

Module 2 - Classroom Management and Student Levels

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I. The key areas of classroom management

In this module you will find out the basics of classroom management, which includes such aspects as giving instructions, using the board, arranging the seats, and managing students' behaviour. We will also look at various proficiency levels.

As a teacher, classroom management means doing all you can to run your lesson smoothly, no matter what environment you find yourself in.

Let's take a look at the three key areas of classroom management in more detail and examine how you can make the most of space and resources, and how to control behaviour.

Space

Consider how to use your classroom space in the most effective way – you may need to find ways to deal with classrooms that are dark, hot, too small - or too large. If there are no chairs, have cushions or mats brought in so that everyone can sit on the floor. If there are some chairs but no desks, ask your students to put books or pieces of cardboard on their knees to use as support when writing.

Resources

The classroom resources can be basic or additional . Basic resources are the coursebook and the teacher. Additional resources may be visual (flash cards, videos, grammar charts, etc), auditory (songs, recorded dialogues, etc) and a great variety of realia that can be used in games and activities (dice, toys, coins, kitchen utensils, boxes, etc). The internet can be used as a vast supplementary resource.

Behaviour

Ideally you want to prevent inappropriate behaviour from occurring in the first place, but if it does, you need to know how to deal with it as quickly and effectively as you can. You will find out more about how to deal with this later on.

II. How to give instructions

The importance of clear instructions cannot be overstated. No matter how interesting or exciting you make your activities, they will flop unless your students know exactly what they are supposed to be doing.

Use concise imperatives

A concise imperative is a short instruction. In fact this is a difficult habit for English speakers to break when asking people to do things. We often use long and complicated sentences instead of getting to the point, such as "Right, what I'd like you to do now, if you don't mind, is to..."

Don't worry about seeming impolite. You can say "Listen!" with a smile and non-threatening body language. It's effective and clear.

Incorrect: "How about we each work with a partner?"

Correct: "Work with the person on your left."

Don't use phrasal verbs or colloquialisms

Again, this is all about clarity. Avoid using phrases your students are unlikely to understand, such as "Why are you looking so fed up?". Likewise, colloquialisms are difficult for non-native speakers to grasp.

If you tell your students to 'pipe down' for example, you may get some blank looks.

Here is an example:

Incorrect: "OK, let's go through this together."

Correct: "Now we'll look at the answers."

Demonstrate

Whenever possible, try to demonstrate activities. This is much more effective than a lengthy explanation. It's always a good idea to do the first question in an exercise together as a class. With games and role-plays demonstrate using a strong student to model the activity.

Check for understanding

Check that the students have understood your instructions by watching their faces. If need be, you can check with simple questions such as "What are you going to do next?".

The importance of voice

An important yet frequently overlooked tool in the classroom is your voice. Often, when working overseas, there is a lack of tape recorders, videos and computers, and your voice may provide the only authentic model for the students. Your voice should be loud enough for every student to hear - without straining.

Make sure you provide a natural model of speech or your learners may have difficulty understanding other people in everyday conversation.

Modulate your voice to avoid monotony. Speak naturally, even with elementary classes rather than in a stilted, non-contracted way. For example, say "She couldn't have gone" rather than "She could not have gone..."

Remember you can use your voice as a signal. A loud voice can signal the beginning or the end of an activity. Also, when telling stories, use your voice and body language to emphasise meaning.

Eye contact

Make an effort to take in the whole class. Scan the whole group when speaking and avoid staring at any individuals in particular. Sometimes it's easy to focus on a friendly face. Use eye contact for selecting a student. It will help keep your students constantly engaged.

III. How to use the board

1. Some popular ways of using the board

The key tool in your teaching toolkit is the board. In some developing countries it may be your only teaching aid - along with a few pieces of chalk.

You can use the board:

- for clarity
- to focus attention
- for visual stimulation (visually orientated students will like it)
- instead of using photocopies (it's kind to the environment)

More specifically, you can use the board to illustrate

- The spelling of words (especially confusing ones, like 'ewe')
- To present new words, accompanied by a picture. E.g. "He's got curly hair"
- To show pronunciation features e.g. the picture of the shape of your mouth when producing a certain sound. To make /v/ your top teeth touch your bottom lip.
- To illustrate a form e.g. the present perfect = have/has + past participle
- She has gone to Spain.
- To keep a written record
- To show stress and intonation
- To correct mistakes (you will find out more about this in module 8 of the course)
- For games, e.g. keeping scores, Hangman, Pictionary
- To show phonemic script
 - Red /red/
 - Blue /blu:/
 - Yellow /jeləu/

2. Substitution tables and time lines

Substitution tables are a good way to show students alternative language options. Here are some examples:

Present Perfect: Question form

Has	he	ever	been	to a club?	
	she			to Liverpool?	
	it			in Love?	
Have	I				
	you				
	they				

Present Continuous

I	am	(not)	working tomorrow.
He	is		meeting them.
She			playing tennis tonight.
It			going out.
We	are		having a good time.
You			
They			

Present Simple

I	live	in London.
You		
We		
They		
He	lives	
She		
it		

Present Simple: Question form

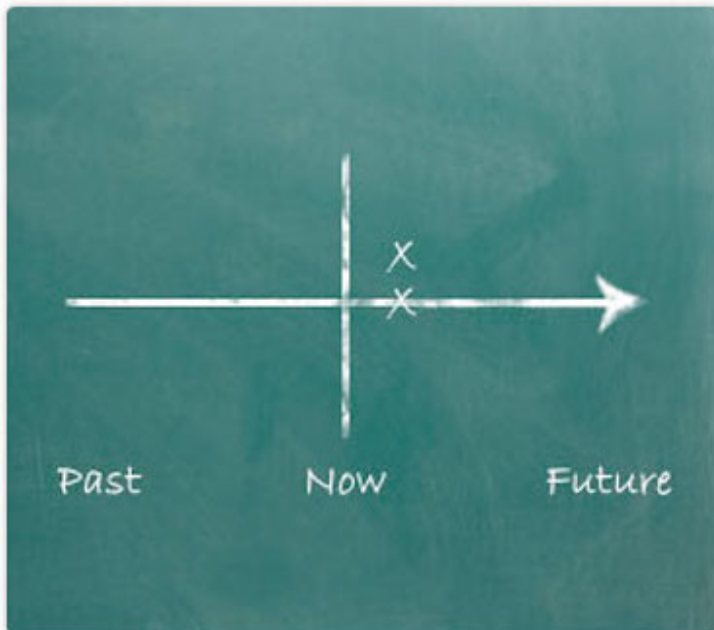
When	Do	I	start?
		you	
		we	
		they	
	Does	he	
		she	
		it	

Would like

I			Tomatoes.
You		___ grams of	Green beans.
He	Would like	A half kilo of	Onions.
She	('d like)	___ kilos of	Carrots.
We		Some	Apples.
They			Oranges.
			Rice.

Top tip: Use upper and lower case correctly, following normal conventions (e.g. John comes from Liverpool, a city in the north of England). Students need a natural model to follow.

Consider using time lines, as shown in the illustration here. You could use it, for example, to illustrate the sentence "I'll tell him when I see him".



3. Presenting vocabulary

Consider using mind maps. These are useful when teaching adjectives as you can see in the image here.



When you organise new vocabulary on the board it is a good idea to put it in groups as shown below:

<u>Going on holiday</u>		
<u>TRANSPORT</u>	<u>PLACE TO STAY</u>	<u>THINGS TO DO</u>
take a car	hotel	go sightseeing
train	rented flat	go sunbathing
plane	resort	go swimming
go by boat	campground	buy souvenirs
<u>VERBS</u>	<u>NOUNS</u>	relax
stay out late	sun cream	
sleep in	beach towel	
walk around	map	

4. Drawing on the board

Simple drawings can help to increase the interest in the lesson, and are a good way of showing meaning. Below are examples of simple blackboard drawings which can easily be substituted with stick figures. If you prefer, you can prepare pictures in advance to stick onto the board.



This simple image illustrates male gender, youth, movement and emotion. With the addition of the boots and ball, we clearly understand the boy is enjoying playing football.



This nurse is clearly about to administer some medicine. This illustration shows us a professional nurse who knows what she's doing.



This stereotypical Western style schoolteacher would be an entertaining way to begin a discussion about schools and teaching across the globe.

Drawing faces allows you to illustrate a whole range of facts and emotions. Remember to draw them large enough to be seen from the back row, and change the mouth for expressions.

For example:



"That's so funny!"

The direction of the nose is useful for indicating who is speaking to whom:



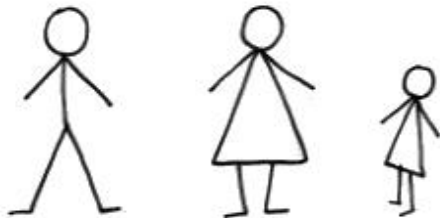
Hair can indicate sex or age:





If you lack confidence in drawing but still want to liven up your class with illustrations, you have two options open to you. Either use pre-drawn images, or consider using simple stick figures as shown here.

To draw a typical stick figure, the body is twice the size of the head. The legs are slightly longer than the arms:



Bend the arms and legs to indicate actions:



You can also use pictures and words to indicate:

- buildings
- locations
- vehicles
- movement

Here are some examples:



5. Top tips for using the board

Here are our top tips to help you make the most of your most versatile (or at times your only) learning tool – the board:

1. Plan your board beforehand so that it is easy to read and things are in a logical order and layout.
2. Write well and clearly (there's no rush)
3. Write large enough for everyone to see
4. Write in a straight line
5. Stand to one side when you write so you don't obscure the board
6. Don't clutter the board with too much information at any one time
7. Don't write everything in capitals or cursive, e.g. JOHN COMES FROM LIVERPOOL (especially important for students who don't use a Roman alphabet).
8. Use colour if possible – on a white board, use blue/black for letters and red/green for highlighting and contrasting.

IV. Increasing interaction: do's and don'ts

In order to get maximum interaction from your students, take a look at the following do's and don'ts.

Do:

- ask open-ended questions (those starting with who/what/why etc)
- use gestures rather than words
- let students finish their own sentences. Students often need thinking time before answering your questions, especially in cultures where making a mistake means losing face. Fight your natural urge to fill the room with constant sound; don't be afraid of pauses
- put students into pairs and small groups to maximise conversation time while you monitor (remember who needs the practice!)
- encourage student-to-student interaction, rather than letting everything be directed at you. Encourage students to explain unknown vocabulary to one another
- encourage students to work together and share answers. This builds confidence, rapport and takes the focus off the teacher.
- physically move away from students who speak quietly. This will encourage them to project their voice
- arrange seating to correspond with the activity.

Don't:

- stand with your back to the class and write silently. This communicates that you don't want to talk to the class
- echo students' answers especially if they're wrong!
- ask closed questions (those that can be answered with a 'yes' or a 'no').

V. Seating arrangement

1. Ways to arrange seats

The classroom (wherever possible) should have an environment that makes learning a pleasant experience. Is the classroom well ventilated or is it stuffy? Does the lighting allow the students to see the board? Are there too many people? Are the chairs set out so that everyone can see each other, and so that all the students see the board?

The arrangement of the seats is a dynamic tool in the learning process.

Here are the most popular seating arrangement options:



Rows

Everyone faces the same direction. This is good for lectures and exams, where the teacher needs to maintain eye contact. Remember when asking questions to ask people at the back.



Circles and Horseshoes

In this configuration everyone feels equal. It's easy to move people around, excellent for class debates, using overhead projectors and presentations where group involvement is desirable.



Groups

Especially useful for situations where the teacher is not the focus of activities such as project work, e.g. working on a class magazine or discussions. Teacher can move from table to table, monitoring and helping students to work.



Buzz Groups

As previously, but the students move from group to group adding information or checking.



In Pairs

Seated next to each other, this immediately increases the level of student practice.



Public Meeting

This is quite formal and not often used in the classroom; it allows a few people to have control of the activity and ask for contributions from others.



Wheel Shape

Everyone moves around and has the possibility to exchange information with different partners.



Opposing teams

Good for competitive activities.



Face-to-face pairs

Excellent for 'describe and draw' activities (especially things the teacher has drawn on the board).



Back to Back Pairs

This decreases the reliance on facial expressions and body language, and helps students focus on the spoken word.

2. Changing the picture

Seating arrangements are dynamic; you can move the students around during the class for variety and for specific reasons.

- In many situations you will be teaching people who might have done a full day at work before coming to class. Moving students around keeps them awake and gives the class pace.
- It also provides an opportunity for people of different levels and personality types to work with each other.

There are many different techniques for moving students. Depending on the size of the class, you can ask your students to arrange themselves in order of their birthday or alphabetically, how long they've been learning English, their shoe size - anything you can think of! The simplest way of moving students is to ask the person on the end of the line to move to the other end, thus creating new pairings.

VI. How to manage discipline

There are times when classroom management proves difficult, especially when teaching children or adolescents. When one or more students begin to misbehave, the teacher's response is key to regaining control and maintaining their authority. That said, however, prevention is the best cure and there are a number of things you can do to stop discipline problems from starting in the first place.

Set a code of conduct

Establish a code of conduct. From the first day, a teacher can work with their students to set up some basic rules that everyone must abide by. These can be as simple as arriving on time, doing homework, not chewing gum, etc. It is essential that the teacher sticks to the agreement if they expect students to as well. You should also establish the consequences for not following the code.

Be positive

Come to class with a positive attitude. Grumpy teachers will have grumpy students. If you dislike your job, the students will pick up on this and will lose interest in studying. They will also fail to admire and respect their teacher.

Be interesting, be prepared

Prepare interesting lessons and make sure you are well prepared. Use the authentic materials (films, music, realia) that interest your students. Include a variety of activities and have extra activities up your sleeve in case you finish early. Don't give students a chance to get restless and bored.

Be fair

Be fair. Everyone should receive the same treatment when it comes to classroom conduct and how much attention they are paid by the teacher.

Here are a few more suggestions:

- Have a seating chart so that friends don't group together from the start, and shyer and quieter students don't feel left out
- Take interest in students on an individual basis
- Encourage students to see themselves as a group working together to achieve a common objective; discourage competition
- Show that you are proud of the school where you are working; if you harbour any bad feelings don't display them in class as this would be unsettling for the students and make them feel unhappy about where they study
- Do not lose your cool and shout or get angry when problems arise; instead refer back to the code and carry out the consequence

VII. Student levels

1. Level descriptions

As a teacher it is useful for you to have a rough idea of what students at particular levels should be able to achieve in English.

It is unlikely you will teach absolute beginners - most students have come across some English at school, usually learnt from non-native teachers.

A student's level of English should be assessed through speaking & communication skills as well as their knowledge of grammar structures, tenses, vocabulary and functions. Be aware that assessment of levels varies in different countries - students considered advanced in Japan due to their good grammar awareness will often be at an intermediate level in Europe due to generally being less confident communicators.

2. Samples of work by students of different levels

Here are some examples of writing done by students of different levels.

1. *(a diary) Yesterday night I go cinema. I see 'Titanic'. I very like Kate Winslet! Then this morning I get up 7 o'clock becaus I come to school by walking. I meet my frend at lunch to the Pasta Café, the food is very delicious.*

This is an elementary student. There is no attempt at the use of the past tense, the narrative structures are simple, and there is confusion with word order and collocations (e.g. 'very delicious' rather than 'really delicious'.) There are some basic spelling errors and the vocabulary is also basic. They are not a beginner, however, as beginners are rarely able to write or speak in full sentences, let alone use structures with 'because'.

2. *(an essay) At primary school I really liked my teacher. Her name was Mme Dupont, and she was first teacher ever I had. I remember her to be very kind to me on my first day. I was crying when my mother left me to the gates (she also was crying!) and Mme Dupont cleaned my tears and gave me a buscuit for eating. I didn't mind going to school after that! I had get over my fears. I hope my children will be happy in school too; my daughter is starting to go to preschool soon.*

This student is intermediate . They are attempting to express more than a straightforward narrative and show relatively good grammar awareness. Their main mistakes are with prepositions and the use of the infinitive vs. the gerund. Their vocabulary is good – using phrasal verbs for example.

3. *(an essay) When I arrived in Russia I was aware that Russian winters were bitterly cold, but little didn't I know that summers there could be boiling hot. Before I had gone to Moscow in June, I had packed my bag with all sort of warm clothes but it turned out to be unnecessary. All I was wearing on most days were a teeshirt and shorts. I had to buy a pair of sun glasses there too because the sun was blinding.*

This student is at the advanced level. There are occasional grammatical mistakes, such as double negation (little and didn't) and the excessive use of the past perfect. However, the student has an excellent grasp of collocations (bitterly cold, boiling hot, etc), uses complex structures and their writing has a natural flow.