

## Methods and Class Management: Tips on Discipline

### First Question

Recall one of your teachers whom you consider a good disciplinarian. List their behaviors or characteristics as you remember them.

### Article

Whether you are a new catechist or one who is very experienced, you know that discipline or orderliness during a session is really important so that both you and the children benefit from the time you spend together. This article describes ten actions you can take to maintain discipline or good order.

#### 1. **Be Focused**

Be sure you have the attention of everyone in your group before you start the session. Don't talk over the chatter of children who are not paying attention. In most cases children do not see that things are underway, and it is time to get to work. They may get the idea that you accept their inattention, and that it is permissible to talk while you are presenting information. To get their focus, get everyone's attention before you begin. Wait and do not start until everyone has settled down. Silence on your part is very effective.

#### 2. **Direct Instruction**

Uncertainty increases the level of anxiety in the group. Begin each session by telling the children exactly what will be happening. Briefly outline what you and they will be doing

during your time together.

### **3. Walk Around**

When children are doing activities, move around the room. This will help you check on their progress. You will also become aware of children who do not understand the activity or who are distracted, and you will be able to assist them. Sitting and waiting for children to complete an activity encourages disorder.

### **4. Model Behavior**

“Values are caught, not taught.” Courteous, prompt, enthusiastic, patient, and organized catechists provide an example of what is expected through their own behavior. “Do as I say, not as I do” just invites confusion and a lack of motivation.

### **5. Control Environment**

Adjust your space as you plan your session. Have a place to do activities that is adequate for children to work and where they have access to materials needed. Create a prayer space with a prayer table and appropriate symbols. Be sure there is enough space for movement when your activities call for movement. This may mean configuring your space differently for different sessions. If you use a space that is used for something else, just be sure to rearrange the space when you are finished.

### **6. Be Positive**

Use rules that describe the behaviors you want instead of giving a list of “can-nots.” For example say, “let’s move through the building in an orderly manner,” in place of “no-running in the hallways.” Instead of “no gum chewing,” use “leave gum at home.” Refer to your rules as expectations. Let your students

know this is how you expect them to behave in your classroom. Always praise them when you see good behavior. Acknowledge it either verbally or with a gesture such as a nod, a smile, or a “thumbs up.” This will reinforce good behavior.

### **7. Confront Privately**

Whenever there is a confrontation between a catechist and a child, there will be a winner and a loser. Obviously, you need to keep order and discipline within your group. In the long run, it is much better to deal with discipline issues privately than to cause a child to “lose face” in front of his or her friends. Don’t make examples of children who cause difficulty.

### **8. Over Plan**

Free time is something to avoid. To avoid it—over plan. When you have too much to cover, you’ll never run out of activities and you will avoid free time. You can also fill up any leftover time with a mini-lesson, such as the story of a saint or the use of a pre-planned game of questions and answers modeled on a contemporary game show.

### **9. Be consistent**

Enforce your rules consistently. If one time you ignore misbehaviors and the next time you scold someone for the same infraction, children will lose respect for you. They need you to be consistent. Inconsistency breeds inattention.

### **10. Make Rules Understandable**

Children need clear, understandable rules. They should understand from the beginning what is and what is not acceptable. They also need to know ahead of time what the

consequences are for breaking rules.

## Reflection Questions

- Which of the ten suggestions will you incorporate easily into your sessions?
- Create one to three “rules” that you think will enhance orderliness during your sessions.