding expectations specific to them
 - encouraging appropriate and respectful peer questioning, feedback, respect and kindness
 - providing additional guidance and support
 - helping solve problems hindering students' active participation in the learning task.
- Rehearse each of these planned routes one at a time, pausing and scanning the classroom.

Record your rehearsal and self-assess using the elements for success. Repeat the rehearsal as necessary until all elements for success have been demonstrated smoothly and with confidence.

Rehearsing with a colleague

Use the points from the Rehearsing on your own section to rehearse with a colleague, asking them to play the role of a student. Ask your colleague to sit in different seats to check your body position when you address individual students, especially those that may need more attention. Alternatively, review your recording with a colleague.

Ask your colleague to provide feedback using the elements for success and identify the following:

- What went well?
- Which elements require refinement?

Rehearse again, incorporating feedback, until all elements for success have been demonstrated smoothly and with confidence.

Practising circulation during a lesson

To practise when students are present:

- Explicitly plan when you will use your rehearsed routes during each activity in a lesson. Allow enough time to complete the planned route without rushing.
- Write down the focus for each circulation on a sticky note and refer to this information as a reminder prior to circulating.
- Move or remove any physical obstacles (such as bags or chairs) so you can move freely around the classroom.

- Pause and scan after giving an instruction before walking your first planned route. Scan as you circulate, avoiding having your back to the class as much as possible.
- Acknowledge students meeting behaviour expectations and praise students exceeding behaviour expectations specific to them.
- Respond to behaviours that do not meet expectations using a non-verbal or verbal correction, for example, moving closer to the student, within their line of sight (proximity), or giving a positively framed quick correction.
- As you refine this skill, combine different focuses during each circulation so that all students are attended to throughout a lesson, for example acknowledging students demonstrating effort expected of them and praising students exceeding expectations for effort specific to them or providing additional guidance.

Ask a colleague to observe 10 to 15 minutes of a lesson, using the elements for success to identify the effectiveness of your circulation and any areas for refinement.

Questions for reflection

- What information about your students and their behaviour are you gaining from each circulation? How could this information be improved or used more productively?
- Are there areas in the classroom, or aspects of your own practice that you need to focus on next lesson? Why? What is the goal?
- Does your classroom layout support effective circulation? What changes could be made to better support circulation?
- How efficiently are you able to identify and correct disengaged and disruptive behaviours as you circulate? Are there ways you can be even more efficient in doing this? Have you spoken to a colleague about how they do this?

For more practical guidance

AERO has developed a suite of resources to support teachers and school leaders to refine or refresh their foundational practices in creating safe and supportive learning environments through effective classroom management. You can read the [Classroom Management Resources: User Guide](#) for an overview of these resources and suggestions for their use.