

# Class Contracts...Step by Step



## A Real-World Approach to Class Contracts

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The real-world classroom is a busy and hectic place. The to-do lists are long, and teachers have so much on their plate! But as a teacher in the real world, I have found that setting clear parameters from the start ensure a successful year. Whether you are starting a new school year, or need a mid year refresh, Class Contracts can help you and your students stay on track.

Class Contracts are a great way to give students responsibility and to help parents understand what your expectations are in the classroom. Be clear and concise with your Class Contract, and you will find that your life is so much easier! There is no guesswork, everyone knows what their role is, and what needs to happen to do well and create a positive learning environment.

The most important thing you can do regarding a Class Contract is to use it! Refer to the contract daily, keep it in a highly visible area of your classroom, and stick to the parameters that you set forth. This will be a life saver. You can do this!!!



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## What is a Class Contract?

- An agreement between students and teachers. Both parties agree and sign accordingly.
- Guidelines, procedures and policies to ensure optimum learning.
  - Behavior guidelines and consequences.
  - Assignment turn-in/scoring policies and procedures.
  - Missing work/make-up work policies.
  - Communication guidelines.
- Guidelines, procedures and policies to foster accountability and responsibility for all parties involved.
- The Class Contract is the same for ALL students; all students will be treated equally.



Class Contracts are specifics that students need to do in order to be successful in learning while in your classroom. A class contract is different than classroom rules, which typically involve things like: be kind, be respectful, treat others the way you want to be treated, etc. The class contract entails items that both you and the students will follow on a day to day basis; students should be involved in the process, and you can share the bullet points on this page with your students to explain what a class contract is, and how it will be used in your upper elementary and middle school classroom.



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## Why Do I Need a Class Contract?

- A clear explanation of guidelines, procedures and policies will place all students on the same playing field. The transparency of the Class Contract give students the opportunity to thrive and take responsibility.
- Class Contracts make your life as a teacher easier!
  - No guesswork regarding grading or missing work policies.
  - Students are clear regarding expectations of work, behavior and more.
  - Parents know what to expect and what the expectation is.
- Students are held to a high standard, and will 100% rise to that standard!



Class Contracts take the guesswork out of teaching. It makes holding all students to high standard very easy. There is less arguing, or students asking for a “favor,” or an “exception.” Students know what the expectations are, and the parents also know these guidelines as well. Communication is key to a successful classroom and a positive learning environment, by relaying this road map to students and parents, they are sure to reach their destination with success! I have also found that class contracts and their transparencies help to alleviate parent emails and confusion—all parties know the expectations.



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## Create a Clear Set of Policies in Your Mind

- Before discussing Class Contracts, have a clear set of policies, procedures and guidelines already identified.
- Be very realistic with these bullet points for your Class Contract. Make sure that they are things you can 100% commit to and that they follow your school/district guidelines and policies as well.
- DON'T dumb down the language for students! Hold them to a high standard, and keep your language concise and "grown-up." This conveys to them that this is a serious contract, and one that will be upheld by all students. Encourage students to utilize their close reading skills, and to jot down synonyms for words that are unclear.



Your Class Contract is there to make your life easier! Be sure to pick guidelines that you are comfortable with and can stick to even when things get busy and hectic! If you need a little help with time management, grading, behavior, close reading and more, check out [my website](#) for free resources. Keep your language academic and precise, it gives weight to the contract; while you are going through your points, be sure to explain each one using different vocabulary to help students understand the meaning.



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## Class Contract

- **Behavior Warnings:** Students will be given two warnings regarding behavior. Upon the third warning, students will have communication home to parents and appropriate consequence.
- **Absent Work :** Students have the same amount of days that they are absent to complete and turn in missing work. For example: if you are absent for two days, then you have two school days to complete and turn in any missing work from your absence.
- **Grades/Graded Work:** Teacher will have all work graded within 72 school hours of students turning in the assignment.
- **Grades:** Assignments will be imputed into the gradebook on Friday of each week. Please check your grades each week to ensure there are no missing assignments.
- **Email and Phone Messages:** Teacher will respond to parent/student emails/phone messages within 24 hours of receiving the email.
- **Student Planners:** Planners will be filled out for the entire week on Monday; parents will sign planners each night. Planners will be checked for signatures daily.



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## 4 Get Students Involved

- You will present your proposed class contract to students, and allow them to discuss this with you, and possibly amend some of the policies, procedures and guidelines (however, very rarely do I have students disagree, or change much).
- Give students a copy of the proposed contract (see previous slide) and encourage them to write notes, make changes, etc.
  - Some items students have wanted to change, that I felt was feasible:
    - Adding an extra day to turn in absent work.
    - Students wanted to receive three warnings regarding behavior as opposed to two.
    - Students wanted graded assignments returned within 48 hours (I had to deny this request and explained to them why I needed the 72 hours).



Be sure to write "DRAFT," on this version of the Class Contract. Encourage students to show this to their parents, and spark a discussion within the classroom. Do whatever you can to make the students feel involved, and explain to them that this contract holds the teacher accountable as well. This Class Contract is designed to make things equal and transparent for all students and parents, it is there to help everyone—be sure to make this super clear to the class.



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## Give the Class Contract Meaning and Relevance

- Post the Class Contract at the front of the classroom; a place that is visible to all students.
  - Next to the "turn in" bin or near the door is the best place, students will see this often, as well as, administrators, visitors and parents.
  - Print contracts on bright paper to draw attention.
  - Be sure to have signature page posted and visible as well.
- If you teach more than one class, print out a separate Class Contract for each class.
- REFERENCE the Class Contract often! Constantly remind students of their responsibility as a member of the class.
  - If a student has not changed their actions have two behavior warnings, remind them of the Class Contract and that the appropriate consequence will be given.
  - If a student has missing work, remind them that per the class contract you have updated grades every Friday, and it is their responsibility to check grades.



You don't want your Class Contract to become wallpaper! Refer to it often to keep it relevant and to help keep yourself and students stay accountable.



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## Communicate with Parents

- Send home a copy of the Class Contract to parents.
  - Have students review this with their parents, make it a homework assignment.
  - It is important to get parents on board and keep the lines of communication open with them.
- Communicating the Class Contract with parents will make your life easier!
  - Clear direction avoids confusion, parents know what to expect.
  - Sending the contract home, and documenting it in the student planner is a great way to document your communication, and protect you in the future if need be regarding classroom policy.



You can never go wrong with documenting your communication with parents; documentation and transparency with my classroom policies has always benefited me. Parents can become frustrated, but by having a clear plan in place from the start, those frustrations are significantly decreased, and parents know that all students are held to the same expectations stated in the Class Contract.





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## Parent Letter

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

Please check in with your student, and go over our Class Contract. It is my goal to be as transparent as possible regarding our classroom and our classroom expectations. It is my belief that our Class Contract will greatly benefit all of us!

As a class, we have reviewed and made revisions to the attached Class Contract. Your student should be very clear about what is in the contract, and what their role plays in this contract. We have thoroughly discussed each paragraph, the verbiage used, and what this means for the students and myself in regard to behavior, work completion, and future communication. Please ask your student to walk you through each paragraph, and sign his/her student planner to indicate that they have explained the terms of our Class Contract.

Our Class Contract will be hung within the classroom, and both you and your student will be given a copy. Please reach out with any questions, and please know how much your support is appreciated and valued!

Sincerely,

Your Teacher

