



Active Insight: Evidence in Action



Tip #423: Active Learning Without Losing Control

Overview

Movement-based learning works best when students understand what is expected of them before the activity begins. Clear routines and consistent signals allow teachers to keep lessons active without sacrificing order or safety. When students know how to start, stop and transition between tasks, the energy in the room becomes productive. Building these habits early in the year means teachers spend less time managing behaviour and more time teaching. Active classrooms are calm classrooms when the routines are in place.

Key Teaching Ideas

The foundation of a well-managed active classroom is explicit routine teaching. Teachers can introduce movement expectations the same way they introduce any other learning task: model it, practise it and reinforce it consistently. A reliable stop signal, a clear transition cue and a predictable start sequence give students the structure they need to manage their own energy. When these routines are embedded, teachers can increase the complexity and energy of activities without losing the sense of calm that makes learning possible.

Practical Application

- **Stop Signal Practice:** Teach and rehearse a consistent stop signal at the start of the year. Students who respond reliably to a stop cue can be trusted with higher-energy activities.
- **Visual Expectation Cues:** Display simple, icon-based reminders of movement expectations during active tasks. Students can self-check without needing verbal reminders from the teacher.
- **Group Responsibility Roles:** Assign rotating roles within small groups, such as equipment manager or timekeeper, to build shared ownership of the activity and reduce disruption.
- **Visible Timer:** Use a countdown timer that students can see during movement tasks. A visible timer reduces off-task behaviour and helps students manage their own pace.
- **Behaviour Reflection Routine:** Close active sessions with a brief, positive reflection on how the group managed the routines. Name specific examples to reinforce what worked.



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Next Steps

Find practical tools for building active and well-managed classrooms at activeeducationaustralia.edu.au.

References and Research

1. Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (Version 9.0) – Establishes the curriculum expectations for developing movement competence, health literacy, personal and social capability, and lifelong participation in physical activity.
2. Australian Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines – Recommends regular physical activity throughout the day to support health, wellbeing and active lifestyles across the lifespan.
3. Australian Professional Standards for Teachers – Provides the national framework for effective teaching practice, safe learning environments and ongoing professional learning.
4. Australian Sports Commission. (2019). Australian Physical Literacy Framework – Defines physical literacy as the development of physical, psychological, social and cognitive capabilities that support lifelong participation in physical activity.
5. Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) – Professional standards resources on managing classroom activities and establishing learning environments that support engagement.