



**Classroom
Management
Suggestions
for Elementary
School Age
Children**



Classroom Management Suggestions For Elementary Age Children

Dear Teachers,

Thank you so much for volunteering to teach our children! We have developed this tip sheet to give you some ideas about how to deal with common classroom management situations. We hope that it helps both you and your students to better learn about God and to love one another.

Child Protection Issues

Key Principles

1. No one adult should be alone with one child at any time.
2. When in doubt, call a hall monitor or parent

Some Scenarios:

A boy needs to go to the bathroom

A male teacher or the hall monitor (always male) should accompany the boy and another boy of similar age to the bathroom. The adult stands outside the door and makes sure the children have washed their hands before returning to the classroom. If teacher leaves, hall monitor should be called to take place in classroom until their return.

A girl needs to go to the bathroom

A woman teacher takes the girl and another girl of similar age to the bathroom. Teacher stands outside the bathroom door and waits. Hall monitor takes teacher's place in their classroom until they return.

A child gets badly hurt, significant nosebleed, throws up, etc.

Call for hall monitor to page parents. Write up incident on an injury report sheet. Inform parents when they pick up their child.

A child gets slightly hurt (a cut requiring a band-aid)

Use the first aid kit to clean and cover any small wound. Write up incident on an injury report sheet. Inform parents when they pick up their child.

A child's parents do not show up to pick up their child within 15 minutes of the end of session

Call for hall monitor's assistance in finding the children's parents. If the hall monitor is not reachable, send one teacher to find the child's parents or contact the Children's Ministry Administrator. Make sure that there are two teachers or certified children's workers with the remaining child as he waits for his parents to collect him.

Behavior Management

Key Principles

1. Children are Foolish by Nature

“Folly is bound up in the heart of a child,” Proverbs 22:15, NIV, 1985

Therefore, we can expect foolish behavior from children in the classroom.

2. Responding to Foolish Behavior is an Important Part of Our Teaching

Since we can expect foolish behavior, we can plan how to use foolishness to train children in biblical truths we hope they will learn from our lessons. Foolish behavior fills the pages of the Bible; and it often fills the lives of our children. Why? Because foolish behavior is the outworking of foolish, sinful hearts. We enjoy good behavior from our children because it makes our jobs as teachers easier and more effective.

But, it is important to remember that our primary objective in all our teaching is to help the children learn about the Creator God, see their sinful, use their foolish behavior and our teaching as opportunities to point out their rebellious hearts, understand the consequences of their sin; and turn to Jesus as their Lord and Savior. We can use their foolish behavior and our teaching as opportunities to point out foolish behavior, its consequences and our need for a Savior. As you prepare your lesson, ask yourself: What foolish behavior do I see the people in this story exhibiting? What wise behavior? Do any of these behaviors look like the heart issues or actions of the children in my class? What questions could I ask them to help them see these issues/actions and apply them to their lives? How could I point the children to their own heart issues and their own need of a Savior through this story and the issues/actions highlighted, as well as, of course, through any foolish classroom behaviors?

3. Training and Turning of Hearts and Actions

As we address foolish behavior in our classroom, it is important to think about how we change. Any kind of training takes time, even more so the training of behaviors overflowing from sinful hearts. Since children are by nature foolish, then we need to help train them in wise behavior, encourage them to turn away from it. We need to make sure they understand how they are to act (through learning classroom rules as well as through learning biblical truths in our lessons); as well as lead them to, see their sinful hearts, ask God for forgiveness and the Holy Spirit’s help to change both their hearts and their actions. We need to be praying for the children during the week to this end. How important it is that we remember that changed behavior does not necessarily mean changed hearts! Changed hearts are a work of the Holy Spirit alone! We also should pray that God would make us gentle, wise and consistent in our training of the children.

4. Train and Turn Only with Great Compassion, Gentleness and Graciousness

Behavioral problems, especially with “repeat offenders”, can be very frustrating. It is very, very important that we only train and turn with compassion, gentleness and mercy. Not only can this often help a situation more quickly resolve (cf. Proverbs 15:1 “A gentle answer turns away wrath and a harsh word stirs up anger.”), but when we act and speak from a heart of compassion, gentleness and graciousness, we reflect our merciful and loving Father to the children. Pray that God would fill your heart with His mercy and love as you deal with any behavior issues. Then of course there’s the work that God will do in our heart and lives as we ask Him to cultivate this attitude in ourselves.

Be aware of growing frustration on your part. If you feel that you cannot speak or act towards a child with the right attitude, it would be better to leave the situation to another teacher.

5. An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Correction

out of temptation's way

When you become familiar with the children in your classroom, you will become aware of the things that typically tempt them. You may prevent many mishaps by looking over your lesson plans and classroom for situations, objects, etc. that will tend to draw out misbehavior and adjusting them accordingly. Do you have a group of especially wiggling children? Look for ways to add in more movement. Do you have some very competitive children? Change the games to be group cooperation games rather than team vs. team. Are there things in the room that regularly distract? Find a place to put them away.

working as a team

When one teacher is leading the teaching, the other teacher(s) should be actively looking for ways to facilitate focus and learning. This includes everything from noticing if the lead teacher needs a dry erase marker and bringing it to him, hold visuals, etc. to sitting next to a wiggly child, to quietly pulling aside a child who has a behavioral issue. Whenever possible, avoid the lead teacher interrupting his teaching to deal up with these issues. It will be distracting the other students and be more embarrassing to the student who is struggling.

6. The Child that Will Not be Trained and Turned

Sometimes a child refuses to change in a particular situation. Sometimes there is a pattern of behavior and heart issues that becomes apparent. In these cases, you need to be speaking to the parents about what you observe. Usually this can be done after the session during sign-out time. In extremely rare cases, you may need to call the hall monitor to page the parents immediately. Be sensitive as to whether this is a conversation that should take place in the child's presence or not. As a guideline, one time issues may be best addressed with the child present, while patterns may be best addressed without the child. If in doubt, speak to the parents privately and they can decide whether to discuss the matter further with the child present. decide whether to discuss the matter further with the child present.

General Guidelines for Behavior Issues: Children of Visitors

How Visitors Are Different

Visitors are not familiar with the class rules and may come from non-Christian families. So much of our training and turning is based on knowledge of our families, our rules and the relationship we have with the children. Since little if any of these elements are in place with visitors, they must be treated differently. On the other hand, we do not want to let visitor's bad behavior set the tone for our class, be left unaddressed, and certainly not allow harm to either children or teachers. Sometimes this makes for a tricky balance.

Special Principles for Behavior Issues of Visitors

1. Forbear as long as possible with behavioral issues of visitors
2. Use positive reinforcement as much and as long as possible
3. Try to give cues to a visiting child through a whispered comment rather than removing them for a conversation
4. Contact the parents through the hall monitor if the situation escalates and/or becomes unmanageable

Common Scenarios with Visitors

Lack of cooperation in the group

Give them two or three choices of things they can do, such as: sitting quietly, helping you, or taking part in the activity. Your goal to help the visitor be obedient in a comfortable way (given their new setting), while maintaining focus to stay on the group activity.

Disrespectful behavior or speech

Instead of taking the child aside, have a teacher come along side the child and whisper to them: "That sounded pretty unkind/disrespectful, etc. Please don't say that/do that, etc." If behavior persists, then give the child a warning that they will not be able to stay in the class if they keep on doing that. Call the parents via the hall monitor and page system, if situation escalates to an unmanageable distraction.

If they change behavior, praise them, especially in front of their parents at the end of the session.

In Praise Factory: Older and younger children from the same family want to stay together

Let the children stay together! Put them, if possible, in the group of the younger child. If the children visit consistently for three or four weeks, consider transitioning them to their own groups. You can do this best by speaking to the parents privately at the end of a session, asking them how their children are enjoying the program. If they are still feeling pretty new, leave them together. If they seem to be happy and settled, tell the parents that you would love the children to be with their own age group so that they can establish closer friends with the other children their age. If parents are happy for this to happen, ask them if they would speak to their children about this. If the children seem ready after this conversation with their parents, then go ahead and split them. If not, wait a few more weeks and reassess. It works best to put the older child in the younger child's group, since frequently the younger child's transition is more difficult and the older child will want to be with their age group sooner.

The Child that Will Not be Trained and Turned

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Learning Expectations for Elementary School Age Children

Reasonable Learning Expectations

- God answers prayers to help children learn
- God answers prayers to help you teach the children well
- God answers prayers to work in the children's hearts
- Children can learn important things about God
- Children can know God and desire to please Him
- Children learn best when doing a variety of activities within a familiar structure
- Children can learn best when first given a model or example
- Children learn best when you give them clear instructions
- Children learn best with review and reinforcement
- Children can participate cheerfully

Unreasonable Learning Expectations

- You can teach well without preparing in advance
- You can teach well without asking for God's wisdom and grace
- You will teach without mistakes
- The best teaching is only about transferring information and not about heart or behavior issues
- Children can sit still as long as adults
- Children do not need to move
- Children learn well in a lecture format
- Children enjoy all activities the same amount
- All children will have equal ease or difficulty in doing activities
- Children of all ages will be able to do the same things and act the same way
- You only need to teach a child something once for them to know it, understand it and remember it
- Children will know what to do without your clearly communicated instructions
- Giving directions once will be enough for the children to know what to do

Behavior Expectations for Elementary School Age Children

Reasonable Expectations

- God will hear and answer our prayers for help in teaching and training the children
- God will use the class time with the children to support what the parents are teaching at home
- Children can keep from touching and teasing each other during class
- Children can keep quiet and listen while others speak
- Children can sit, stand, move appropriately (sit up in one place; stand in place; walk, not run, to where you want them to go)
- Children can raise hand for permission to speak
- Children can obey directions, cheerfully and in a timely manner
- Children can change their behavior when corrected
- Children can participate cheerfully
- Children can improve in behavior and obedience
- Children appreciate encouragement when you see even small improvements
- Children can learn the classroom rules and learn how to put them into practice

Unreasonable Expectations

- You will not need to pray for God's wisdom and help with the children
- You can change a child's heart by correcting his behavior
- You will be able to handle all behavior issues without the parents' aid
- Teaching the children the classroom rules will necessarily bear the fruit of good behavior
- Children will not act foolishly or willfully
- Children are not sinners
- Children will never disobey
- Children will act the same every class time
- All children have equal ease or difficulty behaving as expected
- Children will not need reminders of expected behavior
- Children will know what behavior you expect of them without your clearly communicated expectations
- Telling the children expected behavior once will be all they need to hear it
- A verbal warning is always sufficient to correct behavior

Tips for Better Classroom Behavior

Reasonable Learning Expectations

1. Pray for God's help, both before class and with the class...and don't forget to pray afterwards, both thanking Him for how He worked and asking Him for more help, based on what you saw that day.

2. Give Clear, Specific Expectations of Expected Behavior

- Give these at the beginning of class, or at the beginning of each transition point between activities.
- Tell them how you will deal with their misbehavior (for example, "If you cannot show respect during game time you will be asked to leave the group and sit on a chair to the side of the room.")
- A child should raise his/her hand and wait for the teacher to call on him/her, when they have a question or comment

3. Do not ignore flagrant disobedience of clearly explained behavior expectations.

- Be willing to wait for silence and compliance.
- Do not just plow ahead and speak over the children or ignore their behavior.
- Disobedience does typically multiplies rather than disappears when ignored
- Remind the children of behavior expected.
- Do not be afraid to stop your activity and wait until they are cooperating.

4. Prepare the children for transitions between activities with clear instructions.

Many difficulties in behavior arise during transitions, partly because we do not give clearly tell children how we want them to behave.

- **Tell them WHEN you want them to move** (for example, "When I say "kitty cat" I want you to...")
- **Tell them HOW you want them to move** (for example, "When I say "kitty cat", I want you to put your hands on your head and walk quietly to...")
- **Tell them WHERE you want them to move** (for example, "when I say "kitty cat," I want you to put your hands on your head and walk quietly to the other room...")
- **Tell them WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO DO or NOT DO WHEN THEY GET THERE** (for example, "When I say "kitty cat," I want you to put your hands on your head and walk quietly to the other room and sit at the craft tables. Put your hands in your laps and do not touch the snack.")
- **Review with them WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO DO before you ask them to do it** (for example, "How should you go into the other room? What should you do when you get there? etc.)

Behavior Management Steps

1. Give the “Look”

- this can take place without stopping the class
- at this point, it may be helpful for a co-teacher to position themselves near the child

2. Give a Warning

- stop teaching and give warning for specific behavior
- alternatively, a co-teacher can give a warning for specific behavior while the lead teacher is teaching.

3. Have a Private Conference

- ask child why you have called them aside
- ask the child if they can explain what it is about their behavior that is unacceptable
- tell child what you expect
- ask the child if s/he can correct behavior on their own, or does s/he need your help
- briefly pray with the child/ren involved before returning to the group
- foster reconciliation with others involved
- praise child for changes in behavior you see
- speak to parents at end of class if behavior is a pattern

4. Remove from Activity

- ask child why they have been removed (follow guidelines above)
- give them some “time out” to cool off and consider behavior (5 minutes is an appropriate time out)
- remind the child of expectations before they can continue to participate in the activity
- you may need to ask the hall monitor to step into your class while you remove the child
- speak to parents at pickup time

5. Call for the Parents to remove child from class immediately

- call for the hall monitor to get the child’s parent(s)
- have another teacher or the hall monitor step into your class while you speak to the parents
- tell the parents what behavior you expect, what steps you took to correct it, and what the child’s response has been..
- call Deepak Reju, Jennilee Miller, or a Deacon of Children’s Ministry if you need help

6. Communicating with Parents

- speak to parent about notable issues or concerns (parents need to be know about and/or may have good advice)
- speak to parents at the end of class if pattern behavior is IMPROVING!!!

7. Discuss and pray about any major issues or patterns after class

- Pray for God’s wisdom for both the families and the teachers.
- Speak with a member of the Children’s Ministry team about particularly troubling situations that you have questions about or that seem to not be resolving.

Common Behavior Scenarios

Children Lie Down on Carpet

- If it is quite a few children, you may want to make a general reminder about the behavior expected. This can be done in a fun way, such as: "I see a number of slouchers and loungers on the carpet today. Get up, sleepy heads! Let's see if everyone can sit straight up by the time I count to "3".
- If a child/children persist in behavior, catch the child's eye and give the look. Make a sit up gesture with your hand and when child obeys, give them a mouthed "thank you."
- If the child still persists in lying down, then it is time for a child to be taken aside for a private conversation by one of the supporting teachers, while the lead teacher keeps teaching. Based on the conversation, the child can either be allowed another chance on the carpet, or asked to sit in one of the chairs along the side.
- All of these steps, except the first general reminder, are best done by a teacher other than the teacher leading the teaching, if at all possible. This allows the rest of the teaching time to continue and is less embarrassing for the child.
- If behavior persists after this, pull the child aside again and speak to them. If behavior is slow to turn, but is turning, try to continue to work with the child. Notice and praise even small changes in behavior. If behavior cannot be turned at all, then you will need to call the hall monitor and ask for the parents to pick up the child from class. You will at very least need to talk to the parents when they come to pick up their child at the end of the session.

Children keep whispering to each other

- If it is quite a few children, you may want to make a general reminder about the behavior expected. This can be done in a light way, such as: "I hear a lot of extra noise as I am trying to talk. Let's see if we can be quiet enough to hear the children playing in the floor below us, the wind blowing in the trees, etc." "When everyone is quiet, say, "Thank you, children, for being so quiet. Now, let's continue."
- If a child/children persist in behavior, catch the child's eye and give the look. Make a "shh" gesture with your hand and when child obeys, give them a mouthed "thank you."
- If the child still persists in talking, then it is time for a child to be taken aside for a private conversation by one of the supporting teachers, while the lead teacher keeps teaching. Based on the conversation, the child can either be allowed another chance back with the group but seated next to a teacher and away from the other friends; be asked to sit in one of the chairs along the side, separated from the friend(s) they have been talking to; or, be given a 5 minute "time out" before returning to class (and then seat them next to a teacher and away from friends).
- If behavior persists after this, pull the child aside again and speak to them. If behavior is slow to turn, but is turning, try to continue to work with the child. Notice and praise even small changes in behavior. If behavior cannot be turned at all, then you will need to call the hall monitor and ask for the parents to pick up the child from class. You will at very least need to talk to the parents when they come to pick up their child at the end of the session.
- All of these steps, except the first general reminder, are best done by a teacher other than the teacher leading teaching, if possible. This allows the rest of the teaching time to continue and is less embarrassing for the child.

Children do not want to fully participate

- This is a tricky one! Often this behavior is seen in the oldest children who are being too big to do the activity. The trouble is that their indifference quickly spreads to other children.
- If it is tiredness and an infrequent behavior, then don't worry about it. You may try to re-engage the child by asking them a pointed question or a suggestion that helps draw them back into the activity. You can ask them to help you by holding a sign or some other way.
- If this appears to be a pattern rather than just a one-off occurrence, then it may be time to speak to the child about it in a private conversation and find out what is behind their behavior. Their answer will make a difference in how you respond to the situation. If they are feeling "too big," you may want to give them a way to assist you in leading the group. Or, you may want to talk to the parents: it may be time to encourage the child to sit in the service. This is not an infrequent occurrence with the older children.
- Visitors often do not feel as comfortable to participate with a new group of children. Help them feel at ease. Do not be surprised if they do not participate as fully as the other children. As long as they do not disrupt your class, allow them to watch quietly.

Children keep blurting out answers or comments without raising hand and being called on

- Make a general reminder of behavior expected. Say something like, "I hear voices, but I'm only calling on people whose hands are raised and are waiting quietly to be called on."
- Often times this behavior shows up in excited children who still need practice in raising their hands and waiting. Sometimes, however, it is done in defiance.
- If a child/children persist in behavior, catch the child's eye and give the look. Point to your hand and mouth "Raise your hand" to the child. If they respond with a raised hand, mouth "thank you."
- If the child still persists in blurting out, position an assisting teacher near the child, who can give them gentle, quiet reminders. If you have no assistant available, such as in Small Group Time, ask the child to come sit next to you. This allows you to quietly prompt the child with less disruption to the class.
- If the behavior still persists, then it is time for a child to be taken aside for a private conversation, preferably by an assisting teacher while the lead teacher keeps teaching. Based on the conversation, the child can either be asked to have a time out for 5 minutes or so; or, allowed back in the teaching time, but seated next to a teacher.
- Unless you think this behavior is coming from defiance, show the utmost patience and encouragement. You may find it helpful to speak to the parents about the behavior, if it continues as a long-standing difficulty. It will be good information for them to know and they may have good advice for you.
- If behavior persists after this, pull the child aside again and speak to them. If behavior is slow to turn, but is turning, try to continue to work with the child. Notice and praise even small changes in behavior. If behavior cannot be turned at all, then you will need to call the hall monitor and ask for the parents to pick up the child from class. You will at very least need to talk to the parents when they come to pick up their child at the end of the session.

Children blurt out inappropriate comments

- Most of the time, the children are blurting out answers related to your question or story. Sometimes, though, they are inappropriate “wise cracks” or “complaints.” These comments come from a very different issue than the simple need to learn to raise one’s hand.
- Respond to the child’s wise crack comment make before the group something like this: “Charlie, we all like to laugh, don’t we? And we want to have fun. But it is never good to make fun of someone else (if the wise crack made fun of someone else) or, but as much as I hope you have fun in Praise Factory, I want you to learn. This is our teaching time. If you have a good comment, answer or question to contribute, I am happy to take it. But please keep any other remarks to yourself. Thank you.” If another child has been hurt by the child’s comment, it will be good for an assisting teacher to take the two children aside and help them ask forgiveness and reconcile.
- Respond to a child’s vocal complaint (before the group) something like this: “Charlie, we all like to have fun and always do just what we want to do. I certainly hope that I hope you have fun in Praise Factory, but I want you to learn even more than have fun. This is our teaching time. If you have a good comment, answer or question to contribute, I am happy to take it. But please keep any other remarks to yourself. Thank you.”
- If behavior persists after this, pull the child aside again and speak to them. If behavior is slow to turn, but is turning, try to continue to work with the child. Notice and praise even small changes in behavior. If behavior cannot be turned at all, then you will need to call the hall monitor and ask for the parents to pick up the child from class. You will at very least need to talk to the parents when they come to pick up their child at the end of the session.

Child raises hand to answer question and instead relates a totally unrelated incident

- Children get so excited about things! Perhaps their bodies are in your class, but it was their birthday yesterday, and they are dying for an opportunity to tell about the new bike they were given....right in the middle of your serious question about why Jesus died on the cross! This is a part of childhood that is both endearing and sometimes frustrating!
- As the child starts telling the group their unrelated exciting news, try to break in as soon as you can and say something like, “Charlie, it sounds like you had some really exciting things happen yesterday. I really want to hear them, but could we wait until the break (or some other time you can think of in the near future), when I can hear all about them? Thanks.” Then continue with your teaching.
- If child persists in telling the story, have an assistant teacher take the child to the side and speak to them in a private conversation.

Children push each other

- Depending on where this happens, this can be very, very dangerous! All too many times, it happens on the top row of the risers or on the stairs. Even if it happens on the floor, though, it can be a small action that leads to a serious injury.
- Immediately take aside the children involved in the incident and have a private conversation with them. Help them reconcile any issue between them. Help them to understand what serious consequence could have occurred from the push. This is best done by asking the child something like, “Charlie, if Ryan had fallen down when you pushed him, what might have happened? Help the child/ren understand the consequences that could have happened from their behavior. Warn

the child/ren that this behavior cannot be tolerated at all and that their parents will be called if it happens again.

- If the behavior occurred on the risers, have the child/ren sit on the floor or on a chair near a teacher for the remainder of the activity. At very least, you want to separate the children.
- If the behavior occurs again during the same session, call the hall monitor to send for the parents.
- While the taking aside of the children is best done by a teacher other than the teacher leading the teaching, it is such a potentially dangerous action, that it is worth making a point of this conduct with the whole class.