**Discipline and Effective Teaching 101**

*Effective teachers discipline with encouragement and kind words much more often than rebukes or reprimands. The goal is to help students feel good about themselves and their behavior in the classroom.*

Inevitably, though, misbehavior happens. When it does, keep the collected wisdom of experienced teachers in mind:

* **Take a deep breath and try to remain calm.** It's natural to be overcome with frustration, resentment, and anger. But when you are, you become less rational, and your agitation becomes contagious.
* **Try to set a positive tone and model an appropriate response, even if it means you must take a few moments to compose yourself.** Acknowledge that you need time to think, time to respond. "This is upsetting me, too, but I need a few minutes to think before we talk about it."
* **Make sure students understand that it's their misbehavior you dislike, not them.** "I like you, Jason. Right now, your behavior is unacceptable."
* **Give the misbehaving student a chance to respond** positively by explaining not only what he or she is doing wrong, but also what he or she can do to correct it.
* **Never resort to blame or ridicule.**
* **Avoid win-lose conflicts.** Emphasize problem solving instead of punishment.
* **Insist that students accept responsibility for their behavior.**
* **Try to remain courteous in the face of hostility or anger.** Showing students that you care about them and their problems will help you earn their respect and establish rapport.
* **Treat *all* students respectfully and politely.** Be consistent in what you let them say and do. Be careful not to favor certain students.
* **Be an attentive listener.** Encourage students to talk out feelings and concerns and help them clarify their comments by restating them.
* **Model the behavior you expect from your students.** Are you as considerate of your students' feelings as you want them to be of others? Are you as organized and on-task as you tell them to be? Are your [**classroom rules**](http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3749728) clear and easy for students to follow?
* **Specifically describe misbehavior and help students understand the** [**consequences of misbehavior**](http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3749727)**.** Very young children may even need your explanations modeled or acted out.
* **Be aware of cultural differences.** For example, a student who stares at the floor while you speak to him or her would be viewed as defiant in some cultures and respectful in others.
* **Discourage cliques and other antisocial behavior.** Offer cooperative activities to encourage group identity.
* **Teach students personal and social skills** — communicating, listening, helping, and sharing, for example.
* **Teach students academic survival skills**, such as paying attention, following directions, asking for help when they really need it, and volunteering to answer.
* **Avoid labeling students as "good" or "bad."** Instead describe their behavior as "positive," "acceptable," "disruptive," or "unacceptable."
* **Focus on recognizing and rewarding acceptable behavior** more than punishing misbehavior.
* **Ignore or minimize minor problems instead of disrupting the class.** A glance, a directed question, or your proximity may be enough to stop misbehavior.
* **Where reprimands are necessary, state them quickly and without disrupting the class.**
* **When it's necessary to speak to a student about his or her behavior, try to speak in private;** this is especially true of adolescents who must "perform" for their peers. Public reprimands or lectures often trigger exaggerated, face-saving performances.

**When Personalities Clash . . .**

Sometimes, despite our best intentions, we find ourselves actively disliking one of the students in our charge. The student may be rude, disrespectful, disruptive, obnoxious, or otherwise annoying. It's just human nature; some personalities clash. But instead of feeling guilty about our feelings, we can take positive steps to improve them, says school psychologist and teacher Shelley Krapes. Here are some of her suggestions:

* **Try to understand where the behavior is coming from.** Does a death, divorce, new baby, learning disability, or some other overwhelming experience distress the student? Speaking to the student's parents or guardian may shed light on underlying causes and help you develop sympathy through understanding.
* **Help yourself manage negative feelings by reflecting on a past situation in your life where a similar conflict occurred.** Discuss the situation with a friend or by writing your thoughts in a journal. Making and understanding these connections can help you let go of some of your current hostility or resentment.
* **Use positive strategies when dealing with the child.** One such strategy is addressing specific behaviors with precise language that describes what needs to be done. In addition, try to seat the student near to you or a helpful student, praise the student liberally but sincerely, give the student choices to promote self-worth and feelings of control, be firm and consistent about your rules, and express displeasure with the student's behavior without criticizing the student.
* **Set a goal.** If the situation between you and the child has not improved after two or three months of your best effort, it may be time to recommend professional/psychological/educational testing. Some problems are very complex and beyond your control.