

100 CLASS MANAGEMENT AND DISCIPLINE HINTS:

A Primer for the new Teacher

- 1) **A beginning (brand new) well-organized teacher with relevant materials, lively personality and an involved manner has already won the battle**-regardless of lack of experience, skilful teaching technique and teaching philosophy which come later...
- 2) **Teacher Behavior influences Student Behavior** – just about everything that happens in the classroom is a consequence of YOU.
- 3) It is critically important that you, the teacher, **learn to get more control over your own personal resources**, so that you can teach others to have more control over theirs. (This is one of the secret agendas of the teaching role).
- 4) **Be prepared**-in spades! Plan a good flow of activities. This eliminates most discipline and boredom behavioral problems. No teacher in the world can walk into a classroom and continue to do “off the cuff” lesson after lesson and benefit children’s learning long-term.

This is why I find the trend in cram school teaching particularly worrisome; most teachers for example, become effective entertainers only, and school management knows next to nothing about education.
- 5) The **first ten SECONDS** of a brand-new class is critical. You must establish control and set the standard for behavior IMMEDIATELY!
- 6) **Play the teacher role**; establish a position of leadership. Later, you can also become a guide and facilitator. Remember that you are also “**in loco parentis**”.
- 7) Practise your eye contact, vary your voice tone and body language.
- 8) Use your voice pitch, tone, loudness and pace to convey animation, thoughtfulness, anger, pleasure, and other emotions as a control, and as a model. This is your single most important controlling tool in the classroom. Your students will not always understand what you say, but they will hear the emotional message!
- 9) **Facial expressions**: there is a complete range of facial expressions that convey disapproval, annoyance, anger, pleasure etc. Practise these and use them.
- 10) Develop a useful **lesson plan template**-one you can “recycle” for all your classes.
- 11) Develop **habitual, effective teaching sequences**-the students will develop confidence in your ability to control the direction of their learning, and will feel that they are really learning something worthwhile.
- 12) **Increase the amount of learner involvement** in your classroom. Most teachers talk too much. Get the students practising more. Classroom interaction is a multiple-way process. Where there is only action and reaction, there can be little interaction, and hence no communication.
- 13) **Learn your students’ names quickly**. If you are using good student-centered activities, you should be able to learn their names in a week.
- 14) **Use the “listen-look-say-do” approach**: I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand.
- 15) **Teach social approval strategies** for the students to use. E.g. “that’s great; it’s your turn; go, go, go”. This builds team and class spirit, and confidence, as even the slowest student can say this.
- 16) **Step up the pace** of your activity presentations. If one activity is taking too long, or not working well, do not hesitate to cut it short and move to the next activity in the sequence.

- 17) **Pre-Activity preparation:** If an activity takes some time to set up, either prepare it on a poster beforehand, or get the class doing some independent activity where they need to talk to everyone (e.g. in a “find someone who...” type activity) while you get the activity set up.
- 18) Set clear standards of **self-discipline** for yourself. How clear are your own expectations of your “in role” behavior as a teacher?
- 19) Develop **good class management habits**-all kidz want to be in a secure, guiding and supportive environment. Establish good routines in moving from one activity into another e.g., getting ready for a talking activity; opening story readers; starting a writing activity etc.
- 20) Develop a **Classroom Courtesy Code**-Rules for Interaction-with the involvement of your kidz-and set an example yourself.
- 21) **Do not let students eat, drink, or chew gum in class**, sneakily or otherwise. It undermines your authority, and is regarded as impolite and ineffective when communicating with someone. Confiscate the stuff if necessary, until the end of the lesson. I sometimes take it off their desk and make a show of thanking them for giving the teacher a snack (I put it on my desk)! Then I return it at the end of the lesson very offhandedly, but without a lecture. The students get the message (and you haven't scolded them to make them lose face).
- 22) Expect and **teach students to listen courteously to other students** as well as you, otherwise they will learn they can control the class-and you.
- 23) **Do not talk over talking or inattentive students** – expect their attention; if you say something, mean it and carry it out – be consistent!
- 24) **Involve inattentive students** in another student's response; “Is she right (inattentive student's name)? What did she say? It's your turn next, (student's name)!”
- 25) **Remember that the language of deep thought is silence.** Probe students' silences for understanding, or confusion.
- 26) **Use a speech format**, and explain at the beginning of the lesson, where the lesson will take the class, step by step. (“First, we are going to ____, and then we will ____, and finally we will ____”). It's okay to use Chinese for this. This will give the students a secure feeling so that they will not get confused and restless.
- 27) Points systems for reinforcement of learning are okay, as are prizes and candies for younger children, but students beyond the 12-year-age group respond more to intrinsic reinforcement, e.g. genuine praise and support for a good job done from teacher and peers. [**Need for respect and liking from others** must be satisfied for healthy **development of self-esteem and self-confidence** in the maturing self-motivated learner].
- 28) Watch out for students who always sit in the place in the corners of the classroom, out of your sight-scanning range (if you only stand at the front of the class). These are the ones who will become “**missouts/optouts**”, and later, possibly “**misfits**”. It's up to you to involve them, so all the more reason to vary your teaching locus.
- 29) Do not forget to smile, and look like you are having fun!
- 30) **Review, review, review!**
- 31) Read any **teaching notes** for all the textbooks you are using-they are written to help you teach, manage, control and develop professionally.
- 32) Be as **creative** as you can be. Remember that effective and elegant teaching is largely about the teacher being a creative personality – **your own personal creative energy may be your most valuable resource.** Continually experiment and evaluate

- yourself. You will become more effective as a teacher, and provide for your own continuing education.
- 33) **Continuing Education Teacher Training** courses can be useful for the new teacher, but only if they are run by experienced, practicing teachers (refer to the point below).
 - 34) Remember that **real advances in language teaching** mostly come from the **independent** and **experimental** efforts of excellent teachers in their own classrooms, not from ministry of education officials, academic educators, and professors at teacher training colleges publishing academic papers. Such **advances** and **independence** are not developed by imposing fixed ideas and fashionable formulas.
 - 35) If you get stuck because the students are stuck, **do not panic! Rephrase questioning to include alternative answers**, one of which is correct. **If the students only know one item of vocabulary, you can use that to teach them anything else!** E.g. This is a book, right? Okay (holding up a pen), is this a book or a pen? Is this (holding up a bag) a book or a bag? More sophisticated questioning can be used for function and purpose in verb use. E.g. I can read a book, right? What can I do with a bag? Can I read it, or can I carry things? What can I do with a banana? Can I read it, or can I eat it? (You should be miming the action if teaching young children).
 - 36) **Bring the world into your classroom.** Use **authentic material** whenever you can. This means anything like magazines, pictures, articles of clothing, MRT/train timetables, maps, food item containers, travel brochures, posters etc.
 - 37) At the beginning of your (high school level) class, introduce a **regular, short “free talk” activity**, by **introducing a small snippet of local news in your mother tongue** for quick discussion and feedback (high school student levels), then introduce some new English words related to that news...write them up on the whiteboard; make this a regular thing in the class...this encourages participation and lets students know that the world “out there” is a living thing with great relevance to the language they are studying “in here”. Try to tie this in to the topic(s) you are currently introducing in class.
 - 38) **Textbooks:** authentic materials, story readers etc. should all **supplement your textbook**, as textbooks are always limited as a resource when used in isolation. Treat them as a skeletal guide for the particular language functions concerned. Remember that **NO single textbook does it all**, nor is it perfect, so expand, supplement, and design your own stuff where necessary.
 - 39) **Language Functions:** when teaching these, vary your strategies-give students choices, e.g. if teaching the function of accepting thanks, use “no problem; you’re welcome, that’s okay; it’s my pleasure”. Do not teach subcultural slang, as it soon becomes useless or out-of-date (unless the student will be going overseas to study in a foreign country-I only do this with private adult students).
 - 40) **Questioning:** avoid using yes/no questions all the time. Use false, alternative and “wh-“questions (who, what, why, when, how, where, which).
 - 41) **Pronunciation:** there is a time and place to correct pronunciation. NOT all the time, and choose your place during the lesson, though spot checks are okay. Too much correction can be demoralizing or discouraging. If there is a common pronunciation problem being repeatedly made in the class, do not correct it after every student, but wait until the end of that activity and then do a “whole class correction drill”.
 - 42) **Review:** this material can and should be used anytime – throw it at the class during free conversation time (if you have one), or use it at the beginning of every lesson as a “settling down after coming in” activity, e.g. a short vocabulary test. Use an urgent and rapid tone of voice. “Okay; pens out; thinking caps on, vocab test, let’s

- go, let's go; ready..."It also gives the students a model for establishing a calm but purposeful, productive mood at the start of the class, and is **good for discipline** incidentally.
- 43) **Use the students' own energy** to influence the pace, variety and organization of activities. You should be reading the classroom mood all the time.
 - 44) **Most children misbehave** because **they don't understand** what is going on. Keep this in mind when you read the following points about teaching skills.
 - 45) **Encouraging slower students:** it is not necessary when learning a language to know each and every word of a sentence. **Meaning can be gleaned from context.** Teach your students this skill-teach them the skill of "guessing creatively". If they know six out of ten words in the sentence, they can probably guess the meaning of the remaining four words, or the sentence itself.
 - 46) **Attention span:** be aware of children's attention spans. This varies from < 15~20 minutes with preschoolers to around 45 minutes with pre-teens, but even high school students can phase out after an hour. A clever teacher builds activities around pace, time and process.
 - 47) **Vocabulary:** for each lesson, regularly list the key words on the w/bd in some strategic position e.g. the top right-hand corner, so that the students can regularly refer to the words if they forget.
 - 48) Consider using good students as **peer teachers**, and frequently use able students to help less able ones.
 - 49) In **teaching process activities**, it is always useful to start **simple pairs work** with picture resources and provide an **information gap** where students have to ask each other directed questions to complete a task. Ask them how they felt after the activity. Once the class is familiar with this, then as they get better and more confident, you can move from this, into **controlled role-play, free role-play, small group guided tasks, free conversation on a guided topic, mini-debates** etc. over the course of your two-semester class.
 - 50) **Student responsibility:** by the time you are ready to introduce the above types of activities, the students will be ready to take more responsibility for their own learning. This requires the teacher to learn new skills to be able to guide the class into organized and profitable chaos (at first)! The first few sessions may be noisy, and you may have to teach them to speak in voice levels that do not disturb the groups around them. Younger students in particular get really excited, but channel their excitement profitably, by using "pass the whisper" games or the like, to teach this skill.
 - 51) Learn and teach the **basic classroom commands in English** with Chinese translation where appropriate ...but use Chinese more sparingly as your students improve...and use it together with the English.
 - 52) Use **natural colloquial English** in the classroom. Encourage fluency-all classroom instruction should (eventually) be in the target language as much as possible.
 - 53) Remember that, whether you are a Chinese or a foreign teacher of English, you are an **English Language Salesperson** and "Foreign" Ambassador for the World of English-what you do and say may influence your students to come to love or hate English for the rest of their lives.
 - 54) Remember that you are also selling **yourself**.
 - 55) Internalization of a new language has been shown to bring about **personality and attitudinal change** itself. The experiences that YOU are providing will help shape your students' lives-this is an awesome responsibility to bear, but bear it you must!

- 56) Remember that in the modern communicative classroom, **the teacher works on the student while the student works on the material.**
- 57) **Teacher movement:** Use the classroom space as **your** playground-take control! Circulate freely during virtually any aspect of teaching-it keeps students “on their toes”, aids discipline, and enables you to interact more satisfyingly and appropriately with your students. **Use a varying locus** when teaching-move around; don't just stand at, and teach, from the front. Move to the sides; even teach from the back if you want the students to look at the board while “blind” questioning kids- this is very useful for control...
- 58) **Desk movement:** Certain activities may require seating re-arrangement. Varying your seating for different group activities is also a useful way of separating “silly” students who always seem to sit together. It also gives them a chance to work more cooperatively with other students, for which you should praise them. Also, consider separating those students who constantly want to talk in Chinese.
- Remember that** sitting in rows, directing all interaction to and through the teacher (as in a grammar-based, teacher-directed classroom) destroys all hope of communication.
- 59) If you have a co-teacher, then you should use them as a team teacher, not just as a translator or disciplinarian-such duties are a waste of a skilled teacher's talents.
- 60) **Be natural, be relaxed, be confident, be yourself-or if you do not yet have these personal characteristics - fake it! (You will soon learn).**
- 61) Remember the three F's of Teaching in order: **Firmness, Fairness and Friendliness**- as per the next comment
- 62) **In the beginning, be tough, mean, hard, then** loosen up much later-do not be the good friend right away-children will see it as a sign of weakness, and you may lose control of your class-(and this is extremely difficult to get back).
- 63) Use a **commanding voice and presence** in the classroom.
- 64) Use your **body language** forcefully, congruently and with appropriateness to each and every situation.
- 65) For S-S oral activities, begin by enforcing a “no Chinese/Taiwanese” rule, although many students will in the beginning. **Keep encouraging them to do this.** If some students persist in speaking Chinese then ask yourself why. Are they just lacking confidence, embarrassed to speak English and make mistakes, or are your instructions not clear for the slower student.
- 66) **Speaking softly** can be even more effective than speaking loudly or shouting.
- 67) **Speaking slowly** in a measured voice can also be very effective (but not all the time, or the students will think you are retarded).
- 68) Allow the students time to get used to your personal style.
- 69) **Be prepared to win every confrontation**-but don't push a kid into a corner-give them space; but keep your face...
- 70) Do not use **long-winded explanations of grammar in Chinese**-try to use a simple English example to illustrate your point, with minimal translation if required, or even ask a good student to explain in Chinese, to the class.
- 71) **Teach animatedly; show your enthusiasm.**
- 72) Male teachers should avoid **talking to or counseling a female student** on a one-to-one basis alone-they should always have another student present, or a female colleague.
- 73) Never lose your cool, or your temper, and try to **avoid extreme self-reference** when disciplining kids. Use **Reality Therapy techniques** i.e. “ I feel upset when I see you

behaving that way, and not being the best student I know you can be; we need to help you work on controlling your behavior...I KNOW that you can do better...the next time you want to answer a question, do NOT call out, just raise your hand, THEN I will call on you if you were first, okay?...the next time that someone says something to get you angry, LOOK at me (I will raise my hand, then lower it slowly- and I want you to take a deep breath and calm down etc...Let ME, the teacher, deal with the comments..." etc.

- 74) Getting **physically close to a trouble spot** can be a calming ("quenching the fire") effect, as is standing right over a "naughty" student while talking in a "suppressed" voice tone (expressing "barely controlled anger" through "clenched teeth") can also establish respect (or fear) and better behavior. This means that you, the teacher, have to learn how to **control your voice using dramatic skill**.
- 75) **Roving eye:** while teaching, keep a roving eye over the whole class to watch for inattentiveness or misbehavior. Students will get to know that you have "eyes like a hawk", or you have "eyes in the back of your head".
- 76) **Eyes:** a steady unblinking stare or glaring at a naughty child will often stop them fooling around. Establish control with this stare, along with strong tone of voice.
- 77) **Body language:** using body language like "hands on hips", or shaking your head negatively, or looking at a child and wagging or shaking your finger, are all mildlythreatening gestures conveying a message of disapproval. Do not overuse these; rather vary them, because they will lose effectiveness.
- 78) **Gestures:** using your hands, even in an exaggerated way, focuses the students on what you are saying. Your gestures should be congruent with your speech and facial expressions, however.
- 79) If another **teacher substitutes** for you, try to let them know what routines you follow; what things you do regularly; what things work well with this class; how you organize the particular activities, and what behavior standard you expect-this helps them and you, and other teachers will come to respect your skills and professionalism.
- 80) Use the "**divide and conquer**" philosophy for troublesome students. Split them up; do not let them sit together or you will have trouble.
- 81) For students who are **real distractors** (and do not forget that you may have some students who are slightly retarded, hyperactive or not "normal", though parents and the school may be in denial about this), have a "**time out**"; stop teaching and wait for the student to sit down and pay attention. Sometimes it is useful to make all the other students stop doing what they're doing as well. Everyone is going to wait for this "distractor" to sit down and pay attention.

In the above case, do not continue teaching, although in some cases, ignoring bad behavior can be a useful strategy if the kid is merely an attention-seeker. Give him attention by rewarding (praising) him when he does something well, or when he sits still for five minutes, or whatever it is that you have mutually negotiated with him. A general rule here is "**ignore inappropriate behavior; praise good behavior**".

- 82) For young students (elementary school or a private cram school), you could have the problem student sit outside the classroom. Similarly, talking to him privately can be effective, but interrupts your teaching, and should not be overused.

Make sure the student has an uncomfortable chair to sit on, or make him stand. Play a fun game or activity in the classroom so that the problem student knows he is being left out. Make him explain why he has to sit outside to the Academic Director.

If this is a kindergarten or elementary student-have the student stand by the door on the inside, and place their hands on their head.

Alternatively, introduce no participation- the student has to sit by the teacher and do nothing. If he blurts out an answer without raising his hand, ignore him. Play a really fun game and don't let him play. Pretending you do not want him to play, and then asking if he'll be good and letting him have a chance, is also a good strategy.

Telling a child to wait behind and then talking to them is a better strategy. Be supportive of them making more effort in class, and controlling their own behavior. Tell the child that they have a problem, and it needs to be solved – with your help and their cooperation.

If the child is really “**intellectually challenged**”, then bring some crayons and lots of pictures for the kid to color in the back of class. Don't bring a whole coloring book- the child will destroy it. Simply bring individual pictures to let the student color in; maybe some simple English words included. This way you can cover the text material with the rest of the class.

Alternatively, give the challenged student a much **easier version** of the “**test**”, with less words or questions in it. Praise him if he can reach a pre-set goal or score. Discuss his progress with the parents – let them know you wish to encourage him or her.

- 83) Teenage students require different strategies. Refer to the article attached for ideas with this age group.
- 84) **Public humiliation** as a strategy should be used very carefully-for some children, getting even negative attention is better than positive attention as it is a kind of “any attention” for which they crave. Children can be quite cruel when laughing at a classmate, so be careful with the use of this one.
- 85) **Punishing the whole class** for one problem student as a strategy is also risky. “Everyone has to put their hands on their heads and stand up”. Have him stand by the teacher, and look at all the other students being punished. (Here you are trying to manipulate the student through a sense of inducing guilt. If he gets this at home already, then this will not work). Alternatively, telling the class that they have to “help” him be good, may give him the message that he has friends out there who can help him.
- 86) **Give the problem student a good partner for the day** to help him with the classroom tasks. Peer teaching can work with this kind of kid. To encourage someone to be his (rotating, shared with other students) peer teacher; give the peer student some reward, such as stickers, or whatever. When the problem student is doing better, then do the same for him.
- 87) **Never physically hit** the student or use strong insulting words to punish them.
- 88) **Conversely, body proximity and physical contact** can be used to show empathy, support, encouragement and liking. If you are a female teacher, then a friendly pat on the shoulder or hug can often mean more to a shy child than words. Even a kind glance can work wonders. Children are more relaxed than adults and more spontaneous. Kindergarten teachers are frequently hugged by their students, for example. Depending on your student levels, and if you think this idea would fit your teaching style, then use it. (Aggressive or suicidal behaviors have been shown to be forestalled with such warmth and empathy shown).
- 89) Consider using the **local homeroom teacher as a go-between**, and even suggest that the parent be “invited” in for a special **parent-teacher meeting**-(this will create all kinds of face-saving behavior). You must be prepared to adopt an effusively

supportive tone, one that is seen as encouraging for their (problem) child, but one that exhibits courage in **suggesting some solutions for helping the child with his learning or behavioral difficulties**. Unfortunately, many of today's parents will take their offspring's side no matter what, or deny their child has a problem, to keep their family or personal face.

- 90) Above all, **letting the kidz know what your expectations are for good social behavior and enforcing these, are critical**-your **Classroom Courtesy Code** forms the backbone of this, and should be established during the first or second class with a new group of students. It should be written in (simple) English as well as Chinese, and displayed in poster form on the classroom wall at the front of the class, so you can refer to it when appropriate.
- 91) Bear in mind that **punishment only teaches people how to control others** -i.e. by punishment. We learn this model very early, at home.

One thing I have found here in Taiwan is that most parents have little idea how to discipline or socially educate/train their children to act appropriately and responsibly. Do not perpetuate this in the classroom. Teach your students a new model of social interaction that gets what they want in a better way. (Refer to the article "[A Life in Your Hands](#)" in pdf format).

- 92) **Punishment can generalize** to make an entire situation aversive (i.e. students may reluctantly come to English class, or start avoiding school etc.).
- 93) **Punishment usually does not work**; or its effects are only temporary.
- 94) Show your students that you care-by refusing to accept less than what they can do well, by pushing them gently to succeed in a supportive environment, and letting them know that **it is okay to be wrong or to fail occasionally** in your class (even though this runs contrary to the social and educational indoctrination here).
- 95) **Kidz here have low self-esteem, are extremely dependent, and lack real confidence in their ability to succeed without being "spoon-fed"**. You can instill the necessary skills of self-reliance and independence in them through breeding success in your classroom-but only if you are organized, enthusiastic and are passionately committed to your work. **It's not that difficult.**
- 96) **Do not forget that kids are the best manipulators of all.** Most adults (parents and teachers included) have got a heck of a lot to learn from them.
- 97) Forget the fact that, as a newcomer to the field of teaching, you are a **"stranger in a strange land"**, and seize the opportunity to develop professional people-relating skills, management skills, organization skills, leadership skills, resource development skills and language skills from your teaching job.
- 98) Teach that **we can learn from our mistakes**, and can have fun while learning from doing so.
- 99) **Needing to ask for help** from other teachers does not mean that you have failed- not everyone has all the answers, and everyone is constantly learning.
- 100) **Develop your own personal philosophy of teaching, living and risk-taking**, and share it with your students-it may astound them, but you will gain great respect and, dare I say it, even love...



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