



The Most Common Speaking Mistakes Teachers Make Part 1

How you speak to your class matters – a lot.

It affects how attentive your students are, how well they listen and **follow directions**, and how independent – or dependent – they become.

It affects the efficiency and effectiveness of your lessons and the extent of student engagement. It affects learning and behavior, temperament and memory retention.

It affects the very power and influence of your words.

Little of classroom management, in fact, is untouched by the style, pace, inflection, pattern, and intensity of your speaking voice. Yet most teachers don't give it a second thought.

They wing it and end up making mistakes that cause classroom management to be a greater challenge than it needs to be.

In this first of a three-part series, we'll cover two such mistakes, with four more coming in the weeks ahead. They're doozies to be sure, but are easy to correct.

Speaking too loud.

It's common for teachers to increase the intensity of their voice whenever they stand in front of their class. It's a habit born of the natural desire to be heard and understood (and thus effective).

But speaking loudly causes students to *tune out* the sound of your voice, making it harder, not easier, for your message to get through. You see, when you raise your voice you leave your students no responsibility to actively listen.

It's *too* easy to hear, and so they're encouraged to look away, daydream, or turn and talk to a neighbor. They grow tired of the relentless volume, the perceived nagging, and the harsh delivery. They become repelled by it.

To attract students to what you have to say, to encourage them to hang on your words, speak softly. Keep your voice calm and pleasant – particularly when giving directions, providing information, or managing the day-to-day business of the classroom.

Your students will then be compelled to lean in, read your body language, and follow the movement of your lips – thereby capturing the fullness of your message.

It also allows for greater contrast when you cut loose with inspiring lessons, dramatic readings, and **passionate, motivational speeches**.

Further, you'll find their own voices growing softer and more respectful. After all, they mimic what they see, and hear, from their teacher.

Speaking over students.

Another common mistake is to provide directions or information to students while at least some are either distracted, talking, or still working on a previous assignment.

Good teaching requires you to wait until all students are silent and looking at you before opening your mouth. When you talk over your students, when you attempt to call out over a noisy classroom, your message becomes lost in the static and your students have a ready-made excuse for not knowing what you said.

Always **signal for their attention** first. Wait a beat or two – then wait another beat or two. Don't begin speaking until you *know* your words will reach receptive ears. And how will you know that? Their eyes will tell you.

Wait until every student is looking at you before calmly and succinctly telling them what you want.

By removing all excuses, the responsibility for following the direction you give or understanding the information you provide rests with them, which spawns an *urgency* to listen and follow your directions.

A Simple Solution

It's easy to fall into one or both of the mistakes above.

They have a way of sneaking up on you, of deceiving you into thinking that you're providing clear instruction, and that the reason your students have trouble listening is because of them.

But the reality is much different.

The reality is that when you speak loudly or talk over students who are unprepared to listen, you train them to disregard the sound of your voice. You train them to be less focused on their responsibilities and more focused on the distractions around them.

The solution, though, is simple. Soften your voice and *always* confirm that every eye is on you before opening your mouth.

You'll reverse those bad habits within a week.