

Classroom Management Tips

1. Plan:

...ahead: Any teacher will tell you their worst days are the days they don't have a solid lesson plan. You may be an improviser, but trying to "wing it" in an academic setting is a recipe for disaster. A good lesson plan is like a road map; it'll lead you seamlessly from one topic to the next, and ensure that you cover everything you intended to cover. Templates for an effective lesson plan can be found online, or you can simply use the pre-made lesson plans on the UGC Instructor website.

...to the minute: It isn't enough to just ballpark how long an activity will take. If you don't plan exactly how much time you'll devote to each section of the lesson, you may end up with dead space at the end of your lesson. Wear a watch to keep track of time; it's embarrassing and inefficient to have to constantly check your cell phone, especially if you've set expectations that students leave theirs off.

...for dead space: Even if you plan perfectly, you still may end up with dead space at the end of the lesson. In these situations, it's helpful to have an "ending activity." This could be a weekly book club, where students use the remainder of the class to talk about their thoughts on the reading, or even a "current events" swap, where you share recent headlines. So long as it's educational, it works!

2. Student-Centered Learning: In the old days, students were lined up in straight rows and talked at for an hour. Educational researchers now know the best way for students to learn is from "student centered" learning. This includes class wide or small group discussions, independent research projects, and student presentations. Teachers should see themselves more so as "facilitators" and "resources." The less lecturing you do, the better!

3. Get organized: Have a binder or file folder for everything students submit; there's nothing more embarrassing than having to tell a student you've lost their project! Track attendance and grades electronically. If you have students sign a daily attendance roster, make sure you update an electronic list after class is over.

4. Students are not your friends: This is an old adage in student affairs, and it counts double in education! You want to be available to students, as a resource and an advisor. You want to assert a certain distance between you and your students; if they become too casual with you, they may take a casual attitude to the course as well! If a student comes to you with a personal issue, you don't have to send them away, but remember, you aren't trained to address emotional or psychological issues.

5. Learn their names: This may be obvious, but it's important that you know who's in your class early on in the course. This helps build a relationship with your students, and is also helpful in classroom management (taking attendance, handling discipline issues, etc).

6. Use Blackboard: The future of education is in technology! More and more teachers are utilizing resources like Wikis, online discussion boards, and other web-based resources. Your students will already be using such resources in their other classes, so it will be expected that you do the same. Blackboard contains many such resources, and is an excellent, user-friendly teacher aide!

7. Set clear objectives for your lessons and the semester: Students need concrete expectations and learning objectives to thrive. Be sure you introduce each lesson with what you plan to cover, and refer back to these objectives throughout the lesson (you may even want to write them on the board). Similarly, make your behavioral expectations clear at the start of the semester.

8. Have a system for grading set up from the beginning: Grading is a fairly subjective process, but as an educator you must be clear and consistent about how you grade! Decide what percentage different things will count for (projects, attendance, participation), and make that clear to the students. Track grades as soon as you set them to avoid losing track. For projects and assignments, use a rubric so students know exactly how to achieve in your class. Rubistar.com has a rubric generator that will help you design your rubric for any circumstance.

9. Address discipline issues fairly and consistently: Make sure students understand your classroom policies, and address students if they violate them. Without humiliating them or being patronizing, calmly but firmly speak to the student after class, or at some other time when you have them one-on-one. Trying to deal with them in front of their peers may inadvertently draw you into a contest of wills.

10. Invest yourself!: Students can tell when a teacher is passionate, and that passion is contagious! Bring your personality into the material, and find ways to present it that excite you.