

Classroom Management



Classroom Signals

Signals are simple, nonverbal messages, such as hand or body gestures between the teacher and students. Classroom signals serve to communicate volumes without saying a word. Use signals to manage your students.

Use signals to relay instructions. Have your students communicate with you via signals to avoid disruptions. Signals will save you time and energy, and improve the lines of communication in your classroom. This SmartCard offers dozens of popular classroom signals, steps for establishing signals in your classroom, and ideas for developing your own signal system.



Steps for establishing signals

1

Settle on the Signals

Adopt or adapt some of the many signals on this SmartCard, create original signals to use with your class, or involve students in the creation of the signals. See Developing Signals on the back of this SmartCard for ideas to create or have students create new signals.

2

Teach the Signal

Start with sharing why the signal is important. Then model for students what the signal looks like, and review what it means. Create or have students create a poster with the signal name, an illustration and the steps for future reference.

3

Practise the Signal

Repeatedly practise the signal until students have it down pat. If it's a quiet signal, let the class get noisy then give the quiet signal. Repeat until students know the signal and respond successfully.

4

Re-establish the Signal

If your signal isn't working effectively, it's time to practise the signal. For example, if your quiet signal does not receive full attention within five seconds, stop the class and 1) review the importance of the signal, 2) model the signal and share the steps, 3) have students practise the signal until it is effective again.

Why Use Signals?

- **Save Time and Energy.** Giving a simple signal is much quicker than verbally communicating the same message. Like a picture, a signal can speak a thousand words.

- **Create Engagement.** Nonverbal cues are more engaging than verbal cues, especially when you use student signals and students respond to teacher signals with their own signals.

- **Reduce Interruptions.** Students can signal to the teacher that they're lost, to slow down, that they need to go to the toilets, that they need more time, or any number of messages without interrupting the class. A simple signal can say it all.

- **Make Learning Fun.** Signals are a secret classroom code. Students enjoy using them.

- **Foster Belonging.** Common to many groups is a unique language, often understood only by its members. Cultures have their own languages or dialects. Subcultures have their unique lingo or jargon. Sports teams have their secret codes and symbols. Creating a signal system establishes a classroom identity and fosters belonging. Send the message, "This is our class, and this is how we communicate".

- **Maintain Continuity.** Teacher instruction is predominantly verbal. Using words to manage the class can interrupt the flow of a lesson. Signals are a visual and kinesthetic mode of communication, and therefore don't interfere with the verbal lines of communication. Signals allow the teacher to relay messages to students without breaking the continuity of the lesson.