



# SMART CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

## How To Fix A Big Classroom Management Mistake

It's bound to happen.

If you follow your classroom management plan, then chances are someday you're going to make a mistake and enforce a consequence that was undeserved.

For example, you hear Joseph talking and joking during a lesson and send him to time-out . . . only to find out later you got it wrong. It wasn't Joseph.

Maybe it *sounded* like Joseph. Maybe you didn't really hear what you thought you heard. Perhaps you misread the situation.

Whatever the case, mistakes happen.

But when you send a student to time-out who didn't deserve it, you risk losing the rapport, influence, and trust you've worked so ardently to achieve.

It can disappear in a flash of anger, betrayal, and resentment.

This is why it's so important that when you do make a mistake, you become aware of it immediately and know how to correct it.

What follows are eight easy steps to help you avoid the potential hurt and harm caused by getting it wrong – and in a way that is quickly forgiven and forgotten.

### **1. Be proactive.**

As part of teaching your classroom management plan, explain to your students that **because class rules are enforced 100% of the time**, there is a chance that you could make a mistake. And if you do, you need to know about it right away.

### **2. Model it.**

Act out for your students a situation where you mistakenly inform a student of a time-out. Model for them how to first listen to the consequence with poise and without argument, and then to calmly say to you, *"I need to speak with you privately."*

### **3. Handle it immediately.**

It's important to correct your mistake right away. If you wait until your lesson is over, it's too late. By then the student may already be sitting in time-out, boiling with anger. Therefore, *"I need to speak with you"* is your cue to take care of it immediately.

### **4. Speak privately.**

Pull the student aside to a private area of the room to hear what he (or she) has to say. Ask him to recount what he was doing prior to being given the consequence and how he believes you made a mistake. Just listen and picture the scene in your mind's eye.

### **5. Determine the truth.**

In most circumstances, you'll know straight away if you got it wrong. The **student's story**, along with his body language and tone of voice, will ring true. If you're not sure, however, go on to the next step.

#### **6. Get a witness.**

Although rare, it does happen on occasion that you'll need to speak with a witness. Do this confidentially and not in the presence of the student involved. Typically a single yes-or-no question is all it takes to get to the truth.

#### **7. Apologize publicly.**

Apologize to the student in front of the class. Be direct and succinct. *"Class, I owe Joseph an apology. I thought he broke a rule, but it was a misunderstanding – and my fault. So, Joseph, I'm sorry."*

#### **8. If the student is mistaken...**

If the student is mistaken and you did get it right, there is **no reason to lecture or cause any hard feelings**. Simply inform him again what rule was broken and how, and then continue with your consequence without further discussion.

### **Empowering Students**

Some teachers fear that if they expressly encourage students to point out their classroom management mistakes, then somehow this will cause students to lie to them, argue with them, or challenge their authority.

But the truth is, students appreciate knowing they have a voice. They appreciate knowing they can speak up for themselves and that they'll never be held accountable for something they didn't do.

Contrary to causing them to be untruthful or argumentative, teaching your students how to square their shoulders and candidly point out injustice engenders loyalty and trust and the confidence to speak up not only for themselves...

But for those in society who don't have a voice.