

**Article Review: “How to Handle a Student Who Yells at You”**

**Source:** <https://www.smartclassroommanagement.com/2016/04/16/how-to-handle-a-student-who-yells-at-you/>, accessed 24 Jan 2018.

**Review**

This article would benefit from being outlined first:

- 1) When confronted by a student, it is important at first to
  - a) Not react instinctively with explanations or defensive postures
  - b) Consider how to de-escalate the situation
- 2) De-escalation step #1: Delay
  - a) Your goal is to calm them down and avoid confrontation.
  - b) Do not respond directly to the student’s complaint.
  - c) Stay cool and relaxed.
  - d) Pretend it’s no big deal.
  - e) Say calming words, like “I understand what you are saying. We’ll get back to this. But let’s move on now.”
  - f) Then move on as quickly as you can.
- 3) Step #2: Fix
  - a) Do not explain yourself or your decisions to anyone who is disrespectful.
  - b) After student settles down, clarify rules, protocols, procedures to the entire class.
  - c) Get to the point, be brief, provide facts only.
- 4) Step #3: Enforce
  - a) If the behavior is very brazen or there is continued disrespect, consider going directly to an appropriate consequence.
  - b) Deliver the news of the consequence and turn away.
  - c) Document the behavior.
  - d) Send student to administrator if needed.
- 5) Step #4: Review
  - a) Review the rules with the class in a day or two after the incident.
  - b) Focus on your rule concerning disrespect.
  - c) Define it and reiterate it won’t be tolerated.
  - d) Remind students the classroom is for learning and teaching, and that it won’t be disrupted.
- 6) Important:
  - a) Keep your contact with the offending student to a minimum.
    - i) Pulling them aside, counseling, forcing an apology, convincing them of your point of view just weakens your leverage and influence.
    - ii) Let accountability do your talking.
  - b) Do not take their disrespect personally.
  - c) Respond later with
    - i) Simple kindness
    - ii) No-hard-feelings acceptance

When I consider this article, I see a valid and viable strategy for a community college classroom. It does not require a lot of time, it treats students like adults, it educates the entire class, and it is easy to remember when the professor is in a stressful situation.

I particularly like the “Delay” step. This might give the class a chance to relax, too, knowing a confrontation is avoided. It also shows the disruptive student that you aren’t going to be baited.

The “Fix” step is important for the community college classroom in that it should help everyone recall the rules, which should be listed in syllabus. Some might have forgotten, and some might not have read it at all but it enforces them in a timely manner.

The “Enforce” step is a good reminder to me to turn away after I make my statement. I realize now that continuing to look at the student is a good way to encourage them to keep misbehaving.

The final advice, to respond later with simple kindness and acceptance, is excellent. I have had students who have misbehaved and then corrected themselves worry about coming back into my room. They know they can’t take back what they did. I tell them directly that that incident is in the past and forgiven. We are good to move forward. Then, later, I make it a point to make eye contact and smile at them. This works.

My challenge will be to keep calm in the initial confrontation. Other sources have suggested counting to ten while looking thoughtful. Looking away from the student and rubbing your chin has had the effect of making the student think you are considering some highly effective punishment. Then they are relieved when you respond pleasantly. But what it is really doing is giving you time to calm down.

The phrase I think that will help me the most is “Let accountability do your talking for you.” It is the ultimate in treating students as adults.

### **Article Text in Full**

#### **How to Handle A Student Who Yells At You**

*by Michael Linsin on April 16, 2016*

Recently, I received an email from a teacher who was yelled at by a student.

Her class had been in the middle of a learning game, and everything was going smoothly.

Or so she thought.

The students were playing by the rules. They were having fun and enjoying each other.

They were playing cooperatively.

In fact, she was thrilled with how well the activity was going.

But then, out of the blue, a student stood up and accused her of favoring one team over another.

When she tried to explain, he began arguing with her.

When she defended herself and her decisions and assured him that she would never do such a thing, he became furious.

He began yelling, pointing his finger at her, and calling her a cheater. It was an ugly scene, and the teacher was left shaken and unsure of how to handle it.

This isn't the first email we've received on this topic. And it won't be the last. Confrontations like this are happening more frequently.

In this day and age, students seem more aggressive when they feel slighted and less willing to listen to another point of view. Further, many have never had anyone show them, or model for them, what respect looks like.

This underscores the importance of first deescalating the situation—in order to ensure your safety and the safety of your students—before teaching a life-lesson the offending student won't soon forget.

Here's how:

### **1. Delay**

The instant you recognize—or think you recognize—a student becoming angry, your singular goal is to calm them down and avoid confrontation.

In the case above, the moment the student stood up, the teacher should have gone into deescalation mode.

The best way to do this is to delay.

*Do not respond directly to the student's complaints.* Doing so will only make things worse.

Instead, stay cool and relaxed, pretend it's no big deal, and say *"It's okay. I understand what you're saying. I can see how you might feel that way. I promise I'll fix it, but let's finish the game first."*

Then move on as quickly as you can. Go ahead and let the student complain a bit longer if they wish or get in a last word. Delay, delay, delay, and they'll calm down.

### **2. Fix**

You are under no obligation to explain yourself or your decisions to any student who speaks to you or approaches you disrespectfully—nor should you. It only encourages more disrespect.

However, after the student settles down, it's smart to set the record straight by clarifying your rules, protocols, or procedures related to the game or activity *to the entire class*.

This allows you to defend your decisions as the teacher and leader of the classroom while at the same time fulfilling your promise to "fix it."

Get to the point, be brief, and provide facts only.

### **3. Enforce**

Your classroom management plan should include an addendum that allows you to skip the warning stage and jump directly to a more appropriate consequence.

Any incident of brazen or continued disrespect should be met with your strongest consequence—which may include an extended time-out for elementary students or detention for high school students—plus a notification of parents.

The behavior should also be documented and, if it was in any way threatening, aggressive, or potentially dangerous, then officially referred to an administrator.

*(Note: Although we have strong opinions about how administrators should best handle severe misbehavior, and support and protect classroom teachers, we are a website dedicated to helping teachers. We do not provide advice for principals on this blog.)*

Only after the student has forgotten about the incident, which may be much later in the day, or even the next, should you approach, deliver the news of your consequence, and then turn on your heel and walk away.

#### **4. Review**

Students tend to repeat the behavior they see from others.

This is one reason why a class can get out of control so quickly. Therefore, it's important that you review your rules again a day or so after the incident.

Severe misbehavior can act as an agent to *improve* behavior and politeness class-wide. Whenever you have a dramatic incident or a particularly bad day, you should view it as an opportunity to teach a valuable lesson to the entire class.

Focus on your rule concerning disrespect.

Be sure and define once again what it looks like and reiterate that it won't be tolerated, that you won't allow anyone or anything to upset the experience of being a member of your class.

Finish your review by reminding your students that the goal of your classroom management plan is to safeguard their right to learn and enjoy school and your right to teach great lessons.

#### **Limiting Contact**

As counterintuitive as it may seem, the less contact you have with the offending student, the less likely a similar incident will happen in the future.

We'll delve deeper into this topic in future articles, but just know that pulling them aside to counsel, patch things up, force an apology, or convince them of your point of view will only weaken your leverage and influence.

#### **Let accountability do your talking for you.**

By not taking their disrespect personally, but instead keeping your cool and following through on your promise to protect learning, your respect in the eyes of *all* your students will grow.

The offending student, especially, is often changed by the experience. So much so that they'll begin treating you with reverence and even admiration.

When you then show them—through your simple kindness and no-hard-feelings acceptance—what grace, forgiveness, and true respect looks like . . .

You'll forever change how they view the world.