

10 Essential Classroom Skills

Part two



Language of acknowledgement

Language of correction

Language of Expectation

The Balance Model



Management-focused language



Expectation

What teachers say and do to articulate the boundaries of acceptable behaviour in the classroom.

Acknowledgement

What teachers say and do to support students to engage with the curriculum and cooperate productively with others.

Correction

What teachers say and do to interrupt and redirect students who are off-task.



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Essential skills



• 10 Essential Classroom Skills are sorted into three categories:

1. Expectation

1. Establishing expectations

1

- 2. Giving instructions
- 3. Waiting and scanning
- 4. Cueing with parallel acknowledgment

2. Acknowledgement

- 5. Body language encouraging
- 6. Descriptive encouraging



Essential skills



3. Correction

- 7. Selective attending
- 8. Redirecting to the learning
- 9. Giving a choice
- 10. Following through



Feature	In Place	Not In Place
Small number of classroom rules have been developed (fewer than five).		
Classroom rules are publicly available and accessible (e.g. variety of formats).		
Classroom rules are short, simple and clear.		
Expected student behaviours are acknowledged regularly (positively reinforced) (>4 positives to 1 negative).		
Problem behaviours receive consistent consequences.		
Classroom rules and routines in classrooms are stated positively & defined clearly.		
Classroom rules are reviewed prior to starting a new learning tasks or special activity.		
Classroom rules are modelled by the teacher (e.g. one person speaking at a time).		



2. Giving instructions

Purpose:

Give clear direction to students about what they are required to do.





 Use a verbal and/or non-verbal attention gaining prompt to focus student attention towards the teacher, for example:

Verbal prompts:

- 'Stop and look to the front, thanks.'
- 'Look here, thanks.'
- 'Put pencils down, attention here thanks.'
- 'Face me, thanks children.'





Non-verbal prompts:

- Hand clap (this could be in sequence)
- Ring a hand-held bell or play iPhone bell tone
- Whistle (especially relevant to physical education)
- Stand on an 'attention calling' spot in the classroom, which is known and understood by students.





- 2. Wait and scan (Skill 3).
- 3. When student attention is focused, start the instruction with a verb. Keep instructions short; be concise.
- 4. Follow the instruction with a short pause and scan the class.
- Separate instructions from curriculum/content talk. Avoid interrupting content talk with instructions.





6. Phrase the instruction as a direction rather than a question.

For example, Instead of saying: 'Would you like to copy the sentence, Year 4?' or 'Can we stop working now?' Say: 'Copy the sentence Year 4' and 'Stop working, thanks.'

If you get into the habit of phrasing instructions as a question rather than as a direction, students may believe that following instructions is optional.





- 7. Use 'thanks' rather than 'please' at the end of an instruction for a crisper, less questioning tone. 'Thanks' implies compliance; however, saying 'please' at times is appropriate.
- 8. Give the instruction in a firm, calm and measured voice, e.g.:
 - 'Come here, John.'
 - Open your books at page 17, Year 8.'





- 'Steven and Sharon, hand out the science equipment, thanks.'
- 'Move to your group areas now.'
- 'Stop what you are doing and look here.'
- 'Sit in the shade, please.'
- 'Walk down the stairs, thanks.'
- Year 3, take out your pencil, eraser and ruler, and get ready to work.'





- 9. Use 'now' if the group or student is unlikely to comply, for example:
 - Initial instruction: 'David, look to the front, thanks.'
 - If he does not respond or his behaviour deteriorates: Look in his direction and say, 'Now' (Using a firmer tone of voice, possibly with a slight increase in volume or inflected pitch, but with no anger.)
 - Or it may be necessary to say: 'David, look to the front, now.'
 (Do not shout, but use a calm, firm tone of voice.) When he responds appropriately, pause slightly to reaffirm, then look away and continue.





Activity

• Clear vs. unclear instructions



Clear vs. unclear instructions



- Pack up
- Eyes front
- Hands on head
- Finish up
- Move back to your seat
- Work in pairs

- Be responsible
- No talking
- Get on with your work
- Get ready
- Feet on the floor
- Dismissed



3. Waiting and Scanning

Purpose:

Pausing after an instruction to give students time to process the information.



How to wait and scan



- 1. After you have given an instruction:
 - Pause
 - Remain quiet and look at your students
 - Scan the room for 5–10 seconds to maintain their attention.
- 2. When you have their attention, continue with your dialogue or prompt them to begin following your instruction i.e. start working.



How to wait and scan



- 1. Use the waiting and scanning time to encourage a period of quiet focus. Use assertive body language—stand still facing the group, while scanning the class. Then, prompt students to maintain the quiet focus while they start working.
- 2. Use this short time to think ahead and calm yourself, if necessary.
- 3. Scan the group, link with a descriptive encourager (see Skill 6) or a redirection as necessary.



4. Cueing with parallel acknowledgment

Purpose:

To acknowledge on-task behaviour with the intention of encouraging other students to copy this behaviour.





- 1. Scan the class regularly. When students are off-task, choose to acknowledge an individual or group in close proximity who is on-task.
- 2. Acknowledge that person or group with a descriptive encourager (see Skill 6) in a loud enough voice for others to hear.





- For example, if Jenny is off-task during a writing activity while sitting next to Mark who is on-task, you say to Mark, 'I can see Mark working quietly on his writing.'
- This is a prompt for Jenny or other students who may be offtask.
- If a group of students sitting at one table is off-task, then acknowledge a group of students sitting near them who are on-task.
- Say: 'Group one is constructing their straw tower.' (Loud enough for group two to hear.)





3. Follow up with a low-key acknowledgment to the students as soon as they choose to be on-task.

Examples of low-key acknowledgment: verbal and non-verbal

- Verbal low-key acknowledgment is low volume, verbal acknowledgment delivered in close proximity such as:
 - Descriptive encouragement: 'Daniel, I can see you writing'
 - Praise: 'Well done Melissa.'
- Non-verbal, low-key acknowledgment involves body language such as:
 - Smiling
 - AUSLAN or finger signing
 - Close proximity
 - Touching of students' materials.





- As you move around the room, touch the books or desks of those students on-task.
- Do not touch the books or desks of those students off-task.
- When off-task students become on task, calmly go back to their position and touch their book or desk.



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End

