

## Classroom management skill

# Acknowledgement and praise

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Effective classroom management creates safe and supportive learning environments for all students. This practice resource is part of a suite of foundational resources for beginning teachers, teachers working in new environments, or experienced teachers who want to refine or refresh specific elements of their classroom management practice. They can be used to individually reflect on and refine one's own practice, or as shared resources to support mentoring and other collaborative and whole-school approaches to improving classroom management.

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO)'s guidance is based on a [synthesis](#) of the most rigorous and relevant research evidence and guidance on classroom management from a wide range of research experts and expert practitioners across Australia and internationally.

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Acknowledging and praising is a skill that supports and maintains positive student behaviour. Related practice resources to refine other skills focus on [circulation](#), [clear communication](#), [deliberately pausing](#), [non-verbal correction](#), [scanning](#) and [voice control](#).

Verbal or non-verbal acknowledgement should be used frequently to recognise students demonstrating expected behaviours.

Praise emphasises the effort students have made to exceed behaviour expectations specific to them. It's important to note that some students prefer praise to be delivered privately.



Acknowledgement	Praise
<b>Used when individual or class expectations have been met</b>	<b>Used when individual or class expectations have been exceeded</b>
‘Thank you, [Name], for lining up quietly with your books ready.’	‘Great job, [Name]. You have really made an effort today to focus on your own work. You asked some excellent questions.’
‘Thank you, class. You raised your hands when you had an answer and you waited for me to ask someone.’	‘Brilliant job, class. I am very pleased with how you worked together. You all used group voices well.’

## The importance of acknowledgement and praise

Acknowledgement and praise help build positive connections with students, create a positive classroom environment, and highlight and reinforce expected student behaviours. This helps students to know which behaviours are appropriate in the classroom environment.

Students appreciate frequent recognition of their efforts. Acknowledging and praising behaviour demonstrates to students that you care about them and validates their positive behaviour.

## Rehearsing acknowledgement and praise

It's important to rehearse without students present. The elements for success in this section provide a clear picture of effectively implementing this skill. They also provide a focus for feedback and reflection to improve your use of this skill.

Further guidance on effective rehearsal can be accessed in the [Classroom Management Resources: User Guide](#).

### Elements for success

#### Acknowledgement

- Regular tone
- Focus on expected behaviours
- General or specific
- Frequent

#### Praise

- Enthusiastic tone
- Focus on behavioural effort
- Specific
- When expectations have been exceeded (individual, group or class)

### Rehearsing on your own

Script and rehearse how you would acknowledge or praise students in these scenarios, or in common scenarios in your school:

- A student consistently uses a voice louder than outlined in expectations for a learning task, which often disturbs their peers' learning. You have recently seen them making a noticeable effort to talk at the expected volume.
- Students lining up outside the classroom as expected, safely, quietly and with the required equipment.
- A student held the door open for other students entering the library.

Read your scripts aloud. Record your rehearsal and self-assess using the elements for success. Repeat your rehearsal or rescript as necessary, until all elements for success have been demonstrated smoothly and with confidence.

## Rehearsing with a colleague

Use the scenarios from the [Rehearsing on your own](#) section to rehearse with a colleague, asking them to play the role of the student. Alternatively, review your recording with a colleague. Ask your colleague to provide feedback using the elements for success and identify:

- What went well?
- Which elements require refinement?

Rehearse again, incorporating feedback until all elements for success have been demonstrated smoothly and with confidence.

## Practising acknowledgement and praise

Practise when students are present. Use acknowledgement and praise:

- from the first moment you engage with students each day – for example, at the school gate, in the corridor and as students [assemble and enter the classroom](#)
- when you [pause](#) and [scan](#) to monitor all students
- when [circulating](#) during learning tasks, with a focus on students' behaviour and effort
- before [responding to disengaged and disruptive behaviours](#), unless the behaviour is unsafe, in which case, it needs to be addressed immediately.

Ask a colleague to observe 10 to 15 minutes of a lesson, using the elements for success to identify the effectiveness of your use of acknowledgement and praise and any areas for refinement.

## Questions for reflection

- How are your students responding immediately after you use acknowledgment or praise?
- How consistent are you in using acknowledgement and praise to reinforce behaviour?
- How is your use of acknowledgement and praise impacting your students' behaviour?
- How might you use acknowledgement and praise to improve the motivation of individual students to meet behaviour expectations?

## For more practical guidance

AERO has developed a suite of resources to support teachers and school leaders to refine or refresh their foundational practices in creating safe and supportive learning environments through effective classroom management. You can read the [Classroom Management Resources: User Guide](#) for an overview of these resources and suggestions for their use.