

## Classroom management skill

# Voice control

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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.

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Voice control 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](#), [non-verbal correction](#) and [scanning](#).

Voice control includes the tone, pitch, volume and pace you use to deliver instruction. Tone is the mood of your voice, pitch is how high or low your voice is, volume is how loud or quiet your voice is, and pace is the speed of your speech. Controlling your voice means moving between two registers – regular voice and assertive voice – for different purposes and to different effect. Effective voice control, along with body language, models and maintains a calm and measured approach to behaviour and contributes to a positive and inviting classroom culture.



## The importance of voice control

Teachers use not only words, but their tone, pitch, volume and pace to build positive connections and relationships with students, improve student responses to instruction and help prevent the escalation of disruptive behaviours. Being excessively loud, shouting, or rushing instructions, using a confrontational or disrespectful tone, raising the pitch of your voice, or exaggerating specific words to highlight a behaviour can demonstrate a lack of respect for students or a loss of composure. This can then be mirrored by students, escalate students' disruptive behaviours and negatively impact the classroom culture.

## Rehearsing voice control

It's important to rehearse your voice control 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.

In your rehearsal, note the differences in your tone, pitch, volume and pace when speaking in your regular voice and when using an assertive voice to give directions, set expectations and respond to disengaged and disruptive behaviours. Also note the accompanying change to your stance.

## Elements for success

Regular voice and stance	Assertive voice and stance
More relaxed tone	More certain tone
Wide range of pitch (low to high)	Lower pitch
Loud enough volume for individual students, a group, or a whole class	Strategic use of volume – for example, slightly louder to draw whole-class attention to an instruction, or slightly quieter to address an individual student or group
Regular pace	Slightly slower pace when necessary to emphasise the instruction
Less serious, more relaxed body language that mirrors the voice.	More upright posture
	Facing the student(s)
	Clear communication.

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.

## Rehearsing on your own

Using examples from your own experience, or the observation of others’ practice from your own experience, script 2 short sentences using:

- a relaxed voice and stance (for example, an acknowledgement – ‘Thank you, [Student name], for waiting quietly’)
- an assertive voice and stance (for example, an instruction – ‘Pens down, attention on me. Thank you’).

Rehearse and then record yourself saying the sentences you scripted in a regular voice and then an assertive voice. Use the elements for success to guide you in identifying and rehearsing the differences. Repeat the rehearsal if necessary until the difference between your regular voice and assertive voice is clear, and 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 the difference between your regular voice and assertive voice is clear, and all elements for success have been demonstrated smoothly and with confidence.

## Practising voice control during a lesson

To practise when students are present, use voice control and [clear communication](#) in different situations, remembering to match your stance and your body language to your voice:

- greeting individual students while they are lining up and then as a whole class
- giving instructions to [move into](#), [out of](#) and [around the classroom](#)
- [setting expectations](#) prior to an activity
- [acknowledging](#) students meeting behaviour expectations
- [praising](#) students exceeding behaviour expectations
- reminding students of expectations
- [responding to disengaged and disruptive behaviours](#).

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

## Questions for reflection

- How do your students respond to the changes in your voice and stance?
- How do you know if you are using the right tone with students?
- How does your tone support your engagement with students' families and communities?  
Is it encouraging them to share their knowledge and perspectives?
- Are you using pitch effectively? For example, are you keeping it low when using a more assertive voice?
- Are you using a suitable volume? Is it loud enough for students to hear? Are you being excessively loud? How do you know?
- How do you ensure you suitably pace instructions for all students?
- What impact is deliberately controlling your voice having on interactions with your students?  
Is it different for different students? Why do you think that is?
- Have you ever worked with or observed a teacher who did not use voice control and body language effectively? How did it make you feel? How do you think it made the students feel? Would that encourage students to learn effectively?

## 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.