

“Clearly stated expectations convey to students what teachers want. In addition, they tend to guide student behaviour and strengthen teacher monitoring.”

– Jeff Sprague and Annemieke Golly, *Best Behavior: Building Positive Behavior Support in Schools*

Teaching classroom behavioural expectations begins on the first day of the school year. These expectations, framed in positive language, apply to all activities at all times.

Three to five classroom behavioural expectations are sufficient at any grade level. They should be posted in a conspicuous place in the classroom and reviewed regularly. Specific expectations may vary slightly from class to class but should align with school-wide expectations.

Clear classroom behavioural expectations:

- provide students with a sense of security
- contribute to a positive climate
- increase academic learning time
- reduce classroom stress
- enable students to monitor themselves
- enable teachers to facilitate and support positive behaviour
- support good communication with parents and other school staff, including substitute teachers.

Although *rules* and *expectations* are often viewed as interchangeable terms, *expectation* has a more positive connotation. The implication is that expectations are tools for helping as opposed to enforcing, and involve commitment rather than compliance. Expectations tell students, “We believe this is how you can be.”

Respond consistently to students who meet behavioural expectations and be flexible when students do not meet them, keeping in mind their individual needs and the context of the behaviour. Most students who do not meet expectations benefit from feedback and opportunities to correct their behaviour. For example, “We walk, not run, in this classroom. Return to your desk, please, and walk quietly to the coat rack.”

Some students who do not meet expectations have not yet learned the skills they need to do so. They need additional coaching and practice. For example, “Inside voices are quiet so they don’t interfere with other people’s learning. Please turn to your desk partner and practise what a ‘quiet voice’ sounds and feels like. I’ll do it first, you listen and then you try it.”

A few students may challenge the classroom expectations. These students require individualized approaches that may or may not include negative consequences.

Example of expectations for an elementary classroom

In this classroom:

1. We follow the teacher’s directions.
2. We stay in our work areas.
3. We keep hands and feet to ourselves.
4. We speak kindly to others.

Teach expectations

Take time during the first weeks of school to frequently review classroom expectations and ensure that students understand them. For example, create a triple T-chart, identify one of the expectations and brainstorm with students what meeting that expectation looks like, sounds like and feels like.

Listening while others are speaking

Looks like	Sounds like	Feels like
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eyes are on the speaker • mouths are closed • hands are still 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • only one voice talking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the speaker feels like what he or she is saying is important • both the speaker and the audience are respected

Younger students can learn about behavioural expectations by drawing pictures of appropriate behaviour, presenting them to the class and then posting the pictures as friendly reminders.

Develop activity procedures⁴

Activity procedures are detailed written statements of what will occur each time a certain type of activity takes place in the classroom. For example, the social skills used in cooperative groups are quite different from those used to listen to a guest speaker.

Teaching specific activity procedures:

- maintains consistent positive behaviour
- provides students with a sense of security
- reminds the teacher and students about what to do
- provides a focus for setting limits
- prompts self-direction and less dependence on the teacher
- increases the time available for learning.

Consider these types of questions when developing activity procedures.

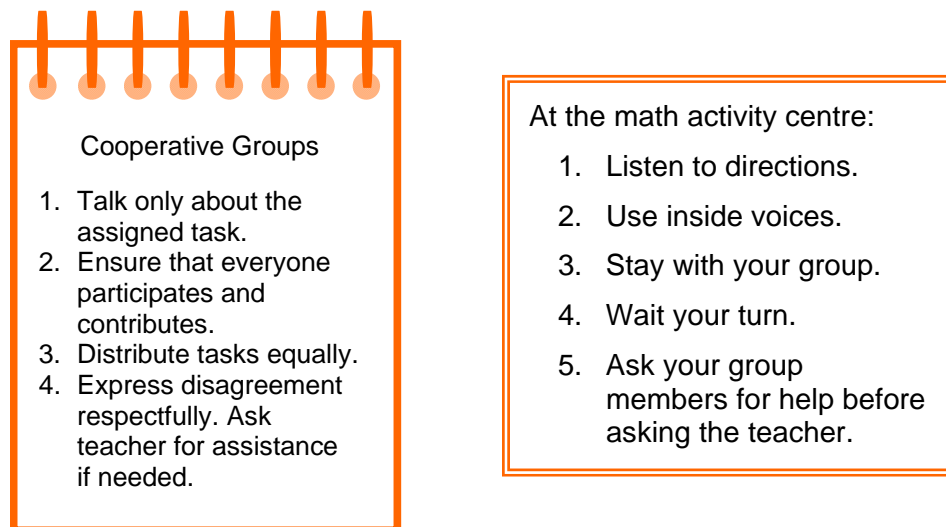
1. How will students work?
 - whole groups
 - small groups
 - partners
 - individually
2. How will they communicate?
 - show of hands
 - in writing
 - talk with partner
 - one at a time in group
3. How will they ask for help?
 - raise hand
 - use signal card
 - ask other students
4. Where will they work?
 - at their desk
 - at partner's desk
 - at table
 - moving around
5. How long will they have?

4. Adapted from Patricia Sequeira Belvel and Maya Marcia Jordan, *Rethinking Classroom Management: Strategies for Prevention, Intervention, and Problem Solving*, pp. 112, 113, copyright 2003 by Corwin Press, Inc. Adapted by permission of Corwin Press, Inc.

6. What materials will they use? Where are materials stored? How will they be distributed and cleaned up?
7. What should they do when they are finished?
 - begin the next task
 - read silently
 - select an activity
 - visit quietly with partner

Create cueing systems

Use visual cues to reinforce activity procedures for different classroom contexts. The examples below show a flip chart⁵ that lists expectations for certain tasks in a senior high classroom and a list of expectations for working at a math activity centre in an elementary classroom.



Establish general cues that can be used across the subject areas. For example, a set of three coloured cards can be posted on the board and can be moved around to indicate expectations for a certain activity. A red card could signal “No talking,” a blue card could indicate it is time to “Talk to partner or group about activity” and a green card could stand for “Free talking” during such activities as art or indoor recess.

5. Adapted from *Discipline in the Secondary Classroom: A Positive Approach to Behavior Management* (2nd edition) (p. 122) by Randall S. Sprick; copyright © 2006, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Reprinted with permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.