

Classroom management skill

Non-verbal correction

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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.

Non-verbal correction is a skill that supports and maintains positive student behaviour. Related practice resources to refine other skills focus on acknowledgement and praise, circulation, clear communication, deliberately pausing, scanning and voice control.

Non-verbal corrections provide students with a clear, visible corrective gesture that acts as a behavioural prompt without the use of words.



Non-verbal technique	What is it?
Proximity	Moving within the general area of a student not demonstrating expected behaviours.
Deliberately pausing	Stopping what you're doing to draw the student's attention to you and what they should be doing.
'The look'	Turning and looking at a student to demonstrate that you're aware of their behaviour and it needs to change so learning can continue.
A gesture	A hand or facial gesture to communicate the expected behaviours.

It's important to note that some students may not understand or respond positively to subtle non-verbal corrections and will need clearer verbal corrections. Taking the time to teach students expected responses to non-verbal corrections may reduce the need for more intrusive responses over time.

The importance of non-verbal correction

The use of non-verbal corrections prompts expected behaviours and ensures students know that you're aware of what's happening in your classroom and will discreetly correct off-task behaviours when they first appear, without disrupting the flow of the lesson.

Rehearsing non-verbal correction

It's helpful to rehearse without students present. The elements for success in this section provide a clear picture of effectively implementing 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

Non-verbal technique	Elements for success
Proximity	<p>Move near the student.</p> <p>Ensure you're still able to see all other students.</p> <p><u>Scan</u> the whole class.</p>
Deliberately pausing	<p>Sustain a <u>deliberate period of silence</u>.</p> <p>Ensure it's long enough to <u>gain the student's attention</u>.</p> <p>Combine with <u>scanning</u> for students' responses.</p>
'The look'	<p>Intentionally turn towards the student.</p> <p>Look at the student.</p> <p>Combine with a gesture – for example, shake your head, then nod when they correct themselves, point to your eye and then point and look where they should be looking.</p>
A gesture	<p>Make a corrective gesture – for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> putting your finger to your lips to indicate silence raising your hand to remind a student to raise their hand rather than calling out gesturing with your hand to indicate 'sit down'.

Rehearsing on your own

Rehearse the non-verbal technique you would use to correct the behaviours in the following scenarios:

- A student is talking to another student while you're giving the whole class an instruction.
- A student calls out when you're asking specific students to answer.
- You instruct all students to open their books and begin their work and one student doesn't open their book.

Record your rehearsal and self-assess using the elements for success. Repeat the rehearsal 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. Alternatively, review your recording with a colleague. Ask your colleague to provide feedback using the elements for success and identify:

- What went well?
- Which elements require refinement?

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

To refine further, plan and rehearse how you can combine non-verbal techniques with other corrections using the [Responding to Disengaged and Disruptive Behaviours](#) practice guide. Gain feedback on what went well and any areas in need of further refinement.

Practising non-verbal correction during a lesson

To practise when students are present:

- Explicitly demonstrate each non-verbal correction to students and explain what it means. Check for understanding after demonstrating.
- Purposefully use non-verbal corrections to address behaviours that don't meet expectations.
- Intentionally combine non-verbal corrective techniques with other corrections for behaviours that don't meet expectations.
- [Acknowledge](#) students when they correct their behaviour.

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

Questions for reflection

- How consistently are you using non-verbal corrections to address disengaged and disruptive behaviours?
- How effectively are you using non-verbal corrections? What is one thing you can change to use them even more effectively?
- Are you aware of the impact that your use of non-verbal corrections has on the students in your class, aside from their role in managing behaviour?
- Are there any adjustments or additions you would like to make to the non-verbal corrections you use? What would they be?

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.