

# TEACHER TACTICS

## BCTF New Teacher Conference – Workshop Resources

### Save Time

#### How to mark quickly

##### Group projects

Group projects drastically cut down on the number of individual assignments you have to mark, and give your students experience working and cooperating as part of a team.

To maintain student accountability, keep group sizes to 2 or 3, assign individual roles to each student, and have students fill in a brief group evaluation that will make up part of their grade. Group evaluation is important for accountability. Check out a simple group evaluation from **George Mason** (<http://chnm.gmu.edu/7tah/unitdocs/unit10/lesson5/peereval.pdf>), or take a look at some of the more involved options that are listed at the **Schreyer Institute** ([https://www.schreyerinstitutione.psu.edu/pdf/Team Peer Evaluation Examples.pdf](https://www.schreyerinstitutione.psu.edu/pdf/Team%20Peer%20Evaluation%20Examples.pdf)).

Many of these strategies can be **combined** – for instance, you could use a rubric to mark a group presentation in class. Obviously, you can't use these tactics for every evaluation piece that you give, but different ways to evaluate students can expand how they interact with your material, while saving you time marking in the process.

##### Mark by student number

If you have a quiz or test with closed-ended questions like **fill-in-the-blank**, **matching**, **true-false**, or **multiple-choice**, get students to pass their work to a classmate and mark them in class. Not only can this save you hours of time, it gives students a chance to go through the answers with you, and provides near-instant feedback. To keep grades private, get student to write their student number on their quiz, instead of their name (or assign them a unique number for your class).

##### Use presentations

Presentations are a great way to save time marking because **you can mark in class** while the presentation is happening. You can add a presentation component to many types of assignments to save time marking. What's easiest is combining presentations with rubrics, so you can evaluate students by ticking off boxes as the presentation is happening, then write a couple of individual comments later. Presentations also give students valuable experience speaking in front of their peers.

## Use rubrics

Rubrics reduce the amount of comments and writing you need to provide for each project or assignment. Once you've created a rubric, it becomes very easy to quickly mark large numbers of assignments by simply by checking off or circling the level achieved for each element of the rubric. The more detailed the rubric, the more detailed the feedback you can quickly provide to students, so that your comments only need to discuss specific strengths or areas of growth.

To quickly create rubrics for free, try **Rubistar** (<http://rubistar.4teachers.org>) or **Rubrics 4 Teachers** (<http://rubrics4teachers.com>).

## Finding lesson materials online

### Look for teacher websites

Listen to podcast 21 – <https://www.teachertactics.com/tt021-use-mentorship-improve-teaching-practice-ask-expert/> for more ideas about finding teacher resources online.

### Check new Prescribed Learning Outcomes

These are rapidly changing, but you can still get lesson ideas from the old PLOs here:

<https://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/plo.php>

### Order free review copies of textbooks

Most textbook publishers allow you to get a free review copy of textbooks – check the publisher website. A review copy lets you get inspiration and ideas from the materials in the book.

## The power of proximity

### Desk placements

Our podcast TT005 has lots of great suggestions for desk placements:

<https://www.teachertactics.com/tt005-the-danger-zone/>

### Seating plans

Tips for setting a seating plan are discussed in podcast TT003:

<https://www.teachertactics.com/tt003-your-golden-rules/>

### Circulation

Circulating around the class is important – it lets you check in with every single student and sets the expectation that students should be working. Spending a few seconds to check in with each student is also great for assessment.

# Stress Less

## The power of compassion

### “Is everything okay?”

Listen to podcast TT006 to hear the reasons why compassion should be part of your classroom management strategy: <https://www.teachertactics.com/tt006-love-is-all-you-need/>

### Relationships over consequences

We’ve both seen countless students who behave very differently depending on who their teacher is. **Student behaviour often comes down to how much they trust and respect their teacher.** Students learn best and behave best with by teachers they respect.

How can you build these relationships and earn respect? Learn students’ names quickly. Be genuine with your enthusiasm and your interest in the class. Create assignments and activities that allow students to express themselves, their interests, and their personalities. Share information about yourself. Create opportunities like icebreakers for you to get to know your students, and for your students to get to know you.

Remember that teacher-student relationships should be based on respect, not admiration. It’s more important that a student respect you than like you. Therefore, having **high expectations** of you class is necessary along with relationship-building, as it shows your students that you care about them, but that you expect the best from them, too.

### Private discipline

If a student misbehaves privately in class – maybe they said something disrespectful to you – there’s no need to get the rest of the class involved, as that brings more negative attention to the misbehavior. But if they misbehave publicly, you need to acknowledge to the class that you saw what happened, and that it’s inappropriate.

What’s so important here is all you have to do is acknowledge it, and nothing more.

**Discipline should always happen in private.** Avoid giving the misbehaving students extra attention by calmly acknowledging the rule-breaking (in public) and following up later in the class (in private).

This minimizes attention-seeking behaviour while showing the class that you are in control of the situation. It also avoids the power struggle can come up if you discipline a student in front of the class, which often makes the student defensive and oppositional as they try to save face.

## The power of self-care

### Schedule time for yourself

Instead of just scheduling time for your school-related events, **schedule time for yourself**, too. That could be weekly dinner dates with friends, a recreational sports league, or a standing weekly lunch date with a colleague. By scheduling these events, you're more likely to actually take a break and retain a sense of balance that's so important as a teacher.

It's also easier to feel okay saying no to other obligations that might come up with teaching. Because hey, you already have plans!

### Avoid decision fatigue

As a teacher, you make hundreds of decisions an hour, and thousands of decisions a day. How do I plan my lesson? How do I start the class? Do I need to spend more time teaching this information? Should I continue to help this student or move on to another? And on, and on! **Making so many decisions is mentally exhausting.** Reduce "decision fatigue" by making the rest of your life as simple as possible.

Pick out your clothes for the week on the weekend. Decide what you want to eat for dinner each night and make a list of ingredients you need. Choose a day of the week for cooking, cleaning, exercising, spending time with your family, socializing – whatever's important in your life. Reducing the number of decisions you make may seem boring, but it frees your mind to focus on the things that actually matter, and lets you look forward to the times you've set to take care of yourself.

### Find multiple wins

If your life and identity is caught up in being a teacher, your emotional wellbeing can take a hit if things aren't going well at school – and there's always going to be ups and downs.

**Try to aim for "multiple wins"** – ways that you can feel good about yourself beyond teaching. In other words, set goals outside of teaching. – maybe you have a hobby, or a side career, or a family, or a physical pursuit that you can focus on alongside teaching.

They don't have to be big goals, but they should be something you're working towards, so that even if you have a tough day at school, there are other area of your life that you can feel good about.

### Good enough is good

If you have perfectionist tendencies (and a lot of new teachers do), **nothing can ever seem like it's good enough**. Everybody makes mistakes. Veteran teachers make mistakes. You are going to make mistakes.

Not every lesson you have is going to be perfectly planned or perfectly executed. As a teacher, you can always do more – more planning, more assessment, more evaluation, more relationship- building, more volunteering, and more extra-curricular activities.

When you're just starting out, aim for "good enough" most of the time, and shoot for one amazing lesson per week, or a couple per month. Students will remember when you wowed them, and they will forget the times that weren't perfect.

As long as you strive to improve your teaching practice year-after-year, and as long as you care about what you do, **you don't need to feel guilty for taking time for yourself**. In fact, you won't be able to take care of others without taking care of yourself first. So don't be part of the statistic of almost half of teachers quitting the profession within five years. Start slow, keep it sustainable, reflect and learn from your mistakes...and have fun doing it!

### The power of mindfulness

#### 10 second deep-breathing reset

Simply asking students to take a deep breath (deeply, slowly, and quietly) can reset the energy level in the room and reduce anxiety.

#### Mindful minute

Ask students to take a minute just to breath deeply and try to focus on the present moment. See our Mindfulness Kit for videos and audio you can use to help achieve this in your class:

<https://www.teachertactics.com/mindfulness>

# Be Creative

## Customizable lesson hooks

### Novelty (Opening Sentence)

Print out a question or sentence related to the day's lesson and **tape it to the floor** by the door of your classroom. Students will stop and wonder why it's there. This is a fun way to transition students into your lesson. The **novelty** of the words on the floor (or on the wall, or on the door...) is a guaranteed way to get them thinking and talking about your class.

For example, in English class, you could ask *"Was MacBeth a good person?"*, in science you could ask *"Why is the sky blue?"*, or in history you could ask *"What is the most important invention of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?"* These sentences could be writing prompts, opinion-based questions, or content questions related to your unit.

### Curiosity (Predictions)

Get students to make a **prediction** – it could be what happens next in history, what they think will happen to a character in a novel, how to pronounce a word in a foreign language, how to solve a math problem that you haven't yet demonstrated in class, or which artist developed a piece of artwork you're displaying in the room.

Raise the stakes by taking a class vote to see which prediction is most popular, or get students to do a quick mini-debate on their position and why they've chosen it.

### Competition (Class Challenge)

Start the class by giving the entire class a **difficult challenge**. For example, put students in groups and give them a review problem and make it a race to see who can complete it first. Put students in pairs and have them come up with review questions to try to stump their friends, or ask them a question about an upcoming unit to see if they can brainstorm an answer. Have your students try to come up with the best version of: an impression of a character, a conversation in a foreign language, a drawing of a map from memory, or anything related to your curriculum.

## Games & activities

### Ice Breaker (Me in a Bag)

Ask students to bring in 3 objects that show off their personality and who they are as a person. Do a demo of this by bringing in your 3 objects and explaining them the class before.

### Sponge Activity (In a Minute)

Listen to podcast TT016 for instructions for this quick (and quiet) game:

<https://www.teachertactics.com/tt016-three-quiet-games/>

The podcast includes a few other games you can try, too.

### Anytime (The Clap Game)

One student volunteer is sent outside, and the class has to decide in secret what they want them to do (sit down in a certain chair, open a window, write something on the board). When the student volunteer returns, the only way the class can guide them to do the activity is to clap – loud claps mean the student is getting warmer, soft class means they're getting colder.

# Feel Confident

## Your teaching community

### **“Never eat lunch alone”**

Reach out to colleagues at your school – getting to know them will help you form connections and make it easier and more enjoyable to teach. Having friends at school is important!

### **Find your teacher mentor (hint: SAs & FAs!)**

Listen to podcast <https://www.teachertactics.com/tt022-find-specific-relevant-lesson-ideas-online-something-borrowed/> for suggestions about finding a mentor.

### **Meaningful professional development**

There are lots of fantastic professional development opportunities out there – but if you can't find a workshop or event that speaks to you, make your own! You can have an informal self-directed pro-d session, which can be particularly helpful if you invite other new teachers to discuss the issues that are most important to you.

## Support & encouragement

### **Teaching involves life-long improvement**

You aren't going to be a perfect teacher in your first five years (or ever....). Teaching is a life-long career, so instead of focusing on perfection (and considering anything less a failure), focus on how you can make incremental changes to improve your teaching practice.

### **Mistakes happen: students will forgive you**

It's okay to make mistakes! It's okay for a lesson to go poorly, or an activity to be less successful than you thought it might. Students are quick to forgive these things – they'll remember the care and attention you put into your job, not the minor missteps along the way.

### **It's never too late to try something new**

If things aren't going well, it's never too late to change and mix it up. Students are adaptable. Yes, first impressions and consistency are important, but just because things aren't going well with a course, a class, or a school, doesn't mean that you can't always make it better.