

Grace + Zen: Classroom Management, Best Practices, and Child Safety

- Teacher Voice: Always have a warm, gentle tone while still demanding authority. Don't let the kids take advantage of you or take over the class.
- Classroom Rules: No yelling, running, or touching others. Raise your hand if you have a question. Wait until water breaks to tell your parents something.
- Always maintain authority and control of your class while still being gentle in your approach.
- Never position your body inappropriately with a child, or touch a child inappropriately, even if unintentional. For example, if a child is laying down, never stand or kneel with your body over theirs. Always sit by their feet or their head.
- Never call a student out for being clumsy, having trouble paying attention, goofy, etc. This child could have early signs of special needs that we are unaware of yet.
- Realize that some children are shy and may be extra shy during a class full of strangers watching them. Never push the child too much, as this may result in crying and embarrassment. Allow the child to observe until they are ready to participate. Periodically ask the child if they want to take a turn across the floor, or if they are ready to join in class, but do not overdo it.
- If a shy child wants to sit out of class, and the parent wants to leave class, try to encourage the parent and child to at least stay because the child may want to join in later on in class, which is a step in the right direction. This is important around the 3 year old age when children are experiencing separation anxiety and are afraid to be in class without mom.
- All teachers are required to be CPR/First Aid certified. Find a class at local fire department or local red cross.
- Watch out for children harmfully putting pressure on joints.
- Avoid all upside-down poses that place potentially harmful pressure on the head and neck.
- For pregnant moms, avoid all inversions, forward folding poses, and twists.
- If a mother just gave birth or just had a c-section, advise her to wait a few weeks until she has the doctor's clearance to participate in physical activity again.
- If a child seems sad/excited/mad, let them know that you notice their feelings. They want to be seen and heard. Say "I see that you are sad/excited/mad/etc. right now. Can you tell me why?" Try to encourage them expressing their feelings through words rather than negative actions.
- Use as few of words as possible with children. Clear and concise instructions work best. Too many words will get lost.
- Say what you want, not what you don't want.
- Offer choices for children instead of making them feel like you are telling them they are in trouble. Example: "You can sit and watch quietly, or you can participate. It is your choice."
- When a child says "I Can't do it!" respond with "But you can try your best! Let me help you try your best!"

- Praise positive actions of students who are behaving to get other children to follow along. If one student persistently misbehaves or seeks negative attention, be sure to praise their positive actions and ignore negative actions.
- When children arrive early to class, tell them what you expect of them after greeting them. "Please wait quietly on your mat for class to start." Without these instructions, children see the big open room as an invitation to run around in circles and jump over mats. Not safe or calm!
- When describing poses, give simple hand and foot placement directions. Don't worry too much about specifics especially with young children, while still staying safe.
- Always keep your eyes on your students to assure safety and safe body alignment.
- Instead of using 'right and left,' just say 'one side, and now the other side.' Young children don't yet know right and left.
- Be firm yet compassionate with misbehaving children. More often than not, they are lacking structure and discipline at home. Also more often than not, their parents will tell you to be more stern with them rather than let them run wild, be disrespectful, or distract the class. There may be family dynamics or changes at home causing a student to act out, and they might just need some extra love.