



Rules and Routines

Try these strategies to create rules and routines that show you care and build consistency in your classroom.

Sympathetic Sound

Respond to student misbehavior not with anger but with disappointment. No matter what rule they break, start with a sympathetic “Oh!” Follow it up with, “That’s a bummer,” or “That’s so sad,” to help students understand that you care about them. For example, if a student roughhouses in class, say, “Oh! That’s a bummer! I know you can do better,” before you impose any consequences.

Blue Apple Routines

There is no reason why you can’t make routines even more awesome! Make a list of your classroom routines, then think about which ones you could “funnyfy.” For instance, instead of clapping your hands to get student attention, blow on a horn made by decorating a PVC pipe. Instead of just shaking students’ hands when they enter the door every day, create a secret handshake for each student.

Flexify Your Rules

Shrink your list of rules—no more than five!—and make them more flexible. Instead of saying, “Turn your work in on time. Be on time to class. Bring the necessary materials,” say, “Do your best.” Instead of saying, “No hitting. No kicking. No biting. No eye gouging. No insults or name-calling,” say, “Be kind.” These broader rules are applicable to a wider range of issues.

You Be the Teacher

Share control of the classroom by having students design a lesson to teach about a concept they understand well. Have them teach a student who is still struggling to understand the material, or a student from a younger grade. Both the “teacher” and the student learn the concept more deeply, and teachers feel trusted and valued for their expertise.

Brain-gaging Transitions

We spend lots of time transitioning from one activity to another. Figure out how to keep minds engaged by adding academic content to these transition times. For instance, while walking down the hall, have younger students silently count their steps by twos or fives. For older students, have them estimate the amount of time it takes them to clean up after an activity.

Skip One

Let students know you respect them by giving them choice. For instance, assign one more problem than you need students to complete. Then, let them choose which one to skip. Got lots of extra problems? Let them choose which half to omit!

“But What Did I Say?”

Never argue. When students attempt to engage, simply listen, nod empathetically, and say, “But what did I say?” If they continue to argue, kindly repeat, “But what did I say?” Be caring and be consistent, and this approach will work wonders!

Throw It

Students should get to throw something every day. Use the Throw It strategy to include movement and games simultaneously. For example, instead of handing in your papers, have students try to throw them into the hand-in basket. The further away they are, the more points they can earn. To get everybody on the same team, keep a scoreboard and see if they can score more points this week than last.



To see a Rules and Routines strategy in action, check out this Blue Apple project:

Water is essential for life. All living things depend upon it. Yet every day, our actions contribute to pollution that is detrimental to our waterways—and ultimately our watersheds. In this project, students will take action to protect our watersheds. They will investigate water samples to determine what’s in their water, and investigate ways to improve water quality. Then, they’ll share what they’ve learned by creating a fundraiser to raise money for a charity that focuses on improving water quality and water pollution issues.



To explore this project and others, visit BlueAppleTeacher.org