

Positive Discipline Responses:



Alternatives to Corporal Punishment

Types of Responses

Reflection

For minor day-to-day problems, students will be asked to reflect on their misbehaviour. Students learn from their mistakes when they are told why what they did was wrong and when they are given an opportunity to think about the consequences of their behaviour. The types of disciplinary measures in this category include the following:

- *Verbal warning* — This involves talking to the student and telling them what they did wrong. It also involves telling them that if they repeat the misconduct, further disciplinary steps may be taken.
- *Imposing timeout* — This involves asking a student to either leave the class for 10 minutes or sit in a quiet place and think about their behaviour. To be able to return to class, the student must be able to articulate what they did wrong and how they will avoid repeating the mistake. After 10 minutes, the teacher should invite the student back into the room and ask them to explain what they did wrong. This should be done firmly without humiliating the student. Timeouts are not punitive, but rather a chance for a student to reflect upon their mistake.
- *Letter writing* — This could involve the student writing a letter or even an essay on why they behaved in a certain way and what they will do to avoid repeating the mistake. If appropriate it should include an apology.
- *Oral apology* — This involves the student apologising to the wronged person and asking for forgiveness. The wronged person should acknowledge the apology and accept it.
- *Infraction slip* — This involves writing the student's offence down on a slip of paper. If the student stops the misconduct, the paper is thrown away at the end of the class. If the student continues the misconduct, the paper is given to the student court (peer discipline committee) to handle.

Penalty

For offences that are persistent and detrimental for all concerned, students may need to experience a penalty to understand that there are consequences to their actions. The types of disciplinary measures in this category include the following:

- *Any of the disciplinary actions listed above.*
- *Light work that improves the school environment* — This involves such things as slashing an appropriately-sized area of grass; cleaning a small, designated part of the school compound; cleaning the toilets; mopping the floors; etc. The work must be productive, not punitive. The work must be appropriate for the age, size and physical

abilities of the student. Care must be taken that the penalty is related to the offence and that it is not excessive or humiliating to the student. The aim is to create an opportunity for the student to think about their behaviour while they are performing the task and to learn a new response for the future.

- *Withdrawal of privileges* – This involves taking away an activity that the student enjoys. For example, the student will not be allowed to go out during break time, play in a school football match or participate in a planned activity. However, students should not receive such a penalty if detrimental to their health or safety, such as not eating lunch, not receiving drinking water or the removal of toilet access or other such necessities. The withdrawal of the privilege must also be proportional. Lighter offences may mean the withdrawal is for only one day. More serious offences may mean the withdrawal is for a longer period of time.
- *Detention* – The student must remain for extra time after school to reflect on what they did wrong. They may be given an assignment during that time, such as to write an essay or a letter, or they may be asked to just sit and reflect.
- *Signing a behaviour contract* – This involves writing a one-page contract between the student and teacher that describes the misconduct and the steps that must be taken to correct it. It includes negative consequences if the misconduct is not stopped and positive consequences if it is corrected. The contract is set for a specified amount of time and is signed by the teacher and student. For more serious offences, the contract may also be signed by the head teacher and/or a parent/guardian.
- *Disciplinary talk with the student* – This involves setting a time to meet with the student to discuss their behaviour and to set a course for correcting it.
- *Demerit* – This involves marking the student's file or the disciplinary book to record the student's offence in an official manner.
- *Community service* – This involves having the student do light work that assists the community in some way. Such tasks might include cleaning up a public space, helping an elderly or disabled person in the community for a specified amount of time or volunteering at an institution that needs assistance. For any community service work, the student should receive guidance at the start to ensure they understand the purpose of the work.

Reparation

For offences that cause damage to a third party, the student must undertake public reparation. This involves the student acknowledging the misbehaviour in front of others and taking responsibility for their actions. The types of discipline measures in this category include the following:

- *Any of the disciplinary actions listed above.*
- *Public apology* – The student must apologise for their misbehaviour at assembly to the entire school or to the group of people offended.
- *Replace or repair* – If the offence is accidental, the student must help replace or repair the damage they caused (e.g. erecting a new fence, chopping wood or repainting a wall).

- *Financial restitution* — If the offence was intentional, the student must replace or repair the damage and must pay for the materials needed to do so. If financial restitution is impossible, the school may require the student to do meaningful labour to earn the money to pay for the damage.
- *Official reprimand* — The student must accept a written notice that is added to their disciplinary record and sign a letter committing to reform. The letter spells out repercussions for failing to reform.
- *Calling parents* — The school involves parents to contribute toward replacing, repairing or apologising for the damage caused by the student.

Last Resort

For persistent and serious offences, sometimes severe action must be taken as a last resort. The types of discipline measures in this category include the following:

- *Any of the disciplinary actions listed above.*
- *Parent meeting* — The school summons the parents to discuss the possible next steps, as a warning to the student and the parents.
- *Referral* — This involves referring the student to a professional who can provide the needed assistance, such as a counsellor, person from an NGO, community member, probation officer, social worker, religious leader or any other such person.
- *Suspension* — The school gives the student a time-limited suspension (e.g. one week) with a written warning and a referral to a counsellor or probation officer.
- *Expulsion* — As a very last resort, this involves expulsion from school with the involvement of the probation officer and a recommended action plan with next steps to help the student.

Layers of Response

If a student commits an offence, the layers of response are as follows:

1. Teacher

Teachers are the first people to handle any disciplinary cases. However, if the student continues to misbehave, the case will be referred to the next layer of response.

2. Student Court (Peer Discipline Committee)

Teachers can refer cases of indiscipline to the school's student court. The student court holds a hearing with the offending student and chooses appropriate disciplinary measures, including counselling the student as a peer group and helping them come up with solutions for their problem.

3. School Discipline Committee

If the student continues the misbehaviour after the case is referred to and handled by the student court, the case may be referred to the school discipline committee, which may take actions deemed appropriate and according to the Code of Conduct.

4. Head Teacher

If the offending student continues with their misbehaviour, the case is referred to the head teacher, who may take actions deemed appropriate and according to the Code of Conduct.

5. Parents

If the student still continues with the misbehaviour, the head teacher may call upon the parents to become involved, and a joint decision will be made as to the appropriate disciplinary action to take.

6. Outside Referral

If the student's misbehaviour becomes uncontrollable or dangerous to others, an outside referral may be made to counsellors, police or another relevant agency.