

What Is It?

The arrangement of the classroom has an effect on student behavior and academic learning. Teachers can encourage learning and positive behaviors with their seating arrangement, use of wall space, and the temperature, lighting, and noise level in the classroom. By arranging the classroom strategically, it's easier to manage large numbers of students and still support individual student needs, monitor student progress, and ensure that instruction is delivered successfully.

When to Use It

- Consider how the classroom should be arranged when first setting it up and preparing for classroom management.
- Arrange the classroom to establish a supportive learning environment for all students.
- Create a classroom setting that promotes school rules and policy.
- Create a classroom environment that is welcoming and accessible.
- Arrange the classroom to include the individual needs of a specific student.

Steps to Implementation / How to Do It: Seating Arrangements

	1. Make seating assignments consistent with instructional procedures and class routines.
	2. Make sure you can easily see all students during instruction. Place students who need additional supports closer to instruction.
	3. Make sure all students can clearly see instructional presentations, the classroom board, class rules, and other important visuals.
	4. Keep busy areas open and free of congestion.
	5. 5. Make sure all students can easily access necessary materials.

Steps to Implementation / How to Do It: Bulletin Boards and Walls

	1. Post clear rules and expectations on a classroom wall. Use these rules and expectations as a reference for classroom management.
	2. Positively state rules and expectations. Avoid “do not” statements.
	3. Keep the students’ ages and interests in mind when decorating the classroom.
	4. Use color (i.e., colored butcher paper) to brighten walls and enrich the learning environment
	5. Decorate the classroom but leave room to add student work and classwork later in the school year.

Example

Mr. Jones, a 9th grade math teacher, is setting up his classroom for the upcoming school year. He wants to ensure that his classroom is arranged to support student learning and maximize academic outcomes. First, he moves the student desks into three rows of nine desks, all facing the front white board, and leaves room between them to minimize congestion. Then he moves his own desk behind the students. He chooses this arrangement because he wants to promote a quiet learning environment where students are less likely to talk with each other during independent work times.

Mr. Jones decorates the walls with colored butcher paper to create a more vibrant learning environment. On the front wall he puts his schedule of daily routines and procedures. He also reserves a spot at the front of the room for a classroom rules poster that he will create with his class on the first day of school.

When Mr. Jones is teaching the whole class, he can easily move around the room as he asks questions. This gives the students multiple opportunities to engage and respond. He refers to the poster of class rules and procedures when correcting and redirecting student behavior. As the school year progresses, Mr. Jones updates the class schedule.

How to Increase Effectiveness

- Arranging or rearranging the classroom can be done anytime. However, it’s easier to establish classroom rules and behavioral expectations by effectively arranging the classroom at the start of the school year.
- Arrange student desks in rows and facing the instructional area. Rows, rather than clusters, increase on-task academic engagement, minimize student talk-outs, and increase work completion. Keep the goal of instruction in mind. When you want group discussion, temporarily arrange the chairs or desks in clusters.
- Make sure all students can easily see the instructional board at all times.

- Make sure you can see all students during instruction.
- Consider the location and use of the teacher's desk. If you don't spend much time at your desk when students are in class, consider moving it to the side or back of the classroom.
- Keep student desks spread out to allow movement and eliminate congestion.
- Keep rules and expectations clearly posted and visible at all times.
- Seat a student who needs support near a student role model.
- Look at the needs of individual students. Sometimes a student's attention can increase if allowed to stand while listening, or sit in the back so her fidgeting doesn't distract others.
- Provide low-distraction work areas such as a quiet study carrel for independent work.
- Use appropriately sized furniture, and make adaptations for children with special needs. In general, a student should be able to put his elbows on the desk and have his chin fit in his hands with his feet flat on the floor.
- Consider whether the temperature, lighting, and noise level are comfortable for the students.

Resources

Kern L., & Clemens N. H. (2007). Antecedent strategies to promote appropriate classroom behavior. *Psychology in the Schools, 44*(1), 65-75.

Emmer, E. T., & Evertson, C. M. (2013). *Classroom management for middle and high school teachers* (9th edition). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson.