

**Preschool Discipline and Guidance:
Creating Environments Where Children (and Teachers) Can Be Happy and Healthy**
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Making small adjustments to your teaching approaches, schedule, routines, circle time, or expectations for children's behavior can make ALL THE DIFFERENCE in how your classroom functions. Don't be afraid to change up something that isn't working—even if you've laminated it! 😊

Know your children well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation, examination of written and active work, individual assessments such as checklists. • Recognize that children differ in development, strengths, interests, preferences, personalities, knowledge, and previous experience. Some children have special learning needs (both diagnosed and not diagnosed). • Learn as much as possible about the child's home values, expectations, behavioral and linguistic conventions that shape children's lives. Be sure that learning experiences at school are meaningful, relevant, and respectful for each child. • Make plans to promote learning and growth based on the information gathered.
Set challenging and achievable goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on what a child already knows and can do. The child must stretch a reasonable amount to gain new skills, abilities, or knowledge. • When a child reaches a milestone or goal, the teacher reflects on what goals should come next and continues the cycle. • Learning does not happen by chance. Teachers must be intentional about everything they do—setting up the classroom, planning the curriculum, selecting teaching approaches, assessing children, interacting with them, and working with their families.
Be an intentional teacher.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be purposeful. Is this a craft that is “just for fun?” Or does this activity address specific learning goals. Be honest. Be reflective. Use children's time wisely. Games, fingerplays, music, movement, stories, child-centered art projects, explorations, and investigations support cognitive development and keep management issues in check. Bored kids act out. Busy kids are too busy to act out. • Act with specific outcomes or goals in mind for children's development and learning rather than cutesy or themes-dictated activities. The Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines (http://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=2147495508) give us a guide for what to teach. • Have high expectations. Teachers who expect children to learn will deliberately engage in instructional activities to enhance children's knowledge and skills. • Use a variety of strategies for teaching. Hands-on, engaging activities based on children's interests are more successful than “seat work,” worksheets, memorization without meaning, or copying the teacher's model. Remember that preschool is a series of ever-increasing expectations for independence. • Seek to address all the domains (cognitive, social and emotional, physical, and linguistic). • Adjust teaching strategies based on assessment of learning (can be observational).

Ask more questions than you give commands.	Turn directions into requests. "Can you pick up more blue blocks or red blocks?" "Where do we keep the crayons on the shelf?" "Will you please push the chairs under the tables, so we don't trip on them?"
Make routines visual.	Use children's pictures and images of your classroom on your daily schedule and centers chart so that even pre-readers can understand when and where they are supposed to be. Children need routines to feel emotionally stable. Predictability helps children feel safe and comfortable.
Divide and conquer with centers.	Children should spend most of their day working in small groups. Dividing students makes it easier for them to stay on task and for you to work on skills one-on-one in a teacher-led center.
Make yourself one of the centers.	Set up a "teaching table" where you meet with 2-4 children at a time doing some intentionally-planned activity. This is a space for guiding learning but also listening to children, assessing, and observing.
Keep learning centers simple.	You don't need a dozen separate activities to keep children focused and on task. In addition to your teacher-led center, have planned activities in two more areas of the room, plus free choice of permanent centers.
Use Conscious Discipline.	*Composure *Encouragement *Assertiveness *Choices *Empathy *Positive Intent *Consequences
Provide variety and stimulation through play.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play games that require children to pay attention. Play rhyming games, like "I am thinking of an animal with a name that sounds like pat." Play word games, like "I am a fruit, and I start with the letter R. What am I?" • Play games that have rules. Play <i>Simon Says Do the Opposite</i>. • Play <i>sorting games</i> with changing rules. Ask children to sort toys first by size or color, and then sort them back to where they belong.
Use songs and movement activities to ease transitions.	<p>(Tune: Jingle Bells) Tidy up, tidy up, put the toys away. Tidy up, tidy up, we're finished for today. Tidy up, tidy up, put the toys away. We will get them out again the next time that we play.</p> <p>(Tune: Farmer in the Dell) We're putting out toys away. We hope it won't take all day. To have more fun, we'll get it done. We're putting our toys away.</p>