

## **■ QUICK START GUIDE: Building Respect Quickly as a Substitute Teacher**

*A companion resource for the Professionals of Substitute Teaching Podcast Episode 10: Cool, Calm, and Slightly Overcaffeinated: Instant Respect Strategies for Substitute Teachers*

### **1. Greet Students at the Door**

#### **Why it works:**

It signals confidence, presence, and “I’m paying attention.” Students instantly clock that you’re not a passive adult.

#### **How to do it:**

- Stand at the door before the bell
  - Smile (or at least look awake)
  - Say: “Good morning—come on in.”
  - Bonus: Circulate around the school greeting students before school starts
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### **2. Start Firm, Fair, and Calm**

#### **Why it works:**

Students respect adults who don’t panic. Calm is power.

#### **How to do it:**

- Start class right away, don’t hesitate to start
  - Speak slowly and clearly
  - Keep your tone steady
  - Avoid over-explaining
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### **3. State Expectations Clearly**

#### **Why it works:**

Students test boundaries because they want to know where they are. Clarity prevents chaos.

#### **How to do it:**

Use this script:

“Here’s what we’re doing today. Here’s what I expect. Here’s how we’ll handle it if we get off track.”

**Keep it short:**

- What they should be doing
- What they should not be doing
- What happens if they choose otherwise

**Example Expectations:****1. “When I’m giving directions, you’re listening.”**

This sets the expectation that students pause, focus, and give you their attention so everyone gets the next directions or instruction and the class can move forward without confusion.

**2. “Stay on task and work the whole time.”**

This communicates that students are expected to use class time productively—no wandering, no side conversations, no disappearing into their backpacks, or ‘pretending’ to be on task.

**3. “We will treat classmates and each other with respect.”**

This covers the things they say and how they say it to each other and you, how they treat each other and you, and how you will talk and treat them in return. It’s broad enough to apply to any situation but clear enough that students know what’s expected

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**4. Introduce Yourself with Confidence****Why it works:**

Your introduction sets the tone. If you sound unsure, students will fill in the gaps.

**How to do it:**

- Stand tall
- Use a steady voice
- Say: “Good morning, I’m Ms. \_\_\_\_, and I’m excited to work with you today.”

**Pro tip:**

Confidence is not a feeling. It’s a behavior.

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**5. Be Consistent with Consequences****Why it works:**

Students value fairness more than strictness. They lose respect when adults wobble.

**How to do it:**

- Give one clear warning
- Follow through if needed
- Keep consequences small and predictable
- Avoid arguing — state, don’t debate

**Remember:**

If you say it, mean it.

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**6. Listen Actively to Student Concerns****Why it works:**

Respect is reciprocal. Students respond better when they feel heard.

**How to do it:**

- Make eye contact
- Nod or paraphrase
- Say: “Thanks for letting me know. Here’s how we’ll do it today.”

**This keeps you in charge without dismissing them.**

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**7. Use Professional Presence****Why it works:**

Students expect professionalism. It reassures them you’re capable and trustworthy.

**How to do it:**

- Move with purpose
  - Keep your materials organized
  - Avoid sarcasm that punches down
  - Stay neutral, steady, and predictable
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**8. Quick Scripts for Common Moments****When the class is loud:**

“Let’s reset. Eyes up here for directions.”

**When a student challenges you:**

“I hear you. Today we’re doing it this way.”

**When you need silence:**

“I’ll wait.”

(Then actually wait.)

**When you need to redirect:**

“Right now, your job is \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you.”

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## 9. What Students Are Really Thinking

- “Are you consistent?”
- “Are you fair?”
- “Do you mean what you say?”
- “Can I trust you to run this room?”

They test boundaries not to be difficult, but to understand the rules of the day.

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## 10. Your Daily Respect Checklist

- Stand at the door
- Greet students
- Introduce yourself confidently
- State expectations
- Stay calm
- Be consistent
- Listen actively
- Keep it professional

**Do these, and you’ll earn respect faster than you think.**

