

When managing your classroom, one of the most important tools at your disposal is your voice. The way in which you communicate to your students verbally has a lot to do with how your students will respond to you. And it goes far beyond the message that you are actually communicating. The way you use your voice – the tone, pace and volume – has a lot to do with how your message will be received and interpreted.

Students tend to react more to the way you speak rather than what you may actually be saying. So, the way you speak needs to be considered when you are teaching. Depending on how you speak, you can either wind kids up or be ignored or abused. If you want to remove all potential triggers for bad behaviour, you need to pay attention to, and possibly change, the way you speak. The upside to paying attention to the way you speak is that there are certain ways that you can utilize your voice to show you are in control and gain immediate attention from your students.

When giving instructions or explaining consequences, drop your volume, drop your tone, and slow down your pace. This works wonders in getting your message across. By speaking in this way, you can be sure to not say anything that will wind them up. You will also have less of a chance for your instructions to be misconstrued. Most of us tend to give instructions the opposite of this way. We tend to feel the need to conquer the noise level in the classroom – to speak loud and in an irritated or excited tone. This only serves to wind up your class because your students will tune into your tone and volume of your voice.

The biggest mistake a teacher can make when giving directions is to spew out fact after fact from the front of the classroom expecting the students to take it all in. If this is your dominant teaching method, then you probably have to deal with a lot of behaviour problems. Children can't be still for long, and have trouble paying attention to long boring lectures. This is true of adults to a certain degree as well. No one particularly likes long lectures. So it's important that you keep your directions short and straightforward.

When you need to explain things to your class, try to make the time that you are speaking interactive and use it as another chance to show you're in command of the group by constantly directing questions at different individuals. This keeps students on their toes and paying attention because they quickly catch on that they could be asked a question. It also helps them to retain information better, as when they are directly involved in the instruction process there will be less confusion.

So, it's good to remember that the way you speak – your tone, pace, and volume – is just as important as the actual words you are saying. It makes the difference as to whether students will tune you in or tune you out.