

The Take-Charge Teacher

5 Steps to Create Effective
Classroom Routines
Your Students Will Actually Do

BY KATRINA AYRES

Previously published in eBook format as
CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES THAT WORK:
STRATEGY 1- CLASSROOM ROUTINES

Books and eBooks by Katrina Ayres

*All The Ways I Screwed Up My First Year of Teaching
And How You Can Avoid Doing It, Too*, 2012

*Classroom Management Strategies That Work:
Strategy 1 - Classroom Routines*, 2014

The Classroom Teacher's Coloring Book, 2015

*The Affirmations and Encouragement Coloring Book
For Grown-Ups*, 2015

*5-Minute Classroom Management Hints:
37 Proven Ways to Manage Your Classroom and Keep Your Sanity*, 2016

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CONTENTS

Is This Book For Me?	Pg 1
Activity #1	Pg 3
How to Use This Book	Pg 9
Step 1 - Pick Your Routine	Pg 16
Activity #2	Pg 19
Step 2 - Envision Perfection	Pg 22
Activity #3	Pg 30
Step 3 - Troubleshooting	Pg 35
Activity #4	Pg 43
Step 4 - Lesson Planning	Pg 45
Activity #5	Pg 51
Step 5 - Teach The Routine	Pg 55
Activity #6	Pg 58
Next Steps	Pg 59
About The Author	Pg 61

Is This Book For Me?



This book is for you if you are a K-12 classroom teacher or are preparing to become one, and you want a positive, well-run, organized classroom. This book is for you if you care deeply about your students and want to provide them with the best possible education instead of just getting by with the bare minimum. This book is for you if you do not want to be one of the thousands of teachers who struggle every day with your students and end up quitting or losing your job before you even finish paying off your school loans.

This book is for you if you are willing to invest the time and effort to proactively prevent problems in your classroom

instead of waiting for something to go wrong and then reacting; if you want to take the time to develop a plan that will really work instead of guessing, hoping, and praying everything will turn out okay. This book will not be a good match for you if you just want to roll along spontaneously and handle things as they come up.

In this book we are going to get specific. We are going to go deep. We are going to think things through and make plans. We are going to write things down and be prepared. This is an interactive book. This means in order to get the results you want from this book, you will need to *interact* with it. If you don't want to do any of the activities, please don't buy this book.

So let's see if this really is the right book for you, right now. Are you willing to jump right in to the first activity? If so, turn the page!

Activity #1



Estimated Time = 1 minute

Materials

- Pencil or Pen
- Paper

Please write down five things that worry you about student behavior in your classroom (or your future classroom, if you're just starting out.) I know you may also be worried about other things, such as your curriculum, Common Core, or parent communication. These are important, too. However, the topic of this interactive guide is classroom management, so I'd like you to focus only on student behavior.

What five things have you seen in classrooms you hope to never see in yours? Please do not just do this in your head—actually write it down. (If you don't have paper, you may want to create an electronic note, or text or email the list to yourself. But put it into words!)

What Was On Your List?

Each week, I send out a classroom management hint called the Monday Morning Sanity Boost. I recently asked my readers to send me their top questions about classroom management. Here is what they asked:

- How can I rein in excessive talking and general constant chatter? Students who can't help but blurt out whatever is on their mind? Keep kids quiet while walking in line?
- There's no respect! What can I do?
- The students destroy books and furniture. How can I stop them?
- What about all the homework excuses?
- How can I deal with inappropriate use of electronics?
- How can I get the students' attention? How can I get back the attention of the class when I have "lost" them?
- How can I deal with students whose cognitive or emotional ability is not anywhere near their actual age? 16 year-olds with the emotional maturity level of a 4 year-old? Students who are two years behind?
- How can I work with individual students and still give the rest of the group the attention they need?
- What about if I don't have administrative support?
- How can I reward good behavior?
- What is the best way to communicate with parents about their child's behavior?
- How can I stop repeating directions and asking kids to do things multiple times?

- What about attention-getting behavior (class clown) and other disruptive behavior from just a few students? The willfully disrespectful student who looks around the room for your reaction and the reaction of other students?
- What if students refuse to participate? How can I deal with students who pack up before class is over?
- How do you create community in your classroom? What if I don't have my own classroom?

How did these concerns match up with your list from Activity #1? My guess is you are concerned about many of the same things as my readers. When students seem to have a complete disregard for the rules, unruly behavior can make it difficult to get anything done in class, no matter how engaging the curriculum.

The stress level of teachers is through the roof. We want to do our jobs, and we know how important education is, yet many times we feel trapped and ill-equipped. New teachers are sent out into the most difficult situations, confident that their college programs have prepared them, only to find out they have not. Is it any wonder that half of all new teachers quit or are fired within their first five years?

The saddest part (to me) is the effect on our students, particularly those most at risk of failure. When there is little or no learning going on in a classroom, the effects are felt long after the school year is over. Some students never recover the academic ground they lost during that year, adding to the risk they will drop out or be excluded from school. In addition, students can develop negative habits and behaviors that make it

difficult to succeed in life—habits which can be almost impossible to break after years of reinforcement and repetition.

Good teaching begins with effective classroom management, and effective classroom management begins with powerful routines. A *routine* is a systematic way your students are expected to do common activities in your class. Effective classroom routines, correctly taught to your students, can truly transform your classroom. You will be able to maintain your personal power, save hours of wasted time, and truly enjoy teaching. Let's take a few examples from the questions above.

- **How to prevent chatter and blurting out?** Proactively teach your students the “chatter level” you expect during different types of activities. (See page 34 for a list of different “chatter levels.”) Will teaching about chatter make all students instantly comply with your wishes? Of course not. But it will eliminate inappropriate chatter that happens because the students are used to chattering all the time at home, and don't know anything different. It will reduce the number of students who talk and shout out to find out where the limits are. It will also give you a way to talk to the students about chatter BEFORE it becomes a problem, instead of blaming and punishing them afterward.
- **Lack of respect**—Get very clear about what you really mean when you say “respect.” Today's students come from a variety of cultures and home situations. Their idea of “respect” may be totally different than yours. (More about that in Step 2.)

- **Vandalism and abuse of materials**—Do the students know how to properly care for the materials? Or are we going to leave it to chance?
- **Homework excuses**—Have you taught them how to do homework, even when there is no support at home? This can be a very illuminating class discussion, as you can well imagine.
- **Inappropriate use of electronics**—Teach a routine for the appropriate use of electronics.
- **Getting the students' attention**—Teach a routine for what to do when I ring the chimes, clap my hands, move to the “teaching position” at the front of the room, and so on.

You get the idea. And while classroom routines will not solve every classroom management issue, they are a great place to start. If you are new to teaching, the most important thing to focus on in your first year is how to systematically teach routines to your students. If you already struggle with student behavior issues, routines are usually the best way to quickly regain control.

Telling Versus Teaching

*I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand. -
Confucius*

Many teachers think they have taught classroom routines to their students, when in fact they have not. They have *told* or

explained about classroom routines, which is not the same thing at all. As teachers, we know we can't just talk about our academic subject and expect the students to instantly understand it. Yet when it comes to behavior, many of us make the classic blunder of *telling* instead of *teaching*.

Telling and teaching are not the same. A classroom routine has only been taught when every student has demonstrated they can do it. In Step 5 I will show you the correct way to teach classroom routines to your students and ensure they actually understand them.

How to Use This Book



Would you like a book that lists a fail-safe solution for each of the classroom management questions or worries you have?

So would I.

Unfortunately, that book doesn't exist. I certainly don't have all the answers, and there is no "expert" who does. Each student is different, each teacher is different, and each situation is different. A solution that works really well for me might be a disaster in your classroom, and your favorite classroom management strategy might not be effective at all with my

students. Not only that, but a technique that works well in my fourth period class may not be effective at all with my eighth period class, and the strategies that worked for me last year might not work this year.

Although you can borrow ideas from other teachers, in the end you will need to create your own routines. That is what this book is all about. In this book, I will teach you a five-step process you can use over and over to create specific solutions to specific problems you are dealing with in your classroom. I discovered this process in my own classroom 17 years ago, and it's been working for me ever since.

Each chapter explains one of the five steps of the process, gives two examples of how to do the step, and ends with an activity. I have estimated the time each activity will take, and the entire process (all five steps) can be done in approximately one hour if you just skip straight to the activities and do them. (I don't recommend you do this, of course, but I know you are busy. If you have to skip something, skip the explanations, not the activities. Remember, this is *an interactive book!*) Templates and examples are available right after each activity, as well.

Throughout the book I will follow two teachers, Brian and Karen, as they work their way through the process. I deliberately chose newer teachers for these examples because I wish I had known about this process when I first started out in the classroom. It is my hope and dream this book will find its way into the hands of new teachers and save them from making all the embarrassing and painful mistakes I made when I first started out. (If you are interested in my mistakes, you can read