

Establishing Classroom Rules

Summary

This activity engages students in a collaborative process of setting rules and expectations for a positive classroom community. An open discussion of student needs and preferences is followed by work in pairs and small groups. Each group makes a few propositions. A list of rules that everyone agrees to follow is created. This becomes a classroom contract that all members of the class should sign.

Description of the activity

1. Briefly introduce the activity.
2. Share your vision for the class as a learning community. Explain that meaningful learning requires risk-taking. Multiple viewpoints are needed to truly see the world. Some members of the class may have strong feelings about certain topics. We need to respect each other if we are to explore different ideas in a spirit of acceptance, inquiry, and exploration.
3. Explain that for this reason the class has to agree upon some classroom rules that will help to ensure that everyone's needs are respected.
4. Facilitate a short discussion. Encourage frank and personal responses. Ask the class:
 - ➔ What makes a community?
 - ➔ What kind of learning environment encourages community spirit?
 - ➔ What kind of class environment helps you to learn?
5. Divide the class into pairs and ask each pair to develop five (or more) rules that they consider essential for this kind of classroom environment.
6. Ask each pair to join with another one to compare and combine their lists. The group of four should then write down the rules that they agree upon.
7. Ask each group to appoint a representative who will present their list to the class. After each suggested rule, ask for a show of hands from other groups who had a similar rule. Write on the whiteboard each rule that has a consensus.
8. Ask if there are any more propositions and feel free to make your own suggestions. Make sure that no one is left out.
9. Observe that having fewer rules is better and ask if any of the rules on the list could be combined.
10. Point out that clear rules are easier to follow. Help the class to refine the phrasing of the rules. Make any negative statements into positive ones.
11. Write down the agreed list of rules. Tell the class that this will be your classroom contract and ask everybody to sign it.





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12. Conclude by reminding students that enforcement of these rules is everyone's responsibility.

Activity structure

- **Preferred premises of the activity:** in class or outdoors.
- **Resources needed:** writing utensils, paper.
- **Recommended number of people participating:** a whole class of students. Make sure no one is absent.
- **Previous knowledge of participants necessary:** none.
- **Activity duration:** 45-60 minutes.

Learning Objectives

Students will create a shared vision of their learning community and a roadmap for getting there. They will engage in dialogue about the features of a supportive learning environment and participate in a democratic process. The activity promotes the development of critical thinking, responsibility, social and communication skills.

Expected Outcomes

Establish rules that ensure a safe classroom environment.
Promote inclusion and respect for cultural diversity.
Create a shared identity and responsibility of the whole class.

Target group

10-16 years of age.

Subject of the curriculum in which the activity could be implemented

Humanistic subjects

Learning objects to be used with this activity

None



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