

Answers to the Second Edition of The Quick Guide to Classroom Management are given below.

The answers given here represent the author's personal opinions and experiences and should be used to form the basis of discussion and reflection. You may have your own thoughts to share – why not comment at the Rogers Community Forum or on Richard's blog?

[Question time! Page 23](#)

1. What is the purpose of marking? Why should we mark our students' work anyway?

Marking provides students with acknowledgement for the work they have done. Without marking, students can feel that their efforts are worthless – that their hard work is not appreciated.

Marking also allows teachers to provide feedback – pointing out 'mistakes' and the methods to correct them. When this is done in a caring, non-confrontational way, it really can help students to enjoy the process of constant personal improvement.

Marking also allows the teacher to become intimate with the skills, attributes, abilities and needs of a particular class of students. By checking classwork and homework regularly, teachers can find out information about:

- Key problems that seem to recur (e.g. calculation difficulties)
- Presentation skills and artistic ability
- Misconceptions picked up along the way (by individuals and by whole classes)
- Skills issues (e.g. not labeling diagrams correctly, failure to use a ruler when drawing tables, etc.)
- Effort and determination

On a final note; we must not forget that marking should also aim to encourage and motivate students. A few genuine and specific words of praise can have a massive impact on a child's sense of self-confidence.

2. Which ‘Golden Rule of Praise and Encouragement’ (page 18) is most important and why?

They’re all pretty important to be honest, but one does stand out as being particularly powerful: *‘Praise only works if it is sincere’*. Praise should never be faked – we do our students a massive disservice when we over-praise, or use flattery.

The real world doesn’t hand-out participation medals for showing up, nor does it reward mediocrity. In order to train each generation for the trials of life we must ensure that they have earned their praise – that effort has been shown to achieve the positive feedback; the certificate; the medal.

In addition to this, sincere praise is quite simply more effective than flattery. Children are not stupid – they know when we’re being honest and when we’re exaggerating. Be specific – find something worthwhile to celebrate.

Question time! Page 28

1. For the five examples of marked work on pages 22, 23, 25, 27 and 28, what distinctive comments/features benefit the student who’s receiving the work back?

There are a number of positives that we can glean from the different examples:

- The feedback is very specific: highlighting key terminology and concepts that the student must master. The comments on page 27, for example, say *“It’s better to describe this as ‘the nuclear envelope disappears/disintegrates’”* and *“‘poles’ is a better word than ‘ends’”*.
- Key ‘success skills’ are acknowledged and praised in the feedback, which will serve to build-up the student’s self-confidence and determination. *“An excellent piece of work, which clearly took time to complete. Well done for putting so much effort into this”* the feedback reads on page 28, for example. Here we see that skills needed to succeed in life (i.e. putting time and effort into our endeavors) are reinforced.

- Suggestions for further inquiry and study are given in the marked examples on pages 22 and 23, which is really handy for advanced/exam-level students. With comments like *“You should probably review the following topics.....”* (page 22) and *“You should probably go over growth curves and global warming”* (page 23) we give our students direction in a friendly, ‘I care about you’ way.

2. Are there any disadvantages of marking in this way?

It does take a lot of time to write lengthy comments like this on student work. I certainly wouldn’t advise that this be done for every assignment that the students submit. However, there are still ways to provide this depth of feedback without staying up late each night and using-up gallons of red ink:

- Train the kids in the correct use of peer and self-assessment and get them to delineate detail in their feedback to themselves and others (you can read more about peer and self-assessment techniques [here](#))
- Use the technique of ‘Live Marking’ – ask kids to come to your desk one at a time and mark their work in front of them, or walk around the class with a pen in hand and mark the kids’ work as they are doing it. This means that the marking gets done on-site, in class, in real-time. This saves you the hassle of taking piles of work home to mark on regular basis. You can read more about ‘Live Marking’ [here](#).
- Provide verbal feedback to your students, and get them to write a summary of what you said on the piece of work you discussed.

3. Are there any features of the students’ work I that failed to pick-up on in my marking?

There are probably quite a number of errors in some of the examples that I didn’t pick up on in my marking. Some that I can identify in hindsight are:

- Overall presentation in individual cases, including the underlining of titles and dates, quality of handwriting and the size of diagrams
- The level of detail apparent in some of the sketches

- Formatting preferences, such as the use of arrows to show the steps in the meiosis sequence in the work on pages 25 and 27

However, it is important to note that I deliberately did not comment on these points as I was more concerned with the conceptual detail in the work (which is what will get the student most of the marks in the final exam).

In order to build-up self-confidence in our students we must remember to only correct **SMALL *clusters of problems*** at a time. Once a student has mastered the conceptual detail, for example, we can then focus on getting the presentation right. An overly-critical approach when marking can cause more harm than good – causing students to feel disappointed and resulting in hours and hours of your time wasted in the process of marking.

[Question time! Page 46](#)

1. Why do games matter? How do they enhance our teaching?

Games serve to disrupt the monotony of a lesson and get kids excited about what they have learned; or are learning. They can offer a number of benefits, including:

- Reinforcing key vocabulary and terminology
- Building up relationships between peers and interpersonal skills
- Creating suspense and healthy competition
- Building a sense of accomplishment; which then creates memory
- Getting the kids moving: sending oxygen to key parts of the brain to enhance learning
- Disrupting tiredness and lethargy
- Builds creativity by allowing students to think about concepts in unconventional ways
- Develops fondness for the subject and builds-up that ever-crucial *student-teacher rapport*

So it's clear – games are really beneficial and you don't need a ton of money, resources or time to set them up.

2. Is there an age-limit at which games start to become ineffective? Are there particular game 'types' that appeal to older high-school students, but don't appeal to younger ones?

In my personal experience, I've found that games work with kids at any age. You might get a few awkward grumbles from students aged 13 and upwards when they have to get out of their seats and move a bit, but once they get into the swing of things they tend to have a jolly old time!

In terms of game 'types' and how this relates to age: I haven't found any direct relationship in my teaching experience. I would imagine that games like Bingo and the Poster Game may require greater prior explanation for primary-school kids, and you may find that younger kids 'fight' a bit during games like 'Splat', but overall all of the game types appeal to high school kids of any age.

You can see the games mentioned in [The Quick Guide to Classroom Management](#) in full color [here](#) and [here](#)).

[Question time! Page 81](#)

1. Do you know any 'positive deviants' at your school? What attributes do they have?

The answer to this question will depend very much on your own personal work environment.

I can share my own personal experiences with you in an effort to highlight the qualities you should look for.

When I was training to be a teacher and doing my PGCE I was lucky enough to be mentored by an amazing Biology teacher. The school I was training at was challenging, with students coming predominately from low-income families in an area of high crime. Kids came to school with a range of different forms of emotional 'baggage', and they would generally misbehave whenever the opportunity arose. It was difficult to maintain their interest and focus in lessons.

My mentor didn't have the same problems as I did, however. When I observed his lessons I noticed that the same kids that were misbehaving

in my classes were attentive and focussed in his. After careful study of this phenomenon, I discovered that this 'positive deviant' was doing the following in his teaching:

- Listening very carefully to his students, respecting every question that came his way and offering the best answer he could
- Using voice inflections to sound interested in the topic he was teaching (because he was, genuinely, interested)
- Deploying activities to engage the students, such as practical work
- Using the students' names to address them (I've always found it difficult to remember student names)
- Using 'professional intelligence' – knowledge of student interests and their 'whole lives' to build rapport. Common conversations he would have with his students would go something like this:

“How’s your dad these days? Is she still working as an engineer?”

“I heard you did some great work in art class with Mrs. Stevens this week. Tell me about it.”

I've worked with so many excellent colleagues over the past 16 years. Teachers who have inspired me have had strengths in many areas, including the following:

- Organization – I've learnt a lot about recycling resources, organizing homework and marking student work promptly from my colleagues over the years
- Displays – some teachers are just naturals at creating beautiful classroom displays. A beautiful classroom is always conducive to learning.
- Student-teacher rapport: I have learnt a lot about building rapport through showing a genuine care and concern for all of my students by following the examples of others.

2. How can you share your skills and expertise with your colleagues at school? Could you use technology to help with this?

The first thing I'd like to say about this is that the teaching profession offers its family of educators two main opportunities: the opportunity to teach students and the opportunity to teach colleagues.

The past five years have given me tremendous scope to share my knowledge with people from all over the world – through this website, my books, social media and training sessions.

I can tell you this – teaching your colleagues can often be just as rewarding as teaching your students.

We can share our expertise with our colleagues in many ways, including:

- Running CPD sessions, perhaps after school on a rotational basis or during INSET/teacher-training days
- Through blogs (WordPress is great as it allows people to comment and join in with the discussion – you can even comment at the bottom of this page, for example)
- Virtual Learning Environments, where materials can be posted and shared with a network. Google Classroom, Firefly and Moodle are all great for this.
- Hosting or attending coffee mornings or meetups in your town or city. Check out [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) – there's bound to be a teacher-training group on there. If there isn't, then set one up.

[Question time! Page 89](#)

1. Do you remember a teacher you didn't like when you were a kid at school? What factors or experiences do you think led to this?

When students don't 'like' a particular teacher, it tends to be for one or more of the following reasons:

The teacher.....

- ***... promised something and didn't keep their word***
- ***... is too strict with sanctions and punishes inconsistently***
- ***... doesn't recognize the hard-work and effort of the 'good kids', but showers praise on the 'disruptive kid' who has a good day***
- ***... is consistently boring (and the root causes of this are numerous but mainly include a lack of personal interest in the subject or teaching in general, or dissatisfaction in one's role at school)***

- ... doesn't take their role seriously and is too lax in setting boundaries or covering/reinforcing syllabus content (particularly important for exam-level classes)
- ... the teacher made a mistake that hurt the student on an emotional level, and didn't recognize this or apologize for the mistake

I cannot stress this enough – the negative behaviors we exhibit as teachers may be remembered, and even resented, by our students for many years into their adulthood.

I certainly had my fair share of bad teachers, and I personally only came to peace and forgave them in my mid-late twenties, when I realized how difficult teaching was (but I haven't forgotten all of them, I'm sorry to say):

- The primary school head teacher who called me into his office and spanked me royally with a slipper because I stole a bag of crisps (I was five-years-old)
- The chemistry teacher who shouted *“Are you thick?”* at me when, at 17-years-old, I heated up a beaker with a Bunsen Burner and the bottom cracked
- The maths teacher who gave me an extension on my homework because of medical reasons, and then told me off because I handed the work in late (she'd forgotten about the extension)
- And, the worse – that Year 2 teacher who didn't like me at all (I was a handful at that age, I'll admit) and who, when I went to Year 3 with my new teacher, walked into the classroom and, in a very sarcastic and malevolent tone of voice, said *“Hello Richard, I reaaallllly miss you”*.

We have to remember that our words and actions are powerful, and when we are working with impressionable young people our impact is unpredictable and can even be life-changing.

2. Why is it important that kids 'like' their teachers, and not just the subjects they are taught?

Learning is an emotional process, and students must have a professional, but positive connection with their teachers. When a student doesn't 'like' a teacher, the following may happen:

- The student may feel that he or she cannot approach the teacher to ask for help, and this can be really paralyzing to the learning process when students have big difficulties with homework, coursework or even the conceptual understanding of classwork.
- Non-compliance becomes more common, and students may use the excuse of *'I just don't like my teacher'* to give-up and not put forth enough effort
- Retention of content covered in class drops

It's also worth mentioning that making our students 'like' us may not be the best goal or objective in every situation. There are times when we may have to take actions that our students don't like, such as:

- Sanctioning them for poor behaviour
- Having a serious conversation when grades slip
- Giving out detentions so that work can be completed
- A phone call to parents to resolve a situation
- Referral to a senior manager when a situation arises that affects the health, safety or well-being of a student

In my experience, even when we have to carry out the serious side of the job and show vigilance in our actions, most students will understand provided that our actions are:

- Fair and consistent
- Logical

Giving a detention for missed homework and then telling the student to sit in silence for 30 mins during that detention is not logical, for example. That 30 mins should have been spent completing the missed work (You can read more about the effective use of detentions [here](#)).

3. What are the challenges involved in getting kids to 'like' us?

There are a number of significant obstacles standing in the path of the educator who wishes to be liked by his or her students. All of them, however, are surmountable.

The first key mistake that teachers make (especially newbies) is that they interpret the word 'like' as meaning 'becoming popular'. Wanting

our students to 'like' us is not necessarily the same as wanting to be popular.

A classic example that always comes up is that of the teacher who doesn't give out any homework: not because that's school policy necessarily, but because he wants to keep his kids 'happy'. This turns out to be an oxymoron however, as kids generally like teachers who are vigilant and rigorous, although they may not say that to you directly.

When we say that we want our students to 'like' us, what we actually mean is that we want our teaching styles, our professional personalities and our various mannerisms to be liked by our students. This is an important consideration to keep in mind as maintaining 'professional distance' between ourselves and our students is not only vital for safeguarding our careers: it is also essential for creating the only ambiance through which effective teaching can be delivered.

Plainly speaking: if we're not professional, we won't be liked.

Another obstacle in this path is that it takes hard work and time to generate the level of rapport necessary to be deemed a 'likeable' teacher:

- Lessons need to be consistently energetic and varied in style**
- Feedback needs to be detailed, regular and sincere**
- Deadlines need to be honored by the teacher (i.e. set homework when you say you will, collect it in when you say and provide feedback in a timely manner)**
- Praise must permeate most of your interactions with your students**
- Subject knowledge needs to be secure, so that confidence in the material is high**
- Personal interest in the subject needs to be high**
- Rewards and sanctions need to be used fairly, with rewards being used much more than sanctions**

It all sounds complicated, doesn't it? Perhaps I should have started with the sentence that really sums it all up: actually give a damn about your students. Care about them, sincerely. Everything else will naturally come from this.

You can read more about the power of showing a genuine care and concern for your students at my popular blog post: [Actually Giving a Damn: The ONLY Thing That Matters?](#)

[Question Time! Page 119](#)

1. What key challenges does student coursework present to a teacher?

Teachers must be really vigilant to ensure that the following are in place when facilitating the completion of student coursework:

- **Clear deadlines:** You may have deadlines for part-submissions, first and second drafts and the final piece of work. These deadlines should be non-negotiable where possible – this ensures that all students receive fair treatment and prevents the work from dragging on and on into key times within the academic year (e.g. when the kids should be focusing on exam revision).
- **A good system of organisation:** Back in the day when students did their coursework by hand, storing and looking after this work was a big challenge. Students and teachers would sometimes lose the work – a nightmare for everyone. Back everything up on an external memory stick, hard drive or USB/flash drive. Better still: use cloud storage to keep documents safe – Dropbox and Google Drive are both great for this.
- **Learning to let go:** It's important to remember that even if the student were to draft and re-draft his or her work for the next ten years, there would still be more stuff they could add/tweak. Sticking to the deadlines without compromise provides closure for you and your students. Without this, the work will drag on and on unnecessarily.
- **Teacher support systems:** Some examination boards stipulate an exact amount of time that the subject teacher is allowed to spend mentoring the student through their coursework. Make sure you know what the exact requirements of your exam board are, and think carefully about suitable support systems you can put in place (e.g. the ability for the students to seek help from other teachers).
- **Training:** Coursework can become complicated – both for the student doing the work and the teacher doing the mentoring. You may need specialist training. Most exam boards provide this training, but it may come at a cost. Ask your school to fund this

training for you, outlining the benefits it will bring to your students. If your school refuses, then consider investing the money yourself – the certification can be a very valuable addition to your CV.

- **Marking criteria:** Official coursework should always come with some kind of grading rubric/marketing criteria. Become familiar with this, and share it with your students.
- **Skills training for the students:** Students will often need specialist training prior to completing official coursework. In IB Diploma Chemistry, for example, students need to have covered a certain number of topics on the syllabus and have received practical skills and data manipulation training before they can even begin their coursework. This needs to be worked into your medium-term planning.
- **Overlap avoidance:** This is a tricky one, but basically you don't want to be in a situation where your students are completing multiple pieces of coursework for different teachers all at the same time. Get together as a teaching team and work out your 'coursework time' by subject area, avoiding overlap where possible.

2. What strategies can we use to motivate our students when they are completing coursework?

I have to say that this can be quite tricky with some students – especially at times when:

- The student has little interest in your subject as it does not match his or her career aspirations
- The student is generally unmotivated and under-performing in multiple subject areas
- The student is particularly unorganized

I think that, first and foremost, our students need to be made aware of the percentage weighting that the coursework counts for. A student is more likely to show some interest if they know that they will walk into the exam with a potential 20% in marks already achieved from coursework, or whatever the percentage may be.

Other strategies to use include:

- Showing exemplar work from previous students and from the exam board itself – this will give your students a good idea of the structure/format that their project should take, as well as setting a benchmark to aspire to
- Having one-on-one conversations with students at regular intervals along the way. This kind of ‘mentoring’ can really help those students who are shy to open up about their problems in front of the class, or those who won’t naturally come to the teacher for help out of their own volition.
- Providing tools to make life easier for the students. Recommend websites to go to. Book the computer room, the school laptop cart or school tablet trolley. Allow the use of mobile phones if students have a genuine intent to use them for research.
- If permitted, provide feedback on a first draft. This will really help the students to pinpoint things they need to improve in the project.
- Provide really clear deadlines and stick to them. Don’t assume that a single deadline announcement is enough – remind your students regularly via e-mail, VLEs, MOOCs, verbal reminders, notes in their diaries, etc.
- Use the tremendous power of Subtle Reinforcement to remind your students of their past achievements, their capabilities and character. When a student ‘hits a wall’ or feels disinterested, remind them what they have done in the past: “I remember the young man who scored a goal at last week’s football match. It was cool. Show that same tenacity here – I know you can do this. I am here to help. Go for it.” Read my [blog post on Subtle Reinforcement here](#).
- Be approachable – assure your students regularly that not only can they come to you for help, but that it is your PLEASURE to help them out.
- Hold clinics for coursework when it’s happening: Maybe you can team up with other colleagues in your department for this. One strategy that a previous school of mine used was a rotational ECA where for one hour after school each week a Science teacher was on-hand and available to help with coursework issues.

[Reflection Time! Page 127](#)

1. What does this interview teach us about the importance of teacher behaviors in motivating students to learn?

Jeff reveals quite a few interesting insights into the kinds of teacher behaviors that have influenced him during his time at high school:

- **He mentions a teacher that would play a song during class to lighten the mood and create some humor. This increased the enjoyment level of the students in the class, which would inevitably have made their experience at school a happier one. Jeff also mentions his Biology lessons in which his teacher engages two particular students who have trouble with English pronunciation by saying the words in British and American English. This is quite a powerful, all-encompassing technique as the teacher reinforces key vocabulary, shows humanity (doing this activity because he cares for his students) and creates some humor to lighten the mood in the lesson.**
- **‘Control’ over the class is mentioned, and this can be a particularly problematic issue for new teachers, and those who find it hard to manage behavior generally (and even experienced teachers may have behavior management issues). I’ve written a number of blog posts about behavior management (see this one, for example) and there’s a whole chapter dedicated to this in my book. The reason that such importance is placed on this topic is that no decent learning can take place if a class is not ‘harmonious’. This means that the teacher is in control, but is not seen as an autocratic dictator to be feared.**
- **Teachers can subtly make students aware of their progress over time, even when that progress is minimal. Seeing their progress, students gradually become more confident in the subject being taught. It would appear, at least from Jeff’s perspective, that his mathematics teacher made the subject difficult at the beginning/taught the most difficult topics at first so that students would see their progress as the subject became easier and so that he would achieve a class in which only the most dedicated students remained/stayed-on. Clearly, for compulsory classes where students cannot change part-way through a semester, this approach may not be the most effective. It certainly does provide some interesting points for discussion, however: is it better to deliver difficult content at the beginning, or towards the end, of the academic year? Can progress be ‘engineered’ from the start? (I believe it can, by the way).**
- **Again referring to his Geography class, Jeff describes a cut-and-stick technique the teacher uses to give the kids some practice in**

handling exam-style questions. The teacher didn't have to do this – he could simply have printed sets of questions for the students to complete. This extra effort on his part, however, made the learning much more interactive and probably more memorable and beneficial for the students taking part. This would have involved good pre-planning and time-management by the subject teacher, as the activity and resources would have had to have been ready prior to the lesson.

What did we learn about the subliminal cues that Jeffrey picked up from his teachers as he progressed through high school?

In order to answer this question, we must first understand what is meant by the term 'subliminal cues'. My understanding is that subliminal cues are the ways in which teachers communicate non-verbally with their students. As a rough guide, it includes:

- Dress
- Voice inflections
- Body image
- Mannerisms
- Hobbies and interests
- Effort and passion put into lesson delivery
- Effort and passion put into feedback

On page 121, Jeffrey describes how his teacher created an activity in which the students took questions that had been cut up in order to complete them in groups. Just by designing this unconventional activity, the teacher demonstrates the power of employing just a little bit of effort and creativity to ensure an effective outcome. This is a great lesson in-and-of itself – that effort reaps rewards.

The personality trait of being caring is described by Jeffrey on two occasions on page 122. He describes how teachers can care for students during times of high stress, such as when they are preparing for exam. He even mentions that just 'pretending to care' can be beneficial for building student confidence. Jeffrey also makes the connection between being a caring teacher and being friendly/approachable.

This issue of teachers being ‘approachable’ is rather a significant one, as teachers who genuinely care for their students enact profound results:

- Student confidence improves (in terms of their confidence in the subject and their confidence in approaching the teacher for help)
- Knowledge and understanding improves
- The implication is that when those students become adults, they will be inspired to be more caring to others as a result of the care shown to them by their teachers

I’ve written a separate blog post about the power of teachers who care here: [Actually Giving a Damn: The ONLY Thing That Matters.](#)

On page 123, Jeffrey alludes to the fact that most of the good teachers he remembers all had a good sense of humor, and he mentions one of his teachers who; it seems, chats with his students in a relaxed manner in order to get to know them as people. He then emphasizes; again, the fact that this teacher makes the students feel like he cares for them. He also mentions that this teacher is ‘friendly’.

It seems that teachers who were friendly, approachable and caring (or who at least seemed to care) had the biggest impact on Jeffrey, and made the best impressions.

Jeffrey goes back to the theme of teachers having a sense of humor on page 124. He mentions a teacher who helps two girls with their English pronunciation in Biology class (which is really an expression of the teacher’s care and concern, mixed with a sprinkling of humor and spice). He also mentions his teacher ‘making a fool out of himself’ by singing a Michael Jackson song, which is another colorful expression of the teacher’s natural personality. Being ‘less formal’ is something that Jeffrey mentions too – again relating to the relaxed atmosphere that a teacher can create through the expression of his or her personality.

A few points to note on the subject of subliminal cues are mentioned on pages 125 and 126. The idea of keeping ‘control’ over a class, particularly in a public school setting, is an opinion that Jeffrey kindly shares with us. You can read my blog post about [behavior management techniques here.](#) Jeffrey also mentions how his mathematics teacher seems to have engineered the progress seen in the class over time, and

Jeffrey mentions that the reason he loves maths so much is that it has been very satisfying for him to see his progress over time.

It's possible that Jeffrey's maths teacher engineered progress by making the course more difficult at the start. This is mere speculation, however, and the fact that Jeffrey felt that the course got easier over time shows us that his maths teacher deployed some very effective 'progress engineering techniques'. You can read my blog post; [Can Progress be Engineered From the Start, here.](#)

3. What can we, as teachers, take from this interview to make us better practitioners?

Answering this question really involves condensing down the information gleaned from answering the previous two questions.

The teachers that made the most impact in Jeffrey as he was progressing through school had the following personality and competency traits:

- They were caring – this is a strong and prevalent theme mentioned by Jeffrey**
- They were approachable**
- They had a sense of humor, and knew how to create a relaxed classroom environment**
- They engineered progress, or at least created conditions in which progress could be allowed to flourish**