

50 Ways To Be A **Better**



*Practical ideas and strategies
for every classroom.*

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A manual to support teachers in classrooms

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Teaching Tips For

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Relief Teaching.

Relief Teaching is so different to regular classroom teaching.

The students will respond to you differently and, if it is your first time with the class, they will not know your expectations or your style of teaching. You are different to **their** teacher and they know you won't be with them for very long. How they respond to you will, to a large extent, be determined by how you respond to them.

You must convince the students that you

- are going to make a difference,
- are going to value-add to their day,
- care about their performance and
- you plan to do something about it.

Most people respond well to people they know and who they think will care about them. Students are no different. Show them in the [first 10 minutes](#) that you care.

This book outlines 50 strategies that could be part of your relief teaching repertoire.



Ways to be better at Learning Management

The biggest challenge facing teaching is that **LEARNING** must occur. Being the best teacher in the world is meaningless unless kids actually learn. Just like the doctor who quoted, “The surgery was a success but the patient died.” Teaching can not be achieved unless someone has learned as a result of your input.



1 Make sure the **MAIN** thing is the main **THING**.

Always keep focused on the **MAIN** outcome of your lesson. This should be clearly established in your own mind well before you start the lesson. Write the answer to this question somewhere in your diary, “At the end of this lesson I want kids to ...”

The value of being a relief teacher is that you don’t have to use the current jargon. Just use plain English to answer this question.

If you want children to

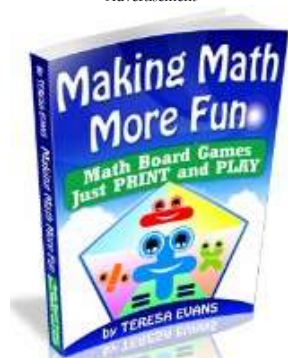
- write good sentences or publish a story or learn how to use capitals letters or find x in an equation,

then make certain all

- your language, all your praise and all your effort clearly focuses on this goal.

Don’t make a big deal about anything else such as handwriting/bookwork. Certainly, make passing comments as needed but don’t dwell.

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Keep your language supportive and corrective.

Support the outcome by keeping the kids focused on the *learning*. You should be reinforcing all during the lesson, “**This is what you are learning.**”

While patrolling the room, always mention the outcomes you want to achieve like, “... those adverbs are descriptive and really add meaning to your sentences...”

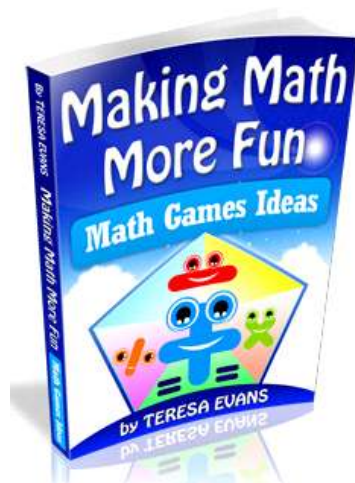
3

Don't give out all the information – every time.

Some time kids want to explore options to get information. Give out books, computer access and/or website for students to search.

Show the students how to use common search engines like Google. Make topics broad enough to allow students to have options in their interpretations.

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Consider group work as an option

There is no doubt that group work is the chatty option. Having kids facing other kids is a sure fire bet to start discussion. But if discussion is important to your lesson, then perhaps group work is a great option.

If the group is chatty, check out other options. [CLICK HERE](#) for 10 Ways to Keep Chatty Kids on Task.

Group work has the risk of bombing. Kids can become more difficult to bring back on task so **have an escape plan** if group work looks like it is failing. (Relief teachers are known to be great pragmatists anyway.) See

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However, don't use **failure language**. Avoid critical comments like, "Well that was a mess – back to rows." Consider language which is more positive and developmental.

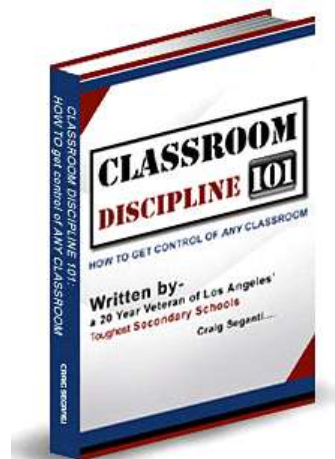
"OK. Now let's move to the next phase of the lesson. Thank you for moving your chairs quietly back to rows. Now get ready to listen about the next activity."

The most difficult thing in group work, for you as a relief teacher, is that it is protocol to return the room to the condition in which it was found.

Group work is not to be confused with collaborative learning. See

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Investigations are powerful learning opportunities.

Investigations are those activities avoided by most relief teachers because they are usually difficult to organize on the spot. So ... be organized for an activity before you arrive.

Kids get a lot of value out of learning investigations and a part from the setting up; they are generally quite easy to manage – probably because the kids, even the ratbags, are clearly focused.

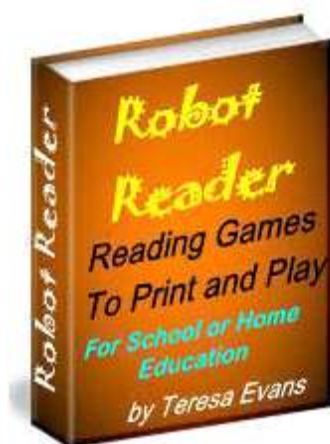
If you haven't tried investigations in a classroom, try an easy one first.

Probability – This is a simple activity exploring chance – rolling die and flipping coins. [CLICK HERE](#).

This one explores the relationship between the drop height and the bounce height of a table tennis ball. [CLICK HERE](#)

One you have a few investigations up your sleeve, you can refine them, resource them as you see fit and pull them out whenever you need to.

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Allow Time to THINK

Students need time to THINK and process new concepts. Relief teachers, because they know content and skills, sometimes go on without giving kids the take up time needed to understand a concept. Sometimes relief teachers talk too fast and pepper the students with questions and activities without giving them time to process. You know the old adage, “Stop and smell the roses!” That is also true in the classroom.

When you have taught a new skill, concept or strategy, simply stop. Watch the class as they process what has been covered. When you need to ask a question, simply pause before expecting an answer. Some students just need time to

- process and understand the question;
- retrieve the necessary information and then (finally)
- formulate a response



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Be pragmatic.

Sometimes lessons develop in a completely different way than you expected. Sometimes that can be a good thing. So how do you know the difference?

Go back to **1**. Is the **main** thing still the **main** thing? If not, then bring the lesson back and consider the matter another day.

Let's say you want to explore the Voyage to the Moon. During the discussion the class is animated and excited about discussing the more general nature of space travel – can we get to other universes, how can we travel at the light of speed, what do astronauts eat?

Now consider the MAIN thing. If you want to discuss the technology of Apollo 11, then move the discussion back. If your MAIN thing was the key issues of space, then go with the flow.

How exciting learning can be!

Relief Teaching Titles for All Primary Levels





Put learning into practice

Kids, from the beginning of time have always asked, “Why do we have to learn this?”

And it used to be so simple.

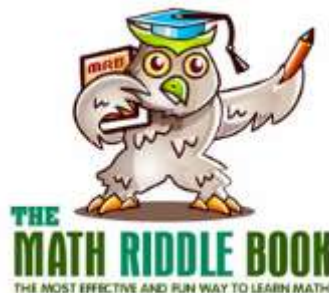
“You need to learn how to club dinosaurs so we can eat, Kronk.”

But now, the answer is much more complicated. Why do we have to do algebra? Why do we have to write about our Christmas/Easter holiday – yet again?

You probably need to be prepared and have answers ready. The best way not to be forced to answer the difficult question is to put it into practice. If you learn about FRICTION – show how it applies to rolling a ball on the carpet V the floor.

If you learn about 3D shapes – make them. [Use shopping catalogues](#) for math activities. Explore probability by rolling dice.

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Allow TIME to TALK.

Allow students the time to talk. Check out [this strategy](#). Honestly, everyone needs to be given a chance to talk. Put 30 adults together in a small room and tell them to be quiet. It is not a practical application of learning.

Talking is fundamental to how we learn and not allowing children that opportunity seems to me to be a little unfair. And quite frankly, it makes your job, as a relief teacher, that much harder.

The management issue is to keep the talk on the task at hand. Off task behaviour is not acceptable in a learning situation. All the more reason to teach that learning through talking is important.



Share your learning process

There is nothing more valuable to a student learner than to see a master at work. When learning a new concept, vocalise the thought processes you use to interpret meaning.

Show your class how you develop meaning. Senior high school math teachers are great at this, particularly if they are introducing a new and difficult concept. They often think aloud and bring their class with them.

This is a great way, even for younger students, to see learning in action from a *master*. Vocalise your thought processes to your class, show the kids how you create links to prior knowledge, how you use your decoding skills.

You didn't get where you are now because you are a slouch. Show off the techniques you use to develop understanding. In this situation, you are indeed, a role model to kids.

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Use an **ADVANCED ORGANISER**.

[David Ausebel](#) developed the theory of [Advanced Organisers](#) in 1960. Essentially, he believed that if students were given a framework before the lesson, they would be able to apply or understand the concept.

This could be as simple as displaying on a board what you are going to do during the lesson. I do the same with my program for the day.

There is considerable debate in educational forums about the intricacies of this strategy. I leave that to the academics.

All I know is that it works.

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Build your lesson

Identify your introduction, the body of your lesson and your conclusion. Kids will respond to this structure. I know, you haven't heard this since Uni days. Life was so much simpler then.

And now we have much more complex lesson structures.

And ... I'm not sure we are any better at it. If you can identify these three elements, so can the kids. This is part of that [Advanced Organiser](#) stuff (see

number [11](#)). This is what adds meaning to learning.

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Provide a FOCAL point in the classroom

Have you ever been in a crowd and pointed skyward. Everybody looks skyward.

It is not much different in a class. Give the kids something at which to look. If you are studying water, have pictures of dams, if you are looking at Africa have pictures of lions, if you are studying film and drama have a picture of Pamela Stephenson.

Use the board as a **YOUR** scribble pad and watch how the kids focus. This is the SCREEN generation. I'm sure some of these kids would sit at a screen saver if the computer ever had a chance to need it.

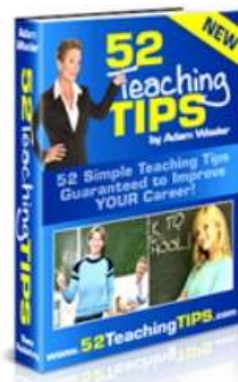
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Manage the interruptions.

Goodness knows the modern relief teacher (just like the modern teacher) has it tough and part of the problem is the constant stream of interruptions that occur during the day. Learn the hierarchy of the school, to see what interruptions can be controlled. Start from the top. The boss, well, that goes without saying. Instructions must be followed then and there.

But others ... respectfully request that the interruption occur outside your valued teaching and the kids valuable learning time. (And good luck with that!)

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Be visible in the classroom

This has to be the first lesson on **Learning Management 101**. Why wouldn't it be? Learning occurs best when you interact with students and that only happens when students can see you.

I have seen all too often, a relief teacher anchored at the desk having already issued 30 worksheets left by the regular teacher.

Let's face it. Learning isn't going to happen.

Be visible - Let the students see you – better still, let the students see you work. How can you expect them to, if you don't?

Be visible – Interact. Ask questions – check for understanding. Help – check for misunderstandings.

Be visible – offer guidance if needed and encouragement when not.

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Ways to be better at Classroom Management

The classroom is vital to the learning environment. The order, the processes, the procedures. Obviously the good classroom teacher will have these completely ingrained in the students. So when a stranger (you) comes in to disrupt their world you can expect, “We don’t do it that way.”

And the students are perfectly entitled to be protective of their classroom. So be prepared to ask the students about procedural matters.

Don’t feel threatened if your way is the wrong way – because it is different to their usual practice.

Never force the issue by saying, “Well we are going to do it my way.”

If there is conflict between you and their regular teacher, they will REJECT YOU!

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Set the classroom up for success

Unfortunately you don't have much choice here. The classroom only belongs to you for a short period of time. You are really only a classroom sitter.

But there are some things you can do to help. Don't be afraid to move some furniture around to suit the day you have planned. I suggest taking a photo with your phone so you know how it looked. Then you could return it to its original condition at the end of the day.

The physical layout should reflect your teaching style. If you want students to collaborate in small groups, for example, organize them around tables or clusters of desks. For whole-group discussions, try a circle or U-shaped desk configuration. If you plan on an individualized instruction, you might set up learning stations.

Keep YOUR equipment within easy reach and secure all your valuables. Easily accessible materials and supplies can eliminate delays, disruptions, and confusion for students.

Generally I prefer desks in cooperative groups of four – any more generally becomes more complex to manage. So if necessary, just put a bit of distance between large groups. It is amazing how little is needed to create a perceived barrier.

I know some relief teachers who bring a bean bag to school since reading and interacting with groups on the floor is their modus operandi.

Good for them.

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Making Learning Rewarding.

I know the old argument about intrinsic worth of education and kids should not work just for rewards – Blah! Blah! Blah!

But honestly, would you work if you didn't get paid? Kids love rewards – (and so do I!)

I use a business card approach as just one of my strategies. I used to make up my own which proved a laborious task. Now I get them made for next to nothing through Vistaprint.



You can get 250 very cheaply and you can design your own. Leave a space for a child's name and hand a few out very early in the day so kids know what you are offering.

Imagine handing this to a child and telling them to take that home to their Mum or Dad. What a buzz that would create around the classroom.

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