

Positive behaviour support: Behavioural expectations

Overview and rationale

Positive relationships underpin all effective classroom management practices. This resource is the fourth component in a suite of resources collectively called Positive Behaviour Support – Effective Classroom Practice, which are available through the Universal Resources Hub. It provides classroom teachers with support to:

- understand and describe what behavioural expectations are
- explain why behavioural expectations need to be established
- develop and establish behavioural expectations for their classroom.

Establishing behavioural expectations is one of the many effective classroom practices which research shows has the greatest positive impact on learning and behaviour. These proactive strategies assist teachers to increase the time available for instruction and decrease the amount of time spent responding to inappropriate or unwanted behaviour.

Effective classroom management is critical to the provision of a safe and supportive learning environment and helps build positive relationships. Research has consistently demonstrated the relationship between effective classroom management and both academic achievement, and teacher and student wellbeing.

Target audience and instructions for use

Teachers across all school settings can use this resource to support students P-12.

When to use/ timeframes: Teachers can use this resource at any time in the year as a stand-alone resource to support them to establish and maintain behavioural expectations or as part of the suite of effective classroom management resources. The first resource is about positive relationships, which underpins all resources in the suite.

This resource will work most effectively when:

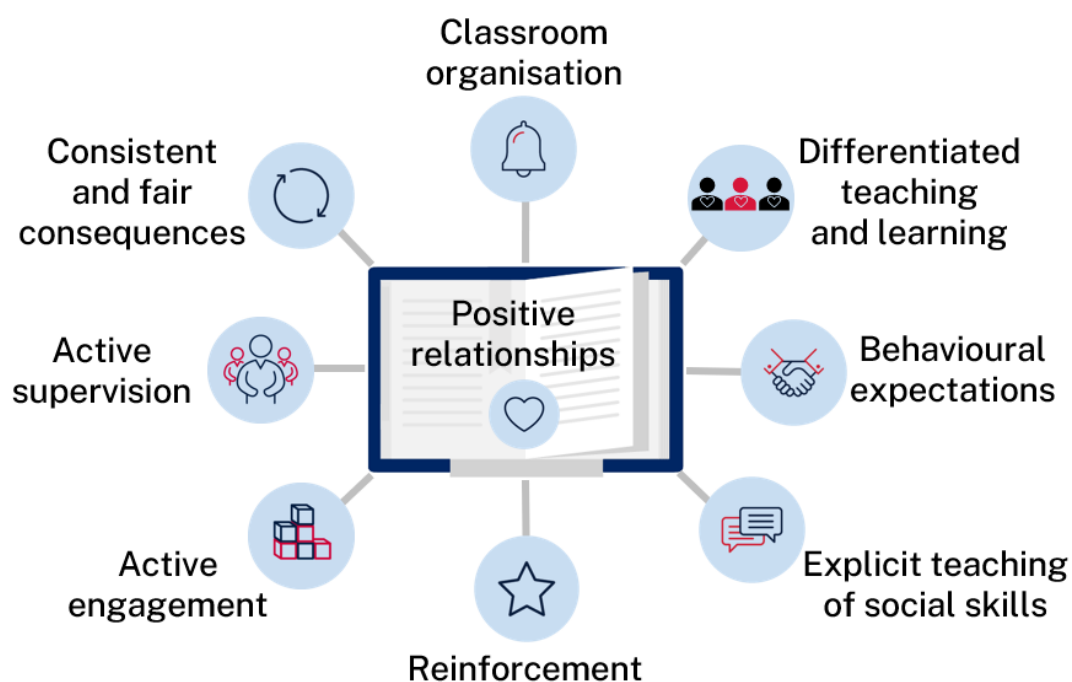
- a whole-school framework for behaviour support and student learning and wellbeing is in place

- schoolwide systems are in place for teaching, acknowledging and responding to behaviours
- data-based decision-making is in place to guide implementation
- classroom systems are linked to the schoolwide system of positive behaviour support
- effective pedagogy, including differentiation, is in place in classrooms.

Key components of effective classroom management

The visual below depicts the components of effective classroom management demonstrated by research to reduce rates of inappropriate or unwanted behaviour and increase student engagement with learning. Each component can be broken down into a number of practices, which teachers can utilise to build a positive classroom environment and maximise instructional time.

This resource focuses on behavioural expectations. Refer to the separate resources for more information about each of the other eight components.



Behavioural expectations



Expectations are the valued beliefs or attitudes that we want students to display. Rules are the specific behaviours which define what students need to do to meet the expectations. Having clearly established expectations is one of the cornerstones of [effective classroom management](#).

However, simply establishing expectations is not enough; these need to be taught, made visible, periodically reviewed, referred to regularly, and retaught as needed. Ideally, classroom rules should be developed from schoolwide expectations. Classroom rules should be few in number – as a rule of thumb, 1-3 rules for each expectation should be sufficient.

Behaviour expectations are tools that encourage positive behaviour – they are standards of conduct which might take the form of ‘dos and don’ts’ or procedures to follow in certain situations. For example, you might have an expectation that students always try their best, or you might expect them to be on time, or to line up outside in single file when they arrive at your classroom. Other examples of behaviour expectations might centre around routines for answering a question in class, transitioning between activities, or going for a toilet break.


Classroom rules and routines are essential for effective classroom management. They provide predictability and structure and help to minimise disruption and support student's engagement in learning.

Example of classroom rules based on schoolwide expectations

School Expectations	Class Rules
Be safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">We keep hands and feet to ourselves
Be a learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">We stay on taskWe ask for help
Be respectful	<ul style="list-style-type: none">We speak politely

Why do we need expectations for behaviour?

Research has found that having clear, consistent, high expectations in the classroom can positively affect students' abilities, opportunities to learn,



motivation, and learning outcomes. If you set out expectations, they are likely to meet them. Having clear expectations for behaviour in every classroom can also help to:


- create a positive classroom environment
- provide all students with a sense of security
- reduce student anxiety
- maximise learning time
- enable student self-monitoring
- support positive behaviour
- ensure consistency.

Classroom rules

Classroom rules are statements that identify acceptable and/or unacceptable behaviours in the classroom. The benefits of classroom rules include:

- They clearly articulate success criteria to students and parents. Classroom rules define what it is that students need to do to be successful in the classroom.
- They enable proactive teaching of expected behaviour. Classroom rules provide us with the opportunity to proactively teach the behaviours we expect. Teachers often assume students have the skills to behave however research shows this is not necessarily the case, especially in the earlier years.
- They provide a framework for guiding decisions for student behaviour. Rules can help focus teachers and students on positive behaviours and provide a clear framework for teaching the skills necessary to be successful.
- They put a focus on positive behaviours and allows for reinforcement. Rules support teachers to provide increased positive feedback and reinforcement for students.

Classroom rules are considered fundamental to effective classroom management. A recent review of research about the characteristics of effective classroom rules identified fifteen studies that had explored the



use of rules in a classroom management context. The finding from these studies provided strong evidence that classroom rules are most effective when they are explicitly taught, and consistently connected to positive and/or negative consequences that are applied immediately.

What is the difference between expectations and rules?

Expectations are the overarching values that communicate what you want from students. Rules are the specific behaviours you want to see. Rules link directly to the expectations and clearly convey what is expected in specific settings. For example: expectation is 'respect' and an aligning rule could be 'we listen at the teacher's signal.'

Rules are specific. They support students to understand the behaviours which allow them to meet expectations. In the classroom, rules frequently address common behaviours such as how students should behave in group work, transitions, talking and communication.

How to establish classroom rules

Rule development is a process that considers the needs of the class and describes what students are expected to do.

- Present the schoolwide expectations to students and brainstorm the classroom rules which are needed for each schoolwide expectation.
- Develop a process (for example, each student selects the top 3) to select rules for the classroom. Do not exceed more than 5.
- Word the rules positively, using age-appropriate language.
- Address inappropriate behaviours and/or skill deficits. Typical rules will address common minor behaviours such talking too loudly, calling out or arriving late to class. Consider what behaviour skills would help the class.
- Check that each rule is observable and actionable.
- Add visuals for each rule.
- Display the rules in a highly visible part of the classroom.
- Use the [OMPUA guidelines](#).



Developing expectations and rules

Expectations

- Broadly stated: 3-5 expectations
- Apply to all situations and settings
- Communicate the expected behaviour
- Usually whole school agreed.

Rules

- Align with expectations
- Are specific, observable, and positively stated
- Are a replacement for inappropriate behaviours
- 1-3 rules for each expectation

Refer to the [process for developing expectations](#).

Teaching behaviour expectations

When talking about your expectations, be specific – it's not enough to simply say 'be on time' or 'come prepared'. You need to explain what this means to you so that students have the greatest chance possible of getting it right. Is being on time within one minute of the bell? Is being prepared having paper, pens, and books with them? If so, say that.

You'll need to teach your behaviour expectations in the classroom the way you'd teach any other topic in school. Talk about the detail – what they are, why they're important, the consequences of breaking them, and any exceptions to them – and give your class a chance to practise. See example below of how to [teach expectations effectively](#).

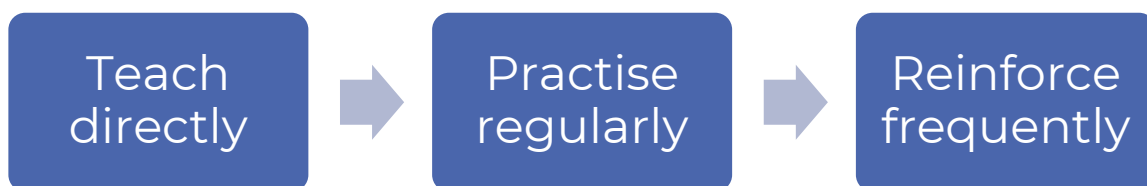
Classroom routines

Classroom routines are explicit guidelines for procedures or recurring events in the classroom. When routines and procedures are carefully taught, modelled, and established in the classroom, students know what's expected of them and how to do certain things on their own. Having these predictable patterns in place allows teachers to spend more time in meaningful instruction.

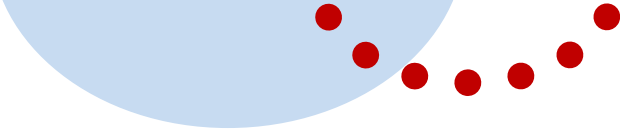
The benefits of classroom routines include:

- They support students to be successful. All students know what and how to do it'. Ensures students have the knowledge and skills to participate successfully in class.
- They increase instruction time, reduces, and prevents inappropriate behaviour. Results in fewer disruptions in class. This means less lost learning time.
- They promote a positive classroom environment and increases student belonging. Teachers can focus on positive reinforcement. Involving students in the smooth running of a classroom increases their engagement and sense of belonging.
- They help to develop student self-discipline as productive work habits. Increases the ability of students to move between tasks and contribute to the learning environment. This increases independence and on-task behaviour.

Teaching rules and routines



- Incorporate opportunities to review and revise the steps of the routine regularly. The steps need to become a habit – this is when the routine has been established.
- To ensure students maintain the routines, teachers need to reinforce students when they use them. Reinforcement should be provided throughout the year. Put a plan in place to teach any new students.
- It is important to explicitly model, teach and revise classroom rules and routines as we would teach academic content. Practice is the key.
- Ensure classroom rules and routines are displayed in a prominent place and refer to them often when you teach, practice and revise rules and routines.
- Use pre-corrections (positively stated reminders of rules and routines) to proactively support students to engage in appropriate



behaviours and reduce the need for corrective responses. For example, teacher may remind the class/student/s about the rules for playing safely in the playground before going to lunch.

- Ensure casual or relief teachers are provided with the rules and routines.

Importance of predictability

When students can predict the events throughout their school day, they are more likely to be engaged and less likely to display inappropriate behaviour. One way to increase predictability in a classroom is to establish routines, particularly early in the school year.

Additional information

While this resource provides an explanation and examples of establishing behavioural expectations, it is important to remember that becoming an effective classroom teacher involves a thorough understanding of the principles of positive behaviour support. The aim of classroom management is for students to become self-managing, and to create a respectful learning environment where positive relationships are fostered, and individual learning is encouraged.

Becoming an effective classroom teacher also takes self-reflection and deliberate practice. Self-assessment and coaching have been shown to improve implementation of [effective classroom practices](#). Teachers are therefore encouraged to work with colleagues and school leaders to develop and refine classroom management understanding and skills.

OMPUA Guidelines

Effective rules provide students with guidance to meet expectations for behaviour. To ensure the effectiveness of classroom rules they should be positively stated and explicit.

One approach is OMPUA – which stands for observable, measurable, positively stated, understandable and always applicable. This model provides a framework for writing rules but also allows for evaluation of existing rules to ensure they are clear and teachable.

1. Observable
 - Behaviours we can see

- I can see it
- 2. Measurable
 - Can we count observations of the behaviour?
 - I can count it
- 3. Positively stated
 - Desired behaviour
 - What do I want students to do?
- 4. Understandable
 - Student friendly language
 - Can my student understand the rule?
- 5. Always applicable
 - Rules should be based on problems which typically occur in the setting
 - Does this rule always apply in this setting?

Example and non-examples

Guideline	This means	Example	Non-example
Observable	I can see it	Raise your hand and wait to be called on	Be your best
Measurable	I can count it	Bring art materials	Be ready to learn
Positively stated	I remind/tell students what to do	Hands and feet to self	No fighting
Understandable	The words used are appropriate for student's age /grade	Hands and feet to self	Maintain personal space
Always applicable	Students should always do this	Always walk in the classroom	No running

[\[Back\]](#)

Process for developing expectations

Examples expectations

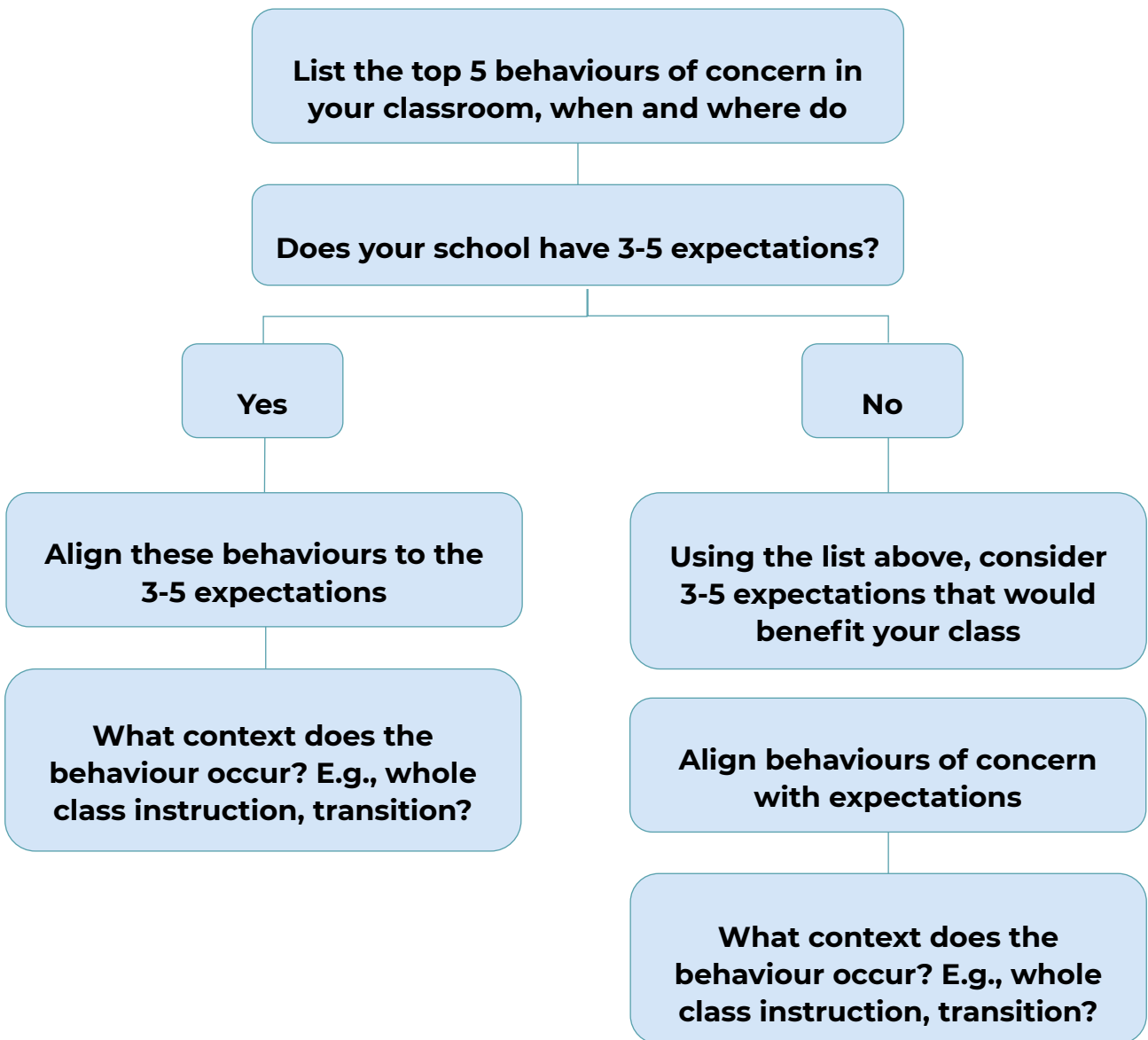
- Be safe
- Be respectful
- Be a learner

Example rules (from expectations)

- Be safe – Keep your hands and feet to self
- Be respectful – Use kind words
- Be a learner – Listen and follow teacher instructions

[\[Back\]](#)

Process





Teaching behaviour expectations

1. **Identify the expectation** – ‘Listen when others are talking.’
2. **Identify why it’s important** – ‘It is important to listen when others are talking so that they feel respected and have a chance to share their thoughts and opinions. We all want and need to be able to do that.’
3. **Decide what the expectation does and doesn’t look like** – ‘Listening to others means looking at them, not talking when they are, and putting your hand up if you want to talk during the lesson.’ For younger students, you could draw pictures of the appropriate behaviour.
4. **Practise the behaviour** – Do a few practice runs where you show students what to do and what not to do. Ask students to explain why it is the right/wrong thing to do and demonstrate how to do it themselves. Give them lots of positive reinforcement.
5. **Respond consistently** – Once you’ve set the expectations, you should always respond consistently. Reinforce children who are doing it right, and give feedback and opportunities to correct the behaviour for those who are doing it wrong (e.g. ‘Sam, we listen to others in this classroom – show me how you do that, thank you’).

[\[Back\]](#)



Alignment and identified need

System priorities and/or needs

This resource aligns with:

- the [Student Behaviour Strategy](#)
- the [Inclusive, Engaging and Respectful Schools](#) policies
- the [New South Wales Department of Education's strategic outcomes](#) of improving academic achievement and wellbeing
- the [Premier's Priorities](#) to improve outcomes in literacy and numeracy and HSC attainment.

School Excellence Framework

- Learning domain – Learning culture, wellbeing, curriculum, assessment
- Teaching – effective classroom practice.

Relevant frameworks

- [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#)
- [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](#)
 - Standard 1: 1.2 and 1.6
 - Standard 3: 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5
 - Standard 4: 1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4
 - Standard 6: 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4
- [NSW Wellbeing Framework for schools](#) – behaviour, discipline and character education.

Existing resources

- [Behaviour Support Toolkit](#)
- [Behaviour Professional eLearning:](#)
 - Classroom management fundamentals
 - Understanding behaviour support planning
 - Introduction to Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL)
 - PBL Tier 1 School-wide support
 - PBL Tier 1 Classroom support

- [Inclusive Practice hub](#)
- CESE:
 - [Classroom Management: Creating and maintaining positive learning environments](#)
 - [Classroom Management: Maintaining positive learning environments](#)
 - [What works best 2020](#)

Consultation

Materials adapted with permission from the Guide to Effective Classroom Management (Queensland Department of Education).

Reviewed by:

- Behaviour Services, Behaviour and Student Participation
- Delivery Support, Student Support and Specialist Programs.

Last updated: August 2022

Anticipated resource review date: February 2023

Feedback: studentbehaviour@det.nsw.edu.au

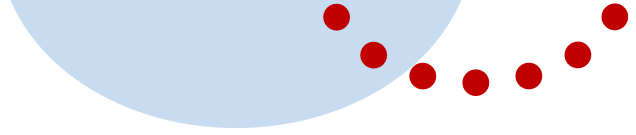
Evidence base

Research has consistently demonstrated the importance of effective classroom management as a component of effective teaching; the relationship between effective classroom management and teacher self-efficacy and wellbeing; and the positive outcomes associated with a small number of specific classroom management practices.

Allen, G., Common, E., Germer, C., Lane, K., Buckman, M., Oakes, W., & Menzies, H. (2020). A systematic review of the evidence base for active supervision in Pre-K-12 settings. *Behavioral Disorders*, 45(3), 167-183.

Alter, P & Haydon, T 2017, 'Characteristics of effective classroom rules: A review of the literature', *Teacher Education and Special Education*, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 114–127 in Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation 2020, *Classroom management: Creating and maintaining positive learning environments*.

Ashman, A. (2019). *Education for Inclusion and Diversity* (6th Ed.). Pearson.



Barker, K., Poed, S., and Whitefield, P. (Eds.). (2022). School-wide positive behaviour support: The Australian handbook. Taylor and Francis, New York.

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation. (2014). What is effective classroom management? NSW Department of Education and Communities.

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2020), Classroom management - creating and maintaining positive learning
https://www.cese.nsw.gov.au//images/stories/PDF/Classroom_management_literature_review_2020.pdf

Ennis, R., Lane, K., Menzies, H., & Owens, P. (2018). Precorrection: An effective, efficient, low-intensity strategy to support student success. *Beyond Behavior*, 27(3), 146-152.

Galkiene, A., & Monkeviciene, O. (Eds.). (2021). Improving Inclusive Education through Universal Design for Learning. Springer Nature.

Grattan Institute (2017) Engaging students: Creating classrooms that improve learning. Retrieved from the Grattan Institute website:
<https://grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Engaging-students-creating-classrooms-that-improve-learning.pdf>

Haydon, T., Hunter, W., & Scott, T. (2019). Active supervision: Preventing behavioral problems before they occur. *Beyond Behavior*, 28(1), 29-35.

Howell, M., Dounavi, K., & Storey, C. (2019). To choose or not to choose?: A systematic literature review considering the effects of antecedent and consequence choice upon on-task and problem behaviour. *Review Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, (6), 63-84.

Hulac, D., & Briesch, A. (2017). Evidence-based strategies for effective classroom management. Guilford Publications.

Marzano, R., Marzano, J., & Pickering, D. (2003). Classroom management that works: Research-based strategies for every teacher. Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development: Alexandria, VA.

Strnadová, I., Dowse, L., Danker, J., & Tso, M. (2020). A review and synthesis of educational supports for students with disability: Evidence based practices in Australia. Summary review. UNSW Sydney.