

The **Teacher's Essential Guide** Series



# Jim Burke

# Classroom Management

How to:

- Establish Positive Discipline
- Organize Your Classroom
- Manage Your Teaching Time

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# Dedication:

*To America's newest teachers*

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# Introduction

**T**he *Teacher's Essential Guide to Classroom Management* offers you concise, effective solutions to the most common instructional challenges all teachers face. These solutions are based on a combination of research and my own experience as a public school teacher who, like you, gets up every morning and teaches kids. It is this experience in the classroom that reminds me daily how little time we have to do the professional reading we wish we could and know we must do if we are to improve. I've written this book with teachers like us in mind, striving to create a truly helpful book that is small enough to keep in your desk or carry in your pocket.



This book has a number of key features designed to help you learn at the speed of need:

- A self-assessment to help you identify those areas you want to improve and key ideas to help you develop a personal improvement plan to address those areas.
- Short chapters that each focus on a crucial aspect of classroom management.
- Guiding principles for each aspect of classroom management anchored in research and practical experience.
- In each chapter you'll find extra help for new teachers labeled "New Teacher Notes," as well as "Legal Notes," and a "Keep in Mind" box that calls attention to cultural diversity and sensitivity issues.
- A troubleshooting section that offers targeted solutions to specific problems nearly every teacher encounters with classroom management.
- Carefully chosen recommended readings for those who wish to examine certain subjects in greater depth.

Classroom management consistently ranks among the top challenges faced by all teachers but especially new teachers. Many potentially great teachers leave the profession because they were never taught how to guide and govern—how to lead that wonderful, restless bunch of kids we call a class. It is also important for a very obvious reason: nothing else can happen in the room if the class is not prepared to learn. Classroom management is about not only creating an effective classroom environment but also reducing your stress, increasing your students' productivity, and ensuring a safe, equitable environment.

I am grateful for the chance to share with you what has worked for me. As is so often the case, my classes always seem larger than they should be, and students are rarely as eager to learn as I wish they were. Thus it is my job to find out how to light that learning fire and keep it alive within them. Writing this book has allowed me to reflect on my own practices while learning from others' as well. In this way, the book has helped guide me as I have sought to learn how to better manage my own classroom. I hope this book can also become your essential guide to managing your classroom.



Bob D'Amico/The Image Works

# Classroom Management Self-Assessment

For each of the items below, record an answer between 1 and 5.

**1** Never   **2** Rarely   **3** Sometimes   **4** Usually   **5** Always

## Classroom

- I create a positive first impression.
- I use my walls to educate, communicate, and celebrate.
- I arrange desks and assign seats based on individual and instructional needs.
- I develop and maintain a positive and productive relationship with all students.

## Instruction

- I begin the period effectively.
- I end the period effectively.
- I provide a disciplined, supportive classroom environment.
- I use and manage group instruction productively.

## Learning

- I strive to meet the needs of all students.
- I strive to meet the needs of English Learners.
- I strive to meet the special needs of students in my classes.
- I strive to meet the needs of students with specific learning needs.

## Discipline

- I teach students self-discipline and personal responsibility.
- I administer discipline with dignity.
- I define and communicate policies, procedures, and principles in my syllabus.
- I establish and maintain effective discipline.

## Troubleshooting

- My students do all their in-class and homework assignments.
- My students attend class regularly, arriving to class on time each day.
- Students do not experience any type of abuse in my classroom.
- My students do not cheat or plagiarize.
- I am prepared for and know what to do in the event of different types of emergencies.
- I have no problems taking students to the library, lab, or on field trips.
- I provide substitutes with the information and resources they need to be effective.
- I store, organize, and take care of all equipment and supplies.
- I keep track of and make effective use of student information.
- I come prepared to conferences with parents, students, administrators, or counselors.

After completing this self-assessment, identify those areas with most urgent need of attention and improvement. For each statement to which your response was “never,” “rarely,” or “sometimes,” go to the corresponding chapter and learn what you can do to improve in that area.

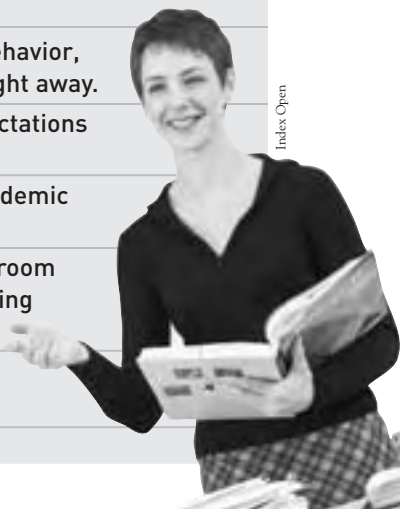
# Your Classroom

## 1. Create a Positive First Impression

Kids know almost immediately what they think about a class based on what they see, what the teacher asks them to do, and how that teacher acts. Within seconds, students form impressions and expectations about your competence, your attitude toward students, and the work they will do. As a teacher, you want students to leave eager to return, glad that they have an instructor who is professional, organized, and caring, but also fun and interesting. Beginning with that end in mind, you cannot leave crucial details to chance. You must plan carefully to create the first impression and solid start you need in order to achieve the end you want.

### Guiding Principles

1. Establish expectations regarding behavior, culture, policies, and procedures right away.
2. Communicate and apply these expectations clearly and consistently.
3. Get to know each other through academic and social activities.
4. Create an environment that makes room for fun and comfort while emphasizing learning.
5. Dress, act, and speak like a caring, serious professional.



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## **Establish expectations regarding behavior, culture, policies, and procedures right way.**

When you set boundaries you help students understand how the class works. Boundaries allow students to feel comfortable and safe, so they can focus on learning and enjoying the class. Here are some suggestions for setting the right tone in your class:

- Discuss and clarify policies with students regarding attendance, homework, electronic devices, missing work, and hall passes.
- Post policies and procedures in your classroom so that they are always available to your students and to you.
- Define consequences without making threats. Instead of saying “If you come to class late I will not accept your homework,” say “I do not accept late homework.”
- Assess students’ understanding of the policies and procedures by creating a quiz.
- Practice what you preach by following your own policies and explaining reasons and consequences.
- Refine and reiterate expectations as each new semester begins. Keep what works for you, and jettison what doesn’t.

## **Communicate and apply these expectations clearly and consistently.**

The opening days define you as a teacher: what you do and say must agree, otherwise students will quickly learn not to trust your words. In those openings weeks:

- Begin each day by reviewing the relevant policies or procedures for class.
- Come prepared each day with challenging assignments that you can model and explain, thus demonstrating your commitment to each student’s success in your class.
- Follow through on any policies regarding missing work or tardies from the first day. If, for example, you say you

do not accept late work, make no exceptions beginning the first day.

- Recognize that new students must learn the ways of your class in particular and the school in general.
- Be regimented in how your class works, so students learn what to expect and how to satisfy those expectations.



**New Teacher Note!** Be prepared to wear many hats.

We teachers play many roles whether we want to or not, all of which begin that first day: teacher, mentor, leader, coach, guide, role model, and counselor.

## Get to know each other through academic and social activities.

Some of students' most important first impressions revolve around whether or not they feel secure in your classroom. *Will I feel comfortable participating in discussions? Will anyone make fun of me? Will my opinion matter?* To achieve this trust, you have to give kids a chance to get to know each other and get to know something about themselves, too. Here are some ways to accomplish this:

- Write a letter to your class or send them each an e-mail.



Photos.com

- Have students decorate their binder for your class with images and words that are important to them. Then provide students time to share and discuss the binders as a way to introduce themselves to each other.
- Ask students to complete a student interest survey and then discuss their answers during class.
- Share something interesting about yourself, so they see you are willing to let them get to know you, too. Kids like to know that you race horses on weekends, and graduated from this school.

### **Student Interest Sample Questions**

- Favorite activity online?
- Best place you've ever visited?
- Best book read?
- Other languages you speak?
- Extracurricular activities or sports?

## **Create a classroom environment that makes room for fun and comfort while emphasizing learning.**

Incorporating humor and play into work inspires creativity and sustained interest in the work at hand. Most of us want our students to leave that first day having enjoyed a good laugh even as they began working with course content that reveals our high expectations and students' current level of knowledge. One person I know said that on the first day of class he would ask his teacher a question she wouldn't know the answer to; if she said she didn't know, he respected her; if she made up an answer, he made her life miserable for the rest of the year. Begin the year by trying to:

- Greet students as they come in, shaking their hand and asking their name.
- Display pictures from the previous year to share what happens in your class.
- Admit you don't know everything and are here to learn and have fun, too.

- Post your state, district, and school standards to emphasize high expectations.
- Display posters, proverbs, and images that inspire all students to succeed.

## **Dress, act, and speak like a caring, serious professional.**

The most important daily test teachers must pass is the “dinner table test.” Every day kids go home to parents who ask about their day in school. Everything we do or say as teachers should make sense to parents when they hear about it; otherwise we lose credibility in the eyes of our students and their parents. Cultivate this professional persona by paying attention to the following:

- Dress in a way that inspires confidence in you and your teaching. This could mean a jacket and tie, or a dress, but it should always be appropriate for work.
- Speak in a positive, supportive way without trying to be one of the kids. You are there to lead and teach them; they are your students, not your friends.
- Be in class on time and ready to go when the bell rings, so students see that the class has important work to do and that you have come prepared to teach.
- Never talk disparagingly about other classes, students, teachers, or administrators from the past or the present.
- Avoid sarcasm or other ways of embarrassing and humiliating students, such as singling out students.
- Be a role model and a professional: everything you do teaches your students.

