

The Academy for Teaching and Learning Excellence (ATLE)  
*"Office hours for faculty"*  
(813) 974-1841 | atle.usf.edu | atle@usf.edu

## **Classroom Management Best Practices**

### **Barbara Gross Davis, Tools for Teaching**

1. Make it clear you value all comments
2. Avoid singling out students as spokespersons
3. Discourage students who monopolize discussion
4. Tactfully correct wrong answers
5. Emphasize mastery and learning rather than grades
6. Give speedy feedback

### **McKeachie's Teaching Tips**

7. Recognize Perry's stages of cognitive development
8. Quiz early and often to set expectations
9. Establish fair policies
10. Ratchet up response only as needed
11. For low attention, switch activities
12. Start with an assumption of honesty—don't believe the worst in students
13. Get to know students to head off angry confrontations
14. Keep your cool – don't respond instantly
15. Remember that students are human who need sympathy and help

### **Linda Nilson, Teaching at its Best**

16. Balance authority and approachability
17. Model correct behavior, and reward it in students
18. Be aware of your voice and non-verbal communication; use them to subtly communicate your desired response
19. Avoid overly long lectures
20. Keep cool and don't be baited
21. Consult with problem students in private whenever possible

## Classroom Management Scenarios

1. A student approaches you and tells you that he has ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder). He can't take the test within the time allotted, can't turn in assignments on time, or can't take notes, etc. He is requesting special consideration. Other students in the class overhear your conversation and start to whisper among themselves.
2. You've assigned on-line discussion groups. You are reviewing student postings and discover inappropriate language and sexual references to persons being discussed.
3. John recently began teaching at USF. In the fourth week of the term, he administered the first exam. Mary, a traditional-age student, was a "no-show" who had also missed the previous week. After the exam, John telephoned her at the number she had provided on her student profile. A man answered the phone. John identified himself as Mary's professor and asked for her. The man identified himself as Mary's father, told John that Mary was not home, then asked the nature of the call. John replied that Mary had missed the test and went on to speculate about its impact on her grade.
4. A student comes to class who is obviously on drugs or drunk.
5. For a second time, a student arrives to your classroom late (the student is in a wheelchair). Your syllabus specifies a reduction in points for repeated tardiness.
6. A student receives an "F" on a test. He protests his grade and is adamant about your changing his grade or allowing him to re-take the exam. You stand firm on your position and tell him that there are no make-ups or extra credit. His tone becomes increasingly aggressive. He calls you, he emails you, and he waits for you after class.
7. Tracy will frequently become upset over her grades and will ask for extra credit. While normally you would be supportive of someone with her motivation, you are concerned because she frequently gets A's and is often worried because of only a few points.
8. A student misses a mid-term exam worth 40% of her grade. She tells you she was in the hospital. You have a "NO MAKE UP EXAM" policy and the student appears to be in good health.
9. Mid-term is approaching. A student comes to you (who has been working very hard) but is in danger of failing the class. The student tells you that he has to pass this class to keep his financial aid.
10. After his first day working at a local high school as part of a service-learning project, Nathan e-mails you and asks if he can switch schools. You have previously worked with the community partner with no issues and are wondering if Nathan may be uncomfortable with the school's demographics.

11. You believe that you see a student cheating during an exam, and you suspect that others are trying to cheat while you are not looking.
12. Many of your students come from different cultures with different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. You have been lecturing and students are complaining that they cannot understand you or follow your logic.
13. George, a graduate student in your class, is a know-it-all and calls attention to your mistakes whenever you wander into his field of expertise, so that you now fear discussing anything related to his field.
14. Christopher, an older student in your class, is continuing his training by taking classes in his field. Because of his experience with the topic, the rest of the class defers to his opinion and will often wait until he has the first word. This is compounded by the fact that he frequently will make jokes or interrupt other students, especially if he disagrees with their opinion.
15. After recently modifying your lesson plans to include in-class small team assignments you notice that Genevieve with her head on her desk while her partners are working through the problem. After asking her if something is wrong, she's replies that group work is a "waste of time" and thinks that "teachers should actually teach during class."
16. Incensed by his failing essay grade, Michael demands a private meeting at your office, but he shuts the door as he enters, raises his voice, and gesticulates wildly. You notice his brawny arms, and you start to fear for your physical safety.
17. Joan's class had been especially enjoyable to teach—a diverse group of traditional and nontraditional students. Many of the students were working professionals, highly motivated and fun-loving. At the beginning of the final class meeting, one of the students announced that everyone was going to a nearby cocktail lounge following class and that Joan was expected to join them. A fun-lover herself, Joan joined them, but limited herself to one drink.
18. Student Sam struggled the entire term in Janet's class. Janet provided him extra support and tutoring after class, and by the final class period it appeared he would get a satisfactory grade. Sam was genuinely appreciative, saying, "No instructor has ever gone out of their way like you!" As Sam came into the room for the final exam, he handed Janet a small bag with a wrapped gift. Janet was quite surprised when, after all of the students had left, she opened the package to find a pair of gold earrings.
19. Marina finds spelling and grammar errors in your sentences on the board with embarrassing consistency, and she comes around after class to give you her critical opinion of the course. When she's in class, you feel like you're being constantly monitored.

## Classroom Management

### Five Golden Rules

1. Be friendly but firm (andragogy, not pedagogy)
2. Be an ally... for their learning (not grade)
3. De-escalate rather than De-fensive (listen first. Speak softly)
4. Revise syllabus policies to be realistic
5. When in doubt, "fairness rules"

### Spectrum of response:

1. Do nothing (hope for extinction)
  2. Stand nearby
  3. Call of them to answer a plenary question
  4. Pause meaningfully (silence fills room)
  5. Generic plenary address
  6. Private talk
  7. Paper trail (email and otherwise)
  8. Public confrontation
  9. Kick them out
- If you start too easy, you then have to over-compensate to 'catch up' to lessened expectations. Better to choose wisely to start with (but don't over do the first one!)

### One Liners:

1. "Students are sharks" (blood in the water...)
2. "Fake it 'til you make it"
3. "Channel, don't ignore, nervousness about content"