

Classroom management practice guide

Exit routine

December 2023



Effective classroom management creates safe and supportive learning environments for all students. This practice guide 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.

This practice guide will support you to refine an effective exit routine, which is important for maintaining a safe and orderly classroom environment.

An exit routine at the end of a lesson provides a safe, predictable and organised end to learning. It's important to plan dedicated time at the end of a lesson to ensure a consistent exit routine can take place every time students leave the classroom.

An effective exit routine requires the following steps:

End the lesson:

1. Wrap up the final learning task.
2. Gain all students' attention.
3. Remind all students of the expectations for finishing the lesson.
4. Monitor and reinforce the behaviour expectations while students finish the lesson.

Have students leave the classroom:

5. Position yourself to be able to see all students as they leave the classroom.
6. Gain all students' attention.
7. Remind all students of the expectations for leaving the classroom.
8. Dismiss students and monitor and reinforce behaviour expectations as they leave, including outside the classroom.

This routine requires several skills, including [acknowledgement and praise](#), [circulation](#), [clear communication](#), [deliberately pausing](#), [non-verbal correction](#), [scanning](#) and [voice control](#).

Always interact with students with a calm tone, respect and politeness – for example, greeting students on first encounter and completing instructions with 'Thank you'. Positively frame communication, stating what students need to do rather than what they don't (that is, avoid using words like 'no' and 'don't'). This models respectful and polite interactions for students and creates a positive and supportive learning environment.

An effective exit routine

1. Wrap up the final learning task

Having a clear end to a learning task provides students with an obvious point at which to stop working. Providing reminders and prompts for how long students have left and what they need to do before they finish allows students to use the remaining time to complete the task, and reduces possible frustration from having to end a learning task immediately.

Near the end of the learning task, using an assertive voice, clearly communicate how long students have before they need to stop. For example, 'Five minutes left to complete the [learning task] you're working on'. Provide regular, incremental reminders for how long students have left – for example, 'Five minutes to finish. Two minutes. Thirty seconds'. This can be supported by a visual display such as a timer. Between each reminder, provide students with prompts or set targets for them to achieve – for example, 'You have 2 minutes left. Try to complete one more sentence'.

2. Gain all students' attention

Efficiently gaining all students' attention maximises instructional time and reduces the likelihood of students missing critical information.

After the set time, stand where all students can see you and, with an assertive voice, gain all students' attention:

1. Using a countdown, call and response or verbal prompt to indicate to students that they need to stop what they're doing, face you and listen in silence.
2. Pausing and scanning to ensure students are looking and listening.
3. Acknowledging students meeting behaviour expectations and praising students exceeding behaviour expectations specific to them.
4. Responding to behaviours not meeting expectations with a non-verbal correction such as a look and gesture, or a positively framed verbal correction such as a group reminder of expectations, and acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

3. Remind all students of the expectations for finishing the lesson

It's helpful to plan and teach the behaviour expectations for students finishing the lesson so students understand what's required of them. By keeping the same expectations each time, students will become familiar with them and be more likely to meet them.

With an assertive voice and stance, clearly communicate to all students the expectations for preparing to leave the classroom, including:

- what they should do to finish the lesson, including putting items where they belong and rubbish in the bin
- what they need to prepare to take with them, if necessary
- how long they have
- where they should be when they've finished.

For example: 'You have one minute to put things where they belong, put rubbish in the bin and sit back at your desks. Thank you. Ready? Go.'

Check for student understanding of behaviour expectations by asking a student to repeat back the instructions with the whole class listening. Clarify or demonstrate until all students understand what's expected of them.

4. Monitor and reinforce the behaviour expectations while students finish the lesson

It's important to monitor all students while they're finishing the lesson. This will ensure safety and that students are adequately packing away, tidying up and preparing to leave the classroom.

Prompt students to prepare to leave the classroom.

Scan and circulate the room to ensure all students are following directions. Assist students when needed.

Specifically acknowledge students meeting behaviour expectations – for example, 'Thank you [Name] for putting that paper in the recycling', 'Thank you, students, for caring for the classroom and our cleaners' or 'Great to see those students who are putting things back where they belong'. Praise students exceeding behaviour expectations specific to them.

Respond to behaviour that doesn't meet expectations with non-verbal or verbal corrections – for example, 'Remember, [Name], quietly putting your sheet in your folder'. Acknowledge students when they correct their behaviour.

5. Position yourself where you can see all students as they leave the classroom

Being able to see all students allows you to ensure student safety, acknowledge students meeting behaviour expectations, and identify and promptly address any behaviour not meeting expectations.

Move to a position close to the exit that allows you to see all students inside and outside the classroom.

6. Gain all students' attention

Gaining all students' attention after they've finished preparing to leave allows you to remind them of the expectations for leaving the classroom and reduces the likelihood of students missing critical information.

In the position identified in the previous step, with an assertive voice, gain all students' attention:

1. Using a countdown, call and response or verbal prompt to indicate to students that they need to stop what they're doing, face you and listen in silence.
2. Pausing and scanning to ensure students are looking and listening.
3. Acknowledging students meeting behaviour expectations and praising students exceeding behaviour expectations specific to them.
4. Responding to behaviours not meeting expectations with a non-verbal correction such as a look and gesture, or a positively framed verbal correction such as a group reminder of expectations, and acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

7. Remind all students of the expectations for leaving the classroom

It's helpful to plan and teach behaviour expectations for students leaving the classroom.

Ensure students have met the expectations for finishing the lesson and thank them.

With an assertive voice and stance, acknowledge students for their attention and effort in the lesson, session or day, and clearly communicate to all students the expectations for leaving the classroom.

This includes:

- what they need to take with them, if necessary
- what they need to complete or bring for next time
- how they should leave the classroom.

For example: 'Thank you for your focus and effort today. I've read some excellent paragraphs. Please remember to bring your homework tomorrow. When I say your row, I would like you to quietly and calmly walk out of the room. Thank you.'

Check for student understanding of behaviour expectations by asking a student to repeat the instructions with the whole class listening. Provide clarification, modelling and reminders until all students know, remember and can demonstrate the routine. Some students will take more time to learn than others and may need additional guidance. These students may have adjusted expectations specific to them.

8. Dismiss students and monitor and reinforce behaviour expectations as they leave, including outside the classroom

It's important to monitor all students while they're leaving the room and outside the classroom. This will demonstrate to the students that you're aware of what's happening in your classroom and will reinforce behaviour expectations to keep students safe in a supportive environment.

Prompt students to leave the room in a safe, orderly manner – for example, table one first.

Continuously scan all students inside and outside as they leave. Assist students when needed.

Say goodbye to students by name as they leave the classroom to help build positive connections. This also provides an opportunity to acknowledge and praise individual students' efforts in that lesson, session or day and give brief individual reminders – for example, needing to complete a homework activity or needing to bring something next time.

Acknowledge students meeting behaviour expectations for leaving – for example, 'Thank you, back row, for exiting calmly and quietly', 'Thank you, students, for waiting quietly while...' or 'Great to see those students who have their [object] with them ready to take'. Praise students who exceed behaviour expectations specific to them.

Address behaviours that don't meet expectations with a non-verbal correction such as a look or a gesture, or a verbal correction such as 'Remember, [Name], quietly moving out' or '[Name], go back to your desk and try walking out again, giving space to others who are also leaving'. Acknowledge students when they correct their behaviour.

When all students have left the room, position yourself outside the classroom to continue to scan all students as they leave the area.

Rehearse and practise your exit routine

Use the checklist for each step in the following section to identify your strengths and prioritise the step you will focus on first for rehearsal and practice. Focus on one step at a time until you can confidently demonstrate each item on the checklist.

Begin by scripting and rehearsing without students present. Consider filming your rehearsal and using the relevant checklist to review the recording yourself or with a colleague.

Then practise with students present. Record and review your practice alone or with a colleague using the relevant checklist, making sure to follow school or employer policies regarding recording students.

Invite a colleague to observe your exit routine in action. Ask them to use the checklists to provide feedback on what went well and to suggest one area for further improvement.

1. Wrap up the final learning task

Explicitly plan time to be able to effectively conduct your end of day routine. This time may get shorter the more the procedure becomes a habit for students.

Script, rehearse, then practise:

clearly communicating behaviour expectations for students finishing the learning task, including regular incremental reminders of what they need to complete.

2. Gain all students' attention

Rehearse, then practise:

gaining all students' attention by using your countdown, call and response, or visual cue or gesture

deliberately pausing

scanning all students

acknowledging students meeting behaviour expectations and praising students exceeding behaviour expectations specific to them

responding to disengaged or disruptive behaviours that might occur and acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

3. Remind all students of the expectations for finishing the lesson

Script, rehearse, then practise clearly communicating your expectations for finishing the lesson:

- what they should do to pack away and tidy up
- what they need to prepare to take with them
- how long they have
- where they should be when they've finished preparing to leave.

Use as few words as possible while maintaining clarity.

Break instructions down:

- into a small number of manageable steps
- in a sequential order
- so they're actionable for students.

Deliberately pause and scan to ensure students understand and are following the instructions.

4. Monitor and reinforce the behaviour expectations while students prepare to leave the classroom

Rehearse, then practise:

a strategic position where you can see all students

deliberately pausing in your strategic position

scanning combined with deliberately pausing

circulating the classroom to:

- support students requiring clarification of an instruction or extra assistance
- acknowledge students meeting behaviour expectations
- praise students exceeding expectations specific to them
- respond to disengaged and disruptive behaviours, acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

Script, rehearse, then practise gaining all students' attention and re-setting behaviour expectations when needed.

5. Position yourself to see all students as they leave the classroom

Rehearse, then practise:

standing where you'll be able to see all students leaving the classroom (likely just inside the entrance of your classroom). Your position should:

- ensure you don't have blind spots that need to be monitored
- allow you to scan and see all students inside and outside the classroom as they leave
- change for certain classrooms or classes if necessary.

6. Gain all students' attention

Rehearse, then practise:

gaining all students' attention by using your countdown, call and response, or visual cue or gesture

deliberately pausing

scanning all students

acknowledging students meeting behaviour expectations and praising students exceeding behaviour expectations specific to them

responding to disengaged or disruptive behaviours that might occur and acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

7. Remind all students of the expectations for leaving the classroom

Identify the school expectations and your class expectations (aligned with the school expectations) for students leaving the classroom:

- What behaviours do you want to see?
- What problem behaviours do you want to understand and address?

Script, rehearse, then practise:

acknowledging students' attention and effort during the lesson, session or day

clearly communicating the expectations for students leaving the classroom:

- what they need to take with them
- what they need to complete or bring for next time
- how they should leave the classroom.

Rehearsal will improve the clarity, conciseness and consistency of the language you use to communicate expectations.

8. Dismiss students and monitor and reinforce the behaviour expectations as they leave, including outside the classroom

Rehearse, then practise:

dismissing your students, identifying what will work best for your context – for example, row-by-row or table-by-table

scanning as students leave

saying goodbye to students by name

acknowledging and praising individual students' efforts for the lesson, session or day and giving reminders to individual students for homework or the next lesson

acknowledging students meeting behaviour expectations and praising students exceeding behaviour expectations specific to them

positively framed verbal corrections – for example, a whole-class reminder of expectations or a quick correction

non-verbal corrections – for example, gesturing for students to put their books in their bags or their bags on their backs

acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

Questions for reflection

When you've refined and combined each of the steps in your exit routine, consider the following questions:

- Are you planning adequate time to effectively end your lesson and implement your exit routine?
If not, how can you address this?
- How confident do you feel now in implementing all steps of an exit routine?
- What impact is a well-established end of lesson and exit routine having on your students' finishing lessons and leaving at the end of the lesson, session or day?

Regularly revise your exit routine

Schedule points in the year to revise this practice for yourself and your students.

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.