

# Classroom Management Tips SAMPLE

*Our Discovery Island* presents different classroom dynamics. It goes from individual work to pairwork, group work and whole class activities. This variety of students grouping in a language learning environment is very important to develop different skills in our students.

When working individually, students have the opportunity to reflect about what they have learned and to put it into practice by themselves, either internalizing the knowledge or realizing what their doubts are.

On the other hand, when working in pairs, groups or in a whole class setting, students are part of a foster cooperative learning, where they learn with and from each other. Students tend to participate more in class when engaged in an activity in which they can express themselves in a situation similar to their real life.

Different class groupings are also positive for the teacher, who is then able to monitor individuals or small groups' performances, instead of having to monitor all the students at the same time.

Assigning individual and whole class work is not considered a difficult task according to most teachers. Therefore, we have chosen to explore the instructions on the other kinds of grouping, since they are the ones that have to be more carefully planned and demand more classroom management skills from the teacher, according to the group size and/or profile of the students.

All the activities presented here are suited to any group size and students' age and interests.

## Ideas on How to Divide Students into Pairs and Groups

**Alphabetical Order:** Students are paired or grouped in alphabetical order, according to their first or last name. Alternatively, you can also divide them according to the number of letters in their name.

**Animal Sounds:** This is a loud, but fun way to divide students into pairs or groups. Have names of animals in slips of paper. Distribute them and ask students not to show their slip to each other. When they are ready, ask them to start making the sound of that animal that they have on the slip of paper. They have to find the other members of their animal family, by grouping themselves according to the sounds they make.

**Birthday Order:** Students are paired or grouped according to their month or day of birth. (e.g., Group 1 from January to June and Group 2 from July to December; odd and even number days, etc.).

**Candies:** Pass out small colored candies in multiple colors. Students are paired or grouped by same color of candy. Alternatively, you can ask them to form a rainbow with

candies and then have a group formed. After the activity, they can eat the candies.

**Class Band:** Divide students into groups of four any way you want to or let them choose the students who are going to be part of their group. Each group chooses who is going to be the singer, the drummer, the guitar player or the keyboard player. Then, ask all the drummers to get together, then all singers, and so on. Alternatively, you can do the same with sports category or parts of the house.

**Colored Chips:** Give a colored chip to each student or have students pick up one from a bag. You can combine colors (e.g., same colors together; different colors together; mix two same color chips and two different ones, etc.).

**Colored Pencils:** Have some colored pencils in a bag/can. Students who get the same colors are in the same group (or pairs). If you want to form groups of four students, have four pencils of each color. Alternatively, you can form pairs by light and dark colors (e.g., dark blue – light blue; dark green – light green).

**Concentric Circles:** Students make two circles. The students in the inner circle talk to the ones in the outside circle. Then all students from the outside circle move to the right and talk to different students. This way, they keep meeting different students and have the opportunity to repeat the activity several times. Alternatively, half of the class can stay in their seats and the other half moves around, going from desk to desk in clockwise direction to talk to different students.

**Facing Rows:** Students in the front row; turn to face the second row; the third rows to face the fourth row, and so on. The same procedure can be used with the students on their left/right.

**Favorites:** Divide students into groups or pairs, according to their favorite leisure activity (e.g., playing sports or dancing. Alternatively, you can choose other categories such as favorite colors, animals, etc.).

**Fruit Salad:** Have each student choose their favorite fruit or give out pictures of fruit to each of them. Then, they form groups according to kinds of fruit. A fruit salad must have at least four different ingredients.

**Horseshoe Setting:** This setting focuses on the board, but there's still space for pairwork and group work. It's possible to have single desks (pairwork) or double desks (group work).

**Matching:** Students take a picture of an animal out of a bag and then group accordingly (e.g., all dogs together, all birds together, etc.).

**Numbered Flowers:** Prepare small flowers made with popsicle sticks and colored paper. Write a number at

the end of each stick and place them in a small vase or container, filled with sand or dirt. Each student picks up a flower, then they get together in pairs or groups according to their number (e.g., same numbers, sequential numbers, odd or even numbers, etc).

**Numbered Heads:** Assign a number for each student, according to the number of students per group (e.g., in a class with twenty students you may want to have six groups with four students in each, so assign numbers from 1-4). Then, ask all equal numbers to work together.

**Opposites Attract:** Students get together with someone different from them somehow (e.g., different color hair; boy – girl; tall – short; black eyes – green eyes).

**Picture Puzzle:** Have different sets of pictures or drawings cut into puzzle pieces (prepared beforehand).

Each student receives a piece. They have to find a match to their puzzle. All the students who have a piece of the same puzzle are grouped together. Have in mind the number of students you want to have per group before cutting out the puzzle pieces.

**Question & Answer:** Half of the class receives a question and the other half has the answers. Students have to find their partner by finding the corresponding question/ answer.

**Rock, Paper, Scissors (or any other similar game):** Students are paired or grouped after the game is played (e.g., all first winners can be grouped together, and so on). Any lucky game can be used to divide students into pairs or groups, but avoid games that require skills or any kind of strategy.

**Similarities:** Students get together according to something they have in common (e.g., same hair color, same shirt color, shoe size, height, clothing size, same favorite color, etc.).

**Stand and Sit:** Half of the class stands up and the other half remains seated. This way you have two groups. You can split them into smaller groups, by assigning a different action to part of each group.

**Strategic Grouping:** Depending on the purpose of the activity, you may want to group them using one of these combinations: stronger and weaker students together, stronger students together, weaker students together, talkers and listeners together. Whatever you choose, do not let students know what the grouping combination is.

## Signalizing that the Activity has Finished

Some teachers are reluctant to use different kinds of grouping or even to assign speaking activities and play games in large classes because of class disruption and the difficulty they have to grab students' attention. With this in mind, we bring you some suggestions to help you deal with this situation.

With children, especially younger ones, it is advisable to be consistent in the activity you choose to grab their attention. Therefore, use the same one for a long period of time, so that students get used to it. Whenever you decide to change the activity, let students know about it and practice with them beforehand.

## Attention Grabbers

**Can You Hear Me?** Start talking to them in a very low voice and say, *If you can hear me raise your hand.* Students who hear you raise their hand, which will call the other ones' attention and they will do the same.

**Clapping:** Clap your hands in different patterns and speed. Students have to join you in clapping. Say, *Clap once if you can hear me.* Some students join you. Then say, *Clap twice if you can hear me.* And finally, *Clap three times if you can hear me.* At this point, students will notice that the activity has finished.

**Eyes on Me:** Count to three saying, *One, two, three... eyes on me!* Students stop the activity and say, *One, two three... eyes on you!* This way, if the other students have not heard you, they will hear the students and then notice that the activity is finished.

**Give Me Five:** Raise your hand and say, *Give me five.* Students put their hands up and say, *Five.* Then they start to count from 1–5. If that does not call everyone's attention, say *Give me five again.* Students repeat the count.

**Lights Off:** Turn the lights off and on again to call their attention.

**Raising Hands:** Raise your hands. Wait until students notice your hands up and gradually stop talking.

**Ring a Bell:** Set a timer for the amount of time you would like the activity to last or ring a bell. When students hear the sound, they stop the activity.

**Silent Request:** Create a signal for silence. Then practice the signal with your students until they know that every time you make that signal it is time to stop the activity.

**Singing:** Play or sing an *Our Discovery Island* song or chant. Have students join you.

**Stop Light:** Make a stop light with removable color circles. When in green, students can talk in pairs or in groups. When in yellow, they must be ready to end the conversation. When in red, it is time to stop talking. If they are too loud, you can quickly go from green to red. If they are quieter again, go back to green.

**Voices:** When you say *Voices*, students say a quiet *Shhh...* Repeat the procedure until you have everyone's attention.