



How To Create The Perfect Set Of Classroom Rules

By Michael Linsin

Your classroom rules are the first line of defense against misbehavior.

They should never be left to chance. They should never be created as an afterthought or copied from the teacher next door.

They must be created thoughtfully and in a way that is relevant and meaningful to students.

We know from talking with teachers that there is no small amount of confusion about how to do this.

So today we're going to set the record straight. We're going to show you precisely how to construct the perfect set of classroom rules.

To begin, it's important to recognize that to be effective in dissuading misbehavior, your rules must meet each of the following six criteria:

1. They must be simple.

When your students are first introduced to your rules, they should inherently understand what they mean.

Although [each rule must be taught and modeled extensively](#), the simpler and clearer they are to begin with, the more impactful they'll be.

2. They must be definable.

Effective rules have no gray area. You must know without a doubt, and be able to communicate, exactly what is and isn't okay.

Any uncertainty over what constitutes breaking rules leads to arguing and resentment – which in turn render consequences much less effective.

3. They must be enforceable.

It's common for teachers to include rules that are virtually unenforceable. For example, 'respect yourself' is a nice sentiment, but too ambiguous to enforce.

Further, a lack of self-respect doesn't disrupt the class and thus wouldn't be considered misbehavior.

4. They must be expansive.

Your rules must cover every possible misbehavior. If [you enforce a consequence](#), but can't confidently cite what rule was broken, then your students won't trust you.

They must *know* when they've broken a rule – and exactly which one – or they won't take responsibility for their misbehavior.

5. They must be prominent.

If your rules aren't important to you, then they won't be important to your students. Place them high and bold on your classroom wall for the world to see.

Their glaring presence should be a constant reminder to every student that sacred learning is priority one.

6. They must be behavior rules only.

Classroom rules must reflect behavior expectations only and kept separate from academic expectations.

Including a rule like 'turn in homework on time' is confusing to students and doesn't belong alongside rules dedicated to protecting the right to learn and enjoy school.

Creating Your Own Rules

A good way to begin designing your own set of classroom rules is to [jot down every misbehavior](#) you can think of. Be sure to include the most annoying and most severe you've witnessed during your career.

The purpose of your rules is to protect yourself and your students from any and all misbehavior that disrupts learning. They act as an impenetrable wall, keeping interruptions out and inspiration in.

You can create your rules from scratch using the misbehaviors you've written as your guide, or you can put ours to the test.

Here at Smart Classroom Management we recommend the following four rules, which have proven effective over and over again in thousands of classrooms.

1. Listen and follow directions.
2. Raise your hand before speaking and leaving your seat.
3. Keep your hands and feet to yourself.
4. Respect your classmates and your teacher.

However, before adopting them as your own, it's a good idea to look through your personal list of misbehaviors to make sure each one is covered by at least one rule.

After completing this exercise, if you find you need to add another rule, no problem. As long as it meets all six criteria, it should work just fine.

Preparing For The New School Year

Although important, creating an effective set of classroom rules is only a small part of classroom management. From modeling routines to enforcing consequences to building relationships, every area must be on point.

The good news is that with over 300 articles, our archive is chock full of specific, actionable strategies you can use to become a highly skilled classroom manager.

In particular, I encourage you to spend time in the [Classroom Management Plan](#), [Rules & Consequences](#), and [First Days Of School](#) categories.

As the new school year fast approaches, they're sure to prepare you for the best opening month you've ever had.

Thanks for reading.