

So often teachers react defensively to defiant behavior. In my experience, this creates situations in which the student and the teacher lock horns in a power struggle, which leads to poor communication on both sides.

Soooo the question is how do you handle a student who openly defies rules, purposely tries to irritate you or has a pattern of hostile behavior toward your or any authority? While it is my hope that you never have to face these situations, the longer you teach the more likely you will have a defiant student cross your path. Here are five tips to help you avoid and manage defiance when it arises.

1. **Remain Calm:** As we discussed in Teacher Tips, you need to have a discipline plan and follow that plan. Even though the student may be upsetting or frustrating you, you need to keep your frustration inside and remain calm, not only in your voice, but in your body language by keeping your hands at your side and speaking in a calm steady tone.
2. **Choose your words carefully:** While my first response to most things that went on in the classroom was a snarky remark, this is not the time to be funny or forceful. This is also not the time to start barking out commands at the student. Instead try using calm “I statements” where you start out by saying “I would like for everyone to be in their seat, listen or follow directions. When you must speak to the student directly, offer him or her choices, such as please find a seat or a step on discipline plan.
3. **Reinforce positive behavior:** Knowing that the defiant student has a pattern, try to start fresh each day and look for the good things the student does and make a comment on them. However, make sure that you are not just singling the student out to say good things. Make sure it is genuine and that you are making similar comments for other students.
4. **Determine the cause of the behavior:** As we discussed in several of the first-year teacher tips, you need to get to know your students. This is especially true for the defiant and disrespectful student. Seek out information from other teachers, administrators and sending schools. Likewise, work with your administrator to establish any behavior contracts with the student that will make him or her more successful in your class. As we stated last year, our goal is to not give up on students and just turn them over to the office to deal with.
5. **Make a plan:** Once you have identified a defiant student and sought out the causes of the behavior, make a plan. That might be altering seating, changing the flow of class or helping the student to be successful in smaller tasks rather than a long process. Many times working with the student and an administrator can help identify what changes can be made that will not disrupt the sequence and flow of the class.

While dealing with misbehavior can always be challenging it is good to create strategies that will help get past the rough spots and offer CTE to all students.