

Class Routines and Responsibilities

Social and emotional learning is not about controlling how students behave at school – it is about developing skills and mindsets they will use throughout their lives and creating the kinds of relationships and environments that help them do so. Clear and consistent routines and procedures create a supportive, trauma-informed home base for all students. When students grow familiar with class routines and begin to take ownership over these practices, it can also support the development of agency, leadership, and a sense of belonging.

Use this tool to consider what kinds of routines are helpful in your setting and plan ways to teach students to take on greater responsibility as the year progresses.

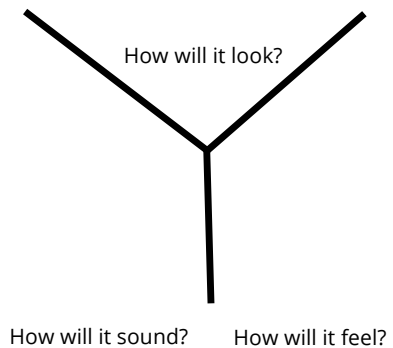
- 1. List the transitions and activities that occur in your classroom** that would benefit from a clear procedure and choose 3-4 that are conducive for student input and choice. Consider the list below as you brainstorm.
 - Entering the classroom
 - Writing down assignments and turning in assignments
 - Getting ready to leave the classroom
 - Getting students' attention
 - Having a discussion with a partner
 - Having a large-group discussion
 - Moving furniture to accommodate an activity, such as a Circle meeting, or re-setting the classroom after an activity
 - Welcoming a class visitor
 - Having a substitute teacher
 - Getting acquainted with team members after a new seating arrangement
 - Working with table groups
 - Re-focusing after a high-energy activity
 - Getting supplies or sharing classroom resources
 - Cleaning up
 - Taking a test
 - Starting a new unit
 - Sharing news and giving attention to whoever "has the floor"
 - Taking a break (either as a whole class, or allowing for individuals to determine that they need a break from an activity)

2. Describe the appropriate balance between teacher-directed structure and student choice. What *needs* to happen during this activity or transition for the good of the group or for your own well-being? What aspects can reasonably be discussed and decided upon by students? Draw a T chart as you reflect.

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| Transition/Activity: | |
| What <i>must</i> be true? Which aspects are <i>not</i> up for discussion? | What is open to student choice? Which aspects should be decided upon by students? |
| | |

3. Facilitate a class discussion about the need for the new routine and hear their ideas about how to shape the procedure.

- Objectively, describe what you have observed about what is happening now, without the routine.
- Explain how a clear routine/procedure would benefit the group (e.g., protect learning time, make sure materials are in good condition for next year’s students, ensure all voices are heard, keep everyone safe).
- Describe the non-negotiable parts: What needs to be true?
- Ask for ideas or offer choices: How should we do this together?
- If helpful, work together to create a Y chart like this example →



You may need some time to think through all their suggestions and come back to your class later with a proposal or a narrower set of choices. That’s okay! Be sure to be specific about how their ideas shaped the plan.

- 4. Plan the routine.** What steps will you and your students take to carry out the new routine smoothly? Remember, the goal of a routine is not to control students' movement and behavior, but rather to create a safe, predictable, and inclusive learning environment.

What are the steps in the process?

How was this process shaped with student input?

How can students assume more leadership over this routine as they learn and get comfortable with it?

What difference do you hope to see if this routine is successful? Be as specific as you can.

5. Practice the routine. Teach the process to your students and run through it together, enacting each step in a way that feels age appropriate

- Take the time to review the rationale for the new routine and explain how their input was influential.
- Model (or ask a few students to model) the routine and provide feedback or troubleshoot if necessary.
- Express that you are “trying” the routine together and it may not be perfect right away. As a group, you’ll check back in to discuss whether the routine is working and if there are any ideas to make it better.

6. Reflect on how it went. After a few attempts at using the routine, bring students back together for a group discussion or ask students to reflect in writing individually. What went well? What could be better?

Answer these questions yourself as well, and consider your response above – what did you hope to see if the routine was successful? Are you seeing any degree of change? What data would help you answer this question?