

Classroom Management Guide

General Advice: Listen, Show Compassion, and Try to Help

1. Include an academic and classroom conduct policy in the syllabus.
2. Clearly establish expectations for course structure and student performance.
3. Pay attention to changes in performance, behavior, or appearance.
4. Realize that a student's poor attitude probably has nothing to do with you.
5. If a student puts a lot of effort into the course but does not get positive results, talk with the student to find out why.
6. Routinely ask students how they're doing. Normalize the process of asking about students' wellbeing so that students of concern don't feel targeted.
7. Before referring students to campus services, probe to verify their true needs.
8. To draw comparisons, ask students how they're doing in other classes.
9. When discussing sensitive topics, meet with the student in your office.
10. When discussing sensitive topics, focus on positives—such as the student's strengths, the benefits of a different strategy, or the unique opportunity of free counseling.
11. Avoid becoming a confidant; focus on behaviors that affect academic performance.
12. Address only specific, observable behavior: "*I noticed that you appear uncomfortable during tests.*"
13. Instead of jumping to conclusions, ask what's causing specific behaviors.
14. Avoid characterizations or words that might put the student on the defensive, such as claiming the student has a "problem."
15. Refrain from labeling or diagnosing the student or otherwise playing character judge or health-care professional.
16. Do not downplay what bothers the student, regardless of how insignificant you perceive it to be.
17. Repeat what the student says to confirm the student's statements and show attentiveness.
18. Ask questions to determine if the student needs more help than you can provide.

19. Listen and decide if a referral might help. Common referrals include [DSU C.A.R.E.S.](#), [Student Support Center](#) (ext. # 4899), [The Writing Center](#), [Disability Services](#) (# 4690), [Campus Counseling Center](#) (# 4690), [Student Health Services](#) (# 4630), [Veteran Affairs Certifying Official](#) (# 4128), [Student Financial Assistance](#) (# 4670), [Human Resources](#) (# 4035), and [Student Life](#) (# 4666). Many students are unaware of the services available to them or where to find help.
20. Normalize the process of getting help. DSU C.A.R.E.S., Student Support Services, Disability Services, and Campus Counseling Center in particular can carry a stigma.
21. If you believe a student could become a danger to oneself or others, submit your concerns to [DSU C.A.R.E.S.](#) and email your academic chair to facilitate communication in case the problem develops.
22. Document everything.
23. Follow up.

Advice for Managing Classroom Discussions with Soldiers

1. Be aware that veterans, service members, or their families might be in class.
2. Know that even noncombat positions can face combat. Don't make assumptions.
3. Soldiers might prefer to sit with their backs against walls, away from windows or doors.
4. Soldiers can feel uncomfortable hearing civilians discuss aspects of war, even if that civilian is a professor with expertise in the topic.
5. Soldiers and their families personalize their wartime experiences; derogatory statements about any aspect of war or the military can feel like an attack on their identities.
6. Just like a member of a religion, race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, soldiers can feel uncomfortable when asked without warning to offer insight into their demographic's experiences. Don't randomly ask individuals to speak on behalf of a demographic.
7. If soldiers open up enough to discuss their insights into war, be aware that an aggressive tone is likely unintentional and not meant to disrespect you or others in the class.

8. Once soldiers open up, instead of asking specific questions that can corner them, ask open-ended questions that allow them to determine how much or how little to share about their experiences.
9. Before a discussion gets heated, help students define what they want to say. Rephrase students' sentences in a more objective tone to minimize emotional impact.
10. There are a lot of stereotypes about vets. The "messed-up vet" is a particularly painful stereotype. Be cautious of words or actions that might convey stereotypes.

Signs of Student Distress (if in combination)

- Poor hygiene
- Often late or absent
- Restless
- Easily startled
- Doesn't appear to pay attention
- Turns in assignments late or incomplete
- Performs poorly on exams
- Agitated; possible outbursts of anger
- Overly concerned with structure or asking for excessive clarification on assignments

For more information or to schedule an individual teaching consultation, please contact [Dr. Gray Kane](#).