Practice guide for primary and secondary schools

Develop techniques and practices

Australian Education Research Organisation

Classroom management practice

Entering the classroom

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

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

This practice guide will support you 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.

An effective entrance routine

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.

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.

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.

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).

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.

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.

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. 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.

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.

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.

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



Video

- entering the classroom



Reflection resource

- entering the classroom



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)



Professional learning resources

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

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