

Tips for Enforcing Consequences

Tips for Enforcing Consequences.....	1
Be Firm and Consistent.....	2
Use Kind, Calm Behaviors and Language.....	2
Use Teacher Talk Choose/Decide/Pick.....	3
Talk Less and Act More.....	3
Separate the Deed and the Doer.....	3
Avoid the Right/Wrong Game.....	4

Be Firm and Consistent



Be firm and consistent with your follow-up behavior. If you do not consistently follow through on consequences, you send a silent message: “I do not believe in you. You’re not responsible enough to handle consequences. I’ll have to take care of you.” Being firm means to give no second chance.

Do give a “second opportunity” once students have experienced a consequence and the price has been paid. You can give them a third or fourth opportunity. If the student messes up each time, implement the consequences again. Remain firm and consistent.

Use Kind, Calm Behaviors and Language

As you present the consequence, use a kindly voice. Avoid sarcasm.

Examples:

- “Bill, I see you’ve decided to do it over.”
- “Shannon, this is your third tardy. When you choose to be tardy three times, you choose to remain after school.”
- “Girls, thank you for letting me know you’ve chosen not to sit by each other for awhile.”
- You don’t have to make students wrong. You don’t have to call them “irresponsible.” You don’t have to suggest they are lazy, procrastinating, messy, disorganized, bad, or troublesome. You just have to make sure they experience the consequences.

Stay calm as you present and implement a consequence. Do not overreact to a loud, boisterous student who has trouble owning the consequences chosen. Students do not appreciate consequences and will resist and resent them on occasion. Stay calm.

Students are invested in getting you angry. If you blow up at them, they focus on your anger rather than on the role they played in creating the consequence. Also, students have learned that if adults blow up, they feel guilty later and often “give away the store” in an effort to make things right.



When students are response-able, they see choices and know they choose. Their responses are less automatic, so they are not at the mercy of their environment. The environment does not dictate their responses; they create their own responses through the choices they make about how to respond to what the environment presents.

Use Teacher Talk Choose/Decide/Pick

Repetitious use of choose, decide, and pick helps students appreciate what they choose. They learn that it is not what “they are going to do to me. It’s what I am choosing for myself.” This style of language communicates that you “see” them as response-able people who can make choices.

Examples:

- “I see you two are choosing not to sit by each other.”
- “If you choose to do it on that side of the paper again, you’ll be deciding to do it over.”
- “If you decide not to turn in the permission slip, you choose not to go on the field trip.”
- “If you choose to turn your paper in by Friday, you will get the grade you earned. If you decide to turn it in later, you will be picking a lower grade.”

Talk Less and Act More

Take action and do what you need to do. Avoid arguing, lecturing, saying “I told you so,” giving advice, threatening, explaining, or giving reasons. The more you talk, the more unsure you seem. It’s as if you’re covering uncertainty with verbiage. Just act — and do it confidently.



Separate the Deed and the Doer

Many students think that they are their behavior. They think that they are “whether or not they made the team.” They think they are “the chair they are in band.” Students are not their report cards. They are not their behavior. They are so much more than their behavior! They are human beings full of spirit and potential. Again, you may use Teacher Talk to emphasize the difference between the student and his or her behavior.

Examples:

“Rico, I like you, and I don’t appreciate that behavior.”

“I hope, Cecelia, you can find another way to get to school during the next two weeks. I like having you here. And we don’t allow people who choose that behavior to ride the bus.”

“Sarah, I hope you’ll choose a different behavior when you come back from ‘time-out.’ I like seeing your smile in the group.”

Avoid the Right/Wrong Game

To steer clear of the Right/Wrong Game, simply implement consequences without making the student right or wrong.

Examples:

- If Jesse forgets her library book, don't make her wrong. Don't make her forgetful, lazy, bad, or frustrating. Just make her someone who has chosen not to take out new library books today.
- If Carmen makes obscene gestures to pedestrians while riding the school bus, make her someone who doesn't get to ride the bus for two weeks. It is not necessary to make her wrong. Also you don't have to make her disgusting, thoughtless, rude, or belligerent. Just make her someone who doesn't get to ride the bus for a while.
- If Vashti turned in enough papers to demonstrate learning that fell in the D range, make him a person who gets a D. Don't make him lazy, procrastinating, or wrong. Since he is someone who chose a D, do make him someone who receives a D.
- When you make a student wrong, they in turn want to be right. When you make a student wrong for something, you are creating sides, and the other side will seek to make you wrong. It can become a vicious circle.



If you have a troublemaker in your class and you make that student wrong, he or she will immediately want to be right. That would be okay, except that when a troublemaker wants to be right, he or she has to make you wrong.

The only way a troublemaker knows to make you wrong is to make more trouble! Then you get after the troublemaker for making more trouble and he or she thinks, "She's picking on me," "He's mean," or "She's not fair." So in the troublemaker's mind, you're wrong and he or she is right.

While you don't want you to make students wrong for their actions, you definitely do want you to hold them accountable for their actions. The way to hold them accountable is by implementing the consequences. Implementing consequences is one way to help students see themselves as capable of making choices — as people who control their own lives. It builds their sense of personal power.

Your effort is not to manipulate — it's to motivate. Motivation is more likely to develop when students are aware of the consequences before they are implemented and when consequences are delivered free of judgment about right or wrong.