

# 10 PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR IN THE CLASSROOM

Supporting structure, stability and your own wellbeing.

## 1. Shift from “Stop” to “Start”

In the moment, it’s easy to say: “Stop talking.”  
Instead try: “Please lower your voice.”

It’s a small change, but it often reduces resistance and keeps the lesson moving.

## 2. Be clear about what you expect

Learners cannot meet expectations they don’t understand.

Spell out what “ready”, “respectful” or “focused” actually looks like in your classroom.

Clarity reduces repeated correction.

## 3. Model calm, especially when it’s difficult

Your response sets the tone.

Staying steady when you’re frustrated isn’t always easy, but it often prevents behaviour from escalating further.

## 4. Agree on classroom standards

When learners have input into class expectations, they are more likely to follow them.

Keep rules simple, visible and consistent.

## 5. Use specific instructions

Vague directions lead to confusion.

Instead of: “Behave”, try: “Books closed. Eyes this side. Thank you.”

Specific language reduces friction.

## 6. Notice when it’s going well

Challenging behaviour often draws attention first.  
But acknowledging effort and improvement can shift the classroom climate: “I appreciate how quickly this side settled.”

Recognition reinforces what you want to see more of.

## 7. Build relationships intentionally

Connection reduces confrontation.

A short check-in, remembering a detail about a learner’s interest, or asking a follow-up question builds rapport, and rapport builds cooperation.

## 8. Create a reset option

Sometimes behaviour signals overwhelm rather than defiance.

A brief pause, a change of seat, or a quiet moment can prevent escalation without turning the situation into a confrontation.

## 9. Correct privately where possible

Public reprimands can create embarrassment and defensiveness.

A quiet word, proximity, or addressing it after class often protects both dignity and authority.

## 10. Keep parents informed

Regular communication prevents surprises.

When expectations are consistent between home and school, behavioural patterns are easier to manage.

Classroom management is not about control.  
It’s about clarity, consistency and maintaining your own steadiness under pressure.

Some days will still feel heavy. That doesn’t mean you’re doing it wrong.

If the pressure begins to build beyond the classroom, remember that support is available.

**SAOU Help provides confidential support to educators.**



## YOUR WELLBEING MATTERS!

FOR IMMEDIATE SUPPORT,  
CONTACT THE SAOU HELP LINE

 012 436 0911

 064 609 1150

24/7 Emotional Support

**You don’t have to carry demanding seasons alone.**

*Challenging behaviour doesn’t happen in isolation.  
It happens while you’re teaching, managing time, and trying to keep everyone on track.*

*There is no single solution. And no strategy works every time.*

*But consistent, small adjustments can reduce escalation, and protect your own energy in the process.*