Australian Education Research Organisation

Foundational classroom management resources handbook

Second edition

January 2024 | Updated November 2026



The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) is Australia's national education evidence body, working to achieve excellence and equity in educational outcomes for all children and young people.

Acknowledgement

AERO acknowledges that this publication was made possible by funding from the Australian Government Department of Education through the Engaged Classrooms Through Effective Classroom Management Program.

Acknowledgement of Country

AERO acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waterways, skies, islands and sea Country across Australia. We pay our deepest respects to First Nations cultures and Elders past and present. We endeavour to continually value and learn from First Nations knowledges and educational practices.

Authors

Ben Peddie, Megan Kelly, Tal Greengard, Catherine Whiting and Sarah Richardson.

Copyright

All material presented in this publication is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence, except for:

- photographs
- the organisation's logo, branding and trademarks
- content or material provided by third parties, where CC BY 4.0 permissions have not been granted.

You may copy, distribute and adapt the publication, as long as you attribute the Australian Education Research Organisation Limited ACN 644 853 369, ABN 83 644 853 369 (AERO), and abide by the other licence terms.

How to cite

Peddie, B., Kelly, M., Greengard, T., Whiting, C., & Richardson, S., (2026). *Foundational classroom management resources handbook* (2nd ed.). Australian Education Research Organisation. https://www.edresearch.edu.au/guides-resources/practice-resources/foundational-classroom-management-resources-handbook

Publication details

ISBN 978-1-923066-85-4 (online)
Images: AERO

Contents

Foreword 4

Introduction: How to use these resources 5

Part 1: Classroom management explainers 10

Chapter 1: Positive teacher–student relationships 11
Chapter 2: High expectations for student behaviour 20
Chapter 3: Teaching routines 26
Chapter 4: Establishing and maintaining rules 33

Part 2: Classroom management practice guides 39

Chapter 5: Building positive connections with all students 40
Chapter 6: Entering the classroom 48
Chapter 7: Exiting the classroom 56
Chapter 8: Gaining all students' attention 66
Chapter 9: Planning for classroom management 72
Chapter 10: Responding to low-level disengaged and disruptive behaviour 79
Chapter 11: Setting behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks 92
Chapter 12: Students gaining teacher attention 100
Chapter 13: Students moving through the school 106

Part 3: Classroom management skill resources 113

Chapter 14: Acknowledgement and praise 114
Chapter 15: Circulation 118
Chapter 16: Clear communication 121
Chapter 17: Deliberate pause 125
Chapter 18: Non-verbal correction 129
Chapter 19: Scanning your class 133
Chapter 20: Voice control 136

Foreword

Australian teachers and leaders want to make the biggest possible difference to students' learning outcomes and see all students flourish. As a teacher, you would know that engaging students is key and classroom management is a critical component of helping students thrive. At the same time, you would also know from your own experience that the time spent on managing behaviour can be significant.

To support teachers in the complex task of classroom management, the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) has developed a set of foundational classroom management resources. This handbook has been developed as part of the Engaged Classrooms Through Effective Classroom Management project funded by the Australian Government.

AERO's resources are based on the most rigorous and relevant research evidence and guidance available from a wide range of research experts and expert practitioners across Australia and internationally. In this handbook, you will learn about how to implement the most important evidence-based practices to create safe, supportive and inclusive learning environments.

Our resources can be used by all teachers and school leaders. You might be a beginning teacher developing your classroom management practices, a teacher working in a new environment, or an experienced teacher who wants to refine or refresh specific elements of your classroom management practice. Students come to us from different backgrounds, with different experiences. Explicitly teaching them about the behaviour that is expected in the classroom helps them to be successful learners.

These classroom management resources align with AERO's model of learning and teaching and will enable you to have maximum impact on student learning.

We would like to thank classroom management expert Dr Tim McDonald as well as teachers, school leaders and stakeholders across Australia who have been consulted throughout this project.

For more evidence-based resources on classroom management and other topics to help you in your work, visit AERO's website: https://www.edresearch.edu.au/.

We hope this handbook is a valuable resource in your complex and important daily work with students.

Dr Jenny Donovan
CEO, Australian Education Research Organisation
January 2024

Introduction: How to use these resources

AERO has developed 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. These resources have been compiled into this handbook for ease of use. You can use them to individually reflect on and refine your own practice, or as shared resources to support mentoring and other collaborative and whole-school approaches to improving classroom management.

We first published the classroom management practice guides and skill resources in December 2023. We updated these guides and resources in 2026 in response to feedback we received from teachers during testing in schools. This second edition of the handbook compiles the updated resources.

How this handbook is organised

This handbook is organised into 3 parts.

Part 1

A compilation of **classroom management explainers**. These summarise the evidence for classroom management. They explain key principles and describe how they're enacted in practice.

The explainers cover:

- positive teacher–student relationships (Chapter 1)
- high expectations for student behaviour (Chapter 2)
- teaching routines (Chapter 3)
- establishing and maintaining rules (Chapter 4).

Part 2

A compilation of **classroom management practice guides**. These provide step-by-step guidance for effectively implementing and refining evidence-based practices and developing responsiveness through reflexive practice.

The guides cover:

- building positive connections with all students (Chapter 5)
- entering the classroom (Chapter 6)
- exiting the classroom (Chapter 7)
- gaining all students' attention (Chapter 8)
- planning for classroom management (Chapter 9)
- responding to low-level disengaged and disruptive behaviour (Chapter 10)
- setting behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks (Chapter 11)
- students gaining teacher attention (Chapter 12)
- students moving through the school (Chapter 13).

Part 3

A compilation of **classroom management skill resources**. These support teachers in implementing effective classroom management practices by refining necessary classroom management skills.

The skills are:

- acknowledgement and praise (Chapter 14)
- circulation (Chapter 15)
- clear communication (Chapter 16)
- deliberate pause (Chapter 17)
- non-verbal correction (Chapter 18)
- scanning your class (Chapter 19)
- voice control (Chapter 20).

How teachers and school leaders can use these resources

The foundational classroom management resources in this handbook support a structured approach to engaging and refining professional practice for teachers and school leaders.

Choosing a starting point

Read and consider the following summary of effective classroom management to select one skill, practice or evidence focus for development. This selection may be guided by a whole-school or individual focus for development.

Effective classroom management

Safe and supportive learning environments are developed through classroom management that:

- **establishes:**
  - relationships (Chapter 1) and connections with all students (Chapter 5)
  - high expectations for student behaviour (Chapter 2) by clearly communicating (Chapter 16), explicitly teaching, supporting and regularly revising:
    - behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks (Chapter 11)
    - routines (Chapter 3), including routines for:
      - entering the classroom (Chapter 6)
      - exiting the classroom (Chapter 7)
      - gaining all students' attention (Chapter 8)
      - students gaining your attention (Chapter 12)
      - moving to other areas of the school (Chapter 13).
  - rules (Chapter 4) that are clearly communicated (Chapter 16), explicitly taught, supported and regularly revised
- **monitors** students to provide assistance and support them to meet expectations by:
  - deliberately pausing (Chapter 17)
  - scanning (Chapter 19)
  - circulating (Chapter 15).
- **acknowledges and praises** (Chapter 14) students demonstrating the expected behaviours
- **responds** (Chapter 10) to students not demonstrating the expected behaviours, and **acknowledges** (Chapter 14) students for their efforts to adjust their behaviour
- **supports** students and responds when factors lead to persistent disengagement and disruption or escalated behaviour. (For more advice on this, see our related creating calm, focused classrooms practice guides Persistent Disengaged and Disruptive Behaviour and Escalated Behaviour.)

Using the resources – Teachers

Effective classroom management involves a complex skill set. AERO's classroom management resources support teachers with focusing on one skill or one step of an effective practice at a time. This involves repeating a cycle involving 4 stages: rehearsal, practise, feedback and reflection.

To support each stage of this cycle, our classroom management skill resources define elements for success, and our classroom management practice guides provide checklists for effective practice.

Rehearsal

Rehearsal is typically included in the early iterations of a cycle. Rehearsing without students present involves repeating and progressively improving aspects of a skill or step before practising with a class. Through repetition, aspects of effective practice can become automatic, requiring less effort when performed in front of a class. For this to occur, rehearsal should be authentic in every respect other than the absence of students. This includes:

- rehearsing in the same environment where the skill or step will be implemented – usually the classroom
- speaking aloud at the same pace and volume as you would during a lesson
- standing or moving as you would if students were present.

Developing a written script detailing what you'll say can help you rehearse more efficiently and increase your confidence. It's a good idea to record and review your rehearsal to help you identify areas for refinement.

Practise

Include practising the skill or step in the classroom with students in every iteration of the cycle. However, your practice should be more than simply executing the skill or step. It should be purposefully planned by selecting specific aspects of the skill or step to focus on refining, and specific student behaviours to attend to. This focused practising helps to efficiently refine classroom management expertise.

Feedback

Include feedback in at least some iterations of the cycle. Communities of practice and critical friends can support you in using reflexive practice to develop responsiveness. Some aspects of your professional practice will be more noticeable to others than to you. By inviting a colleague or school leader to provide feedback on your execution of a skill or step, you'll gain additional insights and an opportunity for focused, professional discussion.

You could ask them to observe your rehearsal or you practising, or you could share a recording of yourself rehearsing or practising (making sure to follow school or employer policies about recording students). Allow dedicated time to receive and discuss feedback. Feedback should be focused on how well your performance of a skill or step aligns with the elements for success or checklists provided in the resources, and should identify the highest priority area for you to refine. You should then plan further iterations of the cycle to address this priority area.

Reflection

Include reflection in every iteration of the cycle. Structured reflection supports you in observing improvements and helps you to identify both your strengths and the areas where your practice needs further refinement. This should inform further iterations of the cycle.

Using the resources – School leaders

School leaders play an integral role in creating and maintaining safe and supportive learning environments by fostering a shared understanding and consistent application of effective practice across the school.

AERO's classroom management resources will support you to:

- review and refine whole-school evidence-based approaches to classroom management
- support teachers and education support staff in reflecting on and refining their classroom management practices and skills
- facilitate reflective conversations with teachers and education support staff.

Part 1

Classroom management explainers

Chapter 1: Positive teacher–student relationships 11

Chapter 2: High expectations for student behaviour 20

Chapter 3: Teaching routines 26

Chapter 4: Establishing and maintaining rules 33

Chapter 1
Positive teacher–student relationships

This explainer describes how creating connections with students over time can help develop trust and positive relationships to support learning. Related explainers focus on teaching routines, establishing and maintaining rules and high expectations for student behaviour.

Positive teacher–student relationships are supportive and fair, and develop in learning environments where students feel safe, understood and valued. Teachers build connections with students when they demonstrate respect and are responsive to their needs (McDonald, 2019). What students value in relationships and how they prefer to connect with others can differ from student to student for a range of reasons. Knowing students well and understanding and responding to students' preferred ways of communicating, can help teachers develop positive relationships with their students (Fox et al., 2024; Sharman & Seedorf, 2025; Tsou et al., 2025; Wolpe et al., 2025).

Over time, respectful verbal and non-verbal interactions build trust, which is foundational to developing positive relationships. For some students, establishing trust may be challenging due to barriers which may or may not be evident. In these circumstances, teachers may need to invest additional time to better understand students, show students they're valued and interact positively with them to build connections and establish trust (McDonald, 2019). Fostering family engagement and recognising families as respected partners in their child's learning also strengthens positive teacher–student relationships.

Trust and positive teacher–student relationships are built on the structure, predictability, reliability and dependability provided by routines and consistency (Bennett, 2020). By maintaining high expectations, modelling expected behaviours and supporting students' needs, teachers affirm the belief that all students can experience learning success. This approach to building and sustaining high expectations fosters belonging, positive relationships and effective teaching and learning (AERO, 2023; Cobb & Krownapple, 2019; Healey & Stroman, 2021; Miller & Steele, 2021). It supports all students in accessing and participating in education (Alice Springs [Mparntwe] Education Declaration, 2020; Disability Discrimination Act 1992; Disability Standards for Education 2005; 2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005, 2021).

Cultural safety within the learning environment is essential for developing positive teacher–student relationships and provides a foundation upon which all learners can succeed. Cultural safety is experienced by students, their families and their communities when an environment is psychologically, socially, physically, spiritually and emotionally safe for them (Moodie et al., 2019; Williams, 1999).

To create culturally safe learning environments, teachers need to be culturally responsive. Cultural responsiveness maintains high expectations while providing appropriate support and can provide a solid foundation for learning success (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2021; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Sarra et al., 2018).

Fundamental to this is the implementation of critically reflexive practice where teachers examine their own attitudes, values, biases and assumptions and how these impact developing relationships with students and their families. Being reflexive can help teachers get to know and understand students, families and the wider community. It also enables teachers to understand how their context and thinking impacts their decision-making and reactions, and, importantly, how these impact their students.

To build positive relationships with students:

- Make active efforts to get to know your students and understand and value their diverse experiences, cultures and aspirations.
- Critically examine how your values, beliefs and knowledge about learning and student behaviour impact how you engage with your students.
- Engage early and regularly with students' families.
- Model and teach expectations for safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour and routines to create a safe and predictable learning environment that builds trust.
- Greet students warmly and consistently and use their names in interactions.
- Acknowledge and praise students for their behaviour and efforts.
- Understand and support students' diverse needs, making reasonable adjustments as needed.
- Demonstrate that you're credible, caring and consistent.

Adapted from AERO (2025), Bennett (2020) and McDonald (2019).

The importance of building positive relationships with students

Relationships are an important element of effective classroom management (AITSL, 2021). Students who have positive connections with their teachers are more likely to have positive attitudes towards school, perceive themselves as part of their school community, attain higher academic results and place a higher value on regular attendance (Commissioner for Children and Young People [CCYP], 2018).

Students build relationships in different ways. While positive relationships are important for all students, they may look different for some students, particularly for neurodivergent students.

The positive interactions between teachers and students, which help build relationships, act as a safeguard for some students who may have difficult relationships in their personal lives (CCYP, 2018). These interactions enable them to have better engagement outcomes at school (CCYP, 2018).

An emotionally safe school environment allows students to feel secure and confident to attend and assures them they will receive support if they face any difficulties (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2020).

Students are more likely to feel comfortable and engaged in learning when their teacher is welcoming, interested, encouraging, caring and kind (CCYP, 2018). Positive teacher–student relationships also enable teachers to intervene more effectively and efficiently to meet students' learning and behavioural needs when problems arise (Epstein et al., 2008; Goss & Sonnemann, 2017; Marzano et al., 2003).

A foundation of safety and predictability enables peer and teacher–student relationships to flourish (McDonald, 2019). Prioritising relationships allows teachers to demonstrate credibility through growing connections and care for students, which can lead to greater effort and trust from students in return, creating a calmer and more productive classroom (AITSL, 2021).

Developing positive relationships with students

Positive relationships with students take time to develop. They're facilitated by planning, explicitly teaching and modelling established expectations for safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour, routines and rules to create a safe and predictable classroom for all students (Bennett, 2020). Teachers should use students' preferred names (and pronouns), and discuss class expectations, rules and responsibilities (De Nobile et al., 2021). One example of a simple, practical strategy for positively connecting with students is greeting them in ways they prefer, and consistently using their names in interactions (Evidence for Learning, 2023).

Teachers can get to know students through informal chats and interactions that demonstrate interest in their lives, interests, families, backgrounds and beliefs. Approach these chats sensitively, respecting what the student is comfortable sharing. These conversations can help build trust, demonstrate approachability and encourage open communication (De Nobile et al., 2021). Teachers can also greet students individually at the classroom door as they enter, interact with them around the school and at school events, inquire about their interests, communicate positively, deliver constructive feedback wisely and communicate positive messages home (AITSL, 2021; Hepburn & Beamish, 2020; Ulmanen et al., 2016).

Teachers should also regularly and intentionally 'check in' with every student, listen when students raise concerns, and assure and uphold confidentiality when appropriate and permitted (CCYP, 2018; Education Endowment Foundation, 2021).

Teachers also cultivate relationships by noticing student effort and responding supportively when students experience difficulties, helping them see that they can be successful and thanking them for their effort (Bennett, 2020; Lemov, 2021). This can include teachers speaking to students privately and reassuring them of their appreciation of them and their belief in the students' ability to demonstrate the classroom expectations (Lemov, 2021).

Praise needs to be thoughtfully given if it is to support a positive teacher–student relationship. Praise that is timely, genuine, informative and specific reinforces positive student behaviours, helps establish a positive and encouraging learning environment and can strengthen teacher–student relationships (Archer & Hughes, 2011). Frequent acknowledgement of students meeting expectations also helps build positive teacher–student relationships. Acknowledgement and praise should be given in ways that students prefer. For example, some students prefer to receive acknowledgement and praise privately, while other students feel uncomfortable with verbal praise and prefer brief non-verbal (such as a quick nod or thumbs-up) or written praise. Positive feedback to parents and primary caregivers also strengthens relationships and fosters trust (Bennett, 2020; McDonald, 2019).

Students understandably want to avoid being embarrassed in front of their peers and teachers should give students a chance to change their behaviour in a way that maintains students' dignity and doesn't cause embarrassment (Bennett, 2020). For example, if a student is talking when another student is speaking, the teacher could calmly say, 'I know you have something to say, Simon. Zelda is speaking now and then let's hear from you.' This gives the student an opportunity to adjust their behaviour before further action is taken.

Early and ongoing positive contact with parents and primary caregivers can help build rapport and encourage them to work in partnership with you to support their child (Bennett, 2020; McDonald, 2019). This might be through a phone call, email or newsletter to provide some introductory details (including how parents can contact you and be involved in supporting their child), updates, important information and feedback. Early and ongoing contact if you have a concern about their child is also important in building positive partnerships with parents and primary caregivers. Encourage parents to also contact you with any concerns or important information.



Scenario

This scenario provides a practical example of the evidence summarised in this explainer. It provides insight into one teacher's approach to establishing, maintaining and continually developing relationships with a class to create a safe and supportive learning environment.

Mr Wenzel makes an effort at the beginning of the school year to learn his students' names as quickly as possible. He creates a seating plan and individual name cards that sit on each student's desk until he's confident with their names. He also adopts the routine of standing at the door and greeting each student by name as they enter the classroom. He adjusts his communication with individual students based on what he knows about them and their preferences.

Mr Wenzel tries to ensure that he has positive interactions with his students within lessons, during breaks and when moving around the school. He frequently acknowledges students demonstrating safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours, individually and as a class. When students are unsure of concepts or tasks, he supports them by checking where they're having trouble and helping them in a respectful and supportive way. His positive and predictable approach has seen encouraging results over the course of the year, fostering a sense of trust and openness with most students, and ensuring they feel comfortable seeking help when needed.

Despite the positive connection Mr Wenzel builds with most of his students, he has been unable to strengthen his relationship with 2 students, and their behaviour frequently disrupts learning. He thinks about what might be influencing his ability to engage with them effectively, and decides to learn more about them to try to identify the strengths they bring to the classroom and the support he might provide to help them focus on learning. Mr Wenzel plans to have more informal conversations with each student away from the classroom environment, speak with teachers who know them better and review their learning profiles.

While on break and bus duty, Mr Wenzel makes a deliberate effort to talk to each of the students he's been unable to strengthen his relationship with in a more relaxed way. Over time, this helps him learn more about them. He reviews the students' learning profiles again to remind him of their strengths and needs and the previous communication with parents and primary caregivers. Colleagues also share insights about how they connect and work with the students, and things to be mindful of.

Mr Wenzel understands that building positive relationships and supporting the students in focusing on learning will take time and consideration. He acknowledges progress and makes sure he provides regular positive feedback to the students, paying close attention to their responses to ensure the feedback is delivered in ways they feel comfortable with. He contacts their parents and primary caregivers to share positive observations and seek insights about strategies that have worked previously.

For more guidance

The following resources in AERO's classroom management suite provide practical guidance and support related to building positive teacher–student relationships.



Building positive connections with all students

- practice guide
- video
- observation tool
- practice development professional learning resources
- reflection resource



Practice guides

- respectful interactions
- cultural safety
- family engagement

Further reading

Australian Education Research Organisation. (2023). *Building positive connections with all students*. https://www.edresearch.edu.au/guides-resources/practice-guides/building-positive-connections-all-students

Australian Education Research Organisation. (2023). *Encouraging a sense of belonging and connectedness in secondary schools*. https://www.edresearch.edu.au/guides-resources/practice-guides/encouraging-belonging-and-connectedness-secondary

Australian Education Research Organisation. (2023). *Encouraging a sense of belonging and connectedness in primary schools*. https://www.edresearch.edu.au/guides-resources/practice-guides/encouraging-belonging-and-connectedness-primary

Australian Education Research Organisation. (2025). *Cultural safety*. https://www.edresearch.edu.au/guides-resources/practice-guides/cultural-safety

Australian Education Research Organisation. (2025). *Respectful interactions*. https://www.edresearch.edu.au/guides-resources/practice-guides/respectful-interactions

Australian Government Department of Education. (2022). *Family-school partnerships*. https://www.education.gov.au/supporting-family-school-community-partnerships-learning/family-school-partnerships

Bennett, T. (2020). *Running the room: The teacher's guide to behaviour*. John Catt Educational. (pp. 205–211)

De Nobile, J., Lyons, G., & Arthur-Kelly, M. (2021). *Positive learning environments: Creating and maintaining productive classrooms*. Cengage. (pp. 280–287)

Dowley, M. & Lovell, O. (2024). *The classroom management handbook*. John Catt Educational. (pp. 41–46)

Lemov, D. (2021). *Teach like a champion 3.0: 63 techniques that put students on the path to college*. Jossey-Bass. (pp. 26–33)

McDonald, T. (2019). *Classroom management: Engaging students in learning*. Oxford University Press. (pp. 118–122)

References

Archer, A., & Hughes, C. (2011). *Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching*. Guilford Press.

Australian Education Research Organisation. (2023). *Encouraging a sense of belonging and connectedness in secondary schools*. https://www.edresearch.edu.au/guides-resources/practice-guides/encouraging-belonging-and-connectedness-secondary

Australian Education Research Organisation. (2025). *Cultural safety*. https://www.edresearch.edu.au/guides-resources/practice-guides/cultural-safety

Australian Government. (1992). *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A04426/latest/text

Australian Government. (2005). *Disability Standards for Education 2005*. https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005

Australian Government. (2021). 2020 *Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005*. https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005/2020-review-disability-standards-education-2005

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment. (2019). *The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*. https://www.education.gov.au/indigenous-education/resources/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2021*). Classroom management: Standards-aligned evidence-based approaches*. https://www.aitsl.edu.au/resources/classroom-management--standards-aligned-evidence-based-approaches

Bennett, T. (2020). *Running the room: The teacher's guide to behaviour*. John Catt Educational.

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation. (2020). *Classroom management: Creating and maintaining positive learning environments*. https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/education-data-and-research/cese/publications/literature-reviews/classroom-management

Cobb, F., & Krownapple, J. (2019). *Belonging through a culture of dignity: The keys to successful equity implementation*. Mimi & Todd Press.

Commissioner for Children and Young People. (2018). *Speaking out about school and learning: The views of WA children and young people on factors that support their engagement in school and learning*. https://www.ccyp.wa.gov.au/media/2763/speaking-out-about-school-and-learning.pdf

De Nobile, J., Lyons, G., & Arthur-Kelly, M. (2021). *Positive learning environments: Creating and maintaining productive classrooms*. Cengage.

Education Endowment Foundation. (2021). *Six recommendations for improving behaviour in schools*. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/behaviour

Epstein, M., Atkins, M., Cullinan, D., Kutash, K., & Weaver, R. (2008). *Reducing behavior problems in the elementary school classroom: A practice guide (NCEE #2008-012)*. National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/4

Evidence for Learning. (2023). *Effective behaviour supports in schools*. https://evidenceforlearning.org.au/education-evidence/guidance-reports/effective-behaviour-supports-in-schools

Fox, L., Williams, R., & Asbury, K. (2024). Experiences of friendships among autistic children in UK schools: A qualitative meta-synthesis. *Neurodiversity*, *2*. https://doi.org/10.1177/27546330241272250

Goss, P., & & Sonnemann, J. (2017). *Engaging students: Creating classrooms that improve learning*. Grattan Institute. https://grattan.edu.au/report/engaging-students-creating-classrooms-that-improve-learning/

Healey, K., & Stroman, C. (2021). *Structures for belonging: A synthesis of research on belonging-supportive learning environments*. Student Experience Research Network. https://studentexperiencenetwork.org/research_library/structures-for-belonging-a-synthesis-of-research-on-belonging-supportive-learning-environments/

Hepburn, L., & Beamish, W. (2020). *Influences on proactive classroom management: Views of teachers in government secondary schools, Queensland*. Improving Schools, 23(1), 33–46. https://doi.org/10.1177/1365480219886148

Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: AKA the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, *84*(1), 70–84. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.84.1.p2rj131485484751

Lemov, D. (2021). *Teach like a champion 3.0: 63 techniques that put students on the path to college*. Jossey-Bass.

Marzano, R. J., Marzano, J. S., & Pickering, D. (2003). *Classroom management that works: Research-based strategies for every teacher*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

McDonald, T. (2019). *Classroom management: Engaging students in learning*. Oxford University Press.

Miller, L., & Steele, C. (2021). Teaching and learning: There is no one right way, but there are right things to do. In M. Shay & R. Oliver (Eds.), *Indigenous education in Australia: Learning and teaching for deadly futures*. Routledge.

Moodie, N., Maxwell, J., & Rudolph, S. (2019). The impact of racism on the schooling experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students: A systematic review. *Australian Educational Researcher*, *46*(2), 273–295. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-019-00312-8

Sarra, C., Spillman, D., Jackson, C., Davis, J., & Bray, J. (2018). High-expectations relationships: A foundation for enacting high expectations in all Australian schools. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, *49*(1), 32–45. https://doi.org/10.1017/jie.2018.10

Sharman, R. J., & Seedorf, T. (2025). Neurodivergent friendships. *Neurodiversity*, *3*. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/27546330251359958

Tsou, Y.-T., Nasri, M., Li, B., Blijd-Hoogewys, E. M. A., Baratchi, M., Koutamanis, A., & Rieffe, C. (2025). Social connectedness and loneliness in school for autistic and allistic children. *Autism, 29(1),* 87–101. https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613241259932

Ulmanen, S., Soini, T., Pietarinen, J., & Pyhalto, K. (2016). Students' experiences of the development of emotional engagement. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *79*, 86–96. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2016.06.003

Williams, R. (1999). Cultural safety: What does it mean for our work practice? *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, *23*(2), 213–214. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-842X.1999.tb01240.x

Wolpe, S., Tien, I., Lee, M., Sozeri, S., & Humphrey, I. (2025). "Neurodivergent people just get each other": Navigating friendship and community in the transition to adulthood for autistic adults. *Research in Autism, 128*, 202692. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.reia.2025.202692

Chapter 2

High expectations for student behaviour

This explainer is about high expectations for student behaviour, describing how holding high expectations for safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour and providing necessary support can positively impact students' behaviour and focus on learning. Related explainers focus on positive teacher–student relationships, teaching routines and establishing and maintaining rules.

Teachers with high expectations for behaviour believe and communicate that all students are capable of demonstrating safe, respectful and learning-focused behaviours. These expectations are expressed in daily routines, rules and behaviours in the classroom, which students are explicitly taught and supported to demonstrate. Examples include assembling quietly outside the classroom before entering, raising their hands when they have a question, quietly putting away equipment and following the teacher's instructions when transitioning between activities.

High expectations for behaviour are best developed and implemented through a whole-school approach so they're consistent across different classes and year levels. They should also be demonstrated by all staff members. This provides consistency and predictability so students and their families know what's expected of them and what they can expect from all staff across all settings (AERO, 2024).

High expectations for student behaviour are best supported by teacher–student relationships that value and support students' strengths and capacity to achieve (Stronger Smarter Institute, 2017). These relationships help teachers have high expectations for students, rather than of them, supporting students to demonstrate the high expectations (Stronger Smarter Institute, 2020).

Students will need varying levels and types of support from teachers to meet high expectations, including removing barriers and providing scaffolds for students. Different point-in-time expectations may be needed for some students as they develop their skills. This reflects the requirement to provide reasonable adjustments so students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as their peers (Disability Discrimination Act 1992; Disability Standards for Education 2005; 2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005) and Australia's commitment to equity and excellence in education (Alice Springs [Mparntwe] Education Declaration, 2019). When different point-in-time expectations are in place, it's important they still ensure a safe, supportive, learning environment for all students.

To explicitly teach high expectations for behaviour:

1. Introduce your expectations for behaviour – aligned with your school's expectations – or ask students to recall them if already known. Discuss with students why these high expectations are important and how they can demonstrate them.
2. Model and explicitly teach these expectations (for example, in your routines and rules).
3. Reinforce and maintain the high expectations through acknowledgement, praise and practice and by providing support and adjustments when needed.
4. Regularly reflect on your own behaviour to ensure you're consistently modelling high expectations yourself.

Effectively implementing high expectations requires alignment with the whole-school approach, consideration of students' diverse needs and a range of skills, including acknowledgement and praise, circulation, clear communication, deliberately pausing, non-verbal correction, scanning and voice control.

Adapted from Archer and Hughes (2011), Bennett (2020) and McDonald (2019).

The importance of high expectations for student behaviour

High expectations for behaviour are important because they provide students with clear guidelines – along with support – for how to behave safely and respectfully and focus on learning in the classroom. Students come to school with a range of different experiences, values and beliefs (Bennett, 2020) and have learnt social norms outside of the classroom that may be similar or different to what's expected in the classroom. When behaviour expectations are clear and students are taught and supported to meet them, students feel more secure because they know what's expected and can better predict how others will respond (DeNobile et al., 2021). High expectations for students' behaviour show they're cared for, offer them hope of success and support achievement for all (Bennett, 2020; McDonald, 2019).

High expectations for behaviour and learning are interrelated, mutually reinforcing and built on the premise that all students will be supported to achieve success. When teachers also hold high expectations for students' learning success, it can lead to increased effort and engagement in learning (Goss et al., 2017).

Having high expectations and supporting students to achieve them increases the likelihood that students will meet or exceed those expectations. High expectations encourage students to learn, take responsibility for their actions and understand the impact of their behaviour (Australian Government Department of Education, 2023). High expectations are also associated with positive outcomes, such as improvements in behaviour, keenness to attend school and academic performance (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2020).

Establishing and maintaining high expectations for behaviour

Establishing and maintaining high expectations for behaviour involves knowing students and valuing their strengths, and providing them with predictability, structure and support. Students may be unsure about teachers' expectations at the beginning of the school year or when they join the school. Sharing and explaining expectations for behaviour early is vital, as it supports students to be cooperative and comfortable as quickly as possible (De Nobile et al., 2021). Early communication also provides opportunity to work with students and families to identify any required support or adjustments.

Helping all students achieve the high expectations requires similar planning to teaching classroom rules and routines (McDonald, 2019). It's important to model, teach and reinforce high expectations every day, not only by telling students to do something, but showing them how to do it and allowing them opportunities to practise with support (Bennett, 2020). 'I believe you can do it' must be used in conjunction with 'And here's how you can do it' (Archer & Hughes, 2011; Bennett, 2020).

Students are quickly able to distinguish between intended boundaries and actual boundaries in the classroom (Bennett, 2020). They recognise consistency and fairness in expectations and responses. When monitoring and reinforcing high expectations for behaviour, it's important to support students when needed, recognise student effort, acknowledge and praise specific behaviours, and view mistakes as learning opportunities to teach students the skills needed to meet expectations in the future (McDonald, 2019).

Scenario

This scenario provides a practical example of the evidence summarised in this explainer. It provides insight into one teacher's approach to having high expectations for all students to create a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Ms Barry notices that her students' behaviour varies across lessons. Sometimes students demonstrate safe, respectful and learning-focused behaviour and, at other times, unsafe behaviour, disruption and disengagement occur. She feels she has good relationships with her students and has taught the classroom expectations, routines and rules. However, her students don't always follow them, especially in the afternoons.

She reflects on how she can ensure she's supporting her students to develop the skills to demonstrate the expectations. She identifies that she needs to focus on this at key times in lessons, including when students assemble at the start and when they leave the classroom.

She reminds herself to be particularly focused on supporting students to meet the expectations in the afternoons, noting that these times are just as important for student safety and learning as earlier in the day. She makes adjustments to more effectively manage students' cognitive load by breaking instructions and tasks into smaller parts, communicating clearly and concisely, and providing written and visual prompts for students to follow.

To strengthen the high expectations within her entrance routine, Ms Barry makes sure she's on time for lessons herself, greets students as they arrive, acknowledges students assembling with their belongings in a calm and orderly way, and reminds students of the expectations. This helps her connect with students and identify early any difficulties they're experiencing so she can make adjustments or provide assistance.

When she gains students' attention, she deliberately pauses to ensure she has everyone's attention before continuing. She also ensures her instructions are clear, concise and include student participation where possible.

She sets clear expectations before activities, explaining to students why these expectations are needed. At certain times when students have previously had difficulty meeting expectations, Ms Barry makes sure she reminds them of the expectations and closely monitors and supports them. She checks students are okay, offers support, reteaches expectations and routines when needed, and has students practise specific behaviours, providing support and feedback to reinforce the safe, respectful and learning-focused behaviour expected in her classroom.

At the end of lessons, she ensures she leaves enough time to wrap up the learning task and pack up calmly. She monitors students carefully during this time as this is when unsafe behaviour is more likely to occur. When students finish packing up, she gains their attention, acknowledges their efforts and thanks them for their safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour. She invites them to privately let her know if they have any information or feedback to share or are experiencing any difficulties. She reminds them of the expectations for leaving the classroom and monitors students inside and outside the classroom as they leave, acknowledging and praising individual students' efforts as they leave with a thumbs up, nod of acknowledgement, smile or quick verbal interaction.

Ms Barry notices that her presence, connection with students, offers of support, reminders and reteaching help prevent and effectively respond to some of the unsafe, disengaged and disruptive behaviours she had been experiencing. She finds that her early responses help students adjust their behaviour and prevent it from escalating or involving more students.

She acknowledges that students are still learning and developing, and that experiences outside her classroom may influence how they behave in her lessons. As a result, she recognises that she will need to continue providing reminders and support so students continue to develop the skills to demonstrate the high expectations for safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour.

For more guidance

The following resources in AERO's classroom management suite provide practical guidance and support related to high expectations for student behaviour.



Practice guides

- planning for classroom management
- setting behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks
- responding to low-level disengaged and disruptive behaviours
- escalated behaviour
- persistent disengaged and disruptive behaviour



Professional learning resources

- facilitation guide
- evidence-based approaches slide deck
- our whole-school approach slide deck
- practical refinement: setting behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks
- practical refinement: responding to low-level disengaged and disruptive behaviours



Reflection resources

- setting behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks
- responding to low-level disengaged and disruptive behaviours

Further reading

Bennett, T. (2020). *Running the room: The teacher's guide to behaviour.* John Catt Educational. (pp. 205–211)

De Nobile, J., Lyons, G., & Arthur-Kelly, M. (2021). *Positive learning environments: Creating and maintaining productive classrooms*. Cengage. (pp. 89–93)

Dowley, M., & Lovell, O. (2024). *The classroom management handbook*. John Catt Educational. (pp. 24–31; 41–43)

Lemov, D. (2021). *Teach like a champion 3.0*. Josey-Bass. (pp. 419–424)

McDonald, T. (2019). *Classroom management: Engaging students in learning*. Oxford University Press. (pp. 118–122)

Sarra, C., Spillman, D., Jackson, C., Davis, J., & Bray, J. (2018). High-expectations relationships: A foundation for enacting high expectations in all Australian schools. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, *49*(1), 32–45. https://doi.org/10.1017/jie.2018.10. (pp. 40–42)

Wong, H. K., & Wong, R. T. (2018). *The first days of school: How to be an effective teacher* (5th ed.). Harry K. Wong Publications. (pp. 49–57)

References

Archer, A. L., & Hughes, C. A. (2011). *Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching*. Guildford Press.

Australian Education Research Organisation. (2024). *Rules and routines*. https://www.edresearch.edu.au/guides-resources/practice-guides/rules-and-routines

Australian Government. (1992). *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A04426/latest/text

Australian Government. (2005). *Disability Standards for Education 2005*. https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005

Australian Government. (2021). *2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005*. https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005/2020-review-disability-standards-education-2005

Australian Government Department of Education. (2023). *Teacher Education Expert Panel discussion paper*. https://www.education.gov.au/quality-initial-teacher-education-review/resources/teacher-education-expert-panel-discussion-paper

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment. (2019). *The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*. https://www.education.gov.au/indigenous-education/resources/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration

Bennett, T. (2020). *Running the room: The teacher's guide to behaviour*. John Catt Educational.

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation. (2020). *Classroom management: Creating and maintaining positive learning environments*. https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/education-data-and-research/cese/publications/literature-reviews/classroom-management

De Nobile, J., Lyons, G., & Arthur-Kelly, M. (2021). *Positive learning environments: Creating and maintaining productive classrooms*. Cengage.

Goss, P., Sonnemann, J., & Griffiths, K. (2017). *Engaging students: Creating classrooms that improve learning*. https://grattan.edu.au/report/engaging-students-creating-classrooms-that-improve-learning/

Lemov, D. (2021). *Teach like a champion 3.0*: *63 techniques that put students on the path to college*. Josey-Bass.

McDonald, T. (2019). *Classroom management: Engaging students in learning*. Oxford University Press.

Stronger Smarter Institute. (2017). *Implementing the Stronger Smarter Approach: Stronger Smarter Institute Position Paper*. https://strongersmarter.com.au/stronger-smarter-approach/

Stronger Smarter Institute. (2020). *When challenged, how do you respond? Educators taking responsibility for change: Stronger Smarter Institute Limited position paper*. https://strongersmarter.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/PUB_Resp-for-Change_2020_final.pdf

Wong, H. K., & Wong, R. T. (2018). *The first days of school: How to be an effective teacher* (5th ed.). Harry K. Wong Publications.

Chapter 3
Teaching routines

This explainer is about teaching routines, describing how explicit teaching of routines provides structure, predictability and consistency to support student learning. Related explainers focus on positive teacher–student relationships, high expectations for behaviour and establishing and maintaining rules.

Whereas rules are short instructions for conduct or action, routines are sequences of recurring tasks or actions – for example, entering the classroom – taught by the teacher and practised by students to become automatic (Lemov, 2021). Routines help students understand and do what's required of them to complete a recurring task or activity safely and respectfully. The efficient, effective and automatic execution of routines increases learning time and helps free up students' working memory to focus on learning. Students will require varying supports to understand and develop the skills to complete routines in safe, respectful, learning-focused ways.

Routines are strengthened by a whole-school approach, with shared understanding and consistent application across the school (Evidence for Learning, 2023; McDonald, 2019). This provides consistency and predictability so students and their families know what's expected of them and what they can expect from all staff across all settings (AERO, 2024).

To explicitly teach a routine:

1. Introduce each routine, or ask students to recall it if already known, and discuss with students why it's important.
2. Model and describe the routine to your students by demonstrating it in action ('I do').
3. Support students to practise the routine, providing support and adjustments as needed ('We do'). Practise the routine until everyone can do it the best they can, acknowledging and praising students' progress.
4. Ask students to complete the routine independently when ready ('You do'), continuing to check for understanding, provide feedback and support when required, gradually removing scaffolding as appropriate.
5. Reinforce and maintain the routine consistently through acknowledgement, praise and practice.

Effectively implementing routines requires alignment with the whole-school approach, consideration of students' diverse needs and the use of a range of skills, including acknowledgement and praise, circulation, clear communication, deliberately pausing, non-verbal corrections, scanning and voice control.

Adapted from Archer and Hughes (2011), Bennett (2020) and Lemov (2021).

Routines should be based on the school community's values and perspectives to create safe, supportive and inclusive learning environments. It's important that teachers recognise and value diverse student and community perspectives and provide support to students when needed to create classroom conditions that are inclusive and conducive to learning (Alice Springs [Mparntwe] Education Declaration, 2019; Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2022; Disability Discrimination Act 1992; Disability Standards for Education 2005; 2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005, 2021). This means starting by listening to and understanding students and families and building that understanding into efforts to strengthen relationships.

Students may demonstrate safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours in different ways. For example, while eye contact may be routinely expected by many teachers, some students may have been taught that it is disrespectful or culturally inappropriate and, as such, may feel uncomfortable making eye contact. In this case, these students may demonstrate active listening and engagement in learning in other ways.

The importance of teaching routines

Routines give students certainty about what's expected in the classroom by providing consistency, predictability and structure (AERO, 2021). Well-designed and -established routines enable students to independently complete them with little involvement from the teacher, reducing interruptions and increasing teaching time (Archer & Hughes, 2011). It's easier for students to demonstrate safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours within routines when they're given clear sequences of the expected behaviour (Bennett, 2020).

Explicitly teaching, modelling and practising the expected behaviours of routines until they become automatic helps free up students' working memory to focus on learning (Lemov, 2021). To support students, a teacher should establish routines for specific tasks or times of the school day, such as entering and exiting the classroom, gaining all students' attention, students gaining teachers' attention, moving through the school and for specific learning activities. Students who've learned the expected behaviours and routines, and had sufficient opportunities to practise to the point they become automatic, won't have to think about these things while focused on learning (Chaffee et al., 2017; Simonsen et al., 2008).

Teaching and maintaining routines

Routines should be taught explicitly to students in the same way as curriculum content and skills. Teachers should identify routines that are necessary for their context, considering their students' backgrounds, experiences, neurodevelopmental profiles, needs and the school's expectations. Some students will require adjustments and additional support to follow the routine.

Introduce specific routines the first time they're required – likely spread out over the first few weeks of school to avoid students feeling overwhelmed (Archer & Hughes, 2011). Explaining why a routine is required and its connection to behaviour expectations is key to establishing shared understanding (Bennett, 2020).

Breaking a routine into a small number of discrete steps, and providing opportunities to revisit this and practise it over time, allows students to master the routine and commit it more easily to long-term memory (Lemov, 2021).

Students require support to learn and practise each step of a routine, as routines must be taught, rehearsed and reinforced to be learned (Lemov, 2021; Wong & Wong, 2018). Check students' understanding by modelling a routine correctly and incorrectly and asking students to identify the differences (Archer & Hughes, 2011).

Teachers can support students in understanding and successfully completing classroom routines by providing specific praise and constructive feedback about expected behaviours. Routines can be displayed visually on the board or a poster to provide a reminder and a scaffold for students who need more time and ongoing guidance to learn and follow them. Teachers can also discuss what the routine 'looks like' and 'sounds like' with their students (Archer & Hughes, 2011).

Mastering any behaviour takes practice. The more students practise, the better they get at it and the less they need to focus on this in ways that might distract from the content of their learning. Teachers need to allow time for students, and themselves, to become familiar with new routines (or time to relearn a routine that may have slipped). Changes to routines can concern some students. Where possible, give advance notice, explaining the reason for the change, discussing the support available and checking in throughout the transition to encourage and support the student.

Routines should be consistently monitored and revised daily, weekly or monthly as needed.



Scenario

This scenario provides a practical example of the evidence summarised in this explainer. It provides insight into one teacher's approach to establishing and maintaining a routine with their class to create a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Identify the routine

Ms Kelly identifies several recurring processes that would be helpful to teach and practise so they become automatic for her students. One of these is packing up and leaving the classroom at the end of the lesson. She finds that this time is often rushed, students sometimes engage in unsafe or disruptive behaviours and the classroom is not always left tidy.

Clarify the steps and expectations

Referring to the school-wide routine, values and rules, she identifies the key steps and behaviours for packing up and leaving the classroom, identifying adjustments to be made and additional support for students' specific needs:

What I do	What students do
1. Wrap up the final learning task with sufficient time to pack up. 2. Gain all students' attention. 3. Remind all students of the expectations for finishing the lesson, including packing away equipment and tidying the room. Check for understanding. 4. Monitor and reinforce the behaviour expectations while students finish the lesson. 5. Position myself so I can see all students before and when they leave the classroom. 6. Gain all students' attention. 7. Remind all students of the expectations for leaving the classroom. Check for understanding. 8. Dismiss students, monitor and reinforce the behaviour expectations and interact positively as they leave, including outside the classroom.	1. Focus on the learning task and seek help when needed. 2. Stop and listen to the teacher when attention is requested. 3. Listen to the expectations for finishing the lesson. Clarify anything unclear. 4. Follow the expectations for finishing the lesson and pack up materials safely and respectfully. 5. Stop and listen to the teacher when attention is requested. 6. Listen to the expectations for leaving the classroom. Clarify anything unclear. 7. Say goodbye to the teacher and leave the classroom calmly and safely, taking everything I need with me. 8. Move calmly and safely to where I need to be next.

Teach and practise the routine

Ms Kelly introduces the routine to the class and displays the steps visually on the board. She explains that the routine helps ensure there's enough time to stop the learning task, return materials to their places and leave the room calmly and safely. She discusses with the class how the routine benefits students, others (including the cleaners and those who also use the room) and herself. Students identify similarities between this situation and other times they stop activities and leave an area, such as after meals, training, rehearsals and special events.

Ms Kelly models each step and clearly explains both her and students' roles. She discusses with students the reasons for each step and where they may have experienced similar or different expectations, discussing why these may vary. She supports students to practise each step, providing scaffolding and support for students who need it, and specific feedback about what students are doing well and what they can refine to make the routine safer and more efficient. Students clarify anything that's unclear and then practise again.

Reinforce and refine the routine

Ms Kelly monitors and provides support for students to complete the routine whenever it's needed and, over time, students become more familiar and efficient with it and start to remind each other of the steps. Ms Kelly reduces the time allocated to the routine, while ensuring there's still enough time to tidy the room, dismiss students and connect with them as they leave.

Adjust and maintain the routine

Sometimes in lessons, Ms Kelly finds she loses track of time and doesn't leave enough time to complete the routine. She decides to set an alarm 10 minutes before the end of the lesson to begin wrapping up the learning task and start the exit routine. She'll use the alarm until she's confident she doesn't need it.

She also notices occasional unsafe and disruptive behaviours during the routine, so she increases her monitoring, reminders and support until students more consistently demonstrate safe and respectful behaviour.

Initially, and at the beginning and end of each term when students may need more reminding, Ms Kelly allows additional time at the end of lessons for practising and refining the routine. She provides additional visual and verbal prompts for students who need them and acknowledges students for their efforts to complete the routine efficiently and respectfully.

When new students arrive, Ms Kelly provides an overview of the routine to them and asks another student to explain it and support them as the class completes the routine. She checks that the new student understands the routine and discusses with them any clarification or additional support they require.

For more practical guidance

The following resources in AERO's classroom management suite provide practical guidance and support related to teaching routines.



Practice guides

- planning for classroom management
- gaining all students' attention
- rules and routines
- students entering the classroom
- students exiting the classroom
- students gaining teacher attention
- students moving through the school



Professional learning resource

- practical refinement: entrance routine



Reflection resources

- planning for classroom management
- gaining all students' attention
- students entering the classroom
- students exiting the classroom
- students gaining teacher attention
- students moving through the school

Further reading

Archer, A. L., & Hughes, C. A. (2011). *Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching*. Guildford Press. (pp. 121–129)

Bennett, T. (2020). *Running the room: The teacher's guide to behaviour*. John Catt Educational. (pp. 161–205)

Dowley, M., & Lovell, O. (2024). *The classroom management handbook*. John Catt Educational. (pp. 20–23; 28–31; 47–117).

Lemov, D. (2021). *Teach like a champion 3.0: 63 techniques that put students on the path to college*. Jossey-Bass. (pp. 385–417)

McCrea, P. (2020). *Motivated teaching*. Ingram Content Group. (pp. 57–67)

McDonald, T. (2019). *Classroom management: Engaging students in learning*. Oxford University Press. (pp. 122–130)

Wong, H. K., & Wong, R. T. (2018). *The first days of school: How to be an effective teacher* (5th ed.). Harry K. Wong Publications. (pp. 138–196)

References

Archer, A. L., & Hughes, C. A. (2011). *Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching*. Guildford Press.

Australian Education Research Organisation. (2021). *Focused classrooms: Managing the classroom to maximise learning*. https://www.edresearch.edu.au/resources/focused-classrooms-practice-guide/focused-classrooms-practice-guide-full-publication

Australian Education Research Organisation. (2024). *Rules and routines*. https://www.edresearch.edu.au/guides-resources/practice-guides/rules-and-routines

Australian Government. (1992). *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A04426/latest/text

Australian Government. (2005). *Disability Standards for Education 2005*. https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005

Australian Government. (2021). *2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005*. https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005/2020-review-disability-standards-education-2005

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment. (2019). *The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*. https://www.education.gov.au/indigenous-education/resources/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2022). *Building a culturally responsive Australian teaching workforce*. https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/intercultural-development/building-a-culturally-responsive-australian-teaching-workforce

Bennett, T. (2020). *Running the room: The teacher's guide to behaviour*. John Catt Educational.

Chaffee, R. K., Briesch, A. M., Johnson, A. H., & Volpe, R. J. (2017). A meta-analysis of class-wide interventions for supporting student behavior. *School Psychology Review, 46*(2), 149–164. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2017-26745-001

Evidence for Learning. (2023). *Effective behaviour supports in schools: Guidance report*. https://evidenceforlearning.org.au/education-evidence/guidance-reports/effective-behaviour-supports-in-schools

Lemov, D. (2021). *Teach like a champion 3.0: 63 techniques that put students on the path to college*. Jossey-Bass.

McDonald, T. (2019). *Classroom management: Engaging students in learning*. Oxford University Press.

Simonsen, B., Fairbanks, S., Briesch, A., Myers, D., & Sugai, G. (2008). Evidence-based practices in classroom management: Considerations for research to practice. *Education and Treatment of Children*, *31*(3), 351–380. https://doi.org/10.1353/etc.0.0007

Wong, H. K., & Wong, R. T. (2018). *The first days of school: How to be an effective teacher* (5th ed.). Harry K. Wong Publications.

Chapter 4
Establishing and maintaining rules

This explainer is about establishing and maintaining classroom rules. It describes how establishing and maintaining rules allow teachers to develop shared understanding of the expected safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours required in the learning environment. Related explainers focus on positive teacher–student relationships, high expectations for student behaviour and teaching routines.

A rule is usually a short instruction for conduct or action that everyone is expected to know, follow and refer to regularly (Bennett, 2020). Rules are underpinned by the fundamental right of all children to safety, respect and an education (United Nations, 1989). A list of rules should be as simple and as short as possible (Archer & Hughes, 2011; Bennett, 2020) to avoid students' working memory becoming overloaded, help them remember what's expected, and limit distraction from their learning (Alter & Haydon, 2017). Students will require varying supports to understand and develop the skills to demonstrate the behaviours aligned with the rules.

Rules are strengthened by a whole-school approach, with shared understanding and consistent application across the school (Evidence for Learning, 2023; McDonald, 2019). This provides consistency and predictability so students and their families know what's expected of them and what they can expect from all staff across all settings (AERO, 2024).

To explicitly teach rules:

1. Introduce each rule – or ask students to recall it if already known – and discuss with students why it's important. Display the rules in the learning environment where students can easily see them.
2. Check – and further develop, where necessary – students' understanding of what the rules should and shouldn't 'look like' and 'sound like' through discussion, modelling and practice. Provide additional supports and adjustments as needed.
3. Monitor all students and reinforce the rules consistently through acknowledgement, praise, reminders and practice.

Effectively implementing rules requires alignment with the whole-school approach, consideration of students' diverse needs and a range of skills, including acknowledgement and praise, circulation, clear communication, deliberately pausing, non-verbal correction, scanning and voice control.

Adapted from Archer and Hughes (2011), Bennett (2020) and McDonald (2019).

Rules should be based on the school community's values and perspectives to create safe, supportive and inclusive learning environments. It's important that teachers recognise and value diverse student and community perspectives and provide support to students when needed to create classroom conditions that are inclusive and conducive to learning (Alice Springs [Mparntwe] Education Declaration, 2019; Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2022; Disability Discrimination Act 1992; Disability Standards for Education 2005; 2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005, 2021). This means starting by listening to and understanding students and families and building that into efforts to strengthen relationships.

Students may demonstrate safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours in different ways. For example, while eye contact may be routinely expected by many teachers, some students may have been taught that it is disrespectful or culturally inappropriate and, as such, feel uncomfortable making eye contact. In this case, these students may demonstrate active listening and engagement in learning in other ways.

The importance of establishing and maintaining classroom rules

Positively framed and clearly communicated classroom rules help to promote safety, belonging and a learning environment where teachers can teach and students can learn (Archer & Hughes, 2011; McDonald, 2019). Students come to school with a range of different experiences, values and beliefs (Bennett, 2020) and the social norms they have learnt outside of the classroom may be similar or different to what's expected in the classroom. The function of a rule is to create shared understanding and discourage or prevent disengagement or disruption by clearly stating the expectations for behaviour (Wong & Wong, 2018). Students feel confident and safe when expectations are clear, consistent and support everyone to engage in learning (McDonald, 2019).

Explicitly taught and consistently maintained rules reduce cognitive load by minimising unclear or inconsistent expectations and supporting students' sense of safety and focus on learning (AERO, 2024).

Teaching and maintaining rules

Rules should be introduced and explained on the first day of school and then explicitly taught in small chunks over the following days and weeks (Archer & Hughes, 2011). *Teaching* the rules, instead of *telling* students the rules, proactively supports students in understanding and developing the skills to demonstrate them, and moves beyond an emphasis on compliance (Hepburn et al., 2021). Helping students understand the reasons for rules fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility (McDonald, 2019). It can also be helpful for families to understand the purpose and rationale for rules. Students benefit from this shared understanding between home and school.

Rules should clearly communicate the expected safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour and be positively framed. This creates clarity about what students need to do, adds to a positive learning environment and reduces the likelihood of resistance (Archer & Hughes, 2011).

For example, ‘Listen to your teacher and classmates’ is better framing than ‘Don’t talk while others are talking’ (Archer & Hughes, 2011).

When deciding which rules to incorporate in your classroom, firstly ensure they align with the school-wide processes for consistency and predictability so students know what’s expected of them and what they can expect from the teacher. Reflect on the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours required and the disengaged, disruptive or unsafe behaviours the rules need to cover. Develop age-appropriate, positively framed, simple rules that best address these, such as:

- Treat everybody with kindness.
- Listen and speak in a respectful way.
- Listen when the teacher is talking.
- Care for others, belongings and the environment.
- Walk quietly through the school.
- Be prepared with required items.

Limit the number of rules to avoid them becoming overwhelming – 3 to 10 are adequate (Archer & Hughes, 2011; Bennett, 2020; Wong & Wong, 2018). Having the fewest number of rules possible to maintain a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment, and ensuring these rules are easy to follow, makes it easier for students to demonstrate expected behaviours (Bennett, 2020).

Once taught, rules should be regularly reviewed. This can be done through classroom discussion, recitation, modelling and practising behaviours that demonstrate the rules (Alter & Haydon, 2017). Visual cues can help students remember the rules, such as a daily review and discussion of rules on a slide, displaying and referring to the rules on a poster or gluing the rules into the cover of students’ books for quick reference.

Rules need to be made clear in various routines, and students should be prompted prior to an activity to support them to successfully follow them (Simonsen et al., 2008). Practically, this may include reminders to listen when the teacher or another student is speaking, walk calmly and quietly when moving around the room or school or keep objects where they belong. Some students – such as those impacted by trauma – may experience difficulty adhering to rules they don’t understand or relate to, especially when it comes to regulating emotions, making plans or dealing with changes in routines. Some students may need additional guidance, support and scaffolds to help them learn and follow rules.

To acknowledge a rule has been followed, use specific acknowledgement or praise for the action. Specific praise can increase intrinsic motivation because it develops students’ awareness of exactly what they’re doing that’s worthy of praise (Wong & Wong, 2018).

A ‘rule reminder’, along with any required support, can be used to correct low-level disengagement or disruption. For example, ‘[Name], the rule is “Keep hands and feet to ourselves, use them only to help.” Hands to yourself, please.’

Scenario

This scenario provides a practical example of the evidence summarised in this explainer. It provides insight into one teacher's approach to implementing effective, positively framed classroom rules to create a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Revisit the rules and identify additional rules

Mr Gregory's school has 4 positively stated rules aimed at promoting safe, respectful and learning-focused behaviours. They are:

- Be in the right place at the right time.
- Act safely at all times.
- Listen and speak respectfully.
- Have a go and seek help when needed.

To revise these rules with his students, Mr Gregory leads a discussion to identify the teacher and student actions that will help everyone be safe, feel respected and focus on learning. As the students have already been taught the school rules in previous years, he asks them to recall them, checks they've remembered them correctly and provides reminders as needed. He then asks them to identify which of the actions they previously identified are covered by each rule.

Explain and discuss the rules

Mr Gregory then has students discuss similarities and differences between the rules and other guidelines they experience elsewhere. Together, they identify any unclear elements that require more explanation and how students can be supported and can support others to follow the rules. He models and has students demonstrate examples of how the rules are enacted.

He asks students to independently record their reflections from these discussions and demonstrations to inform how he can best support them throughout the year.

Invite parent and primary caregiver input

Following the discussion with his students, Mr Gregory emails their parents and primary caregivers, explaining that they're revisiting the rules to help everybody be safe, respectful and focused on learning. He shares the rules and examples with parents and primary caregivers and invites their suggestions for how he can support their children in demonstrating the behaviours associated with these rules.

Reinforce the rules

Mr Gregory uses parent and student input to plan supports for students. He also displays the rules in the classroom and has students record them in their books for easy reference.

Maintain the rules

Mr Gregory regularly revisits the rules with his students to help them remember, understand and follow them. Mr Gregory monitors and reinforces the rules, guiding students to demonstrate them and acknowledging when they do.

For more guidance

The following resources in AERO's classroom management suite provide practical guidance and support related to establishing and maintaining rules.



Practice guides

- planning for classroom management
- rules and routines
- responding to low-level disengaged and disruptive behaviours



Skill resources

- acknowledgement and praise



Professional learning resources

- facilitation guide
- evidence-based approaches slide deck
- our whole-school approach slide deck
- practical refinement: responding to low-level disengagement and disruption



Reflection resources

- rules
- responding to low-level disengaged and disruptive behaviours

Further reading

Archer, A. L., & Hughes, C. A. (2011). *Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching.* Guildford Press. (pp. 117–121)

Bennett, T. (2020). *Running the room: The teacher's guide to behaviour*. John Catt Educational. (pp. 97–102; 213–219)

Dowley, M., & Lovell, O. (2024). *The classroom management handbook*. John Catt Educational. (pp. 28–31)

McDonald, T. (2019). *Classroom management: Engaging students in learning*. Oxford University Press. (pp. 102–106)

Wong, H. K., & Wong, R. T. (2018). *The first days of school: How to be an effective teacher* (5th ed.). Harry K. Wong Publications. (pp. 201–203)

References

Alter, P., & Haydon, T. (2017). Characteristics of effective classroom rules: A review of the literature'. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 40*(2), 114–127. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888406417700962

Archer, A. L., & Hughes, C. A. (2011). *Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching*. Guildford Press.

Australian Education Research Organisation. (2024). *Rules and routines*. https://www.edresearch.edu.au/guides-resources/practice-guides/rules-and-routines

Australian Government. (1992). *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A04426/latest/text

Australian Government. (2005). *Disability Standards for Education 2005*. https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005

Australian Government. (2021). *2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005*. https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005/2020-review-disability-standards-education-2005

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment. (2019). *The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*. https://www.education.gov.au/indigenous-education/resources/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2022). *Building a culturally responsive Australian teaching workforce*. https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/intercultural-development/building-a-culturally-responsive-australian-teaching-workforce

Bennett, T. (2020). *Running the room: The teacher's guide to behaviour*. John Catt Educational.

Evidence for Learning. (2023). *Effective behaviour supports in schools: Guidance report*. https://evidenceforlearning.org.au/education-evidence/guidance-reports/effective-behaviour-supports-in-schools

Hepburn, L., Beamish, W., & Alston-Knox, C. L. (2021). Classroom management practices commonly used by secondary school teachers: Results from a Queensland survey. *Australian Educational Researcher*, *48*(1), 485–505. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-020-00402-y

McDonald, T. (2019). *Classroom management: Engaging students in learning*. Oxford University Press.

Simonsen, B., Fairbanks, S., Briesch, A., Myers, D., & Sugai, G. (2008). Evidence-based practices in classroom management: Considerations for research to practice. *Education and Treatment of Children*, *31*(3), 351–380. https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/20/article/240375

Wong, H. K., & Wong, R. T. (2018). *The first days of school: How to be an effective teacher* (5th ed.). Harry K. Wong Publications.

United Nations. (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child

Part 2

Classroom management practice guides

Chapter 5: Building positive connections with all students 40

Chapter 6: Entering the classroom 48

Chapter 7: Exiting the classroom 56

Chapter 8: Gaining all students' attention 66

Chapter 9: Planning for classroom management 72

Chapter 10: Responding to low-level disengaged and disruptive behaviour 79

Chapter 11: Setting behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks 92

Chapter 12: Students gaining teacher attention 100

Chapter 13: Students moving through the school 106

Chapter 5

Building positive connections with all students

This practice guide will support you in building positive connections with your students, leading to positive teacher–student relationships.

Teachers play a significant role in the lives of their students – not just in terms of academic learning but also in their social and emotional development. Connecting with students to build trust and form positive relationships over time is instrumental in creating learning environments where students feel safe, supported and included.

Meaningful interactions and a well-managed classroom are key contributors to creating positive connections with students. From the very first moments students interact with you, they're deciding whether you're someone to trust and approach or mistrust and avoid.

Building positive connections is a shared process that involves listening to students, understanding their contexts and creating environments where they feel known, valued and safe to engage. Investing time and effort into connecting with all students and getting to know them will help you build positive relationships.

To build positive connections with all students:

- Interact positively with all students.
- Engage with families.
- Get to know your students.

Connecting with students requires alignment with the whole-school approach, consideration of students' diverse needs and a range of classroom management skills, including acknowledgement and praise, circulation, clear communication, non-verbal correction, scanning and voice control.

1. Interact positively with all students

From your first interactions with students, verbal and non-verbal communication needs to be authentic, warm, caring and responsive. In addition to the words you say, your facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures, eye contact and actions help to build a sense of security, connection and trust with your students.

Students may interpret communication differently depending on their backgrounds, experiences, neurodevelopmental profiles and needs. You may need to adjust your approach to ensure all students feel respected and understood.

Showing courtesy and respect towards students sends a message that you hold them in positive regard, are approachable and are open to listening and responding to them. Responding with understanding and empathy shows students that you value their perspective and how they view the world.

To build connections by interacting positively with students:

- [ ] Make a conscious effort to learn students' names from a class list and use students' preferred names (and pronouns). Photo lists, name tags or desk labels can support this. Ask if you're unsure how to pronounce a student's name.
- [ ] Always interact with students with a calm tone, respect and politeness – for example, greeting students on first meeting each day and saying goodbye to students when they exit the classroom, using 'Please' and 'Thank you', and pausing before responding to disengagement or disruption to maintain and model your own emotional regulation.
- [ ] Notice how students respond and communicate. Ask for feedback from students – and, when appropriate, their families – about the student's preferred mode of communication and adjust your approach to help all students feel comfortable interacting with you.
- [ ] Invite and respond to students' perspectives on teaching and learning, including how the learning environment and tasks support their learning – for example, through a survey or speaking to students about what's working well and what could be improved.
- [ ] Provide regular opportunities for students with disability to provide input and feedback on adjustments, especially before and after changes to routines and new learning cycles.
- [ ] Frequently acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful and learning-focused behaviours and efforts.
- [ ] Use positive non-verbal communication, such as turning to face students when they're speaking, smiling and maintaining an encouraging facial expression and positive body language.
- [ ] Positively frame communication, stating, when possible, what students are being asked to do (rather than what they shouldn't do) so that they understand what's required of them. For example, say 'Start the task' instead of 'Stop messing about.'
- [ ] Acknowledge and respectfully respond to students who use agreed routines – such as hand-raising – to gain the teacher's attention when seeking assistance, asking a question or sharing information.
- [ ] When responding to disengagement or disruption, offer support and provide students with the opportunity to change their behaviour. Acknowledge students when they adjust their behaviour.

2. Engage with families

Trusting and respectful partnerships with families support students' safety, inclusion and learning. Parents and primary caregivers know their children best and have important insight and information to share. They're also able to support your work with their children. Building trust with parents and primary caregivers takes time and may be influenced by their previous experiences as parents and through their own schooling.

Effective two-way communication draws on the knowledge, experience and expertise of both families and teachers to support students' learning. It's important that interactions are proactive, positive, calm and respectful. Where possible, interactions should be responsive to the communication preferences of parents and primary caregivers, including using non-digital forms of communication when needed.

Creating a safe, supportive and inclusive environment where students and their families are able to participate in and contribute to learning is fundamental to effective family engagement. Truly collaborative and authentic partnerships with students and their families and communities can be supported by practising reflexivity and responsiveness and remembering that parents and primary caregivers are partners in students' educations. Reflexive practices involve examining your identity, culture, history and biases, and how these impact your relationships with and understanding of your students, their families and the communities they live and work in.

To effectively engage with families:

- [ ] Plan and use reflexive and culturally responsive practices to create a culturally safe learning environment where students and families can engage. This will involve seeking guidance and feedback from colleagues, students and families.
- [ ] Recognise that parents and primary caregivers may have different ways of communicating and require different support to engage. Support two-way, positive communication and provide light-touch updates about learning, using concise, understandable language and explanations.
- [ ] Seek advice and support from school support staff – such as guidance counsellors, community liaison staff or learning support staff – to support communication with families, including culturally responsive communication.
- [ ] Focus on students' strengths, opportunities, goals, effort, progress and needs when engaging with families.
- [ ] Approach conversations about supports students might need in a collaborative, solutions-focused manner and identify opportunities to work together to support their learning.
- [ ] Invite and support parents and primary caregivers to contribute and be involved – for example, sharing their experiences and expertise relating to curriculum topics, and supporting and attending class and school events and activities.
- [ ] Follow school policies and procedures and seek clarification and advice from support staff and school leaders when needed.

Before the first day or soon after:

- [ ] Where practical, introduce yourself to parents and primary caregivers through the school's preferred contact process. It's a good idea to keep this brief and provide more detailed information in follow-up communication or a meet-the-teacher session. In settings where teachers have multiple classes (e.g., secondary school settings), this introduction may be coordinated by a school leader to reduce information overload for parents and primary caregivers. You might:
  - Introduce and share a little about yourself. Consider including a photo in any written introduction.
  - Convey your excitement and passion for teaching your year group or subject and their child.
  - Share how you'll communicate with them and how they might communicate with you. Set reasonable expectations – for example, about response times, meeting frequencies and methods of communication (such as phone calls, emails or parent portals for brief, simple communication, and meetings for more complex, detailed communication). Invite parents and primary caregivers to share relevant information or concerns that may support effective communication.
  - Outline school and class expectations, routines and rules, and how you'll support students when they're not demonstrating safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour, including seeking parent and primary caregiver support when needed. Invite families to provide feedback on how expectations, routines and rules align with families' and community values and support for students.
  - If communicating prior to school commencing, share important information needed for the first day of school.
  - Invite parents and primary caregivers to ask questions and discuss important information that will help support their child's learning, including students' strengths, interests and support needs.
- [ ] Where practical, contact the parents or primary caregivers of students with additional learning needs. In a secondary school setting, this may be done by one staff member, such as a student support specialist. You might:
  - Introduce yourself.
  - Convey your excitement and passion for teaching your year group or subject and their child.
  - Ask for any early information and suggestions to support their child.
  - Provide an opportunity for them to ask questions.
  - Establish regular communication.

To prepare for communication with parents and primary caregivers:

- [ ] Draft written communication and have a colleague, support staff member or school leader review it. Reflecting on these drafts with a colleague or critical friend who knows and understands families and the school community will help you refine your communication.
- [ ] Before verbally communicating with parents and primary caregivers, script and rehearse what you'll say and how you'll provide opportunities for parent and primary caregiver input and questions. Consider potential family perspectives to refine your script. Preparation will help you communicate clearly, positively and confidently. Practise with a colleague playing the role of the parent or primary caregiver.
- [ ] Plan when you'll provide updates to and seek feedback from parents and primary caregivers about students' progress (academic, behavioural, social or emotional).

3. Get to know your students

Making active efforts to know your students demonstrates that you care about them and helps you connect and build positive relationships that enable you to provide support.

It's important to understand each student's background, experiences, neurodevelopmental profile, strengths and needs. This will support you to engage students and promote a sense of belonging and identity within the class and school – for example, asking families and students how they want their cultures to be recognised, and drawing on and celebrating diversity within the class.

Students want you to be genuinely interested in them. Try to spend time getting to know new cohorts of students before the previous school year finishes, when the new school year begins and when new students join the class. This will help you build positive connections with all students.

To get to know your students over time:

- [ ] Read student profiles and speak with key staff already familiar with them to learn their names and begin to identify:
  - family arrangements
  - cultural and linguistic backgrounds
  - relevant medical needs
  - academic, behavioural, social and emotional strengths, needs and plans
  - reasonable adjustments required.
- [ ] Prepare a short 'getting to know you' activity. This will help you learn about students' hobbies, interests, cultural contexts, spoken languages, achievements, likes and dislikes. It will also provide an opportunity to share your own. This information can support further interactions with students and may help you identify students' expectations of you. Students may need time to build enough trust to share this information, so allow students to participate when they feel comfortable. Model reflective and genuine behaviours to help build this trust.

- [ ] Provide opportunities for students to identify challenges they may face and inform you of how they can be successful.
- [ ] Create opportunities for students to 'check-in' at the beginning of a lesson or day and to 'check-out' at the end. For example, to identify how students are feeling, have them complete an entrance ticket activity, such as selecting different emojis that reflect their mood, placing a token in different labelled boxes on their desk or sticking a sticky note on a chart. Provide multiple ways for students to express how they're feeling – including verbal and non-verbal options – recognising that not all students are comfortable sharing publicly. You can then use this information to discreetly check-in with students or provide additional encouragement or support.
- [ ] Regularly speak to students individually and in small groups, and reinforce that you're interested in them, value them being a part of the class and appreciate their efforts and contributions.
- [ ] During break or lunchtimes, when moving through the school or at other appropriate times, talk to students about their hobbies and interests. How did their team go on the weekend? How was their camping trip? How are their pets?
- [ ] Notice, affirm and celebrate the diverse strengths, interests, communication styles and preferences students bring to the classroom, so that all students know their differences are recognised, respected and valued.
- [ ] Show interest in students' interests and activities – for example, asking about, attending or participating in school extracurricular activities, if possible, such as celebrations, performances, sports, clubs or competitions. Be aware that not all students have equal access to extracurricular activities for a range of reasons. Avoid making assumptions and build inclusive connections that don't rely on shared participation in these activities.
- [ ] Share a little about yourself when appropriate – for example, student-appropriate stories of life outside the classroom, interests and hobbies, when it's your birthday or what you did on the weekend or school holidays.
- [ ] Interact with students you don't teach to build positive connections beyond the classroom – for example, while on break duty. Get to know their names and ask how their day is going to show that you're interested in them and that you care.

Questions for reflection

Once you've applied the advice in this guide, consider:

- How are the positive connections you've built with students inside and outside the classroom supporting you in creating a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment and effectively managed classroom?
- What other approaches could support you in building positive connections with students? Are you identifying specific students you need to get to know better and increase positive interactions with? When and how will you do this?
- How are you communicating and building trusting partnerships with families to support student learning? How are you seeking early input and feedback from parents and primary caregivers?
- How do you establish positive connections with new students and families, including those who join the class throughout the year?
- How have positive interactions with students and their families helped you better understand students' backgrounds, experiences, neurodevelopmental profiles, preferences, strengths and needs to foster cultural safety and inclusion in your classroom? How do you know students and their families feel safe and respected in their interactions with you?
- What steps are you taking to identify, understand and reflect on the ways your experiences, values and beliefs influence how you engage with students and their families? How can you strengthen your approach further?
- How will you continue to build positive connections with students over the term or year?



For more guidance

The following resources in AERO's classroom management suite provide practical guidance and support related to building positive connections with all students.



Explainer

- positive teacher–student relationships



Practice guides

- cultural safety
- family engagement
- planning for classroom management
- respectful interactions
- responding to low-level disengaged and disruptive behaviours
- supporting a colleague with refining their practice (and accompanying observation tool)



Video

- building positive connections with all students



Professional learning resources

- facilitation guide
- evidence-based approaches slide deck
- our whole-school approach slide deck
- practical refinement: engaging with families
- practical refinement: interacting positively with all students



Reflection resource

- building positive connections with all students

Chapter 6
Entering the classroom

This practice guide will support you in using an effective routine for entering the classroom. This helps maintain a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

An effective entrance routine builds positive connections with students and maximises instructional time. Explicitly teach the routine and consider students' diverse backgrounds, experiences, neurodevelopmental profiles and needs to identify and provide adjustments and support. This includes providing visual supports or additional time and prompts as needed.

An effective entrance routine requires the following steps:

1. Position yourself to see all students.
2. Gain all students' attention and greet them positively.
3. Remind all students of the expectations for entering the classroom.
4. Monitor and reinforce the behaviour expectations as students enter, providing support when needed.
5. Gain all students' attention to be ready for the next instructions.

This routine requires alignment with the whole-school approach, consideration of students' diverse needs and a range of skills, including acknowledgement and praise, circulation, clear communication, deliberately pausing, non-verbal correction, scanning and voice control.

When responding to student behaviour, always interact with students with a calm tone, respect and politeness – for example:

- greeting students on first meeting each day, and using 'Please' and 'Thank you'
- pausing before responding to disengagement or disruption to maintain and model your own emotional regulation, recognising that students' responses may reflect diverse needs, experiences or barriers that require additional supports and adjustments
- positively framing communication, stating what students are being asked to do rather than what they shouldn't do, so that they understand what's required of them. For example, providing the instruction 'Moving calmly into the classroom, please' instead of 'Stop messing about.' This models respectful and polite interactions for students and creates a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

1. An effective entrance routine

1.1. Position yourself to see all students

Being able to see all students allows you to ensure student safety, provide assistance, acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts, and identify and promptly respond to any behaviour that is unsafe, disengaged or disruptive. It also helps you connect with students as you greet them, ask how they are and show that you care.

Position yourself where you can see all students, and deliberately scan and monitor all students as they assemble or enter the classroom. For example, stand in a place that allows you to monitor all students lining up, putting bags on the bag racks or retrieving any equipment to take into class. Make blind spots out of bounds or, if this isn't possible, regularly monitor them.

Support students who may benefit from entering the room first or last. For example, students with mobility difficulties or sensory sensitivities. Position these students at the beginning or end of the line if students assemble before entering.

1.2. Gain all students' attention and greet them positively

Efficiently gaining all students' attention maximises instructional time and ensures all students – including those needing additional processing time or support – can access instructions and don't miss important information.

Stand where all students can see you and, with an assertive voice, gain all students' attention:

- using an audible prompt, supported by a visual cue, to indicate to students that they need to stop what they're doing, face you and listen in silence
- pausing and scanning to ensure students are looking and listening
- acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts
- responding to students not giving you their full attention, acknowledging students when they do.

1.3. Remind all students of the expectations for entering the classroom

It's important that you plan, teach and remind students of the expected safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours for entering the classroom, so they understand what's required before they need to do it. By keeping the same expectations each time, students will become familiar with them and be more likely to demonstrate them.

Greet all students and clearly communicate the expectations for assembling (if students assemble before entering), entering the classroom and preparing for learning.

Communicate:

- where they should be
- what they're being asked to do
- what they need.

Check understanding of behaviour expectations – for example, by asking a small number of students to repeat the instructions with the whole class listening. If needed, clarify, demonstrate and provide support until all students understand what's expected.

Deliberately pause and scan to allow time for students to demonstrate the expectations for assembling and preparing to enter the classroom, and to provide support if needed, before instructing students to enter the classroom.

1.4. Monitor and reinforce the behaviour expectations as students enter, providing support when needed

It's important to monitor all students while they're entering the room. This will ensure safety, and reinforce safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour expectations. It will also demonstrate to students that you care about them, are aware of what's happening and will provide support when needed.

Consider students who may benefit from entering the room first or last. For example, students with mobility difficulties or sensitivity to crowded environments may benefit from entering at a particular time.

Prompt students to enter the room. As students enter, continuously scan all students outside and inside the classroom. Assist students when needed.

Greet students by name as they enter the classroom to help build positive connections. This also provides an opportunity to briefly acknowledge any milestones or achievements and give reminders to individual students – for example, asking about how their activity or event went on the weekend, reminding them about needing to leave the class at a certain time for an appointment or activity or needing to hand in something, such as a completed task or consent form.

Acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts – for example, 'Thank you, outside line, for allowing the inside line to move in first', 'Thank you, students, for waiting quietly while …', 'Great to see those students who have sat down and started [activity]'.

Respond to behaviours that are unsafe, disengaged or disruptive with non-verbal or verbal correction – for example, 'Remember [Name], quietly walking straight to our desks so we can start our learning and avoid distracting others.' Acknowledge students when they correct their behaviour.

Once all students are inside, follow them into the room and position yourself to continue scanning all students as they move to their designated areas (for example, their desks or the carpet).

1.5. Gain all students' attention to be ready for the next instructions

Having a clear end to your entrance routine signals to students that they've all safely entered the classroom and are now ready for the lesson to begin.

Stand where all students can see you and, with an assertive voice, gain all students' attention:

- using an audible prompt, supported by a visual cue, to indicate to students that they need to stop what they're doing, face you and listen in silence
- pausing and scanning to ensure students are looking and listening
- acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts
- responding to students not giving you their full attention, acknowledging students when they do.

Thank students for their safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts when entering the classroom. Provide specific feedback on anything that could be refined, and practise again if needed.

2. Rehearse and practise your entrance routine

Before beginning rehearsal and practice, identify the school's and your expectations for:

- **students preparing to enter the room.** For example, should students be positioned in lines, sitting or standing? What equipment do students need to have ready before entering?
- **students entering the room.** For example, should students quietly walk in single file? Do they unpack equipment or have it ready? Do they sit in seats or on spots on the carpet? Are they talking quietly to their neighbour? Do they complete an independent activity?

Use the checklist for each step in the following section to identify your strengths and prioritise the step you'll 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 planning, scripting and rehearsing without students present, then practise with students present.

Invite a colleague to observe your entrance routine. Ask them to use the observation tool to record the observation and provide feedback on what went well and to suggest one area for further improvement.

2.1. Position yourself to see all students

Rehearse then practise standing where you'll be able to see all students as they assemble or begin entering the classroom (likely just outside the entrance to your classroom). Does your position:

- [ ] ensure you don't have blind spots that need to be regularly monitored?
- [ ] allow you to scan and see all students preparing to enter the room?
- [ ] allow all students to see you ready to gain their attention?

How might you need to adjust your position for certain classrooms or classes?

Who may benefit from entering the room first or last? Rehearse then practise discreetly inviting these students to be at the beginning or end of the line if this isn't already established.

2.2. Gain all students' attention and greet them positively

If students assemble before entering the classroom, rehearse then practise:

- [ ] gaining all students' attention by using an audible prompt supported by a visual cue
- [ ] deliberately pausing
- [ ] scanning all students
- [ ] acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful behaviours and efforts
- [ ] responding to students not giving you their full attention, acknowledging students when they do.

2.3. Remind all students of the expectations for entering the classroom

Rehearse, then practise clearly communicating these expectations:

- [ ] using as few words as possible while maintaining clarity
- [ ] breaking instructions down:
  - into a small number of manageable steps
  - in a sequential order
  - so they're actionable for students
- [ ] deliberately pausing and scanning to ensure students understand and are following instructions.

Consider how you might complement verbal instructions with visual supports for students to refer to, especially for multi-step instructions.

2.4. Monitor and reinforce the behaviour expectations as students enter, providing support when needed

Rehearse then practise:

- [ ] moving to a position where you can monitor inside and outside of the classroom
- [ ] prompting students to enter the classroom in the expected manner (if students assemble before entering)
- [ ] scanning students inside and outside of the classroom
- [ ] assisting students when needed
- [ ] acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts
- [ ] responding to behaviours that are unsafe, disengaged or disruptive, acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour
- [ ] moving to a position where you can continue scanning once all students have entered the room, ensuring all students and areas of the learning environment are monitored.

2.5. Gain all students' attention to be ready for the next instructions

Rehearse then practise:

- [ ] where you'll position yourself so that all students can see you
- [ ] gaining all students' attention by using an audible prompt, supported by a visual cue. Combine this with an instruction if needed – for example, to be seated or to complete a regular learning task
- [ ] deliberately pausing
- [ ] scanning all students
- [ ] acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts
- [ ] responding to students not giving you their full attention, acknowledging students when they do
- [ ] finishing with politeness by thanking students for their safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours when entering the classroom.

Questions for reflection

When you've refined each of the steps in this guide, consider the following questions:

- What aspects of this practice are helping you develop and strengthen relationships with your students? How?
- What impact has this routine had on your students? On you? What differences are you noticing to the start of your lessons?
- How consistently are you maintaining the steps of this routine? Are there any adjustments you need to make?
- How are you supporting all students in demonstrating safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours when entering the classroom? Could any students be further supported by visual supports, additional processing time, prompts and reminders or opportunities for practice?
- Is this routine automatic for students? What else can you do to make it automatic?
- When will you review (and reteach, if necessary) your entrance routine? How will you know that you need to do this?



Regularly revise your entrance routine

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

For more guidance

The following resources in AERO's classroom management suite provide practical guidance and support related to an entrance routine.



Explainer

- teaching routines



Practice guides

- planning for classroom management
- responding to low-level disengaged and disruptive behaviours
- supporting a colleague with refining their practice (and accompanying observation tool)



Video

- entering the classroom



Professional learning resources

- facilitation guide
- evidence-based approaches slide deck
- our whole-school approach slide deck
- practical refinement: gaining all students' attention



Reflection resource

- entering the classroom

Chapter 7
Exiting the classroom

This practice guide will support you in using an effective routine for leaving the classroom. This helps maintain a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

An exit routine at the end of a lesson provides a 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. Explicitly teach the routine and consider students' diverse backgrounds, experiences, neurodevelopmental profiles and needs to identify and provide adjustments and support. This includes providing visual supports or additional time and prompts as needed.

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, providing support when needed.

Have students leave the classroom:

1. Position yourself to be able to see all students as they leave the classroom.
2. Gain all students' attention.
3. Remind all students of the expectations for leaving the classroom.
4. Dismiss students and monitor and reinforce the behaviour expectations as they leave, including outside the classroom, providing support when needed.

This routine requires alignment with the whole-school approach, consideration of students' diverse needs and a range of skills, including acknowledgement and praise, circulation, clear communication, deliberately pausing, non-verbal correction, scanning and voice control.

When responding to student behaviour, always interact with students with a calm tone, respect and politeness – for example:

- using 'Please' and 'Thank you', and saying goodbye to students when leaving the classroom
- pausing before responding to disengagement or disruption to maintain and model your own emotional regulation, recognising that students' responses may reflect diverse needs, experiences or barriers that require additional supports and adjustments
- positively framing communication, stating what students are being asked to do rather than what they shouldn't do, so that they understand what's required of them. For example, providing the instruction 'Moving calmly and quietly, please' instead of 'Stop messing about.' This models respectful and polite interactions for students and creates a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

1. An effective exit routine

1.1. Wrap up the final learning task

Having a clear end to a learning task provides students with an obvious point at which to stop and prepare to leave the classroom. Providing reminders and prompts for how long students have left to complete learning tasks and what they need to do before they finish allows students to use the remaining time to complete the task. It also helps them prepare to transition from the task, preventing possible frustration associated with an unexpected end to the activity.

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 support – such as a timer – so students can see how long they have left. Between each reminder, provide students with prompts or set targets for them to achieve – for example, 'You have two minutes left. Try to complete one more sentence.'

1.2. Gain all students' attention

Efficiently gaining all students' attention maximises instructional time and ensures all students – including those needing additional processing time or support – can access instructions and don't miss important information.

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

- using an audible prompt, supported by a visual cue, to indicate to students that they need to stop what they're doing, face you and listen in silence
- pausing and scanning to ensure students are looking and listening
- acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts
- responding to students not giving you their full attention, acknowledging students when they do.

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

It's important that you remind students of the expected safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours for finishing the lesson, so they understand what's required before they need to do it. By keeping the same expectations each time, students will become familiar with them and be more likely to demonstrate them.

With an assertive voice, 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.'

Use visual supports – such as a checklist on the board – to support student understanding and for students to refer to while they prepare to leave the classroom.

Check understanding of behaviour expectations – for example, by asking a small number of students to repeat the instructions with the whole class listening. If needed, clarify, demonstrate and provide support until all students understand what's expected.

1.4. Monitor and reinforce the behaviour expectations while students finish the lesson, providing support when needed

It's important to monitor all students while they're finishing the lesson. This will ensure safety, and reinforce safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour expectations while packing away, tidying up and preparing to leave the classroom. It will also demonstrate to students that you care about them, are aware of what's happening in your classroom and will provide adjustments and support when needed.

Prompt students to prepare to leave the classroom.

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

Acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts – 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.'

Respond to behaviours that are unsafe, disengaged or disruptive with non-verbal or verbal corrections – for example, '[Name], quietly putting your sheet in your folder, please.' Acknowledge students when they correct their behaviour.

1.5. 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, provide assistance, acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts, and identify and promptly respond to any behaviour that is unsafe, disengaged or disruptive.

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

1.6. Gain all students' attention

Gaining all students' attention after they've finished preparing to leave allows you to remind them of the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour expectations for leaving the classroom and reduces the likelihood of students missing important information.

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

- using an audible prompt, supported by a visual cue, to indicate to students that they need to stop what they're doing, face you and listen in silence
- pausing and scanning to ensure students are looking and listening
- acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts
- responding to students not giving you their full attention, acknowledging when they do.

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

It's important that you remind students of the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour expectations for leaving the classroom, so they understand what's required before needing to demonstrate the routine.

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

With an assertive voice and stance, acknowledge and praise 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 understanding of behaviour expectations – for example, by asking a small number of students to repeat the instructions with the whole class listening. If needed, clarify, demonstrate and provide support until all students understand what's expected.

1.8. Dismiss students and monitor and reinforce the behaviour expectations as they leave, including outside the classroom, providing support when needed

Consistently monitoring all students while they're leaving the room and outside the classroom demonstrates to them that you care about them, are aware of what's happening and will provide support when needed. It also enables you to reinforce safe, respectful behaviour expectations.

Prompt students to leave the room in a safe, orderly manner – for example, prompting the group sitting nearest the door to leave first. Consider students who may benefit from leaving the room first or last. For example, students with sensory sensitivities may benefit from leaving at a particular time to reduce exposure to high-traffic areas and support a more regulated transition.

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 the lesson, session or day and give brief individual reminders – for example, needing to complete a homework activity or needing to bring something next time.

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

Acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts '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.'

Respond to behaviours that are unsafe, disengaged or disruptive 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 scanning all students as they leave the area, providing assistance when needed.

Thank students for their safe, respectful behaviours and efforts as they leave the area. Provide specific feedback on anything that could be refined, and practise again if needed.

2. Rehearse and practise your exit routine

Before you begin to rehearse and practice, identify the school expectations and your class expectations (aligned with the school expectations) for students leaving the classroom.

What safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours do you want to see? What particular behaviours do you want to understand and address?

Identify what will work best for your context and students' specific needs – for example, certain students first or last, row by row or table by table.

Use the checklist for each step in the following section to identify your strengths and prioritise the step you'll 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 planning, scripting and rehearsing without students present, then practise with students present.

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

2.1. Wrap up the final learning task

- [ ] Explicitly plan time to be able to effectively conduct your exit routine. This time may get shorter the more the procedure becomes automatic for students.

Script, rehearse, then practise:

- [ ] clearly communicating the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour expectations and amount of time for students finishing the learning task, including providing regular verbal, and visual incremental reminders of what they need to do in the time remaining.

2.2. Gain all students' attention

Rehearse, then practise:

- [ ] gaining all students' attention by using an audible prompt supported by a visual cue
- [ ] deliberately pausing
- [ ] scanning all students
- [ ] acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts
- [ ] responding to students not giving you their attention, acknowledging students when they do.

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

Rehearse, then practise clearly communicating what students need to do to finish the lesson and prepare to leave the classroom:

- 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

- [ ] using as few words as possible while maintaining clarity
- [ ] breaking instructions down:
  - into a small number of manageable steps
  - in a sequential order
  - so they're actionable for students
- [ ] deliberately pausing and scanning to ensure students understand and are following the instructions.

Consider how you might complement verbal instructions with visual supports for students to refer to, especially for multi-step instructions.

2.4. Monitor and reinforce the behaviour expectations while students prepare to leave the classroom, providing support when needed

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, extra assistance or an adjustment
  - acknowledge and praise students safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts
  - respond to disengagement and disruption, acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

Rehearse, then practise gaining all students' attention and re-setting expectations for safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour when needed.

2.5. Position yourself to be able 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 to 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 as needed for different classrooms or classes.

2.6. Gain all students' attention

Rehearse, then practise:

- [ ] gaining all students' attention by using an audible prompt supported by a visual cue
- [ ] deliberately pausing
- [ ] scanning all students
- [ ] acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts
- [ ] responding to students not giving you their full attention, acknowledging students when they do.

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

Rehearse, then practise clearly communicating the expectations for leaving the classroom:

- [ ] acknowledging students' attention and effort during the lesson, session or day
- [ ] clearly communicating the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour 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
- [ ] checking for understanding.

2.8. Dismiss students and monitor and reinforce the behaviour expectations as they leave, including outside the classroom, providing support when needed

Rehearse, then practise:

- [ ] instructing students to leave the classroom
- [ ] scanning inside and outside the classroom as students leave
- [ ] interacting positively with students, such as saying goodbye to students by name
- [ ] acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts throughout the lesson, session or day and giving reminders to individual students for homework or the next lesson
- [ ] positively framed verbal corrections – for example, a whole-class reminder of expectations or a quick correction responding to behaviours that are unsafe, disengaged or disruptive, acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

Questions for reflection

When you've refined each of the steps in this guide, 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 changes have you noticed in how students finish lessons and exit the learning environment as a result of your end-of-lesson and exit routine?
- How are you supporting students in demonstrating safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours when preparing to leave and exiting the classroom? Could they be further supported by visual supports, additional processing time, prompts and reminders or opportunities for practice?
- Is this routine automatic for students? What else can you do to make it automatic?
- When will you review (and reteach if necessary) the routine for exiting the classroom? How will you know that you need to do this?



Regularly revise your exit routine

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

For more guidance

The following resources in AERO's classroom management suite provide practical guidance and support related to an exit routine.



Explainer

- teaching routines



Practice guides

- planning for classroom management
- responding to low-level disengaged and disruptive behaviours
- supporting a colleague with refining their practice (and accompanying observation tool)



Video

- exiting the classroom



Professional learning resources

- facilitation guide
- evidence-based approaches slide deck
- our whole-school approach slide deck
- practical refinement: gaining all students' attention



Reflection resource

- exiting the classroom

Chapter 8
Gaining all students' attention

This practice guide will support you in using an effective routine for gaining all students' attention to maintain a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Efficiently and respectfully gaining all students' attention maximises learning time and reduces the likelihood of students missing important information. Teachers use scanning, non-verbal gestures and audible or visual prompts to gain student attention to ensure students are focused and ready to receive instructions. Explicitly teach the routine and consider students' diverse backgrounds, experiences, neurodevelopmental profiles and needs to identify and provide adjustments and support. This includes providing visual supports or additional time and prompts as needed.

Gaining all students' attention requires the following steps:

1. Position yourself where all students can see you.
2. Use an audible prompt, supported by a visual cue, to get students to focus on you.
3. Pause, scan and respond to students' behaviour, providing support when needed.

Effectively gaining all students' attention requires alignment with the whole-school approach, consideration of students' diverse needs and involves several skills, including acknowledgement and praise, circulation, clear communication, deliberately pausing, non-verbal correction, scanning and voice control.

When responding to student behaviour, always interact with students with a calm tone, respect and politeness – for example:

- greeting students on first meeting each day, and using 'Please' and 'Thank you'
- pausing before responding to disengagement or disruption to maintain and model your own emotional regulation, recognising that students' responses may reflect diverse backgrounds, experiences, neurodevelopmental profiles and needs, and may require specific supports and adjustments
- positively framing communication, stating what students are being asked to do rather than what they shouldn't do, so that they understand what's required of them. For example, providing the instruction 'Listening, please' instead of 'Stop messing about.' This models respectful and polite interactions for students and creates a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

1. Effectively gaining all students' attention

1.1. Position yourself where all students can see you

Standing in a position where all students can see you enables students to look at you, listen to your instructions and watch your non-verbal prompts. This helps them focus and be ready to receive important information, reducing the risk of misunderstanding.

Your position should allow you to see all students – for example, at the front of the room or where the number of students who need to turn around to see you is kept to a minimum.

1.2. Use an audible prompt, supported by a visual cue, to get students to focus on you

Effectively implementing age-appropriate prompts to get students to focus on you maximises instructional time and reduces the likelihood of students missing important information because they weren't looking and listening.

Different situations and settings – for example, when students are working at their desks, in groups or yarning circles, around the classroom or in noisy environments – may require different techniques.

If most students are focused elsewhere, techniques to gain all students' attention will need to be audible so they know you need them to look and listen. They can be spoken, sung, clapped or produced (such as with a bell or playing music). Ensure the sounds used aren't overstimulating or irritating for students, especially students sensitive to certain noises. They should be kept as simple as possible. Common and effective techniques include call and response or a countdown, supported by a visual cue or gesture (such as raising a hand in the air). Make adjustments and provide supports so the audible prompt works for all students.

These techniques need to be taught so students know what to listen or look for, and how to respond – usually to stop what they're doing, look and listen. Some students may require more time to notice and respond to cues for gaining attention. Avoid drawing attention to these students and, instead, respectfully acknowledge and praise students when they give you their attention.

Call and response

Use an age-appropriate verbal or audible prompt for students to reply in unison. For example:

Teacher call		Student response
'1, 2, 3, eyes on me.'	→	'1, 2, eyes on you.'
'Ready to listen.'	→	'Ready to learn.'
A short clapping pattern	→	Students copy the clapping pattern
First part of the school creed, motto or values	→	Second part of the school creed, motto or values

Count down

Using an assertive voice, instruct students in what to do and then count down from a low number such as 3 or 5, deliberately pausing between each number and scanning the class. When scanning the class, monitor for signs of agitation, as a countdown can be experienced negatively by some students. For these students, provide an earlier warning before using a countdown or use an alternative method to gain all students' attention.

While counting down, remind students of the expected safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours if this helps to focus their attention. If the noise level is high, give the instruction in a loud enough voice to gain all students' attention, then reduce the volume with each number as the noise in the classroom reduces. 'One' can be in a whisper as students are silent and looking at you.

For example:

- 'Looking at me in 5 (pause), 4 (pause), 3 (pause), 2 (pause) and 1.'
- 'Finish the sentence you're writing in 5, pens down and eyes facing towards me. Four, thank you [Name], pen down facing this way. Three, I can see most eyes facing this way. Two (pause) and one.'

Use visual cues to support audible prompts

Visual cues usually support audible prompts to gain student attention – for example:

- raising one hand in the air
- holding up 5 fingers and lowering them one at a time as you verbally count down
- putting your finger to your lips to visually indicate silence
- holding your hand up to indicate students should copy the gesture and be silent.

Students may need support to understand verbal cues. Teaching students what specific verbal cues mean, along with expected responses, will help develop a shared understanding.

1.3. Pause, scan and respond to students' behaviour, providing support as needed

Pausing and scanning allows you to ensure students are following your instructions to stop, look and listen, as well as provide support to those who need it, acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and respond to disengagement and disruption. Where appropriate, share with families how you gain all students' attention to support student responses and confidence.

Once you've used a technique to gain all students' attention:

- Deliberately pause and scan all students.
- Provide support to those who need it.
- Acknowledge and praise students giving you their full attention – for example, by saying 'Thank you' or giving a thumbs up.
- If needed, use a correction for students that will redirect their focus to you – for example, moving closer to them, within their line of sight (proximity) or giving a quick verbal or non-verbal correction.
- Acknowledge students when they give you their attention.

2. Rehearse and practise gaining all students' attention

Use the checklist for each step in the following section to identify your strengths and prioritise the step you'll 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 planning, scripting and rehearsing without students present, then practise with students present.

Invite a colleague to observe you gaining all students' attention. Ask them to use the observation tool to record the observation and provide feedback on what went well and to suggest one area for further improvement.

2.1. Position yourself where all students can see you

Consider when and where you'll need to gain students' attention throughout the day and week – for example, outside your classroom when students are preparing to enter, during group work, and in other locations of the school (such as at the end of assembly). For each of these scenarios:

- [ ] Deliberately plan – and rehearse, if possible – where you'll stand so you can see all students and all students can see you.
- [ ] Imagine where students will be and what they'll be doing. Will all students be able to see you? Are you in the best position to gain all students' attention?

2.2. Use an audible prompt, supported by a visual cue, to get students to focus on you

Rehearse, then practise suitable techniques to gain all students' attention. These may vary depending on the situation and you can rehearse and practise:

- [ ] **a call and response** – Create and teach your own or use student input as they may be able to identify their favourites from past teachers.
- [ ] **a countdown** – ensuring you:
  - [ ] use the lowest countdown possible – usually from 5 or 3
  - [ ] clearly communicate expectations, provide support when needed, acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts, and respond to disengagement and disruption between each number
  - [ ] use timing that supports students to stop what they're doing and give their attention, not rushing or taking too long
  - [ ] monitor students for signs of agitation and use an alternative audible prompt if needed
  - [ ] finish with a deliberate pause and scan.
- [ ] **visual cues** – to complement verbal prompts. What visual cues will you use? How will you teach these so all students understand what the cues mean and what they need to do when you use them? Are your visual cues clearly visible and easily understood by students?

2.3. Pause, scan and respond to students' behaviour, providing support as needed

Rehearse, then practise:

- [ ] scanning left to right and front to back with obvious head and eye movements
- [ ] combining deliberate pausing and scanning to monitor all students
- [ ] providing support to those who need it
- [ ] acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours, such as looking and listening
- [ ] using a positively framed verbal or non-verbal correction to respond to students not giving you their full attention, acknowledging students when they do.

Questions for reflection

When you've refined and combined each of the steps in this guide, consider:

- How has refining your techniques to gain all students' attention increased students' focus when you deliver instructions? Are any additional supports required to ensure all students are giving you their full attention, particularly for students with diverse needs?
- How is explicitly teaching how you'll gain all students' attention and how they're expected to respond supporting students to give you their full attention and receive important information? Is this routine automatic for students? What else can you do to make it automatic?
- Does your ability to encourage students to give you their attention develop throughout the term or year or dissipate? Why? Does your classroom culture play a role? And if so, how?
- What other skills and practices do you need to refine to support your practice in gaining all students' attention?
- When will you review (and reteach, if necessary) the routine for gaining all students' attention? How will you know that you need to do this?



Regularly revise gaining all students' attention

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

For more guidance

The following resources in AERO's classroom management suite provide practical guidance and support related to gaining all students' attention.



Explainer

- teaching routines



Practice guides

- planning for classroom management
- responding to low-level disengaged and disruptive behaviours
- supporting a colleague with refining their practice (and accompanying observation tool)



Video

- gaining all students' attention



Professional learning resources

- facilitation guide
- evidence-based approaches slide deck
- our whole-school approach slide deck
- practical refinement: gaining all students' attention



Reflection resource

- gaining all students' attention

Chapter 9

Planning for classroom management

This practice guide will support you in effectively planning for classroom management to maintain a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Planning for classroom management is important preparation for building positive connections, actively engaging with students and their families, and modelling, teaching, revising and reinforcing the expectations, routines and rules of the classroom. Effective planning will support you in promoting safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours.

To effectively plan for classroom management, it's important to:

- Reflect on your classroom management practices and skills to focus your initial planning.
- Plan for the first day and the first few weeks.
- Continue to reflect on the impact of your practices and skills to plan for classroom management throughout the school year.

1. Reflect on your classroom management practices and skills to guide your planning

Every teacher – no matter how experienced – can reflect on and refine their classroom management practices and skills. Reflection during an initial planning phase and over time can provide insights to focus your planning and enhance your practice.

The following questions can help when periodically reflecting on the effectiveness of your classroom management:

- To what extent is the learning environment you develop safe, supportive and inclusive for all students? How do you know?
- How do you maximise learning time through high expectations, routines and rules that are explicitly taught, practised, revised and reinforced? How frequently are you prompting students to demonstrate safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours? What does this mean for teaching and revising the expectations, routines and rules?

- How does your thinking about how students should behave in class impact the way you manage your classroom? Why do you think that way? Do you take into consideration that students have different experiences, values and perspectives from your own when trying to understand their behaviour? And do you reflect on these experiences, values and perspectives to grow and adapt your approach and expectations, including the support you provide?
- How do you build positive connections and establish positive relationships with all students, their families and other members of their support networks? How are you working with families to understand their values and perspectives, communicate class expectations, routines and rules and seek their input and involvement in supporting their children?
- How do you consider and support students' diverse backgrounds, experiences, neurodevelopmental profiles, preferences, strengths and needs so they feel safe, supported and included? How do you provide adjustments and support for students' specific needs?
- How does your approach to classroom management support all students in feeling included and culturally safe? Are there any areas that you need to prioritise for refinement?

Table 9.1 lists classroom management skills and practices that create safe, supportive and inclusive learning environments and maximise learning time.

Table 9.1: Classroom management skills and practices

Skills	Practices
• Acknowledgement and praise • Circulation • Clear communication • Deliberate pause • Non-verbal correction • Scanning • Voice control.	• Positive teacher–student relationships built through positive connections with all students and their families • High expectations for student behaviour, including through: – routines, such as » entering the classroom » exiting the classroom » gaining all students' attention » students gaining teachers' attention » moving through the school – rules – setting behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks • Support for students' diverse needs • Preventing and responding supportively to: – low-level disengagement and disruption – escalation – persistent disengagement and disruption.

Using the skills and practices in Table 9.1, consider the following questions:

- What skills and practices do you value? Which do you consider your strengths? How do these support you in maintaining a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment? How do you know?
- What skills or practices could you refine to support your classroom management?
- Which skill or practice would be most beneficial to student safety, inclusion and learning as an immediate focus for refining your classroom management?
- How do you plan for daily and long-term reflection on the effectiveness of your classroom management?
- How will you review and refine your skills and practice over the term or year? How might you seek feedback from colleagues with expertise in classroom management?

2. Plan for the first day and the first few weeks

Preparing well for your first interactions with students will help you build positive connections, create a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment and support students' focus on learning.

Using the checklists in the following sections, plan how you'll make a positive start to managing your classroom. You might do this individually or with a colleague. It's important to self-assess and identify the highest priority focus for creating and maintaining a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment. Consider what's achievable and how you can work towards completing these actions over time.

2.1. Develop reflexive practice to enhance responsiveness

Reflexive practice supports teachers in considering how their individual perspectives impact how they build relationships with their students and their families, manage their classrooms and teach. Consider:

- What are your perspectives of what's happening in your classroom? Why do you think that way? Where did you get that knowledge from?
- How do your perspectives impact how you respond to your students?
- How do your perspectives impact the way you teach your students? How do your actions and responses advantage or disadvantage some students or families? How might you create a more culturally safe and inclusive environment for your students and their families?
- How are your own health and wellbeing impacting your teaching and classroom management? Do you need support with strategies to assist you? What support might you access?

Reflecting on these questions on your own or with a colleague or critical friend will help you be responsive in creating a classroom environment where all students feel safe and are able to learn.

2.2. Get to know your students and their families

- [ ] If you know your future students before the end of the year, arrange opportunities to meet and observe them in their current classes to start building positive connections and knowledge of your students where possible.
- [ ] Meet with your students' previous teachers and support staff to discuss students' preferences, strengths and needs.

- [ ] Read through student profiles to learn names and family arrangements, and to start identifying academic, behavioural, social and emotional strengths, needs and plans, required reasonable adjustments, and medical conditions and treatments, noting that talking to students and families will provide more comprehensive information.
- [ ] Plan:
  - necessary supports and adjustments for students' diverse needs
  - how you'll introduce yourself to parents and primary caregivers before the first day or soon after
  - how you'll engage with students, parents and primary caregivers to build positive connections, support classroom management and students' focus on learning. Ensure you plan for ongoing engagement that values collaboration with parents and primary caregivers.
  - a short 'getting to know you' activity for the first day to start to learn about and build positive connections with your students.

For more guidance, see:

- Positive Teacher–Student Relationships explainer
- Building Positive Connections with All Students guide
- Supporting the Diverse Needs of Students guides.

2.3. Plan to teach the expectations, routines and rules

- [ ] Familiarise yourself with your school's expectations for behaviour, rules and routines for:
  - students entering and exiting the classroom and other areas of the school
  - students moving through the school
  - gaining all students' attention
  - students gaining your attention.
- [ ] Script and rehearse how you'll explain, teach and support students in practising the expected safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours, rules and routines.

For more guidance, see the:

- High Expectations for Student Behaviour explainer and Setting Behaviour Expectations for Completing Learning Tasks practice guide
- Teaching Routines explainer and practice guides for:
  - students entering the classroom
  - students exiting the classroom
  - students moving through the school
  - gaining all students' attention
  - students gaining teacher attention
- Establishing and Maintaining Rules explainer.

2.4. Prepare your classroom

- [ ] Make sure the classroom is welcoming, organised, safe and functional, and supports students' diverse needs, including their use of assistive technology and sensory differences. Consider:
  - visual prompts that will be regularly used – for example, a visual timetable, expectations, routines and rules – and display them so students can easily see and refer to them
  - any classroom elements that might cause sensory or physical difficulties. A sensory audit will help you identify elements of the classroom environment that may contribute to sensory difficulties.
  - how you can respectfully acknowledge or physically represent the diverse cultures of your students. Consider which cultural groups might be excluded and the impact of that on your students' cultural safety and awareness.

- [ ] Plan where students will put their bags (if they bring them to the classroom), books and equipment. Also plan how you'll manage this on the first day, and maintain this each day thereafter. For example, identify bag racks or hooks, label storage places around the room, and identify which items students will keep at their desks and elsewhere. Plan to teach and practise this together as a class on the first day and how you'll reinforce this with students after.

- [ ] Plan an age-appropriate seating arrangement that will support focused learning behaviours. Forward-facing arrangements – such as in rows – ensure that students can see you. Classroom arrangement, including the layout of desks, is important for movement in the classroom, gaining all students' attention, scanning, teaching, circulating, interacting with students, and students working in various ways, including with partners or in groups. You'll need to consider:
  - Which students' specific needs must be considered?
  - Which students work well together and which may experience difficulties working together? What family groupings, cultural backgrounds or other personal circumstances might affect how students work together?
  - Which students would benefit from sitting closer to the exit or near the front, back or side of the room?
  - Can students easily move to the various parts of the classroom they need to access? Which students need support with physical elements of the classroom – such as movement and seating – and how will you provide this support?
  - What relevant information or insights from students, families, previous teachers or other members of students' support networks should be considered when making these decisions?
  - Regularly review student seating arrangements to ensure all students can easily see you and focus on learning.

- [ ] Decide the resources and displays you'll have available to support student learning. These should be accessible to students, but away from the area where you mainly teach (to avoid distractions). Plan how students will access these.

- [ ] Ensure that all teaching and learning materials are prepared for the first day.



2.5. Plan to respond to student behaviour

- [ ] Plan to frequently acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts to reinforce and encourage these behaviours from the first day.
- [ ] Familiarise yourself with the school's behaviour policy and processes for responding to disengagement, disruption, escalation and unsafe behaviour and supporting students experiencing difficulties.
- [ ] Decide how you'll celebrate student successes, including their progress, as a class and with others.
- [ ] Script and rehearse how you'll acknowledge and praise students' behaviours and efforts and respond to disengagement, disruption and escalation.

For more guidance, see the:

- Acknowledgement and Praise practice resource
- Responding to Low-Level Disengaged and Disruptive Behaviours practice guide
- Escalated Behaviour practice guide.

3. Reflect and plan throughout the school year

Building positive connections with students and their families and establishing classroom expectations, routines and rules takes time.

Include prompts or reminders for yourself to use specific skills or practices that promote safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour – for example, cues to use acknowledgement and praise, when to circulate during specific parts of lessons or students you need to check in with.

Regular reflection can help you identify what's effective in your classroom management and what you can focus on refining.

Questions for reflection

Once you've applied the advice in this guide, consider:

- What classroom management skills or practices are you using to create a safe, supportive, inclusive learning environment?
- What skill or practice could you refine to manage your classroom even more effectively? How do you know? What feedback have you received from students or colleagues that has helped you identify this skill or practice?
- What's one thing you'll focus on improving in your use of this skill or practice in your next lesson?
- How regularly do you now reflect on your classroom management skills and practices? What impact does this have on you and your students?
- What differences do you notice when you proactively plan for classroom management?
- How can you further refine your planning to create safe, supportive, inclusive learning environments through effective classroom management?



For more guidance

The resources in AERO's classroom management suite provide practical guidance and tools to support teachers and school leaders in creating safe, supportive and inclusive learning environments.

- Foundational classroom management resources help teachers refine key elements of classroom management. They include explainers, guides and videos.
- Guidance for supporting the diverse needs of students helps teachers support students' specific needs.
- Guidance for supporting students during times of escalation and persistent disengagement and disruption helps teachers and school leaders create calm, learning-focused environments and respond effectively to these behaviours.
- Professional learning and reflection resources help school leaders lead staff in the whole-school approach to classroom management.
- Resources for supporting colleagues with refining their classroom management practice include a practice guide and classroom management observation tools.



Chapter 10

Responding to low-level disengaged and disruptive behaviour

This practice guide will support you in responding to low-level disengagement and disruption to maintain a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students and support students to focus on learning.

Positive learning environments are created when teachers establish and maintain positive teacher–student relationships and proactively teach, model, revise and reinforce the expected safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours, routines and rules with their students. In a positive learning environment, these behaviours are recognised, encouraged and reinforced using acknowledgement and praise.

While proactive classroom management is a preventative strategy, at times, for a range of reasons, students may experience difficulties focusing on learning and allowing others to do so. This requires a responsive approach from the teacher to support safety, respect and focus on learning.

Any response to low-level disengagement and disruption needs to focus on reminding students of the expected safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours or teaching students the skills needed to demonstrate these behaviours. It's important to explain what students are being asked to do and why, make reasonable adjustments and provide support as required.

Goss et al. (2017) define **low-level disengaged behaviour** as passive compliance with little or sporadic engagement in learning, such as sitting quietly but not listening to the teacher, half-completion of tasks and requiring reminders to complete tasks.

They define **low-level disruptive behaviour** as actions that impact negatively on teaching and other students' learning, such as uninvited calling out, interrupting (or disturbing) others and not following the teacher's instructions.

To respond to low-level disengagement and disruption:

1. Monitor all students, making adjustments and providing support when needed.
2. Use a non-verbal correction.
3. Use a verbal correction.
4. Give a choice.
5. Implement the consequence.

Effectively responding to low-level disengagement and disruption requires consideration of students' diverse needs and involves several skills, including acknowledgement and praise, circulation, clear communication, deliberately pausing, non-verbal corrections, scanning and voice control.

When responding to student behaviour, always interact with students with a calm tone, respect and politeness – for example:

- asking if students misunderstand something about what they're required to do and regularly using 'Please' and 'Thank you'
- positively framing communication, stating what students are being asked to do rather than what they shouldn't do so that students understand what's required of them. For example, providing the instruction 'Start the task' instead of 'Stop messing about.' This models respectful and polite interactions for students and creates a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

When disengagement and disruption occur, it's important to use responses that support students in adjusting their behaviour to be safe, respectful and learning-focused. Students will often respond to a non-verbal or verbal correction, but sometimes it will take a combination of responses to correct behaviour and support students to re-engage in their learning.

Knowing your students and how they react in different contexts, and having planned and prepared responses, will help you provide effective support. While student behaviour may feel personal and be emotionally challenging for you and other students, the most effective responses are enacted in calm and respectful ways, with prepared and rehearsed responses aimed at minimising disruptions to learning. View the behaviours as signs the student or group of students need support and pause before responding to maintain and model your own emotional regulation.

It's important to consider how individual and collective perspectives, cultures and identities shape expectations, and whether there's alignment between school, home and community. Clear and accessible communication with families about classroom expectations and behaviour approaches can prompt meaningful conversations to:

- consider why behaviours might be occurring
- help understand and consider families' and the community's views
- support shared understanding
- identify required adjustments and support
- reduce confusion or anxiety for students and families.

1. Effectively responding to low-level disengagement and disruption

1.1. Monitor all students, making adjustments and providing support when needed

It's important to monitor all students. This will ensure safety, and reinforce safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour expectations. It will also demonstrate to students that you care about them, are aware of what's happening in your classroom and will provide adjustments and support when needed.

Monitor all students by regularly using a combination of pausing, scanning and circulating. Assist students when needed, ensuring supports and adjustments are provided as required. Acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts.

1.2. Use a non-verbal correction

Effective non-verbal corrections allow you to address low-level disengagement and disruption when they first arise without interrupting the flow of the lesson. They're quick and often less intrusive than other responses. It's important to note that students may interpret non-verbal corrections differently depending on their diverse backgrounds, experiences, neurodevelopmental profiles and needs. Some students will require verbal corrections or visual supports alongside non-verbal corrections. Teaching students about specific non-verbal corrections, along with expected responses, will help develop shared understanding and may reduce the need for more intrusive responses over time.

Non-verbal corrections include:

- **proximity** – moving near the student or group of students to gain their attention to correct their behaviour, while respecting students' personal space
- **deliberately pausing** – stopping what you're doing to gain the attention of the student or group of students to correct their behaviour
- **'the look'** – turning and looking at the student or group of students combined with a gesture – for example, shaking your head, then nodding when they correct their behaviour, or pointing to your eye and then pointing and looking at where they should be looking
- **a gesture** to communicate the expected behaviours – for example, putting your finger to your lips to communicate 'silence', raising your hand when students call out to remind them of the expectation to raise their hand, or pretending to write to prompt students to continue to complete learning tasks.

Combining a deliberate pause with proximity, 'the look' or a gesture can be powerful in helping to address low-level disengagement and disruption. Students will often notice you're aware of their behaviour and respond with a positive change.

Give the student or group of students time and space to respond to the non-verbal correction and acknowledge them for correcting their behaviour (for example, a thumbs up, 'Thank you' or smile). This positive interaction helps maintain connection with the student or group of students while correcting their behaviour.

1.3. Use a verbal correction

Verbal corrections aim to address students' disengaged or disruptive behaviour by reminding them of expectations and allowing them time and space to respond positively and re-engage with their learning.

Verbal corrections should be done with minimal disruption to the flow and pace of a lesson. First, acknowledge students demonstrating safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and deliberately pause to allow students not demonstrating these to correct their behaviour. If the behaviour continues, use a verbal correction, such as a:

- **quick reminder of expectations or instructions** using clear communication and an assertive voice. Provide students with a short reminder of the expected safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours. Allow time and space for students to action the correction and acknowledge when the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours are demonstrated.

  For example: 'Can we all make sure we're using the equipment to complete the maths activity only.' *[Pause, scan and acknowledge those who've followed the direction.]* 'Thank you.'

- **anonymous correction** using clear communication and voice control to state the expected safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and signal that there are students not yet demonstrating these behaviours. Allow the student or group of students time and space to action the correction and acknowledge when the expected behaviours are demonstrated.

  For example: 'Thank you to those students who are listening.' *[Pause and scan.]* 'I can see a few people who are still to join us.' *[Pause and acknowledge those who have followed the direction]*. 'Thank you.'

- **private correction** at an appropriate time that doesn't interrupt the flow of the lesson – for example, when students are engaging in independent tasks or pair or group discussions. Crouch down beside the student or group of students and, using clear communication, a calm, non-threatening tone and a quiet voice, check if they understand what they need to do. If the disengagement or disruption is due to misunderstanding, remind them to gain your attention next time they don't understand something so you can give them the support they need. Address the misunderstanding.

  If the behaviour is not related to a misunderstanding, ask if you can help them with something else. If needed, remind them of the expectations or instructions and check they understand. For example: '[Student name], it's important that you're listening and watching so that you understand what you need to do. You were trying to get [Name]'s attention when I was explaining the task. Look and listen so that you know what you need to do. Thank you.'

  Acknowledge when they correct their behaviour.

  It's important that quiet, positive interactions with individual students regularly occur in your classroom, such as helping them and privately acknowledging and praising their behaviour and effort. This helps build connections with students and enables you to give a private correction to disengagement or disruption without highlighting it to others. Be mindful of your position when interacting with students, ensuring it is non-confrontational and you can still scan the whole class.

In some instances, you may need to provide a prompt for the student or group of students to engage in the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours – for example, 'Have a go at [task] and let me know if you need a hand.'

After using a verbal correction, allow the student or group of students time and space to demonstrate the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours. When disengagement or disruption continues following non-verbal and verbal correction, it's important to briefly consider why the student or group of students is behaving in this way and what might be contributing to the situation:

- Is the student or group of students trying to avoid something (e.g., learning tasks, peers, staff) or trying to gain something (e.g., a preferred item or activity, the attention of peers or staff, or sensory experiences, such as movement)?
- Is there a skill gap that needs supporting (e.g., task-related, class expectation or social skill)? Are adjustments and supports in place?
- Is there something you've brought to the situation to contribute to the disengagement or disruption? For example, did you get straight into teaching without checking in with the student or group of students after break? Did you correct their behaviour and not another student's similar behaviour?
- Briefly considering what behaviours are occurring and why they might they be occurring will help you select supports and identify consequences that better match the student or group of students' needs or the situation, avoid reinforcing the behaviour, and reduce the likelihood of escalating the situation and making the problem worse.

Give a choice

For a variety of reasons, some students may find it hard to respond positively to non-verbal and verbal corrections and continue to disengage or disrupt. A choice can function as a prompt for both the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours the student or group of students should be engaging in and the help you can offer. It's also a signal of the implications and consequence if the prompt isn't followed.

The student or group of students should be given the choice to:

1. change what they're doing and demonstrate the expected safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours
2. receive support
3. receive a proportionate consequence.

Choices should be given, not as an ultimatum or threat, but to support re-engagement and participation.

Applying proportionate consequences

Proportionate consequences are a necessary component of teaching and reinforcing safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours. They provide clear boundaries and support in managing disengagement and disruption.

They can serve as reminders of the expectations, allow for more specific instruction away from sources of distraction or influence, as well as support more targeted skill building.

Consequences to common low-level disengagement and disruption should be explained to students when establishing expectations, rules and routines, giving examples for certain behaviours. Ideally, consequences are part of a consistent school-wide approach and aligned with the values and desired outcomes of the school community.

Proportionate consequences may include:

- moving desks and seats away from the distraction, sensory discomfort or those being disrupted
- having the student or group of students put an item that is distracting from or disrupting their learning on your desk
- completing unfinished tasks at another time
- speaking with you at break, practising the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours, such as gaining your attention to ask for help, and planning support for future lessons, such as using a break card to take a quick break or using a visual to indicate help is needed.

Unreasonable consequences that aren't related to the behaviours, explained to the student or group of students or applied consistently may lead to further or new disengagement, disruption, escalation or damage to the teacher–student relationship due to a sense of unfairness. These might include consequences that are excessive in duration, excessive in the amount of additional work required or explained in a way that embarrasses or feels disrespectful to the student or group of students.

Avoiding disruption to the lesson flow and as privately as possible, clearly communicate the choice to the student or group of students in a calm, respectful tone (avoiding sarcasm or intimidating language, words or tone). With non-threatening body language move to the student's or group of students' level, side-on and outside their personal space, rather than standing over them.

1. **Try to identify the reason for the behaviours and offer support if required** – 'What is it that you need to talk with [Name] about?', 'Do you understand what this question is asking you to do?' or 'Do you have all the materials you need to get started?'

   Support the student or group of students as required if the reason is identifiable.

2. **State the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours that are expected, the impact of the disengagement or disruption on others and themselves and offer support.**

   For example: *'[Student name], please focus on completing your learning task. Talking to the person next to you interrupts both of your learning. Can I help you with your task or is there something you would like to chat to me about?'*

3. **State the choice, including the proportionate consequence should they not be able to correct their behaviour, explaining how it will support the student or group of students and their peers**.

   For example: *'If you can complete your task quietly, you may stay here with your friends. If working quietly in this space is too difficult, you can choose to move to the empty desk so you can concentrate. As this is an important task, you'll need to finish it at another time if it's not completed now.'*

Once the options are given, allow the student or group of students time and space to make their choice.

If the student or group of students decides to make the positive choice, acknowledge this – for example, 'Thank you for moving to a place where you're able to focus.'

1.4. Implement the consequence

An important part of developing trusting relationships is demonstrating consistency by following through on what you say. Proportionate consequences are only effective if consistently applied. If you say a consequence will happen if a student continues their disengagement or disruption, it's important that you implement it.

A proportionate consequence should be implemented respectfully and as privately as possible to support and maintain the students' or group of students' dignity and the teacher–student relationship. It should also avoid unnecessary attention being drawn to the situation to minimise disruption to the rest of the class.

1. **State the behaviours and why they're a concern**

   '[Student name], I'm concerned because you've continued to talk rather than complete your task. This is an important task and I'm worried that it's not being done because of the distraction.'

2. **Implement the consequence**

   'Please take your things to the empty desk.'

3. **Allow the student or group of students time and space to follow your instruction.**

   Move away to avoid escalation through physical presence and use a combination of circulation and scanning to monitor the student or group of students, while also monitoring the rest of the class. After a short period, check that the student or group of students has responded, or understands when they're required to complete the consequence.

4. **Acknowledge the decision they've made to re-engage in learning and positively reaffirm the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours.**

   'Thank you for moving and focusing on your learning. *Is there anything else I can help you with now that you have a bit of space?*'

5. You might **have a short conversation** with the student or group of students at the end of the lesson to help reinforce expectations, remind them of support available, give them the opportunity to share additional insight and strengthen the relationship.

If the student or group of students persistently refuses to follow your directions at this point, follow your school's behaviour procedure to seek additional support.

When low-level disengagement or disruption persists across multiple lessons or when behaviours escalate, refer to AERO's guidance on:

- persistent disengagement and disruption
- escalated behaviour.

2. Rehearse and practise responding to low-level disengagement and disruption

To help you rehearse and practise, identify the low-level disengagement and disruption you experience in the classroom – for example:

- students calling out instead of putting their hand up
- moving out of their seats to do something they shouldn't be doing
- talking during independent tasks
- using a loud voice during group tasks
- not completing tasks.

Use the checklist for each step in the following section to identify your strengths and prioritise the step you'll 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 planning, scripting and rehearsing without students present, then practise with students present.

Invite a colleague to observe your responses to disengaged and disruptive behaviours. Ask them to use the observation tool to record the observation and provide feedback on what went well and to suggest one area for further improvement.

When rehearsing with a colleague, ask them to play the role of the student or group of students.

2.1. Monitor all students, making adjustments and providing support when needed

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, extra assistance or an adjustment
  - acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts.

2.2. Use a non-verbal correction

Rehearse, then practise non-verbal responses to low-level disengagement and disruption by:

- [ ] using proximity, moving near the student or group of students to gain their attention to correct their behaviour, while respecting students' personal space
- [ ] deliberately pausing, stopping what you're doing and looking at the student or group of students to gain their attention to correct their behaviour
- [ ] using 'the look' combined with a gesture to demonstrate your awareness of the behaviour and the need to correct it
- [ ] using a gesture to communicate the expected behaviour.

2.3. Use a verbal correction

Working through the checklist in this section will support you in planning calm responses to low-level disengagement and disruption, reducing the risk of not knowing what to say and potentially losing your composure.

Using voice control and clear communication, rehearse, then practise responding to the low-level disengagement and disruption you identified previously by:

- [ ] acknowledging students demonstrating safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours then deliberately pausing to allow other students to correct their behaviour
- [ ] reminding individual students, groups or the whole class of the expectations or instructions and checking for understanding about what they need to do
- [ ] using an anonymous correction to identify that there are students not meeting the expectation for safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour
- [ ] setting up the class to engage in independent tasks or paired or group discussion so that you can have a private conversation:
  - privately checking if a student has misunderstood something and telling them what they need to do next time they don't understand
  - asking if you can help with something else
  - reminding the student or group of students of the expectations or instructions and checking they understand
- [ ] prompting the student or group of students to engage in the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours
- [ ] pausing and acknowledging the student or group of students changing their behaviour.

2.4. Give a choice

Using the identified low-level disengaged and disruptive behaviours, identify appropriate choices to offer students – including proportionate consequences aligned with school policy – making sure they:

- [ ] relate to correct the disengagement or disruption – for example, moving a student away from those they're disrupting or placing a distracting item on the teacher's desk so the student or group of students can focus
- [ ] provide clear boundaries and support in managing disengagement and disruption.

Rehearse, then practise:

- [ ] asking questions to identify the reason for the behaviours, identifying:
  - if the student or group of students is trying to avoid something (learning tasks, peers, staff, etc.) or trying to gain something (a preferred item or activity, attention from the teacher or peers, or sensory experiences, such as movement, etc.)
  - if there is an academic or social skill that needs supporting
  - whether adjustments and supports are in place
  - if you brought something to the situation that contributed to the disengagement or disruption
- [ ] offering support to address potential reasons for the behaviour
- [ ] if the student or group of students doesn't accept support, clearly communicating a choice using non-threatening body language and a calm tone, stating:
  - the expected safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and the impact on others and themselves of the disengaged or disruptive behaviours
  - support you're able to provide
  - the proportionate consequence should they not be able to correct their behaviour, explaining how it will support the student or group of students and their peers
- [ ] giving the student or group of students time and space to make their choice
- [ ] acknowledging when they make a positive choice.

2.5. Implement the consequence

Ensure you've practised the Give a choice step before this step. Rehearse, then practise:

- ☐ when setting expectations early in the year, explaining to students the consequences of common disengaged and disruptive behaviours, giving examples of what each behaviour and associated consequence may look and sound like
- ☐ using non-threatening body language, clear communication and voice control to respectfully and privately:
  - state the behaviours and why they're a concern
  - implement the consequence identified in the Give a choice step
- ☐ giving the student or group of students time and space to follow your instruction, using a combination of circulation and scanning to monitor them, while also monitoring the rest of the class
- ☐ after a short period of time, checking that the student or group of students has completed the consequence or understands when they're required to do so and:
  - acknowledging the decision they have made to re-engage in learning and positively reaffirming the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours

  or

  - following your school's behaviour procedure to seek additional support
- ☐ having a short conversation with the student or group of students at the end of the lesson to reinforce expectations, remind them of support available, give them the opportunity to share additional insights and strengthen the relationship.



Questions for reflection

When you've refined and combined each of the steps for responding to low-level disengagement and disruption, consider the following questions:

- To what extent are you using proactive approaches to prevent disengagement and disruption in the classroom?
  - How could implementation of these proactive practices be refined to reduce the need for reactive approaches?
- To what extent are your expectations appropriate for your students' age, development and diverse needs?
- When responding to disengagement and disruption, are you staying calm?
  - Are there particular student characteristics or behaviours (for example, uninvited calling out, frequently seeking attention, delaying or questioning instructions) that trigger a strong emotional response for you?
  - Is there anything you can do to further support your emotional regulation and ensure your tone, body language and overall approach remains supportive?
- How effectively are you using your knowledge of your students and any factors impacting them when responding to disengagement and disruption?
  - What are you observing in your students' responses?
  - What does that tell you about the impact of your actions?
- How effectively are you addressing disengagement or disruption by identifying possible reasons for behaviours and supporting students to address those?
  - What impact is this having on refocusing students on learning?
- How effectively are you presenting choices to students to help them focus on learning?
- What changes in disengagement and disruption are you observing after giving support or implementing proportionate consequences in your classroom?



Regularly revise responding to low-level disengagement and disruption

Schedule points in the year to revise this practice and its impact on your classroom management and students' focus on learning.

For more guidance

The following resources in AERO's classroom management suite provide practical guidance and support related to responding to disengagement and disruption.



Video

- building positive connections with all student



Observation tool

- responding to low-level disengaged and disruptive behaviours



Practice guides

- escalated behaviour
- persistent disengaged and disruptive behaviour
- non-verbal corrections
- practical refinement professional learning resource (3.84 MB, .pptx)



Reflection resource

- Responding to disengaged and disruptive behaviours

References

Goss, P., Sonnemann, J., & Griffiths, K. (2017). *Engaging students: Creating classrooms that improve learning*. Grattan Institute. https://grattan.edu.au/report/engaging-students-creating-classrooms-that-improve-learning/

Chapter 11

Setting behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks

This practice guide will support you in setting behaviour expectations for your students when completing learning tasks to create a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Students undertake learning tasks individually, in pairs, in small groups and as a whole class. It's important to set clear behaviour expectations for learning in each of these situations so all students know what's required of them and are better able to take responsibility for their learning behaviours.

Explicitly teach the routine and consider students' backgrounds, experiences, neurodevelopmental profiles and needs to identify and provide adjustments and support. This includes providing visual supports or additional time and prompts as needed.

Effectively setting behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks requires the following steps:

1. Gain all students' attention.
2. Clearly communicate the behaviour expectations for the learning task or revisit these with students if already known.
3. Model and practise the behaviour expectations as needed.
4. Start the learning task.
5. Monitor and reinforce the behaviour expectations, providing support when needed.

Effectively setting behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks requires alignment with the whole-school approach, consideration of students' diverse needs and a range of 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 meeting each day, and using 'Please' and 'Thank you'
- pausing before responding to disengagement or disruption to maintain and model your own emotional regulation, recognising that students' responses may reflect diverse backgrounds, experiences, neurodevelopmental profiles or needs
- positively framing communication, stating what students are being asked to do rather than what they shouldn't do, so that they understand what's required of them. For example, providing the instruction 'Start the task' instead of 'Stop messing about.' This models respectful and polite interactions for students and creates a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

1. Effectively setting behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks

1.1. Gain all students' attention

Efficiently gaining all students' attention maximises instructional time and ensures all students – including those needing additional processing time or support – can access instructions and don't miss critical information.

Stand where all students can see you and, with an assertive voice, gain all students' attention:

- using an audible prompt, supported by a visual cue, to indicate to students that they need to stop what they're doing, face you and listen in silence
- pausing and scanning to ensure students are looking and listening
- acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts
- responding to students not giving you their full attention, acknowledging students when they do.

1.2. Clearly communicate the behaviour expectations for the learning task or revisit these with students if already known

It's important that you plan and teach the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour expectations for learning tasks so students understand what's required of them. By having the same expectations each time, and providing support as needed, students will become familiar with your expectations and be better able to meet them.

Clearly communicate to all students the behaviour expectations for completing the learning task (or revisit these if already known), indicating the support you're able to provide to students when needed. This will include important instructions for the learning task, such as:

- where students should be
- how they should move around the classroom (if required)
- what they should be doing and how they should be working (individually, pairs, group or whole class)

- how to safely and respectfully interact with each other, including how they should speak to each other and actively listen to and consider others' perspectives
- how long they have to complete the learning task
- what they should do if they need help.

It's also important to communicate why these behaviour expectations are important – ultimately, so all students can focus on their learning in a safe, supportive and inclusive environment.

Examples of different ways of completing learning tasks and how you could communicate expectations include:

- **Independently** – 'For this activity, stay in your own seats, write in your own books and focus quietly so we can all concentrate well. Thank you.'
- **Pairs** – 'In pairs, talk to the person next to you and decide which picture matches each sentence. Use your quiet voice so only your partner can hear you. This will help everyone hear their partners. Thank you.'
- **Group** – 'In your groups, follow the instructions on the sheet. Only one person speaks at a time. Listen when each person speaks so that everyone has a chance to respond and you can consider their perspective. Use a voice loud enough that only your group can hear, so that other groups aren't disturbed.'
- **Whole class** – 'When I say your name, answer the question using a loud enough voice so that the whole class can hear. The rest of us are going to listen to you and think about what you're saying. If you have a question or something to add, please raise your hand so that we can all have our turn and hear each other. Thank you.'

1.3. Model and practise the behaviour expectations as needed

Modelling and providing an opportunity for students to practise the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours required for tasks helps them develop the skills to demonstrate them and increases instructional time.

Demonstrate what the behaviour expectations look and sound like, such as using the appropriate volume for different learning tasks, listening and responding to other students, and moving around the classroom safely and quietly.

Check students understand and remember the behaviour expectations – for example, '[Name], can you please remind everyone how we're going to do this activity so that we can all concentrate while we're working.' Correct any misunderstandings.

When students are still learning the expected behaviours, have students briefly practise them – for example, 'Show me what working in pairs looks like and sounds like by discussing your favourite food.' Scan or circulate and acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts to reinforce these. Respond to students not meeting the behaviour expectations with additional support, a non-verbal prompt or quick correction, such as 'Remember, [Name], we're listening to our group members and thinking about what they're saying.' Acknowledge students when they correct their behaviour.

Gain all students' attention and provide feedback on how they went demonstrating the expected behaviour. For example, 'Thank you for demonstrating the expectations for working in pairs. Everyone used partner voices, took turns and listened to and thought about what their partner was saying before they responded.'

Continue to model and practise the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours required for completing learning tasks until all students can demonstrate them.

1.4. Start the learning task

Having a distinct start to a learning task provides students with a clear moment for them to demonstrate the expected behaviours. This helps establish a clear sense of purpose and action and prevents disengagement or disruption that may occur during slow, unmonitored transitions.

From a position where all students can see you, deliberately pause and scan, provide a final reminder of the expectations if needed, then prompt students to start the learning task. For example, 'Red group, please stand with your clipboard and pencil. Calmly and quietly move to your work area to begin, being aware of other group members moving too. [Pause.] Blue group, you may calmly and quietly move to your work area to begin. Look out for others as you move.'

1.5. Monitor and reinforce the behaviour expectations, providing support when needed

It's important to monitor all students while they complete learning tasks. This will ensure safety, and reinforce safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour expectations. It will also demonstrate to students that you care about them, are aware of what's happening in your classroom and will provide adjustments and support when needed.

It's important to monitor all students when they're moving and as soon as they start a learning task to ensure they understand and can do what they've been asked to do. Monitor all students while they're completing the learning task by regularly using a combination of pausing, scanning and circulating. Assist students when needed, ensuring supports and adjustments are provided as required. Acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts. Respond to disengagement and disruption, acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

If many students aren't demonstrating the expected behaviours, gain all students' attention and provide a whole-class reminder, modelling and practising as required. For example, 'Three, pens down, two, facing this way, one, everyone listening. [Pause.] Thank you. I can hear some excellent conversations, but we're starting to move into group work noise level rather than partner noise level, making it difficult for others to hear. Please let me hear your partner voices again. [Pause to allow students to practise]. Thank you. Let's continue at that noise level.'

Continue to scan and circulate throughout the learning task. Be mindful of your position when circulating, making sure you can always see all students.

2. Rehearse then practise setting behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks

To help with rehearsal and practise, consider the different ways of completing learning tasks:

- individually
- in pairs
- in a group
- with the whole class.

List the behaviour expectations for each of these situations, considering:

- Where should students be?
- How should they move to get there?
- Who should they be working with?
- What should they be doing?
- What materials are required for the task?
- How should they be listening to and considering what others are saying?
- How should they be speaking, including their volume, and how are they to interact with each other?
- How long do they have?
- How should they gain your attention?

Use the checklist for each step in the following section to identify your strengths and prioritise the step you'll 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 planning, scripting and rehearsing without students present, then practise with students present.

Invite a colleague to observe you setting behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks. Ask them to use the observation tool to record the observation and provide feedback on what went well and to suggest one area for further improvement.

2.1. Gain all students' attention

Rehearse, then practise:

- [ ] gaining all students' attention by using an audible prompt supported by a visual cue
- [ ] deliberately pausing
- [ ] scanning all students
- [ ] acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts
- [ ] responding to students not giving you their full attention, acknowledging students when they do.

2.2. Clearly communicate the behaviour expectations for the learning task or revisit these with students if already known

Script, rehearse, then practise clearly communicating or revising these expectations:

- [ ] using as few words as possible while maintaining clarity
- [ ] breaking instructions down:
  - into a small number of manageable steps
  - in a sequential order
  - so they're actionable for students
- [ ] deliberately pausing and scanning to check students understand the instructions.

Consider how you might complement verbal instructions with visual supports for students to refer to, especially for multi-step instructions.

2.3. Model and practise the behaviour expectations as needed

Rehearse, then practise:

- [ ] demonstrating what the expected behaviours look and sound like, referring to visual supports where possible
- [ ] checking for understanding
- [ ] correcting misunderstandings
- [ ] providing opportunities for students to practise demonstrating the expected behaviours, prompting students to refer to the visual supports when needed
- [ ] acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and effort
- [ ] assisting students and responding to disengagement and disruption, acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

2.4. Start the learning task

Rehearse, then practice prompting students to start learning tasks, keeping instructions simple and brief. Where possible, use the same prompt every time students start a learning task (such as an audible prompt and visual cue).

2.5. Monitor and reinforce the behaviour expectations, providing support when needed

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, extra assistance or an adjustment
  - acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts
  - respond to disengagement and disruption, acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

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

Questions for reflection

When you've refined and combined each of the steps in this guide, consider:

- What impact is clearly communicating the expectations for completing learning tasks having on students during activities – particularly considering students' diverse backgrounds, experiences, neurodevelopmental profiles and needs? How can you tell?
- What impact does modelling and practising the behaviours required for completing learning tasks have on your students? Can you improve this further to support students in demonstrating the expected behaviours?
- What other skills and practices might you need to refine to help you strengthen how you set behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks?



Regularly revise setting behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks

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

For more guidance

The following resources in AERO's classroom management suite provide practical guidance and support related to setting behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks.



Explainer

- high expectations for student behaviour



Practice guides

- planning for classroom management
- responding to low-level disengaged and disruptive behaviours
- supporting a colleague with refining their practice (and accompanying observation tool)



Video

- setting behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks



Professional learning resources

- facilitation guide
- evidence-based approaches slide deck
- our whole-school approach slide deck
- practical refinement: setting behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks



Reflection resource

- setting behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks

Chapter 12

Students gaining teacher attention

This practice guide will support you in establishing inclusive methods for students to gain your attention to request assistance, ask a question or share information. This is important for creating a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Due to the number of students in a classroom, an agreed signal is needed to gain the teacher's attention rather than students calling out and moving around the room. Teaching, rehearsing and reinforcing the signal students use to gain your attention will help meet students' needs, manage interruptions to teaching and learning and create a positive and supportive learning environment for all students.

Different signals may be required for different reasons for students gaining teacher attention. Determine the most appropriate signal for the context and circumstance and communicate this clearly to your students. Explicitly teach the routine and consider students' diverse backgrounds, experiences, neurodevelopmental profiles and needs to identify and provide adjustments and support. This includes providing visual supports or additional time and prompts as needed.

Supporting students to gain your attention includes the following steps:

1. Monitor all students and provide support.
2. Have students use an agreed signal to gain your attention.
3. Acknowledge students.
4. Respond to students.

Supporting students to gain your attention requires alignment with the whole-school approach, consideration of students' diverse needs and a range of skills, including acknowledgement and praise, circulation, clear communication, deliberately pausing, non-verbal correction, scanning and voice control.

When responding to student behaviour, always interact with students with a calm tone, respect and politeness – for example:

- greeting students on first meeting each day and using 'Please' and 'Thank you'
- pausing before responding to disengagement or disruption to maintain and model your own emotional regulation, recognising that students' responses may reflect diverse needs, experiences or barriers that require additional supports and adjustments.
- positively framing communication, stating what students are being asked to do rather than what they shouldn't do, so that they understand what's required of them. For example, providing the instruction 'Hand up if you need my attention' instead of 'Stop calling out.' This models respectful and polite interactions for students and creates a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

1. Effectively supporting students to gain your attention

1.1. Monitor all students, providing support when needed

It's important to monitor all students. This will ensure safety, and reinforce safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour expectations. It will also demonstrate to students that you care about them, are aware of what's happening in your classroom and will provide adjustments and support when needed.

Monitor all students by regularly using a combination of pausing, scanning and circulating. Assist students when needed, ensuring supports and adjustments are provided as required. Acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts. Respond to disengagement and disruption, acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

1.2. Have students use an agreed signal to gain your attention

Having an effective signal for students to gain your attention enables them to request assistance, ask a question or share information in a manner that is least disruptive to other students' learning. It's important to teach students an inclusive signal for gaining your attention – for example:

- a hand signal, such as:
  - raising their hand
  - using fingers on their raised hand to indicate their need (e.g., one finger in the air – 'I need to use the toilet', 2 fingers – 'I need to ask a question', 3 fingers – 'I'm stuck')
- a physical object, such as:
  - coloured cards on their desk (green – 'I'm okay', red – 'I'm stuck and need assistance', amber – 'I need assistance but can continue with other tasks')
  - holding up equipment, such as a pencil to indicate the need to sharpen their pencil
- a digital tool, such as:
  - the chat, comment or hand-raising functions in applications they're using
  - assistive technology with a help button to trigger a visual or auditory signal (e.g., a light, sound or message).

The signal needs to be determined, taught and practised with students so they have the confidence to use it independently. Prior to starting a learning task, you may want to check for understanding by asking students to demonstrate the signal.

You could choose to teach your students to seek assistance from a neighbouring peer before seeking your assistance, enabling you to support other students. You can teach your students that this might be helpful when they're not sure about something or need an item, such as an eraser.

1.3. Acknowledge students

Promptly and positively acknowledging students' requests for help lets them know you're aware they need assistance and will support them when you can.

The expected acknowledgement should be taught to students at the same time as the signal to gain your attention. If the signal is students raising their hand, you might verbally acknowledge them – for example, 'I've seen your hand, [Name]. I'll come to you after I finish helping [Name]'. The student can continue their task, doing what they can or wait quietly. To reduce disruption to others, you might use a non-verbal acknowledgement, such as making eye contact and nodding your head.

It's important to continually circulate and scan to see and respond to students seeking your attention early.

If students gain your attention using a signal for a request that doesn't require your assistance (such as going to the toilet or sharpening a pencil), you should be able to acknowledge the request with a nod of your head or a thumbs up without disturbing other students' learning. For example, if a student uses the agreed signal of one finger in the air for 'I need to use the toilet', you could silently acknowledge this request by looking toward the student and giving them a thumbs up.

1.4. Respond to students

It's important that when students ask for assistance or share something with you, the response is supportive, respectful and responsive to students' needs. This helps build trust and connection.

When students have used the signal to gain your attention, move to them as soon as possible. This may be after helping students who requested help first, in which case, it's important that students have been taught to continue their learning task as best they can, seek support from a neighbouring peer or wait quietly.

If many students require similar support, you may choose to gain whole-class attention or bring a small group of students together for further instruction.

Where appropriate, communicate help-seeking techniques with families to help build students' understanding and confidence in how to gain your attention.

2. Rehearse and practise students gaining your attention

Use the checklist for each step in the following section to identify your strengths and prioritise the step you'll 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 planning, scripting and rehearsing without students present, then practise with students present.

Invite a colleague to observe how you support students to gain your attention. Ask them to use the observation tool to record the observation and provide feedback on what went well and to suggest one area for further improvement.

2.1. Monitor all students, providing support when needed

Rehearse, then practise:

- ☐ identifying strategic positions around your classroom where you can see all students
- ☐ deliberately pausing in those positions
- ☐ scanning combined with deliberately pausing
- ☐ circulating the classroom to:
  - support students requiring clarification of an instruction, extra assistance or an adjustment
  - acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts
  - respond to disengagement and disruption, acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

2.2. Have students use an agreed signal to gain your attention

Rehearse, then practise teaching students:

- ☐ to use a signal to gain your attention – for example, raising their hand, using fingers on their raised hand to indicate their need or using a physical object
- ☐ what to do while they wait – for example, seek assistance from a neighbouring peer or work on something they can do without help
- ☐ how to seek assistance from other students – for example, checking an instruction or borrowing equipment.

If asking students to place physical objects (such as coloured cards) on their desks, organise these beforehand and ensure they're available to students.

2.3. Acknowledge students

Rehearse, then practice:

- ☐ promptly and positively acknowledging students' requests for help:
  - verbally – for example, 'Thanks, [Name], for letting me know you need my attention. I'll come to you next.'
  - non-verbally – for example, nodding your head or giving a thumbs up.

2.4. Respond to students

Rehearse, then practise:

- ☐ positioning yourself where you'll be able to see all students while providing assistance to one student or a group of students
- ☐ gaining all students' attention for further instruction
- ☐ temporarily grouping students with similar needs to provide assistance.

Questions for reflection

When you've refined and combined each of the steps in this guide, consider the following questions:

- What impact is having a clear signal for students to gain your attention having on students? How can you tell?
- Are all students comfortable with and able to use the techniques in place, considering students' diverse backgrounds, experiences, neurodevelopmental profiles and needs? Do any students seem reluctant to seek your attention? If so, what alternative or additional support is needed?
- How effectively have you modelled and practised the signal with students? Can you improve this further to support students in demonstrating the expected behaviours?
- What other skills and practices can you refine to further support students in gaining your attention in class?
- Is this routine automatic for students? What else can you do to make it automatic?



Regularly revise students gaining teacher attention

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

For more guidance

The following resources in AERO's classroom management suite provide practical guidance and support related to students gaining teacher attention.



Explainer

- teaching routines



Practice guides

- planning for classroom management
- responding to low-level disengaged and disruptive behaviours
- supporting a colleague with refining their practice (and accompanying observation tool)



Video

- students gaining teacher attention



Professional learning resources

- facilitation guide
- evidence-based approaches slide deck
- our whole-school approach slide deck
- practical refinement: students gaining teacher attention



Reflection resources

- students gaining teacher attention

Chapter 13

Students moving through the school

This practice guide will support you in using an effective routine for when students are moving through the school. This helps maintain a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Establishing a clear routine for students moving between their classroom and other areas of the school ensures they know what to do and why, maximises learning time and minimises disruption to others in the school.

Explicitly teach the routine and consider students' diverse backgrounds, experiences, neurodevelopmental profiles and needs to identify and provide adjustments and support. This includes providing visual supports or additional time and prompts as needed.

Supporting safe student movement to other areas of the school requires the following steps:

1. Gain all students' attention.
2. Remind all students of the expectations for leaving the classroom, moving through the school and arriving at the destination.
3. Monitor and reinforce the behaviour expectations as students move through the school, providing support when needed.
4. At the destination, remind students of the behaviour expectations.

This routine requires alignment with the whole-school approach, consideration of students' diverse needs and a range of skills, including acknowledgement and praise, circulation, clear communication, deliberately pausing, non-verbal correction, scanning and voice control.

When responding to student behaviour, always interact with students with a calm tone, respect and politeness – for example:

- asking if students misunderstand something about what they're required to do, and using 'Please' and 'Thank you'
- pausing before responding to disengagement or disruption to maintain and model your own emotional regulation, recognising that students' responses may reflect diverse backgrounds, experiences, neurodevelopmental profiles and needs that require specific supports and adjustments
- positively framing communication, stating what students are being asked to do rather than what they shouldn't do so that they understand what's required of them. For example, providing the instruction 'Walking calmly and quietly' instead of 'Stop messing about.' This models respectful and polite interactions for students and creates a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

1. Effective student movement to other areas of the school

1.1. Gain all students' attention

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

Stand where all students can see you and, with an assertive voice, gain all students' attention:

- using an audible prompt, supported by a visual cue, to indicate to students that they need to stop what they're doing, face you and listen in silence
- pausing and scanning to ensure students are looking and listening
- acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts
- responding to students not giving you their full attention, acknowledging students when they do.

1.2. Remind all students of the expectations for leaving the classroom, moving through the school and arriving at the destination

It's important to pre-plan expectations that are consistent with the whole-school approach for students when leaving the classroom, moving through the school and arriving at the destination. This includes planning the adjustments and support you need to provide so all students can be safe and succeed. By keeping the same expectations each time, students will become familiar with what's expected of them and develop more automatic habits so that safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours consistently occur.

Clearly communicate to all students the expectations for leaving the classroom, moving through the school and arriving at the destination, as well as the support you're able to provide. Instructions should include:

- what they need to take with them
- how students should leave the classroom – for example, if they need to assemble outside the classroom
- how students should behave when moving through the school – for example, walk calmly and quietly in 2 lines, keep to the left
- the path they should take and where they should stop
- what they need to do when they reach the destination – for example, wait outside the building to the left in 2 lines.

Check students' understanding of behaviour expectations – for example, by asking a small number of students to repeat the instructions with the whole class listening. If needed, clarify, demonstrate and provide support until all students understand what's expected. Visual supports can be used to enhance student understanding of the expectations and process.

1.3. Monitor and reinforce the behaviour expectations as students move through the school, providing support when needed

It's important to monitor all students when they're leaving the classroom, moving through the school and arriving at the destination. This will ensure safety and reinforce safe, respectful and learning-focused behaviour expectations. It will also demonstrate to students that you care about them, are aware of what's happening and will provide adjustments and support when needed.

Position yourself at the door and prompt students to leave, including lining up if required.

Continuously scan all students as they prepare and move through the school. Maintain a position that allows you to observe all students during this transition. Assist students when needed.

Acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts – for example, 'Thank you, students, for waiting quietly while [event/action]' or 'Great to see those students who stopped walking as soon as I asked.'

Respond to disengagement and disruption – for example, 'Remember, [Name], walking quietly to the library', acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

1.4. At the destination, remind students of the behaviour expectations

Reminding students of the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours required at the destination helps to maintain a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

At the destination, position yourself where you can see all students and all students can see you – for example, at the entrance to assembly or the library. Remind students of the behaviour expectations for the destination:

- with an assertive voice, gain all students' attention:
  - using an audible prompt, supported by a visual cue, to indicate to students that they need to stop what they're doing, face you and listen in silence
  - pausing and scanning to ensure students are looking and listening
  - acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours
  - responding to students not giving you their attention, acknowledging when they do
- Clearly communicate to remind students of the expected safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours at that location.
- Deliberately pause and scan to allow time for students to think about and prepare to demonstrate the expectations. Check for understanding.
- Scan and circulate to ensure students understand and are following instructions. Assist students when needed. Acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts. Respond to disengagement and disruption, acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

2. Rehearse and practise student movement to other areas of the school

To help you rehearse and practise, identify the school's and your expectations (aligned with the school expectations) for the 3 stages listed in this section. What safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours do you want to see? Are there particular behaviours you want to understand and address?

1. **Students leaving the classroom.** For example, what do they need to take with them? What do they need to leave behind? Who needs additional support to prepare what they will take with them and how will this support be provided?
   How will students leave the classroom? Will they stand behind their chairs? Will they line up? Will they move out a few at a time? Will any students need support leaving the classroom?

2. **Students moving through the school.** For example, should students walk without talking, or can they quietly talk to the person beside them? Do they walk in lines with a partner? Or can older students walk to the destination themselves and meet you at the door?
   Which path will you take to ensure safety and accessibility for students' diverse needs – including students with specific physical needs? What adjustments or support will you need to provide?

   Can students walk directly to the destination? Or do they need to stop along the way to regroup? How will they know where to stop?

3. **Students arriving at the destination.** For example, do they line up outside the entrance and wait for you? Do they need to keep to the left to make room for others trying to move into the space? Do they need to have equipment ready before they enter?
   Do they sit in a certain place? Is there a task for them to complete when they arrive?

   Can they speak quietly to each other? Or do they need to be silent, ready for the teacher?

Use the checklist for each step in the following section to identify your strengths and prioritise the step you'll 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 planning, scripting and rehearsing without students present, then practise with students present.

Invite a colleague to observe your routine for students moving through the school. Ask them to use the observation tool to record the observation and provide feedback on what went well and to suggest one area for further improvement.

2.1. Gain all students' attention

Rehearse, then practise:

- [ ] gaining all students' attention by using an audible prompt supported by a visual cue
- [ ] deliberately pausing
- [ ] scanning all students
- [ ] acknowledging and praising students' safe respectful, learning-focused behaviours and effort
- [ ] responding to students not giving you their full attention, acknowledging students when they do.

2.2. Remind students of the expectations for leaving the classroom, moving through the school and arriving at the destination

Rehearse then practise clearly communicating expectations:

- [ ] using as few words as possible while maintaining clarity
- [ ] breaking instructions down:
  - into a small number of manageable steps
  - in a sequential order
  - so they're actionable for students
- [ ] deliberately pausing and scanning to ensure students understand and are following instructions.

Consider how you might complement verbal instructions with visual supports for students to refer to, especially for multi-step instructions.

2.3. Monitor and reinforce the behaviour expectations as students move through the school, providing support when needed

Rehearse then practise:

- [ ] the route you will take to provide the most safety and accessibility for students' specific needs, with the least disruption to other classes and distraction for your students
- [ ] where you will stand when students are leaving the classroom to scan all students. Ensure your back isn't facing students and blind spots are monitored.
- [ ] where you will walk in relation to your students when moving through the school so you're able to scan them all
- [ ] supporting students requiring clarification of an instruction or extra assistance

- [ ] acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours
- [ ] responding to disruptive behaviours that might occur as students move through the school, acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

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

2.4. At the destination, remind students of the behaviour expectations

Rehearse then practise:

- [ ] gaining all students' attention by using an audible prompt supported by a visual cue
- [ ] clearly communicating the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours required at the destination (for example, assembly, library, computer lab, oval):
  - what they need to do
  - where they should sit
  - what they need to get or have out
  - if they're allowed to talk and at what volume
- [ ] pausing and scanning to allow students processing time and to check for understanding
- [ ] acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours
- [ ] responding to disruption or disengagement that might occur, acknowledging students when they correct their behaviour.

Questions for reflection

When you've refined and combined each of the steps in this guide, consider:

- What differences are you noticing as your students move through the school?
- Are students' diverse needs supported by this routine? Are any additional supports required? Could students be further supported by visual supports, additional processing time, prompts and reminders or opportunities for practice?
- How consistently are you maintaining the steps of this routine? Are there any adjustments you need to make to ensure you can consistently maintain this routine?
- Is this routine automatic for students? What else can you do to make it automatic?
- When will you review (and reteach if necessary) the routine for moving through the school? How will you know that you need to do this?



Regularly revise moving throughout the school

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

For more guidance

The following resources in AERO's classroom management suite provide practical guidance and support related to gaining all students' attention.



Explainer

- teaching routines



Practice guides

- planning for classroom management
- responding to low-level disengaged and disruptive behaviours
- supporting a colleague with refining their practice (and accompanying observation tool)



Video

- moving through the school



Professional learning resources

- facilitation guide
- evidence-based approaches slide deck
- our whole-school approach slide deck
- practical refinement: gaining all students' attention



Reflection resource

- moving through the school

Part 3

Classroom management skill resources

Chapter 14: Acknowledgement and praise 114

Chapter 15: Circulation 118

Chapter 16: Clear communication 121

Chapter 17: Deliberate pause 125

Chapter 18: Non-verbal correction 129

Chapter 19: Scanning your class 133

Chapter 20: Voice control 136

Chapter 14

Acknowledgement and praise

Acknowledgement and praise are skills that support and maintain safe, supportive and inclusive learning environments. Related practice resources to refine other classroom management skills focus on circulation, clear communication, deliberately pausing, non-verbal correction, scanning and voice control. When using classroom management skills, it's important to consider and make reasonable adjustments to support students' diverse needs.

Verbal or non-verbal acknowledgement recognises when students demonstrate safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours. For example, 'Thank you, [Name], for lining up quietly with your books ready' and 'Thank you, class. You all raised your hands when you had an answer, and you waited for everyone to be ready before speaking.' A simple non-verbal acknowledgement could be a smile or 'thumbs up'.

Praise recognises students' *efforts* to meet or exceed expectations. For example, 'Great job, [Name]. You've really made an effort today to focus on your own work. You asked some excellent questions too' and 'Brilliant job, class. You've really made an effort to work cooperatively together, taking turns to contribute and listening to each other. I heard you encouraging each other to use low group voices.'

1. The importance of acknowledgement and praise

When delivered equitably, acknowledgement and praise help build positive connections with students, create and maintain a positive classroom environment, and highlight and reinforce safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours. This helps students know which behaviours are required in the classroom environment.

Most students appreciate frequent recognition of their efforts, delivered in ways that align with their preferences. Acknowledging and praising behaviour and effort in a way that students prefer demonstrates that you notice and care about them and reinforces their positive actions.

2. Delivering acknowledgement and praise

Acknowledgement and praise should be delivered in ways that align with students' preferences. For example, some students prefer acknowledgement and praise to be delivered privately, while other students feel uncomfortable with verbal praise and prefer brief non-verbal (such as a quick nod or thumbs-up) or written praise. Non-verbal acknowledgement and praise can also provide immediate feedback while allowing teaching and learning to continue uninterrupted. It can be helpful to discuss with students – and their families when appropriate – their preferred ways of being acknowledged and praised. Observing their responses – and asking families how acknowledgement and praise are received – can also provide helpful information about students' preferences.

3. Rehearsing acknowledgement and praise

It may be helpful to rehearse acknowledging and praising without students present so the skill becomes more automatic and feels more natural when students are 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 develop your use of this skill.

Further guidance on effective rehearsal can be accessed in the How teachers and school leaders can use these resources section of the Classroom Management Resources: User Guide.

3.1. Elements for success

Acknowledgement

- [ ] Regular tone or non-verbal cue, such as a smile or nod
- [ ] Focus on expected safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours
- [ ] General or specific
- [ ] Frequent

Praise

- [ ] Enthusiastic tone
- [ ] Focus on behavioural effort
- [ ] Specific
- [ ] When expectations have been exceeded (individual, group or class)



3.2. Rehearsing on your own

Consider what you know about how individual students prefer to be acknowledged and praised and how you might find out more about their preferences before rehearsing.

Plan, script and rehearse how you would acknowledge or praise students in the following scenarios or in common scenarios in your school, accounting for students' preferences as needed:

- A student consistently uses a loud voice, which often disturbs their peers' learning. You've recently seen them making a noticeable effort to talk at a lower volume.
- Students lining up outside the classroom safely, quietly and with the required equipment.
- A student held the door open for other students entering the library.

Read your scripts aloud. 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.

3.3. Rehearsing with a colleague

Use the scenarios from the Rehearsing on your own section to rehearse with a colleague, asking them to play the role of the student. Alternatively, review your recording with a colleague.

Ask your colleague to provide feedback using the elements for success and identify strengths and areas for refinement.

Rescript if necessary and rehearse again, incorporating feedback until all elements for success have been demonstrated smoothly and with confidence.

4. Practising acknowledgement and praise

Practise when students are present. Use acknowledgement and praise:

- from the first moment you engage with students each day – for example, at the school gate, in the corridor and as students assemble and enter the classroom
- when you pause and scan to monitor all students
- when circulating during learning tasks
- before responding to disengagement and disruption, unless the behaviour is unsafe – in which case, it needs to be addressed immediately
- after responding to disruption or disengagement and when students are demonstrating safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour again.

Ask a colleague to observe 10 to 15 minutes of a lesson, using the related observation tool to identify the effectiveness of your use of acknowledgement and praise and any areas for refinement. Seek feedback from students – and their families where appropriate – about their experience of acknowledgement and praise. You might ask, 'How do you know when your efforts have been noticed?' and 'How does this support you in learning?'

Questions for reflection

- How are your students responding immediately after you use acknowledgment or praise?
- How consistent and fair are you in using acknowledgement and praise to recognise and reinforce behaviour and effort?
- How are you using acknowledgement and praise to build a positive classroom environment and positive connections with all students?
- To what extent are you delivering acknowledgement and praise more than correcting disengagement or disruption?
- How are you responding to students' preferences for the way you give acknowledgement and praise?
- How is your use of acknowledgement and praise impacting your students' behaviour?
- How might you use acknowledgement and praise to support individual students' motivation to demonstrate safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour?



Chapter 15
Circulation

Circulation is a skill that supports and maintains safe, supportive and inclusive learning environments. Related practice resources to refine other classroom management skills focus on acknowledgement and praise, clear communication, deliberately pausing, non-verbal correction, scanning and voice control. When using classroom management skills, it's important to consider and make reasonable adjustments to support students' diverse needs.

Circulation is systematically moving around the classroom and standing in key places to monitor, interact with and support students.

1. The importance of circulation

Circulation helps establish and maintain a positive classroom culture and positive teacher–student relationships by intentionally monitoring, connecting with, encouraging and guiding all students to demonstrate safe, respectful behaviours and engage in learning tasks. While circulating, you can focus on:

- acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts
- moving closer to students, where appropriate, to encourage these behaviours
- assisting students
- responding to disengagement or disruption in a more discreet, personal and less distracting manner.

When paired with effective support for students' diverse needs, circulation can support students in engaging in safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours, reducing learning time lost due to misunderstanding, disengagement or disruption.

2. Rehearsing circulation

It may be helpful to rehearse circulating your classroom without students present so the skill becomes more automatic and feels more natural when students are 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 refine your use of this skill.

Further guidance on effective rehearsal can be accessed in the How teachers and school leaders can use these resources section of the Classroom Management Resources: User Guide.

2.1. 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.
- [ ] Come back to where you started, pause and scan.
- [ ] As your practice develops, consider combining more than one focus for circulation.

2.2. Rehearsing on your own

- 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 may require adjustments or need support to start tasks.
- Establish a focus for your second circulation around the classroom and plot your route accordingly. This could be:
  - acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts
  - encouraging respectful interactions between students
  - providing additional guidance, support and adjustments as needed
  - helping to solve problems hindering students' 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 until all elements for success have been demonstrated smoothly and with confidence.

2.3. 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 who may need more support. Alternatively, review your recording with a colleague. Ask your colleague to provide feedback using the elements for success. Discuss:

- What went well?
- Which elements require refinement?

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

3. Practising circulation during a lesson

To practise when students are present:

- Explicitly plan when you'll use your rehearsed routes during each activity in a lesson. Allow enough time to complete the planned route without rushing.
- Write the focus for each circulation on a sticky note and refer to this reminder prior to circulating.
- Move or remove any physical obstacles (such as bags or chairs) so you can move freely around the classroom, while maintaining space for students who require it.
- After giving an instruction, pause and scan before walking your first planned route. Scan as you circulate, avoiding having your back to the class as much as possible.
- Provide additional guidance, support and adjustments as needed.
- Acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts.
- Respond to disengagement and disruption using non-verbal or verbal corrections – for example, moving closer to the student (proximity) or giving a positively framed quick correction that reminds them of what they should be doing. Check that they understand.
- As you refine this skill, combine different focuses during each circulation so that all students are attended to throughout a lesson – for example, acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts or providing additional guidance.

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

Questions for reflection

- Does your classroom layout support effective circulation? What changes could be made to better support circulation?
- What information about your students and their focus on learning are you gaining from each circulation? How could this information be gathered more effectively or used more productively to support students' focus on learning?
- Are there certain students, areas of the classroom or aspects of your own practice that you need to focus on next lesson? Why? What's the goal?
- How efficiently are you able to provide support and respond to students' needs as you circulate? Are there ways you can strengthen this?
- How does circulation help you build positive relationships with all students? Which students might you be overlooking when circulating? How can you make sure you engage with them?
- How can insights you gain through circulation guide your conversations with parents and primary caregivers?



Chapter 16
Clear communication

Clear communication is a classroom management skill that supports and maintains safe, supportive and inclusive learning environments. Related practice resources to refine other classroom management skills focus on acknowledgement and praise, circulation, deliberately pausing, non-verbal correction, scanning and voice control. When using classroom management skills, it's important to consider and make reasonable adjustments to support students' diverse needs.

Clear communication is the use of clear and concise language and written and visual supports to establish the expected safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours, give instructions and respond to behaviour. It models respectful classroom communication that supports students in understanding and doing what's expected of them, while also supporting a positive classroom culture. Students may interpret communication differently depending on their diverse backgrounds, experiences, neurodevelopmental profiles and needs. It's important to check for understanding and provide opportunities for clarification.

1. The importance of clear communication

Instructions are given to students throughout each lesson. Clear communication supports students in developing a clearer understanding of what they need to know and do. To achieve this, teachers need to ensure they're presenting students with a manageable amount of verbal, written or visual information at a time. Presenting too much information, too quickly can lead students to experience cognitive overload. This increases the likelihood of students feeling confused or anxious because they've misunderstood or forgotten what they were told.

Presenting instructions using clear and consistent language in written and visual form, and regularly revisiting expectations, helps reduce students' cognitive load and supports them in understanding what they need to do and adopting positive behaviours. Table 16.1 provides examples of clear communication, as well as communication that is less clear.

Table 16.1: Clear and less clear communication

Clear communication to support behaviour	Less clear communication
'Class, pens down, facing the front. Thank you' with an accompanying gesture of a finger to the ear to indicate listening.	'If you could put your pens down and then make sure that you are facing this way, we'll move onto the next part of the lesson, which is going to be about …'
'Start with question one. Hand up if you need help. Thank you' accompanied by pointing to question one on the task and demonstrating putting a hand up.	'I'd like to see you all getting started on the worksheet, please. Let me know if you are stuck or need any help.'
'[Student name], please take your book and pencil out and face forward silently, ready to enter the room' accompanied by a finger to the lips to indicate silence.	'[Student name], can you get your books and pencils out, turn around and face forward and stop talking while you're doing it. You need to be ready to go into the classroom in a moment.'

Always interact with students with a calm tone, respect and politeness – for example, greeting students on first meeting each day, and using 'Please' and 'Thank you'. Pause before responding to disengagement or disruption to maintain and model your own emotional regulation, recognising that student responses may reflect diverse needs, experiences or barriers that require specific supports and adjustments. Positively frame communication, stating what students are being asked to do rather than what they shouldn't do so that they understand what's required of them. For example, providing the instruction 'Start the task' instead of 'Stop messing about.' This models respectful and polite interactions for students and creates a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

2. Rehearsing clear communication

It may be helpful to rehearse clearly communicating without students present so the skill becomes more automatic and feels more natural when students are 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 refine your use of this skill.

Further guidance on effective rehearsal can be accessed in the How teachers and school leaders can use these resources section of the Classroom Management Resources: User Guide.

2.1. Elements for success

- [ ] Gain all students' attention before clearly communicating.
- [ ] Keep instructions short and simple, while maintaining clarity. Use as few words as possible.
- [ ] Break instructions down into a small number of steps that are:
  - Manageable
  - Actionable for all students
  - In a sequential order, pausing between each step to allow time for students to process what they've heard.
- [ ] Deliberately pause and scan to ensure students understand and are following the instructions. Provide support when needed and ensure students know they can ask for clarification or repetition of the instructions.

2.2. Rehearsing on your own

Write scripts to clearly communicate in different situations that are common in your classroom, for an individual student, a group of students or the whole class. Some examples of the situations you may like to script include:

- reminding students of the behaviour expectations before they enter the classroom
- publicly or privately acknowledging and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts as you circulate the classroom
- responding when students are off task or disrupting other students.

When writing your script, consider how you might complement verbal instructions with visual supports for students to refer to – especially for multi-step instructions. Read your script aloud. 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.

2.3. 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 of success. Discuss:

- How might students respond to your clear communication?
- What went well?
- Which elements require refinement?

Rescript if necessary and rehearse again, incorporating feedback until all elements for success have been demonstrated smoothly and with confidence. Rehearsal will improve the clarity, conciseness and consistency of your language.

3. Practising clear communication during a lesson

To practise when students are present:

- Use the scripts you developed in the Rehearsing on your own and Rehearsing with a colleague sections to clearly communicate in those scenarios.
- Leave cues – such as a sticky note on your desk or around your computer screen – to remind yourself of the elements of clear communication you're working on.
- After clearly communicating instructions, deliberately pause and scan to check that all students understand. Ask questions to check understanding and use students' responses as feedback on the clarity of your communication.

Ask a colleague to observe 10 to 15 minutes of a lesson, using the related observation tool to identify the effectiveness of your use of clear communication and any areas for refinement.

Questions for reflection

- How are students responding to your clear communication?
- How effectively are you using visual and written supports to complement your verbal instructions in ways that don't add unnecessary cognitive load?
- How consistently do you gain all students' attention before communicating?
- Are instructions delivered in manageable, sequential steps with pauses in between?
- How do you check for understanding? Do you notice any students who became visibly confused or overwhelmed either during or after instructions are delivered? How might you provide adjustments for them?
- What are some of the challenges you experience in clear communication?
- What aspect of your communication will you now focus on for further refinement?



Chapter 17
Deliberate pause

Deliberately pausing is a skill that supports and maintains safe, supportive and inclusive learning environments. Related practice resources to refine other classroom management skills focus on acknowledgement and praise, clear communication, non-verbal correction, scanning and voice control. When using classroom management skills, it's important to consider and make reasonable adjustments to support students' diverse needs.

A deliberate pause breaks the flow of verbal communication to gain students' attention, emphasise a point or give students' time to process information, follow a direction or correct behaviours so they're safe, respectful and learning focused. A deliberate pause also gives teachers time to think, assess situations and determine the most appropriate responses to students.

A deliberate pause is often used in conjunction with other practices – for example, after a prompt to gain all students' attention, after clearly communicating instructions or expectations or after responding to disengagement or disruption – to allow students time to refocus on learning. A deliberate pause can also be used in conjunction with other practices and adjustments to support students' diverse needs.

1. The importance of the deliberate pause

Deliberately pausing is important for both teachers and students as it provides time for both to think. It's an opportunity for teachers to observe what's happening, demonstrate to students that they're aware of what's happening and to decide on the best response if one is needed. Pausing provides students with the opportunity to follow an instruction, ask a question or refocus their behaviour.

Due to its various potential meanings, deliberately pausing is more effective in classrooms where its purpose and use have been explained and students have been explicitly taught what they should do in response to a pause. Some students may need additional explanation, support and reminders to respond to a deliberate pause.



2. Rehearsing the deliberate pause

It may be helpful to rehearse deliberately pausing without students present so the skill becomes more automatic and feels more natural when students are 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 reflection to refine your use of this skill.

Further guidance on effective rehearsal can be accessed in the How teachers and school leaders can use these resources section of the Classroom Management Resources: User Guide.

2.1. Elements for success

- [ ] Sustain a deliberate period of silence, long enough to think and:
  - gain all students' attention
  - emphasise a point
  - allow time for students to:
    - » process information
    - » follow a direction
    - » correct disengagement or disruption and refocus on learning.
- [ ] Combine this with scanning for students' responses.
- [ ] Follow this with another strategy if the deliberate pause didn't achieve the desired outcome on its own. For example, a visual cue such as pointing to the classroom rules poster to remind students of the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour or a verbal prompt for what students should be doing.

2.2. Rehearsing on your own

In an empty classroom, rehearse the following with deliberate pauses:

- gaining all students' attention – for example, after using a call and response, deliberately pausing and waiting for all students to give you their attention
- using non-verbal corrections – for example, look at a student or group of students and put a finger to your lips to ask them to be quiet and focus on what you're saying, then deliberately pause, waiting for silence before you continue speaking
- setting behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks – for example, clearly communicating the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours needed when working in groups, deliberately pausing and then checking for understanding
- responding to low-level disengagement or disruption to refocus on learning – for example, using a deliberate pause after acknowledging students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours or providing a group reminder of expectations to allow time for all students to respond.

Plan and rehearse:

- how you'll ensure all students understand what's expected during a pause. This may include explicitly teaching the routine, modelling expected responses and checking for understanding.
- follow-up responses to use if your deliberate pause doesn't have the desired effect on its own – for example, acknowledging students demonstrating the safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours, telling students why you're pausing or using a different non-verbal or verbal correction.

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.

2.3. 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 strengths and areas for refinement. Ask them to include feedback on the length of your deliberate pause and the predicted response from students.

Now ask your colleague to play a student not responding to your deliberate pause and provide feedback on the following:

- How well did you acknowledge students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours?
- How well did you implement a different response after an appropriate amount of time? Did you wait too long or respond too quickly?
- Is your plan likely to support students who may experience difficulties responding to the deliberate pause? What else might you do to engage these students?

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

3. Practising the deliberate pause during a lesson

To practise when students are present:

- Leave cues to remind yourself to deliberately pause, such as a sticky note on your desk or around your computer screen.
- Deliberately pause when gaining all students' attention, emphasising a point or giving students time to process information, follow directions or correct their behaviour.
- After giving an instruction, deliberately pause and scan to monitor all students as they follow it, providing support when needed.

Ask a colleague to observe 10 to 15 minutes of a lesson, using the related observation tool to identify the effectiveness of your deliberate pause and any areas for refinement.

Questions for reflection

- Have you explicitly taught students why you might pause and what they should do?
- How comfortable do you feel when deliberately pausing? If you feel uncomfortable, how might you overcome this?
- Is the length of your pause effective? For example, do you give students enough time to respond?
- How well is deliberately pausing working for:
  - gaining students' attention?
  - emphasising a point?
  - giving students time to:
    - process information?
    - follow directions?
    - adjust their behaviour?
- If its effectiveness has differed, why do you think that is?
- How do different students interpret and respond to a deliberate pause? What specific supports, such as verbal or non-verbal prompts, may be needed to ensure all students can respond successfully?
- How well are you able to implement another planned response when deliberately pausing is not achieving the desired outcome?



Chapter 18
Non-verbal correction

Non-verbal correction is a skill that supports and maintains safe, supportive and inclusive learning environments. Related practice resources to refine other classroom management skills focus on acknowledgement and praise, circulation, clear communication, deliberately pausing, scanning and voice control. When using classroom management skills, it's important to consider and make reasonable adjustments to support students' diverse needs.

Non-verbal corrections provide students with clear, visible corrective gestures that act as behavioural prompts without the use of words. Non-verbal corrections can provide support without drawing the attention of other students.

Students may interpret non-verbal corrections differently depending on their diverse backgrounds, experiences, communication differences or neurodevelopmental profiles. Some students will require verbal corrections or visual supports alongside non-verbal corrections. Teaching students about specific non-verbal corrections – along with expected responses – will help develop a shared understanding and may reduce the need for more intrusive responses over time. Inviting students – and their families when appropriate – to provide input about their perception of non-verbal corrections and the techniques they prefer can assist you in using supportive practices.

Non-verbal technique	What is it?
Proximity	Moving near a student or group of students – while respecting students' personal space – to gain their attention to correct their behaviour.
Deliberately pausing	Stopping what you're doing, using silence purposefully and looking at a student or group of students to gain their attention to correct their behaviour.
'The look'	Turning and looking at a student or group of students, combined with a gesture, to demonstrate that you're aware of their behaviour and it needs to change so learning can continue.
A gesture	A hand gesture or facial expression to communicate the expected behaviour – for example, pointing to where students should be looking.

When using non-verbal corrections, maintain calm and respectful facial expressions and body language, even when feeling frustrated or annoyed. This promotes a sense of safety, support and inclusion, helps build positive teacher–student relationships and models respectful and polite interactions for students.

1. The importance of non-verbal correction

Non-verbal corrections can prompt safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours by ensuring students know that you're aware of what's happening in your classroom and will discreetly respond to low-level disengagement and disruption when they first appear, without disrupting the flow of the lesson.

2. Rehearsing non-verbal correction

It may be helpful to rehearse non-verbal corrections without students present so the skill becomes more automatic and feels more natural when students are 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 refine your use of this skill.

Further guidance on effective rehearsal can be accessed in the How teachers and school leaders can use these resources section of the Classroom Management Resources: User Guide.

2.1. Elements for success

Non-verbal technique	Elements for success
Proximity	☐ Move near the student or group of students, while respecting students' personal space. ☐ Ensure you're still able to see all other students. ☐ Scan the whole class.
Deliberately pausing	☐ Sustain a deliberate period of silence. ☐ Ensure it's long enough to gain the student or group of students' attention. ☐ Combine this with scanning for students' responses.
'The look'	☐ Intentionally turn towards the student. ☐ Look at the student. ☐ Combine this with a gesture – for example, shake your head, then nod when they correct themselves, or point to your eye and then point and look where they should be looking.
A gesture	☐ Make a corrective gesture – for example: – Point at a visual support, such as the written rule or step of the routine. – Put your finger to your lips to indicate silence. – Raise your hand to remind a student to raise their hand rather than calling out. – Gesture with your hand to indicate 'sit down'.



2.2. Rehearsing on your own

Rehearse the non-verbal technique you would use to encourage safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour 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 other students to answer.
- You instruct all students to open their books and begin their tasks 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.

2.3. 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 corrections with acknowledgement and other corrections using the Responding to Low-Level Disengaged and Disruptive Behaviours practice guide. Gain feedback on what went well and any areas in need of further refinement.

3. 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 aren't safe, respectful and learning-focused.
- Intentionally combine non-verbal corrections with other corrections to encourage safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviour.
- Verbally or non-verbally acknowledge students when they correct their behaviour.

Ask a colleague to observe 10 to 15 minutes of a lesson, using the related observation tool to identify the effectiveness of your use of non-verbal corrections and any areas for refinement. Ask students – and their families, when appropriate – about how non-verbal corrections are experienced and understood.

Questions for reflection

- Have you explicitly taught your students what non-verbal corrections mean and the expected response when they're used? Have you checked they understand?
- How consistently are you using non-verbal corrections to address low-level disengagement and disruption and encourage safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours?
- How effectively are you using non-verbal corrections to support the continued flow of lessons and tasks? What's one thing you can change to use these corrections even more effectively?
- How are you using your knowledge of students and any factors impacting them to determine which, if any, non-verbal corrections to use?
- How are you building or maintaining your relationships with students when using non-verbal corrections? How are you helping them feel safe, supported and included?
- 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?



Chapter 19
Scanning your class

Scanning is a skill that supports and maintains a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environments. Related practice resources to refine other classroom management skills focus on acknowledgement and praise, circulation, clear communication, deliberately pausing, non-verbal correction and voice control. When using classroom management skills, it's important to consider and make reasonable adjustments to support students' diverse needs.

Scanning is the practice of consistently and intentionally monitoring all students in your class. It allows you to gather information efficiently and regularly about students' focus and participation in learning so you can respond and support as needed.

1. The importance of scanning

Scanning is a proactive skill that can promote safety, inclusion and respectful, learning-focused behaviours, and prevent disengagement and disruption. Effective scanning allows you to identify, acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and effort and respond to disengagement and disruption. Scanning can help you determine when it's time to revisit and reteach various aspects of your classroom culture and identify students who may require additional support or adjustments.

2. Rehearsing scanning

It may be helpful to rehearse scanning your classroom without students present so the skill becomes more automatic and feels more natural when students are 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 refine your use of this skill.

Further guidance on effective rehearsal can be accessed in the How teachers and school leaders can use these resources section of the Classroom Management Resources: User Guide.



2.1. Elements for success

- [ ] Position yourself to see all students, including when talking to an individual student or group.
- [ ] Use intentional and obvious head movements so students are aware that you're scanning the class. For some students, it may be helpful to verbally explain that you're scanning the class and why.
- [ ] Ensure all students and areas of the learning environment are monitored, including during activities and transitions and after giving an instruction.

2.2. Rehearsing on your own

- [ ] Visualise your class and where students would usually sit. Identify the positions in your classroom that will allow you to see every student.
- [ ] Systematically and intentionally scan the classroom, such as by scanning from left to right and from front to back.

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.

2.3. 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.

3. Practising scanning during a lesson

To practise when students are present:

- Scan the room regularly during activities and transitions.
- When talking to an individual student or group, position your body so you're still able to scan the whole class while avoiding having your back to the class (see Circulation).
- After giving an instruction, pause and scan to check that all students understand and are able to follow it. Acknowledge and praise students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts. Respond to behaviours that aren't safe, respectful or learning-focused using a correction. For example, a look and gesture such as finger to lips to communicate the need for silence.

Ask a colleague to observe 10 to 15 minutes of a lesson, using the related observation tool to identify the effectiveness of your use of scanning and any areas for refinement. Ask students – and their families, when appropriate – about how they feel noticed, supported and included in the classroom to give you an indication of how scanning is supporting your practice.

Questions for reflection

- How often do you pause and scan the class to ensure all students are focused on learning? Is scanning the room becoming habitual for you?
- What is scanning revealing to you about your students' safety, interactions with others and focus on learning? How well do you understand students' diverse needs and behaviours so that you can interpret what you observe accurately? For example, could a self-soothing behaviour be misidentified as disengagement?
- Are all students equally visible when scanning, including quieter students or those who may be less likely to draw your attention? Do you tend to focus more on certain students? Why might this be? What might be influencing your attention?
- When you scan, are you looking for students demonstrating safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours or only those not demonstrating these?
- How has refining the way you scan your class helped increase safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours? How has scanning assisted you in reinforcing these behaviours and responding to students' needs?
- How is acknowledging students demonstrating safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours while scanning the class strengthening the classroom culture?



Chapter 20
Voice control

Voice control is a skill that supports and maintains safe, supportive and inclusive learning environments. Related practice resources to refine other classroom management skills focus on acknowledgement and praise, circulation, clear communication, deliberately pausing, non-verbal correction and scanning. When using classroom management skills, it's important to consider and make reasonable adjustments to support students' diverse needs.

Voice control involves deliberately controlling the tone, pitch, volume and pace you use to communicate. 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 involves moving between 2 main registers – regular voice and assertive voice – for different purposes and to different effects. Voice control can also help you communicate empathy, show support, express interest and signal when something is important or serious.

Voice control – along with appropriate body language – models and maintains a calm and measured approach to communication and helps develop and maintain positive teacher–student relationships within a positive classroom culture. Voice control can also reduce strain on teacher's voices.

Students may respond differently to elements of voice control depending on their diverse backgrounds, experiences, neurodevelopmental profiles and needs. Some students will need clearer, more explicit or alternative forms of communication.

1. The importance of voice control

Teachers use not only words, but also their tone, pitch, volume and pace to communicate. These elements of voice control can help teachers build positive connections and relationships with students, clearly communicate instructions, model respectful communication and help prevent the escalation of disruption or disengagement.

It's important to use the voice that best suits each situation. A regular voice can help build positive relationships, while an assertive voice can help clearly communicate instructions and gain students' attention when needed.

Being excessively loud, shouting or rushing instructions, using a tone that sounds confrontational or disrespectful, raising the pitch of your voice or exaggerating specific words to highlight a behaviour can convey a lack of respect for students or a loss of composure. This can feel threatening or overwhelming for students, be mirrored by students, escalate behaviours and negatively impact the learning environment.

2. Rehearsing voice control

It may be helpful to rehearse your voice control without students present so the skill becomes more automatic and feels more natural when students are 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 refine 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, remind students of expectations and respond to disengagement and disruption. Also note the accompanying changes to your body language.

2.1. Elements for success

Regular voice and stance	Assertive voice and stance
☐ More relaxed rather than firm tone	☐ Firmer tone
☐ Wide range of pitch (low to high)	☐ Lower pitch
☐ Loud enough volume for individual students, a group or the 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	☐ Clear communication
	☐ More upright posture

It's important to note that some students may not understand or respond positively to changes in voice and body language and will need clearer verbal instructions accompanied with visual supports.

Always interact with students with a calm tone, respect and politeness – for example, greeting students on first meeting each day, and using 'Please' and 'Thank you'. Pause before responding to disengagement or disruption to maintain and model your own emotional regulation, recognising that student responses may reflect diverse needs, experiences or barriers. Positively frame communication, stating what students are being asked to do rather than what they shouldn't do so that students understand what's required of them. For example, providing the instruction 'Start the task' instead of 'Stop messing about.' This models respectful and polite interactions for students and creates a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

2.2. Rehearsing on your own

Using examples from your own experience or from observing others' practice from your own experience, script 2 short sentences using:

- a relaxed voice and body language (for example, an acknowledgement – 'Thank you, [Student name], for waiting quietly')
- an assertive voice and body language (for example, an instruction – 'Class, pens down, attention on me, please').

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

2.3. 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.

3. Practising voice control during a lesson

To practise when students are present:

- use voice control in different situations, remembering to match your body language to your voice, including:
  - greeting individual students while they're 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 and praising students' safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours and efforts
  - reminding students of safe, respectful, learning-focused behaviours
  - responding to disengagement and disruption.

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

Questions for reflection

- How do your students respond to changes in your voice? How do you know?
- When do you use a regular tone and when is a more assertive tone helpful? How do you adjust your tone while still communicating respect and maintaining positive relationships with students?
- 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? How do you gather students' feedback on your pace?
- Have you noticed that you use a specific tone, volume or pitch with a certain student or group of students more often than you do with others? Why do you think this is?
- What impact is deliberately controlling your voice having on interactions with your students? Is the impact positive for all students? What will you do to address the needs of the students who aren't benefitting from your use of voice control?
- How does your tone support your engagement with students' families and communities? Is it encouraging them to engage with you?





For more information visit
edresearch.edu.au

101126.CH.AA.V5