



# 11 Essential Skills

that form the foundation of all  
effective classroom management

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A short preview of the CORE Behaviour Response Hierarchy from *Classroom Management: The Foundation for Learning* by Dr Tim McDonald, to help you discover the specific classroom practices that help create calm, focused, and highly engaged learning environments.

# In-Classroom Response: Managing Minor Behaviours

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The reality of classroom management lies not in managing dramatic incidents, but in responding effectively to the constant stream of minor disruptions that erode learning time and teacher effectiveness.

In Dr Tim McDonald's **CORE Framework (Calm, Orderly, Respectful Environments)**, the **CORE Behaviour Response Hierarchy** identifies eleven specific, foundational skills upon which effective classroom management rests. These essential teacher skills are not optional additions to your practice—they are the prerequisite competencies that determine whether any behaviour management strategy succeeds or fails. Without mastery of these fundamental techniques, even the most carefully designed behaviour frameworks can become hollow procedures, followed mechanically but lacking the nuanced execution required to create genuine impact.

## The 11 skills at a glance

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Proximity

Pause

Scan

Name

Voice

Look

With-it-ness

Politeness

Gestures

Acknowledgement

Praise

# Proximity

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**Proximity** involves the strategic use of physical positioning and movement within the classroom to influence student behaviour and maintain engagement. Teachers use proximity both preventatively, by positioning themselves where they can see all students and be seen by all students during instruction, routines or transitions, and responsively, by moving closer to students who are off-task to redirect their attention without verbal intervention.

**Try this:** During independent work, walk a slow lap of the room rather than staying at your desk. Off-task behaviour will often resolve itself before you have to say anything.



# Pause

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**Pause** is the deliberate cessation of speech after giving an instruction or cue, creating a moment of silence that allows teachers to scan the room and ensure complete student attention before proceeding. This powerful technique can occur mid-sentence if a student is not paying attention, with the teacher stopping, waiting for eye contact, then continuing.

**Try this:** Next time you're mid-instruction and notice one student drifting, simply stop talking. Don't repeat yourself, just wait. The silence does work!

# With-it-ness

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**With-it-ness** describes the teacher's ability to project awareness of everything happening throughout the classroom simultaneously, appearing to have "eyes in the back of their head." Identified by Jacob Kounin, this skill allows teachers to work with individual students while monitoring and providing feedback to others across the room. It creates a perception of omniscient awareness that helps prevent misbehaviour and maintain engagement throughout the learning environment.

**Try this:** When helping a student one-on-one, physically angle your body so you can still see the rest of the room. Your presence alone can prevent a surprising amount of off-task drift.



# Praise

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**Praise** involves specific, effort-focused recognition that goes beyond simple acknowledgement to celebrate exceptional behaviour or effort. Effective praise names the student, describes the specific positive actions, and emphasises the effort involved.

**Example:** "Charles, I really appreciate how you helped pack up and supported Bridget, then returned to your seat ready for instructions. Thank you for being so responsible."

## Scan

The habit that catches problems before they start, not after.

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## Name

One word, used at the right moment, redirects without ever raising your voice.

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## Voice

It's not about volume, it's about knowing exactly which register to use, and when.

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## Look

A single calm glance that does the job of a verbal warning.

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## Politeness

Modelling the exact behaviour you're asking students for.

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## Gestures

Corrections your students never even have to hear out loud.

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## Acknowledgement

The fastest behaviour-shaping tool most teachers already have and underuse.

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# Addressing a critical gap in teacher professional learning

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The absence of these practical skills from teacher education represents a critical failure in preparing teachers for the realities of classroom management. To unpack all **eleven** foundational skills and learn the full CORE Behaviour Response Hierarchy alongside Tim McDonald, join the *Classroom Management: The Foundation for Learning* professional development workshops.

# Professional Learning

A three-part workshop series  
with Dr Tim McDonald

BEGINS  
SEPTEMBER  
2026

Three live, 90-minute online sessions covering the full **CORE Behaviour Response Hierarchy** and **CORE Framework**. Focus on the exact scripts and skills from the book in these practical sessions, with direct support from Tim to help you develop actionable strategies for your classroom.

## Key Details

- ✓ 3 live workshops with Dr Tim McDonald
- ✓ All resources for pre- and post-learning
- ✓ \$499.00 per attendee, with group discounts available
- ✓ Complimentary 12-month eBook access to *Classroom Management: The Foundation for Learning*
- ✓ Exclusive 30% off the print edition

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