
CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Classroom Management Tips for ASL Teachers

Creating a classroom where communication thrives

Teaching ASL presents unique classroom management opportunities. Unlike many other subjects, students rely on visual attention, eye contact, movement, and active participation.

Effective classroom management is not about controlling students. It is about creating an environment where communication can flourish.

Eight Habits That Hold a Class Together

Most of these are routines, not rules. Teach them early and they run themselves.

1

Gaining Students' Attention

Instead of raising your voice, use visual attention-getting techniques such as raising your hand, flashing the lights when appropriate, waving, using a visual timer, or counting down with your fingers. Teach these procedures during the first week so students know exactly how to respond.

2

Encourage Eyes Up

Students cannot learn a visual language while looking at phones, notebooks, or computers. Develop routines that encourage students to watch the signer, maintain eye contact, and focus on visual communication.

3

Keep Students Moving

Alternate between partner work, group activities, review games, storytelling, conversations, and movement. Long lectures reduce engagement, while active participation keeps students involved.

4

Rotate Partners Often

Help students become comfortable communicating with everyone in the classroom. Rotating partners improves receptive skills by exposing students to different signing styles.

5

Handle Mistakes Positively

Correct respectfully, encourage often, and celebrate improvement. Confidence comes before perfection.

6

Managing Different Skill Levels

Provide extension activities for advanced students, additional practice for those who need support, peer mentoring, and choice boards, so every learner is appropriately challenged.

7

Technology Is a Tool

Use technology to support learning, not to replace interaction. Encourage students to watch, practice, sign, and communicate using ASLdeafined and other classroom tools.

8

End Every Class with Purpose

Finish each lesson with a quick review, a reflection, a preview of tomorrow's lesson, or an exit ticket. Students should leave knowing what they accomplished and looking forward to the next class.

Paul's Best Practice

One of the best classroom management strategies is building relationships.

Students are much more likely to participate, cooperate, and support one another when they know their teacher genuinely cares about their success.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- ✗ Talking too much.
- ✗ Keeping students seated the entire class period.
- ✗ Using the same activity every day.
- ✗ Waiting too long to address distractions.
- ✗ Forgetting to encourage students.

Four Quick Wins

- ✓ Change activities every 10–15 minutes.
- ✓ Learn every student's name.
- ✓ Smile often.
- ✓ Keep students signing.

Reflection

Looking back over the term, ask yourself:

What one classroom routine has made the biggest difference in helping my students communicate successfully?

Continue Exploring

Continue with these Teacher Resources:

- ▶ [Helping Shy Students Gain Confidence](#)
- ▶ [Teaching Mixed-Ability ASL Classes](#)
- ▶ [Alternative Assessments](#)
- ▶ [50 Review Games for the ASL Classroom](#)
- ▶ [The First 30 Days](#)

Teaching ASL is about creating a classroom where students feel confident enough to communicate, curious enough to keep learning, and supported enough to take risks.

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