

Classroom Behavior Support Tips for Childcare Professionals

Helpful Behavior Support Tips

- Stay calm and use a steady voice.
- Get close before giving directions.
- Use short, simple words.
- Tell children what to do instead of only what not to do.
- Keep classroom rules clear and consistent.
- Notice and praise positive behavior.
- Use routines and visual reminders when possible.
- Remember that behavior is communication.

Common Behaviors and Supportive Responses

1. Throwing Toys or Materials

What it may mean:

The child may be frustrated, excited, seeking attention, or unsure how to use the item.

Try this:

- Stay calm and move close.



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- Stop the unsafe behavior right away.
 - Say: **“Toys are not for throwing. Toys are for building/playing.”**
 - Redirect to a safe choice: **“You may roll the ball outside”** or **“Let’s use these blocks for stacking.”**
 - Praise the child when they make a safer choice.
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2. Hitting, Pushing, or Kicking

What it may mean:

The child may be angry, overwhelmed, lacking words, or struggling with self-control.

Try this:

- Block the behavior if needed to keep others safe.
 - Say: **“I won’t let you hit. Hitting hurts.”**
 - Help the child use words: **“Say, ‘I’m mad’”** or **“Say, ‘My turn please.’”**
 - Guide the child to calm down before returning to play.
 - Teach gentle hands during calm moments.
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3. Biting

What it may mean:

The child may be teething, frustrated, overstimulated, tired, or unable to communicate needs.

Try this:

- Respond quickly and calmly.
- Say: **“No biting. Biting hurts.”**



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- Care for the child who was bitten first.
 - Help the child who bit use simple words or another tool.
 - Watch for patterns such as crowding, waiting, or fatigue.
 - Offer teething-safe or sensory alternatives when appropriate.
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4. Refusing to Follow Directions

What it may mean:

The child may not understand the direction, may feel powerless, or may be struggling with transitions.

Try this:

- Keep directions short and clear.
 - Offer two simple choices: **“Do you want to clean up the blocks or the books?”**
 - Use a first/then statement: **“First clean up, then snack.”**
 - Give a visual or verbal warning before transitions.
 - Praise cooperation right away.
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5. Running Indoors

What it may mean:

The child may have extra energy, excitement, or need movement.

Try this:

- Say: **“Use walking feet inside.”**
- Show what walking feet look like.



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- Redirect to a movement activity later if possible.
 - Provide regular chances for active play.
 - Praise safe movement: **“You are walking safely inside.”**
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6. Screaming or Yelling

What it may mean:

The child may be upset, excited, seeking attention, or having trouble expressing feelings.

Try this:

- Stay calm and lower your own voice.
 - Say: **“Use a quiet voice inside.”**
 - Help label the feeling: **“You seem upset.”**
 - Teach another way to communicate: pointing, words, or asking for help.
 - Notice when the child uses a calmer voice.
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7. Grabbing Toys from Others

What it may mean:

The child may not yet know how to wait, ask for a turn, or manage disappointment.

Try this:

- Say: **“Stop. Grabbing is not okay.”**
- Coach the child to use words: **“Can I have a turn when you’re done?”**
- Use a timer if needed for turn-taking.
- Stay nearby and help both children through the interaction.



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- Praise waiting and asking.
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8. Not Cleaning Up

What it may mean:

The child may be deeply engaged, confused by the expectation, or overwhelmed by the task.

Try this:

- Give a warning before cleanup time.
 - Break the task into small steps.
 - Say: **“Put the cars in the bin.”**
 - Clean up together if needed.
 - Use songs, pictures, or routines to make cleanup easier.
 - Praise effort: **“You put the blocks away. Thank you for helping.”**
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9. Crying During Drop-Off

What it may mean:

The child may be having trouble separating from family or adjusting to the routine.

Try this:

- Offer comfort and reassurance.
- Keep the goodbye routine short and predictable.
- Redirect to a favorite toy, book, or activity.
- Use a family photo or comfort item if allowed.
- Let families know consistency helps.



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- Celebrate small successes over time.
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10. Tantrums or Big Emotional Reactions

What it may mean:

The child may be overwhelmed, tired, frustrated, or unable to regulate strong feelings.

Try this:

- Stay close and stay calm.
 - Keep the child and others safe.
 - Use few words during the peak moment.
 - Say: **“You are upset. I am here to help.”**
 - Wait until the child is calmer before talking more.
 - Teach calming skills later, such as deep breaths or feeling words.
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Simple Phrases Teachers Can Use

- **“I won’t let you hurt others.”**
 - **“Use kind hands.”**
 - **“Walk inside.”**
 - **“Try asking for a turn.”**
 - **“You look upset. Let’s calm down together.”**
 - **“First this, then that.”**
 - **“Let me help you.”**
 - **“Show me a safe choice.”**
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When to Look More Closely at a Behavior

A behavior may need more support when it:

- Happens often
- Gets more intense over time
- Causes injury or safety concerns
- Disrupts the child's daily routine often
- Seems linked to specific times, settings, or triggers

In these situations, it may help to track patterns and work with families to create a consistent plan.



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