



Discipline with a Plan

Effective teachers present their rules clearly and provide reasonable explanations of the need for them.

The three most important student behaviors that must be taught the first days of school are these:

1. Discipline
2. Procedures
3. Routines

Effective teachers introduce rules, procedures, and routines on the very first day of school and continue to teach them the first week of school. During the first week of school, rules, procedures, and routines take precedence over lessons. The ineffective teacher is too eager to present lessons; consequently, when disruptive behavior occurs, they discipline—often without a plan.

Many teachers complain that their students will not behave and that they get no backing from the administration. There is a reason. The administration cannot back up a nonexistent plan; nor can students guide their behavior when a plan does not exist. If a student were to ask, could you produce a copy of your discipline plan? Teachers who do not have a plan resort to disciplining by yelling, screaming, scolding, and demeaning. **If you do not have a plan, you are planning to fail.**

I Did Not Even Have a System

I was going insane and then I realized that I did not have a fair system or even any system. . . . My students, after we had the plan in effect, commented on how quiet the room was and how easily they could do their work. The principal commented about the plan and said how pleased he was to see quiet, working, behaved students!

As for me, I was thinking of quitting teaching because I was so uptight—until you shared a plan with me.

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Lethbridge, Alberta,
Canada

Continuum of Discipline Plans

There are many discipline plans. They all have their good and bad points, but they are all plans. Plans are not charters, laws, or theorems. You have plans for vacations, parties, and weddings.

If you are looking for a foolproof discipline system that works automatically, you will never find one. What you need to do is to develop a plan of your own, based on what you want to accomplish with your students.

It is imperative that you have a hard copy of a plan and that you follow that plan.

Discipline plans range from those where the student is in charge to those where the teacher is in charge. You will behave differently as you move through the different plans. These plans form a continuum. The method suggested in this book falls more toward the teacher-in-charge end of the spectrum.

Who's in Charge?

— Teacher Behaviors When —

Student in Charge	Both Student and Teacher	Teacher in Charge
Teacher silently looks on.	Teacher questions.	Teacher provides reinforcement.
Teacher uses nondirective statements.	Teacher uses directive statements.	Teacher uses physical intervention and isolation.
Teacher accepts excuses.	Teacher models proper behavior.	Teacher accepts no excuses.
Teacher listens.	Teacher confronts and agreements are reached.	Teacher tells what is to be done.

Books to Support Plans

Thomas Gordon, <i>Teacher Effectiveness Training</i>	William Glasser, <i>Schools Without Failure</i>	Saul Axelrod, <i>Behavior Modification for Teachers</i>
Louis Rath, Merrill Harmin, and Sid Simon, <i>Values and Teaching</i>	Linda Albert, <i>Cooperative Discipline</i>	Lee Canter, <i>Assertive Discipline</i>
	Richard Curwin, <i>Discipline with Dignity</i>	
	Barbara Coloroso, <i>Nonviolent Conflict Resolution</i>	

Why You Should Have Rules

The effective teacher invests time in teaching discipline and procedures, knowing that this will be repaid manifold in the effective use of class time. The key word is *invests*.

You, not the administration or the counselors, are primarily responsible for communicating and maintaining behavior. **The most successful classes are those in which the teacher has a clear idea of what is expected from the students and the students have a clear idea of what the teacher expects from them.** Expectations can be stated as rules.

- ✓ Rules are expectations of appropriate student behavior.
- ✓ After thorough deliberation, decide on your rules and write them down or post them **before the first day of school.**
- ✓ Clearly communicate in both verbal and written form to your students what you expect as appropriate behavior.
- ✓ It is easier to maintain good behavior than to change inappropriate behavior that has become established.
- ✓ You will have firm confidence in your ability to manage a class if you have a clear idea of what you expect from your students and they know that that is what you expect from them.
- ✓ Rules immediately create a work-oriented atmosphere.
- ✓ Rules create a strong expectation about the things that are important to you.

The research shows that the most effective schools are those with a well-ordered environment and high academic expectations.

Basic Structure for a Discipline Plan

- **Rules:** What the expected behaviors are. (Chapter 18)
- **Consequences:** What the student chooses to accept if a rule is broken. (Chapter 19)
- **Rewards:** What the student receives for appropriate behavior. (Chapter 19)

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Schoolwide Discipline Plan

The most effective discipline plans are applied universally so that no matter where the students go, they encounter the same plan. **The key to a good discipline plan is schoolwide consistency.** This is why there are many schools where the students are all busily working and the teachers are all busily teaching—and everyone is happy and succeeding.

The best discipline plan is a schoolwide discipline plan. In a schoolwide discipline plan, all persons in authority are trained in an agreed-on discipline plan, support the plan, and continuously work together to refine it. As a result, the students acknowledge and are familiar with the discipline plan. **The key to an effective schoolwide discipline plan is that everyone uses it with consistency!**

A schoolwide discipline plan is like the speed-limit law. We know that there are speed limits; however, the limits differ from one neighborhood, community, or state to another. The acceptable speed is posted for all to see and abide by.

Likewise, under a schoolwide discipline plan, everyone does not necessarily have the same set of rules. The bus drivers may have different rules from the teachers, food-service personnel, nurses, librarians, paraprofessionals, and counselors. Each person in authority can have a separate set of rules.

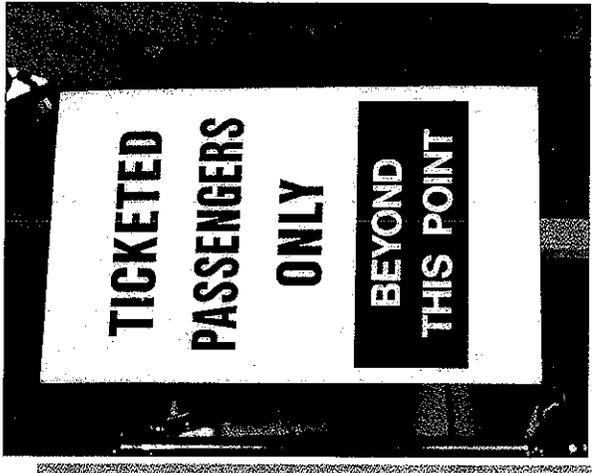
- A schoolwide discipline plan is posted in every room, bus (yes, bus), office, gymnasium, cafeteria, library, hall, and other locations where there is an employee responsible for the safety and education of the students.

- The plan has the same basic design so that when a student goes from room to room or to the office, cafeteria, bus, library, or recess, it is the same basic plan.

- Since everyone at the school uses the same plan with consistency, the students know what is expected of them and all members of the staff support one another. This also makes life much easier for new employees,

because a plan is already in effect.

- Introducing a discipline plan to each new class of students is easy because a plan, rooted in a prevailing culture, already exists at the school.



The best discipline plan is an industrywide or schoolwide discipline plan.

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The Two Kinds of Rules

The function of a rule is to prevent or encourage behavior by clearly stating student expectations. The two kinds of rules are general and specific.

General Rules. General rules are the more encompassing and may cover a plethora of behaviors. Here are some examples:

- Respect others.
- Take care of your school.
- Be polite and helpful.
- Keep the room (or cafeteria) clean.
- Behave in the library.

The advantage of general rules is that they offer flexibility in that a great deal of behavior can be covered by a few general rules.

The disadvantage of general rules is that they must be explained; otherwise students will not know exactly what behaviors are acceptable and not acceptable in the classroom. For instance, students must be told that respecting others includes no hitting, no stealing, no tattling, no name-calling, and so on.

Specific Rules. Specific rules are to the point and clearly cover one behavior. Here are examples:

- Be in class on time.
- Keep your hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
- Listen to instructions the first time they are given.
- Do not use vulgar or offensive language.
- Have all materials ready to use when the bell rings.

The advantage of specific rules is that they clearly state the expected student behavior.

The disadvantage of specific rules is that you are limited to no more than five rules. (See page 147.) Therefore, you must have good classroom management skills and know exactly what behaviors are important to you.

General or Specific Rules?

General rules are more successful when used by effective veteran teachers who have learned how to encourage good classroom behavior over the years. These teachers never raise their voices; they seldom get angry; they don't get flustered. All they do is give the student a signal, a wave of the hand, or a stare (See page 164), and the student behaves.

Specific rules are probably better for the newer teacher or the experienced teacher looking for a better discipline system. You can always move from specific rules to general rules during the school year as the students learn about your expectations of their behavior.

What Should My Rules Be?

Refrain from copying and using other people's rules. You cannot expect your students to behave if you do not know how you want them to behave. **It is essential that you state your specific behavior expectations.**

Here are some examples of specific rules that you may want to consider for your discipline plan.

Universal Specific Rules

1. Follow directions the first time they are given.
2. Raise your hand and wait for permission to speak.
3. Stay in your seat unless you have permission to do otherwise.
4. Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
5. No cursing or teasing.

Specific Rules for Elementary Grades

1. Wait for directions with no talking.
2. Eyes front when the teacher is talking.
3. Change tasks quickly and quietly.
4. Complete the morning routine.
5. Report directly to the assigned area.

Specific Rules for High School

1. Be in your seat when the bell rings.
2. Bring all books and materials to class.
3. No personal grooming during class time.
4. Sit in your assigned seat daily.
5. Follow directions the first time they are given.

Specific Rules for the Playground

1. Swing only forward and backward on the swings.
2. Do not throw ice or snow at anyone.
3. Sliding paths must be clear before you start your slide.
4. Only two on the seesaw or teeter-totter at a time.

Specific Rules for the Cafeteria

1. Follow correct traffic flow from serving counter to table and from table to trash to exit.
2. Make your seating choice and remain there.
3. All food is to be eaten in the cafeteria.
4. Raise your hand to be excused when finished eating.
5. Scrape food into bins with a rubber spatula and put utensils in the water.

These Are Not Good Rules

- Academic behavior should not appear on your list of rules. Such things as doing homework, writing in ink or typing, and turning in assignments fall into the realm of procedures (Chapter 20) and academic performance (Unit D). Your discipline plan should be concerned with behavior, not academic work.
- If possible, state rules positively. But recognize that sometimes a negative rule can be more direct, understandable, and incontestable.
 - No cursing or swearing.
 - No smoking.
 - No fighting on the playground.

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Have your phone number and zip code written on your security card. Have your name and five numbers written on your student ID card.

- Limit the number of items you can bring to school.

- If you do not know the rule, ask the teacher.

- The rule should be clear and specific.

- You have the right to be heard.

- As a new student, you may need to be replaced by another student.

How to Introduce Your Rules

It is important to introduce the discipline plan on the first day of school. Before you do so, check to see that the following things have been done:

- ✓ You have carefully planned for what you want to accomplish.
- ✓ You have written the rules to help you accomplish those goals.
- ✓ You have posted the rules, along with the consequences and rewards. (See Chapter 19.)
- ✓ You have welcomed the class (Unit B), introduced yourself (Chapter 13), and taken care of administrative duties (Chapter 16).

To introduce your discipline plan this is what you might say:

- Step 1.** "We are all here for **YOU**—for you to succeed and to enjoy this class. Because I care about each of you, I am here to help you. So I will not allow you to do anything that will interfere with your success in this class."
- Step 2.** "We will be working together this year. We need to have a class where you can come without fear of being ridiculed or threatened. Because I care about **ALL** of you, I will not allow you to do anything that will interfere with someone else who is trying to learn."

Why You Should Have Only Three to Five Rules

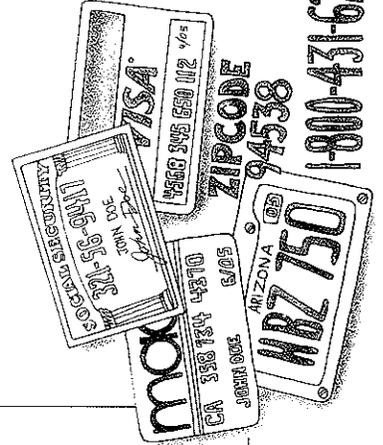
Have you ever noticed that your phone number, credit card, social security number, auto license number, and zip code are written in groups of five numbers or less? That is because people find it easier to remember numbers in groups of three to five.

- Limit rules to a number that you and the students can readily remember—never more than five.
- If you need more than five rules, do not post more than five at any one time.
- The rules need not cover all aspects of behavior in the classroom.
- You have the right to replace a rule with another.
- As a new rule becomes necessary, replace an older one with it. The rule you replace can be retained as an "unwritten rule," which the students have learned. The students are still responsible for the one you have replaced.

Good Rules

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Numbers in groups of three to five are easy to remember.

Step 3. “I am the teacher, and I am looking forward to being your teacher this year. I have an exciting year of learning planned for you, and I will not allow you to do anything to interfere with my desire to teach you. Nor will I allow you to do anything that will interfere with all of us having an enjoyable year.”

Step 4. “So that **YOU** can learn, so that **WE** can all learn, so that I can teach, I have a set of rules to ensure that we will have an orderly classroom.”

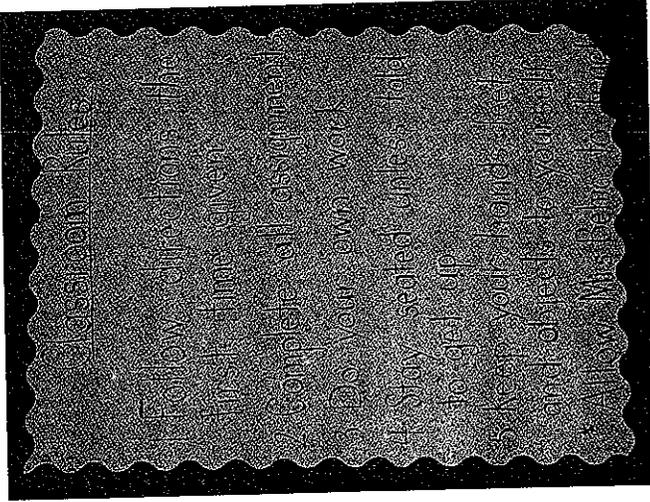
The rules should be written and permanently posted in the classroom and given to students on paper or copied by students into their notebook.

Should You Involve Students in Forming Rules?

You can involve the students in forming rules, but their role will necessarily be limited, for two reasons:

1. Schoolwide and district rules must be accepted as they are. These generally refer to such things as attendance, substance abuse, smoking, profanity, hitting, use of the facilities, and fund-raising activities. These and many more are in a policy book.
2. Classroom policies essential to managing instruction cannot be left to student discretion—for example, attentiveness, homework, and care of the classroom and equipment.

What is left is rather limited: gum chewing, eating, talking during seat work, and pencil sharpening. Most of these are not rules anyway and should be treated as procedures (Chapter 20).



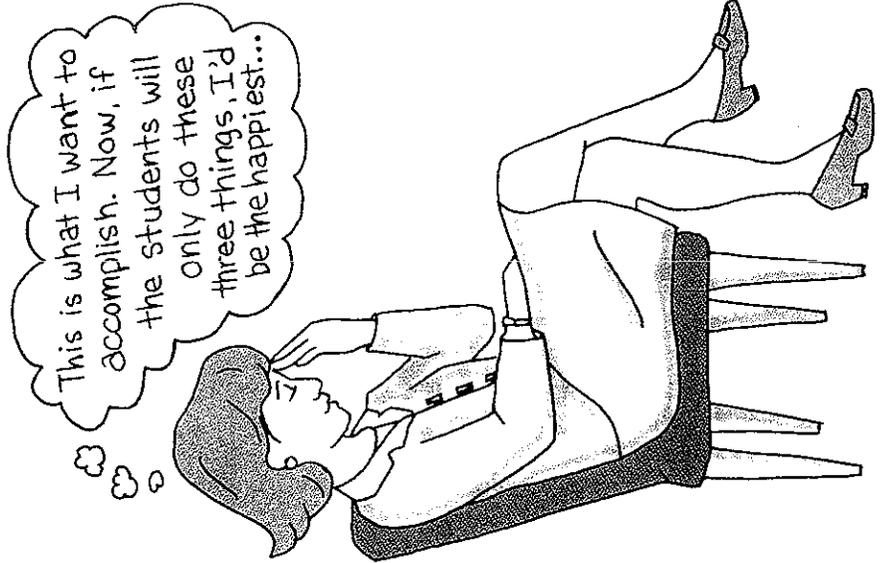
The discipline plan should be posted for the first day of school, with a copy ready for distribution to each student.

Rather than spend too much time with the whole class forming rules, it may be better to involve the class in discussing matters such as these:

- ✓ Why rules are needed
- ✓ Why a particular rule will help students succeed
- ✓ Specific examples of general rules, such as "What does it mean to 'respect others'?"

Read Chapter 20 before working on your discipline plan. What you think is a rule may be a procedure. Know the difference between a rule and a procedure.

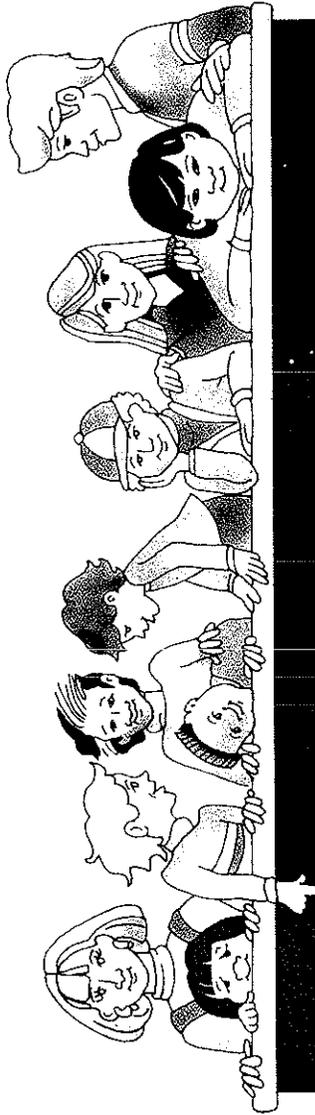
What should my rules be?
Just close your eyes and say to yourself . . .



District and School Rules

Many schools have rules prohibiting or requiring certain behaviors, and the teachers are expected to enforce these rules. It is to everyone's advantage to do so! A set of rules enforced consistently acquires greater legitimacy because the rules are everyone's rules. You must know the school rules.

- You can be sued for negligence if you allow a behavior that is forbidden and a student is injured.
- Find the rules in the teachers' handbook.
- Listen carefully at orientation, faculty, and department meetings.
- Ask your administrators, department head, another teacher, or the secretary about school and district rules.



The Effective Teacher

1. Has the discipline plan posted when the students arrive on the first day of school.
2. Posts a maximum of three to five rules or responsibilities.
3. Explains the posted rules and is willing to make changes as the class situation requires.

