

Classroom Management and Discipline

“Classroom discipline, simply stated, is the business of enforcing classroom standards and building patterns of cooperation in order to maximize learning and minimize disruptions” – Fred Jones

Good classroom management begins before students ever enter the classroom. It begins with the **Four P's**. The following are some ways in which you can help ensure that your classroom runs smoothly with as few disruptions as possible:

- **Pray**

- ✓ Ask God to prepare your heart and the hearts of your students to receive the message you will be sharing with them. Pray for your students by name. If you have any challenging students, pray for them.

- **Prepare**

- ✓ Be over-prepared each Sunday. Successful teachers have more than enough activities ready than they can possibly use. Sometimes activities are completed far quicker than you may expect. Having other activities on hand will avoid awkward downtimes. Also, prepare your classroom before the students arrive. Having materials out and ready will avoid downtime that leads to misbehavior.

- **Predict**

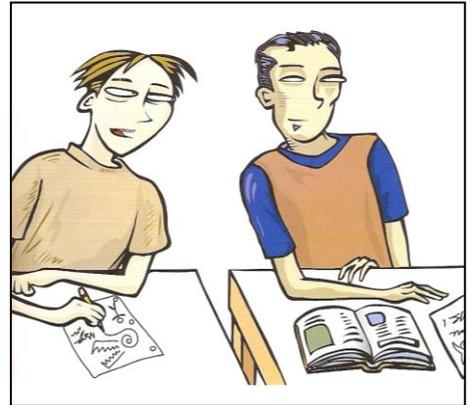
- ✓ Predict any problems you may have. Crafts/activities, for example, may be more difficult than you expect. Predicting what may go wrong before class begins gives you ample time to plan ways to prevent possible problems from arising in the first place.

- **Plan**

- ✓ You have a heavy responsibility to present the word of God accurately and effectively to children. Planning for the lesson should begin on Monday, not Saturday night. At the very least, you should read the Bible story each day and ask God to give you the words He would like to speak to the children.
- ✓ If you are doing a craft, take the time to do it at home before you ask the students to do it. This is helpful for two reasons. First, it provides a model for your students. Second, it gives you some idea how long it will take to complete and what challenges your students may have completing it.

The following are research based statistics:

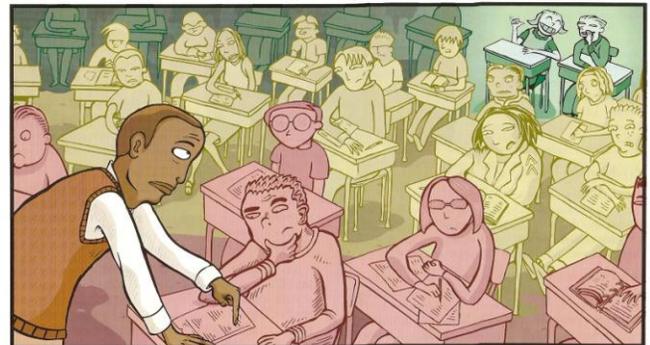
- About 50% of classroom time is lost due to student misbehavior and being off task.
- 80% of lost time is due to talking to neighbors (see picture).
- 15% of lost time is due to students being out of their seats.
- In a typical classroom approximately 1/3 of the class engages in goofing off during any given minute of the day.
- Disruptions will typically increase by 50% within a minute after the teacher sits down.



One of the best ways to deal with classroom disruptions is to **prevent** them from happening in the first place. You can prevent most classroom disruptions before they begin using some of the research proven methods listed below:

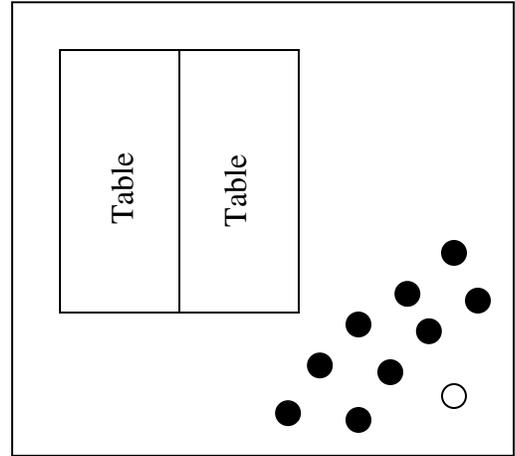
Proximity

The further away you are from students, the more likely they are to be disruptive. You need to “work the crowd” by circulating throughout the room so that students know that you are aware of everything that is going on in the room and you are ready to deal with any disruptions. In the illustration to the right, the students in the back are goofing off because they are the furthest away from the teacher. To prevent, or deal with goofing off, you must keep moving. Stand next to the students who are goofing off. They will likely get back to work because they don’t want you standing there. You’re in their personal space. They will usually get back to work to get rid of you. If not, get a bit closer. Without saying a word, lean in and point to what they should be doing. Regardless of what the student says (since he/she will be trying to get rid of you) you need to **wait** until he/she is back on task. Once you see that the student is back on task, slowly walk a few paces away. Turn back around to make sure that the student is on task. If the student begins to goof off again, go back and lean in again. Repeat until the student is back on task.



Seating for Success

Students are social creatures like we are. They see their friends at church and want to visit. Unfortunately, by doing so, they interrupt your well planned lesson. What to do? As mentioned above, proximity is important. The closer you are to your students, the less likely they are to misbehave. For that reason, the best way to tell the Bible story is to have the students sitting on the floor in a semi-circle around you. The second best arrangement is having the students sit in chairs in a semi-circle around you. The least difficult to manage is students around a large table. (If this is the only arrangement that is possible, you will need to move about the room as you teach to minimize disruptions.) Students who are in grades 4th and up typically do not like sitting on the floor, but a semi-circle of chairs works well for them. Remember the students furthest away from you will typically give you the most trouble. When students are seated in a semi-circle, you are close to all the students at the same time. (See the diagram above.) Further, students sitting on the floor have nothing to play with (besides the students around them). Carefully seating them boy-girl-boy-girl usually helps. Also, having them sit with their legs crossed and hands folded in their laps reduces problems. Before you begin the Bible story say, “I’m looking for boys and girls who are sitting quietly on the floor with their legs crossed and their hands folded in their laps.” Thank students who do as you ask. Other students will want the praise as well and will begin sitting properly.

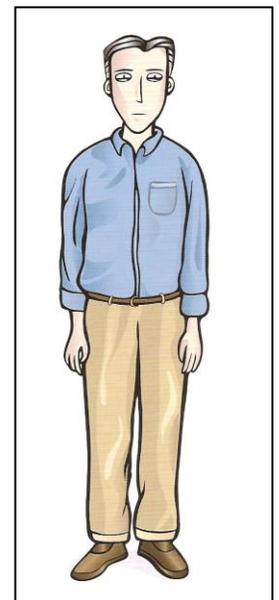


Review Expectations

Now that the students are seated close to you in a semi-circle, you should quickly review what you expect from students during this time. You might say something like, “While I’m telling the Bible story, I’d like you to remember to raise your hand if you have something to say. Remember my rule? When I’m talking, you listen to me. When you’re talking, we listen to you. One person talks at a time.” Periodically through the story, you may need to remind students to cross their legs and fold their hands in their laps. Always compliment a few students for doing what you’ve asked.

Stop, Stare, State, and Start Again

While teaching, interruptions *will* occur. Remember, 80% of the time it will be talking to neighbors. If you are in the middle of teaching or giving instructions, it is inevitable that others will try to talk too. If you hear any talking whatsoever, **stop whatever you are doing**; even if you are in the middle of a sentence. **Stop**. Turn, with your entire body (not just your head) and **stare** at the student(s) who are misbehaving. Stare with an expressionless face as in the picture to the right. Say nothing. Just stare. The offending students may not notice that you’ve stop instruction. No bother. Everyone else has. A few seconds later, the offending students will realize you are waiting for them and they will terminate their discussion. **Optional Step: State** what you would like them to do. You might say something like, “Please face this way with your legs crossed and your hands folded in your laps. If you would like to speak, please raise your hand and wait for me to call on you.” Often times, just staring is enough. You may not have to **state** anything. Once students are focusing on you, **start again**. Continue teaching. You will probably be interrupted again. Repeat the steps above every time you are interrupted. If the same student continues to interrupt, separating him/her from the group is the next step.



Discipline Plan

If a student is misbehaving follow the steps below:

1. **Warning** – Students should receive a warning before proceeding to the next step. A warning can be non-verbal or verbal. A non-verbal warning can be as simple as you staring at the student until he/she gets back on task. A verbal warning consists of you explicitly stating what you would like the child to do. For example, “Please listen quietly without talking to your neighbor.” If a warning does not stop the behavior, proceed to step two.
2. **Separation** – Separate the child from the group. The general rule for separating students from the group is one minute for every year. For example, if a child is six years old, he/she would sit alone for six minutes away from the group. As an alternative to a set number of minutes, you may give the child the option of returning to the group when the student is ready to behave. If the child continues to misbehave, proceed to step three.
3. **Sit Outside** – Students who continue to disrupt should sit outside the classroom door. The door should remain open and the child should be visible to you at all times. The Children’s Ministry coordinator will speak with the child and determine if the next step is necessary.
4. **Sit with Parents** – If the Children’s Ministry Coordinator determines that the student’s behavior is severe enough, he/she will get an usher to find the student’s parent(s). The student will be asked to sit with his or her parents for the remainder of the service.

Classroom Management Tips

- Never hit, spank, or verbally abuse students
- Never be alone in your classroom with you door completely shut. It should always be cracked open if there is no window for others to see into the room.
- Frequently compliment students who are doing what you’ve asked.
- Develop a signal to get your students attention
- Maintain high expectations for behavior in your classroom
- Treat students with the same respect you would want to be treated with.
- Words are powerful. Choose your words carefully when disciplining a student.
- “Effective teachers MANAGE their classrooms. Ineffective teachers DISCIPLINE their classrooms.”

-Harry Wong