



## ➤➤➤ Handling Disrespectful Students Who Don't Know They Are Being Disrespectful

**DID YOU KNOW**



Disrespect appears to be on the rise—particularly among younger students. It's important, however, to determine if the disrespect is intentional or a misunderstanding of the definition.

Sadly, as surprising as it may seem, due to poor home and neighborhood influences many students just don't know any better. And enforcing consequences for behavior your students don't understand to be wrong will jeopardize your relationship with them.

It will cause friction, distrust, and resentment and increase rather than decrease the chances of it happening again.

The good news is that body language and tone of voice will always tell you whether to enforce a consequence immediately or pull the student aside for a brief lesson.

### Steps You Can Take

Excerpted from [SmartClassroomManagement.com](http://SmartClassroomManagement.com) (Michael Linsin)

A student points their finger at you and says "You're a substitute teacher, I don't have to listen to you!"

Or..

A student raises their hand and *commands* you to "Tell Jimmy to stop bothering me."

In either case, as the teacher in the classroom you are uncomfortable with the way you've been addressed. You're unsure how to respond. **Let's assume there is no malicious intent. From their tone and body language, they don't even realize they're being disrespectful.** Sound familiar? What can you do?

Here's a series of steps:

#### 1. Move on.

The first step is to quickly move on from the incident while neither endorsing nor condemning their behavior. The key here is to keep your cool, avoiding any outward expression of anger or disappointment.

A thin smile and a nod of the head will usually suffice. However, if applicable, you may have to calmly tell the student that you'll speak to them about it later.

#### 2. Pull aside.

After the incident is forgotten (30 minutes is a good rule of thumb), pull the student aside for a quick word. Remember as a substitute you cannot be alone with a student and you must never leave the rest of the students unsupervised. You haven't forgotten about the incident. When the opportunity presents itself, have the conversation.

#### 3. Avoid confrontation.

There is no reason to question the student or force assurances from them. The purpose of your short meeting is to tell the student "this is the way it is," and they readily accept it. It's when you browbeat them into telling you what you want to hear that they become defensive and argumentative.

#### 4. Recount and inform.

Recount the exact actions and words the student used that triggered your instinct that their behavior was disrespectful. Then simply inform them that it crossed the line, that it isn't okay to speak to a teacher the way they might a friend or sibling.

#### 5. Model the alternative.

The next step is to illustrate how they should have addressed you. Model it for them so they know exactly what you mean. No matter how irritated their behavior made you feel, be sure and maintain a helpful demeanor. It's key to ensuring that it doesn't happen again.

#### 6. Pause.

A short pause will give the student a chance to speak if they wish. You'll often get an apology. If you don't, however, or if the student clams up, that's okay. It's not important that they admit their mistake. Your meeting isn't a form of accountability, and it shouldn't be construed as such.

#### 7. Make a promise.

Finish your conversation with a promise that if it happens again, you'll enforce a consequence. By patiently setting the record straight, the student will walk away from your two-minute meeting with a greater appreciation of you and a fuller, more meaningful understanding of respect.