

Ways of Dealing with Disruptive Students

1. Never attribute to malice what can be attributed to ignorance (V. Ruggiero)—most of the time students are not trying to be malicious and often are not aware that they are being disruptive.
2. More traditionally aged students exhibit behaviors that were acceptable in high school or at least went uncorrected. They are often surprised that college teachers are bothered by these behaviors.
3. See all conflicts as an opportunity to educate the student(s) involved.
4. If at all possible deal with any significant issues of disruption or disagreement in private (your office with the door open). Dealing with an issue in front of others can cause both the students and the instructor to be affected. You don't need others taking sides.
5. Use **I statements** to address the concern ...this way you are owning the problem and giving the student an easy opportunity to save face and get back on task. I statements avoid the issuance of consequences. " I would appreciate it if your would ..."
6. Stay calm-- at all cost stay calm—if necessary declare a cooling off period.
7. Put yourself in the student's shoes—try to see the motivation behind the disruption/problem/issue.
8. Listen carefully—ask clarifying questions that help to define the issue. " I want to make certain that I understand what you are saying is this what you mean"
9. Think win-win. Ask the students how they would resolve the issue—this will give them some ownership. Also ask how they would handle the situation if they were the instructor.
10. Make certain that your position is clearly defensible.
11. Avoid the introduction of side issues. Keep bringing the student back to the issue at hand. Other issues can be dealt with at another time.
12. Write down the issue/concern/problem.
13. Write down the solution/agreement.
14. Be as consistent as you can in how you handle each individual occurrence. This includes how you handle even small disruptions in class. Students really take note of inconsistencies in this area.
15. Offer the student the option of taking the issue to the next level. Tell him/her who to talk to and where they can find them.
16. Keep notes on the conversation(s) that you have with the student. This will help to protect you and make it clear to the students that you want an accurate record of the interaction(s) you have with them.