

Creating Shared Classroom Rules through a Classroom Contract

Establishing a shared set of expectations or rules is an essential step in creating and maintaining a peaceful classroom community. You will begin with your students by envisioning what the ideal peaceful classroom community would look like and then brainstorming the behaviors or agreements all members of the community will need to help maintain the peaceful classroom you envisioned. This list of agreements or rules can be posted in the classroom as a Classroom Contract and becomes a working document that will serve as a guide towards the goals and ideals for your classroom.

Here are a few important **Points to remember** when creating your Classroom Contract:

- ✓ Rules should be framed positively and should guide students to desired behaviors. For example “be kind to friends” rather than “don’t be mean.”
- ✓ Your whole class should be involved in the creation of the rules and all members of the class should sign your formal contract. Student consent will help to build investment and respect for the rules your class has created.
- ✓ Your Classroom Contract should be posted on the wall of your classroom and referred to and reinforced often throughout your day.



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A 3-Step Process:

- 1. Share Your Vision**
for your classroom (e.g. “Our classroom will be a peaceful community where...”) and have your students brainstorm and share their vision for the ideal classroom community.
- 2. Brainstorm Behaviors**
each member would need to contribute to this ideal peaceful classroom community.
- 3. Shape Your Rules**
into a set of rules or expectations that everyone in the classroom community need to honor to create and uphold your peaceful classroom community.



Classroom Contract: Establishing your Classroom Contract

Here is a sample activity to help you establish your Classroom Contract with your students:

Begin the conversation with your students by prompting them with a few questions about their ideal peaceful classroom community.

Lead students through a brainstorming exercise about what kind of class or community they would like to be a part of.

Choose from the questions below to guide the discussion or use some of your own.

How would you like to be treated in this community?

What would make you feel safe?

How would you like your classmates to listen when you are speaking?

What should we do so that everyone feels comfortable to speak?

How do you and your friends act with each other so that you get along?

How do you like to be treated when you are with other people in a group?

How do we want our classmates to treat us?

How should we treat our classmates?

Use students' answers to these questions to frame the creation of the physical Classroom Contract.

One way to develop a Classroom Contract is by using a Peace Person Poster. **Draw** a body of a "peacemaker" on a piece of chart paper (shown in upper right corner).

Explain to students that the class will use this "Peace Person" poster to help think about and sort classroom actions and behaviors.

Teacher Tip

No student will be perfect as soon as the rules and expectations are established. Expect that your students will break the rules and will need reminders, reinforcement, and practice.



Classroom Contract: Establishing your Classroom Contract (Continued)



Ask for students to suggest peacemaking, or positive behaviors, and **write** these inside the Peace Person, because these behaviors make students feel safe and these types of behaviors belong inside the classroom. Some examples they might share are: teamwork, listening, caring, taking turns.

Then, **ask** for students to suggest peacebreaking, or negative behaviors, and **write** these on the outside of the Peace Person in a different color than the peacemaking behaviors, because these types of behaviors do not belong in a peaceful classroom. Some examples they might share are: hitting, laughing at others, name-calling.

Once your Peace Person Poster is complete, you can **translate** these actions into a list of rules and expectations with your class.

Ask students what rules or expectations they should keep in the classroom to be a successful peaceful classroom community based on the behaviors and actions they included on the Peace Person Poster. Remind students to keep statements positive. For example “Be kind to friends” rather than “Don’t be mean.”

On a separate piece of chart paper, **write** a list of the rules that students generated. You’ll also want to work to condense your list into a few key rules that will become the Classroom Contract.

When your Classroom Contract is finished, **guide** all students to sign it, sealing their agreement to honor the expectations. **Post** the completed Classroom Contract in the classroom and **reference** it periodically to peacefully remind students of the classroom rules and expectations.

Teacher Tip

Celebrate students who are modeling the rules and give praise and compliments.

Teacher Tip

For older students you might consider framing this contract as a “Bill of Rights.” Give students a chance to think about what rights should be part of a classroom community and capture these in the classroom contract.