

tes

Your First Year

A TES Essential Guide
for new teachers



guide

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Your First Year

A TES Essential Guide

At some point in your first year of teaching a kindly colleague may tell you not to worry, as the job gets easier with experience. Great.

That can be reassuring. But it may not feel helpful, particularly when you are facing your first proper class, alone, and are trying to get them to quieten down and listen.

Luckily, a group of teachers and trainers who do have experience have condensed their most practical tips into this TES Essential Guide.

It is packed with advice, from how to create the right classroom atmosphere to ways to maintain your voice. What should you do on your first parents' evening? What is the best way to fit in with your new colleagues in the staffroom? There are answers to these questions, and many others, on subjects from report writing to holding assemblies.

The guide also acts as a reminder, not just of the induction support you should receive but that you need to look after yourself.

We hope the guide will help you through this all-important first year – the year you truly become a teacher.

Michael Shaw
TESpro editor

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Help is at hand

What should you expect from induction? Sara Bubb tells you everything you need to know.

Teaching is wonderful, exhilarating and amazingly rewarding but you're unlikely to find the first year easy.

That's why people have campaigned long and hard to make sure that induction helps you make stacks of progress on the road to becoming a great teacher. You need to understand the rules and they vary depending on whether you work in England, Wales or Scotland (see table).

But be warned, there are changes afoot in England with the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) and the General Teaching Council (GTC) being replaced by the new Teaching Agency in April 2012 and a new set of

standards from September 2012. So, what can you do to ensure that induction works well? If you haven't already done so, register with the GTC of the country in which you work.

The annual fee is £36.50 in England, £45 in Wales and in Scotland £60 for initial registration and then £45 in subsequent years.

You also need to make sure that your school has registered you for induction. Some schools register you on the payroll, thinking that this is enough. It's not.

In England, the 'appropriate body' is the person who is in charge of induction at your local authority or the Independent Schools Council Teacher Induction Panel (ISCTIP).



Look at the standards that you have to meet by the end of your first year. In England, go to the TDA website (www.tda.gov.uk) to look at the induction regulations and especially the 41 core standards. They range from a commitment to ensuring children reach their full potential to establishing a safe learning environment. They're similar to the ones you've just met for Qualified Teacher Status.

Sound easy? Remember that the consequences are dire for those who don't meet them: people who fail induction in England and Wales are never allowed to teach in maintained schools or non-maintained special schools again – ever. You can't redo a term like you can on teaching practice and extensions are allowed only in special cases, such as being absent for more than 30 school days.

The good news is that the failure rate is minuscule – 16 in England in 2009 compared to 26,740 who passed – so don't get over-anxious but make sure induction is done properly. In Scotland, go to www.probationerteacherscotland.org.uk to see the support and guidance new teachers receive to meet the Standard for Full Registration. This includes knowing the curriculum and planning stimulating teaching programmes.

Your entitlement

This is what schools in England and Wales should give you if you're on induction:

- A 10 per cent lighter timetable than other class teachers in the school.
- Meetings with your school induction tutor. These should start with the transition point two discussion in the Career Entry and Development Profile (CEDP).
- Objectives to help you meet the 41 core standards.
- A programme of support, monitoring and assessment that is personalised to your needs.
- One observation in the first four weeks and then at least one each six to eight weeks with written feedback.
- Half-termly reviews of progress.
- An assessment meeting and report at the end of each term.

While you're on induction in England and Wales your job shouldn't make unreasonable demands. You shouldn't have to deal with exceptionally difficult pupils; teach subjects or age groups that you haven't been trained for, or take on a management role. If you think the demands on you are unreasonable – if you're expected to be a subject leader, for example – raise it with your induction tutor.

Headteachers are contractually obliged to give teachers on induction a 10 per cent lighter timetable than other class teachers in the school, as well as the 10 per cent planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time. Check your timetable to make sure. The reduced timetable should not be used for catching up with planning or marking, but for your professional development. New teachers say that they learn most from observing others, working alongside other staff and gaining ideas from practical courses. Ones pitched at new teachers not only develop knowledge and skills but provide emotional support and this is vital in helping your resilience.

In Scotland, the teacher induction scheme guarantees a year's probation in a school after teacher training. For those not able to get on this, the "flexible route" allows new teachers to complete their probation through short term or part-time work. Schools have to do the following:

- Give probationers a 20 per cent lighter timetable, to be used for their professional development and support.

- Appoint a key experienced teacher with a clear responsibility for probationers, who will observe their teaching and provide feedback. There should be 24 weekly meetings between the support teacher and the probationer, and nine sessions for observing the probationer's class teaching.

- Draw up a probationer action plan to improve the teaching and set targets.

- Complete interim and final profile documents.

Someone on the staff should act as your induction tutor (known as 'supporter' in Scotland). This is an important role but people's understanding of what they have to do varies considerably so you might need to help them help you. Point them towards the induction rules, especially the end of term assessment forms that require them to write about how you're doing against the standards. Show them your Career Entry and Development Profile (CEDP) which helps bridge the transition between training and induction and fix a date to discuss transition point two at the beginning of term. Together you should prioritise your most important needs and draw up an action plan of things to do each week that will help you to meet them.

Headteachers are contractually obliged to give teachers on induction a 10 per cent lighter timetable than other class teachers in the school.

Prioritise the things that will have the biggest impact because everything is interconnected

Wherever you are, let your induction tutor/supporter know that you're keen to be observed – the first one should be in the first four weeks but the sooner the better.

By the end of the second week the honeymoon period is over and problems are starting to bubble so that's a good time to be observed. It'll reassure you about the things you're doing right and help you nip problems in the bud.

Use your induction tutor to diagnose what's going well and what needs improvement. Prioritise the things that will have the biggest impact, because everything in teaching is interconnected. For instance, problems with managing behaviour are often the consequence of other issues related to planning, pace, explanations, subject knowledge, relationships, expectations or assessment processes.

Some new teachers don't get their full entitlement and feel awkward about asking for it but it's your professional duty to be the best you can be. You will be doing all your future pupils a favour if you make the most of induction.

Sara Bubb is an education consultant (www.sarabubb.com) and lectures at the Institute of Education, London.



Useful websites:

www.gtce.org.uk
www.tda.gov.uk
www.gtcs.org.uk
www.gtcw.org.uk

It's good to talk

Solid support during your first year is a right, not a privilege. Your mentor's help is essential, which is why you should develop an honest relationship early on, says Tom Bennett.

Your mentor is one of the most important people in your development – but what makes a good mentor? And what happens if your mentor is unsuitable or unwilling to take on the role?

Some mentors approach the role like a personal bodyguard, determined to protect and guide you through every step; others see it in a softer context (the buddy system) where the relationship is more hands-off and usually centred around the pub.

While job descriptions vary from school, department and among individuals, one thing remains constant: a mentor is a colleague with more experience paired with one with less, sharing the aim of easing you through induction.

A mentor needs to be patient, friendly and approachable. They must want to do the job, as it's often an unpaid duty. They need to be empathetic, or even just sympathetic; they need to care about your wellbeing and to be able to see things through your eyes.

They need to be professional – that means reliable, punctual, responsible and positive. Much like the relationship between teacher and pupil, the bond can be friendly, but there must remain an arm's distance of impartiality.

Your mentor is there to provide support, advice and encouragement; they may also need to be diplomatically critical, or enable you to be reflective, which means that being too close isn't advisable. You need a mentor, not a friend.

What happens though when mentoring goes wrong or your mentor is unsuitable? (For unsuitable read unwilling or even worse, hopeless.) Sometimes mentors are chosen by criteria that revolve more around expediency than effectiveness. Some might regard the role as a chore and will tell you at length how busy and overworked they are, and how little time they have for you. If this is happening to you, the best advice is to make the most of it – manage upwards.

What you can reasonably expect from your mentor

- **Scheduled meetings** Once a week would be a good minimum.
- **Positive support** Beginning the job can corrode anyone's confidence and self-esteem so the mentor should be encouraging.
- **Availability** Although the mentor needs to have their own space, they must allow reasonable access to their presence.
- **Information and resources** Everyone needs someone they can ask questions without feeling stupid.

If your mentor is too busy or lacks interest in your career, think of ways that you can make time for you both. Find out when they are free, and book them. Remind them. Write down the things that you need from them, and keep copies for yourself. It's unfair but hopefully by being proactive and encouraging your mentor you can draw out the best of them so that they can do the same for you.

If the relationship really is floundering and you feel you are getting nothing from your mentor (or worse, that you are being undermined by the relationship), discuss your feelings with them. They might not realise the effect their carelessness is having on you. If this still doesn't yield results then you must speak to someone else, usually their line manager. But don't do this before you have discussed it with your mentor – they deserve a chance to negotiate a solution with you.

Act swiftly if you feel there is a personal dislike between you and your mentor, or you are uncomfortable in any way.

You only get one first year of teaching. After that you largely fly solo, so it's critical that the first year is as supportive and reflective as possible. Address the issue with the mentor as before, but be prepared to follow up with someone more senior. Support is your right in your first year, not a privilege, so expect and demand it rather than be grateful for it when it happens.

Tom Bennett is head of religious studies and philosophy at Raine's Foundation School in east London.

Five ways to make the most of your relationship with your mentor

- 1. LISTEN.** Don't just smile, nod and say, "Mmm-hmm". If they've taken the time to advise you, then take it in and process it.
- 2. MAKE LISTS OF QUESTIONS AND TARGETS.** The mentor's task will be a lot easier if they know what you are interested in, or are focused on.
- 3. BE HONEST.** Tell them when you're having problems, or don't understand something. If you suffer in silence you let ignorance bloom.
- 4. BE PROFESSIONAL.** If they have to be, so do you. You're an employee and a member of a profession, not a pupil, so act like one.
- 5. BE GRATEFUL.** Thank your mentor, and let them know that their input and support is valued. It will mean the world to them.



Every second counts

If you're struggling to fit everything into a mere 24 hours each day, stop working and start reading this advice, says Tom Lewis.

It's easy to feel overwhelmed as a new teacher, particularly when first presented by all that the job entails.

Teaching is rewarding and demanding so it's best to develop your time management skills at the earliest opportunity. Doing so will amplify the rewards and minimise the demands.

You need to keep in mind that you are a whole person proven to possess the qualities needed to be a professional, caring, committed and highly effective teacher.

One of the most important elements of time management is being able to create a boundary between work and your personal life. This will never be set in stone but whatever works best for you, stick to it.



By taking time to plan you can help make sure everything is finished in a timely fashion and stop feeling overwhelmed by the confusing mass of tasks at hand

Perhaps you work most effectively by coming in before school starts and leaving on time. Maybe you benefit from doing some planning at home and want to leave school at the same time as the pupils.

Whatever you do, try to make sure you don't end up working at every opportunity: not only do you deserve free time but planning your working hours will mean you're more capable as a teacher.

As well as setting aside specific hours for work it's also useful to determine what work you'll do in those hours ahead of time. By taking time to plan, you can help make sure everything is finished in a timely fashion and stop feeling overwhelmed by the confusing mass of tasks at hand.


Prioritise. Making lists can be a big help but also try to split your tasks into three categories: urgent for this week, important and not in need of immediate attention. By doing so, you can map your work more easily and avoid missing deadlines.

Procrastination is tempting when faced with a big workload. But don't always leave the most dreaded tasks until last – perhaps start with the most difficult so that they are out of the way.

Factor in breaks when you are managing your time and resist the urge to work through them. It's a false economy to keep working as your productivity will fall dramatically if you've attempted to concentrate for extended periods of time.

Lastly, you are not alone. Your mentors and tutors are there for a reason, but they may not want to interfere unless approached. There is a good chance that you will benefit from their advice and guidance, as they are there to monitor your professional and personal wellbeing. More broadly, the staffroom can be a great learning environment as well as providing a place to relax.

Tom Lewis was a teacher for 16 years and is a former counsellor, adviser and coach at the Teacher Support Network.



Getting on with colleagues is crucial to making your first year in schools a success, as Tom Bennett explains.

Balancing act

It's bad enough that you're starting a new school and trying to spin 100 plates at once. But something that's just as important – and often ignored – is the importance of developing good relationships with your colleagues.

It's no surprise that this comes at the end of a long shopping list of to-dos for new teachers, given all the pressures rushing up to face you. But it's vital to develop good relationships inside school.

So how do you turn the staffroom from a lion's den into a comfort zone? Like any relationship these things take time to grow, but follow these short-cuts and you'll plant the seeds of camaraderie as soon as you get there.

Everyone is your colleague

It's amazing how many teachers become blind sighted to any other member of staff who isn't a teacher. What is it, a school or a Georgian country manor?

Everyone who works in the same building as you is your colleague, so cultivate professional relationships with everyone: cleaners, dinner ladies, office staff and the janitor. Treat them as you expect to be treated. If you've accorded them the dignity they deserve then they will be far more likely to stick their necks out for you when you need help in a tight spot. And remember to do the same for them too.

Do your homework

It amazes me that a teacher perfectly willing to plan the seats of every pupil in their charge will often fail to do the most basic personal admin to keep track of the people they will encounter.

Here's a newsflash: people like it when you remember who they are. It feeds one of the basic needs to feel respected and valued. So try to remember their names. Use every trick at your disposal – mnemonics, word association, whatever works for you.

Read the environment

There will be as many social groups pre-existing in the staffroom as there are potential combinations of people, so don't try to work out what they all are at once. Spend the first week or two getting to meet as many people as possible. But...

Don't bug them

The teachers who are rushing about waving papers and pasting things to the wall are probably not in a good place to have a welcome chat with you. The ones on Facebook probably are.

If you want to get in touch with someone and it's not urgent, then use school pigeonholes or staff emails as much as possible.

Have a heart for the people who might not have as much time to talk as you and let them deal with your questions and requests in their own time. It will reap you the dividend of professional respect, as opposed to the compound interest of annoyance.

Get involved

Make a point of getting to know people outside work hours: there might be talent nights, clubs or lunch events that you can help out with. Rumour has it that some teachers even visit the inside of a pub on rare occasions. Drop in, help out, and get your face known at these events.

Getting invited to these events should be easy if you keep your wits about you; some are automatic, such as formal staff parties and celebration evenings, usually open to all. Others require a bit more detective work.

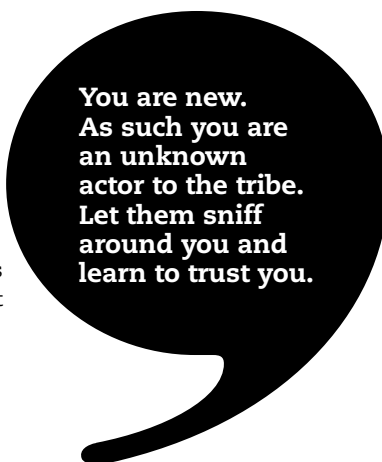
I guarantee you that at the end of every parents' evening there will be a gang of thirsty chalk-face warriors retiring to the pub, so find out who and where, and see if you can tag along. Or better still, why not ask some of the teachers if they want to go for a drink with you?

Initially, you should have a drink/chat/lunch with as many people as you can, refusing as few invitations as possible. It's hard work, but it will be worth it. Besides, you might even have fun.

But don't overdo it

You are new. As such you are an unknown factor to the tribe. Let them sniff around you a little and learn to trust you.

Be friendly, but don't kill any overtures on the part of others by being so keen that people think you're scary. Be polite, sincere and modest. Nobody likes the new kid to be too cocky. Like it or not – and I don't – most social groups have a hierarchy of dominance connected to familiarity, so even if you know that you're a fabulous, funny person with a heart of gold, let them find out for themselves and don't blow it by being overbearing. Play it cool until you have formed bonds with people.



**You are new.
As such you are
an unknown
actor to the tribe.
Let them sniff
around you and
learn to trust you.**



Five routes to success in the staffroom

1. KEEP TIDY.

Find out where your things go and keep them there. People get territorial in a small space, and infractions on someone else's patch can trigger war.

2. COME

PREPARED. You will need a mug, preferably as personalised as possible. This will avoid incurring anyone's wrath by daring to use their "World's Greatest Teacher" cup.

3. BE COOL.

Think you're a laugh-a-minute and all those grumpy faces could do with a cheer-up? Think on. Button it, at least for a few weeks, because nobody likes a smart Alec.

4. BE PREPARED

TO SAY YES. You will get asked to help out in lots of minor ways, and if you can manage it without compromising your primary tasks (induction, teaching) or your

work-life balance then do it. It will also generate some emotional capital with your new colleagues.

5. BE PREPARED

TO SAY NO. You will be asked to do a lot of pointless jobs just because other people are being lazy and think you're a soft touch. Learn the art of polite deflection ("Sure I can help – but not right now. Perhaps I can give you a hand at 5pm?") That should sort most of them out.

Connect more than four

Some people appear to have a knack of relating to others easily. This isn't just good fortune, it comes down to practice. Richard Churches and Roger Terry explain all.

Teaching is about relationships as well as pedagogy. It is about feelings as well as facts and is as much about what goes on inside your head as it is about what goes on in the heads of your pupils.

We know that it is our mood when we enter the classroom that has the greatest effect on lessons. Effective teaching means managing internal responses and external behaviour. There can be few jobs that require such mastery over interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) offers you a range of tools to help you achieve this.

Despite its name, NLP is practical and is sometimes described as the study of human excellence. NLP studies not only what effective people do but also how they go about it.

We are beginning to understand the importance of mirror neurons and the way in which they enable us to understand the actions of others, and also their intentions, emotions and the social meaning of their behaviour.

When one person is talking to another, they understand their emotions and intentions by paying attention to what they do as well as what they say. By subtly mirroring another person's body language and

tonality you can give them the experience of feeling understood. This is called creating rapport. There are two basic patterns for creating rapport – matching (copying another person's behaviour, for example by crossing the left leg over the right when this is what they are doing) and mirroring (adopting their mirror image, for example by crossing the right leg over the left when they are doing the opposite).

Neither of these means mimicking the person but just adopting a similar posture, words and rhythmic pattern. The aim is to be similar, not identical. All you want to do is have the other person's unconscious mind recognise that you are someone like them.



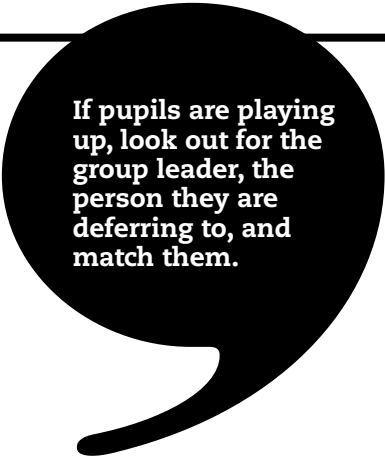
Anything that is visible in terms of body signals, language and vocal sound can be matched to build rapport

Liz Robinson, the headteacher at Surrey Square Junior School in Southwark, uses NLP widely in her school. She says: “Learning to build rapport one-to-one and with whole groups has made a real difference to me.”

These simple techniques are effective, particularly in the first stage of building rapport. A more advanced, and more subtle, technique is called cross-over matching. Cross-over matching involves matching another person’s behaviour with a different behaviour of your own, for example, matching their breathing rate to your finger movement or their eye blinks to your foot-taps. This way of building rapport is difficult to detect, yet still highly effective.

Anything that is visible in terms of body signals, language and vocal sound can be matched to build rapport. This includes posture, facial expressions, hand movements, breathing, body shifts, small foot movements and even head tilts.

With language, matching the sensory word preference of the person you’re talking to (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic) is effective, as is matching descriptive words, key phrases and even exact words. There is also a lot of detail in the vocal sounds that people make when they are talking and this gives more opportunities to build rapport by matching volume, voice tone, tempo, pace and pitch.



If pupils are playing up, look out for the group leader, the person they are deferring to, and match them.

In the classroom, building rapport by matching the body rhythms of a misbehaving pupil before dealing with them often makes the situation less difficult. If pupils are playing up, look out for the group leader, the person they are deferring to, and match them. This is a powerful way to influence covertly without direct conflict. Once you have rapport with the group leader the rest of the pupils will follow.

Parents' evenings are another place where rapport is helpful. Ask an open question first and then listen, taking the opportunity to match body signals. Notice the sensory word preferences (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic) of the parents and use similar language when you come to speak. If you hear a parent say: "I just don't see how this..." you might want to begin with: "One way to look at this is..."

If you know someone well you can even match the proportions of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic language they use.

Another way to establish rapport right from the start is by getting children to do something that creates group rapport by synchronising movement. Ask a universal question and get them to raise their hands, at the same time raising yours at the end of the question.

A universal question is a question that everyone will answer yes to. For example: "Has anyone seen a TV programme?" This may seem strange, and has a blindingly obvious answer, however what occurs is that everyone in the group agrees. So when you raise your hand so will almost everyone else.

You can do this in a sequence and then deliberately ask a question that generates interest in the topic, a pattern we call a yes set. For example: "Put your hand up if you have ever had a conversation... put your hand up if you have ever had a conversation that went wrong... put your hand up if it would be useful to know how to avoid this..."

Richard Churches is principal consultant for national programmes at CfBT Education Trust and a former Advanced Skills Teacher.

Roger Terry is an international NLP trainer, presenter and public speaker and runs Evolution Training with Emily, his wife. NLP for Teachers: *How to Be a Highly Effective Teacher* is published by Crown House Publishing.



Getting pupils to do their homework

- Set homework at the start of the lesson, not the end.
- Relate it to something they have done in class.
- Give clear instructions.
- If it includes internet research, make sure the pupils do something with the information they find.
- Mark the homework as soon as possible and give formative feedback, or get the pupils to mark each other's homework.

James Williams is a lecturer in education at the University of Sussex



Crowd control

It takes time for pupils to get used to your rules. They may resent you at first, but never give in, says Tom Bennett.

Most guides to behaviour are written like theses for masters' degrees, which are little use to the average new teacher; you need simple, practical advice to use immediately. So here it is.


It's your room, not theirs. You've heard the saying: "Don't smile at them until Christmas?" And like every other teacher, you'll probably ignore it, so keen are you to build up a confident, friendly rapport that nurtures their minds, emotions and chakras.

Who are you, Gandhi? You're in charge. So be in charge. Let's look at your appearance. It's cruel, but most children still associate authority with sober, slightly stern dress, so you'd be crazy not to tune into this subconscious expectation.

Be in the classroom before your pupils, preferably at the door. Have every resource you need on your desk before they get there. If there's anything pupils need once you've started, do without. What they want is secondary to what you want.

As they enter, look everyone directly in the eye and say good morning. You are providing an example for them to imitate.

Start by being polite and firm. They deserve the kind of manners that you expect from them. And as they're entering, let them walk around you; don't move for them, you are in charge. If anyone is messing around as they enter, ask them to wait outside, calmly and always politely. Children need to learn from the start that you have high expectations.



If there's anything pupils need once you've started, do without. What they want is secondary to what you want.

Be consistent. This is the real key to long-term behaviour management. The pupils will test your boundaries, so have some lines drawn in the sand.

Initially, use less humour than you would at a funeral: they need a teacher, not a laid-back entertainer. They're crying out for leadership, so give it to them.

Use impact to communicate. You've probably heard that we only get across 25 per cent of our message with the words that we use – it's true, and that means that you're talking to pupils with more than what you say.

Think about how you conduct yourself. Picture the perfect teacher. Are they racing around, biting their nails and staring at the floor? No, so you're not either. Stand still. Let your feet grow roots and stay planted in one place. Keep your arm movements small, and make them certain, deliberate gestures. Think the BBC newsreader for carriage, and JFK for gesticulation.

Sound like you mean it. When you're speaking to persuade others, always avoid a) talking like they are worthless (because they're not) and b) talking like you are worthless (because they'll believe it). Instead aim for c) the assertive tone. Talk to them as if you were asking for something at the supermarket, neither urgent nor wheedling.

Requests need neither a question mark nor an exclamation mark at the end, so lay out your needs like a manifesto. Raise your voice as little as possible – it can make you sound like you have lost class control.

Be consistent. This is the real key to long-term behaviour management. The pupils will test your boundaries, so have some lines drawn in the sand. Make your behaviour expectations clear and let them know that you think it's important, because you need a calm, safe space to help them to learn. Embed your behaviour policy by making them aware that you care about them as learners, even if they don't.

Let them know what the rules are, and let them know what the sanctions are if they break them. And employ these sanctions when the rules are broken, or all you're teaching them is that your words are meaningless, and your rules are empty.

Consistent means fair. Don't pass judgment like Moses one day, then be bashful the next. That teaches pupils that you're inconstant. Follow the whole school behaviour policy as much as you can, because that shows them that you aren't alone, but part of a team – that's a good lesson for you to learn too.

It's a marathon, not a sprint. Every new teacher needs to hear this. Many start off well, applying themselves to discipline with nervous gusto, until they feel that things aren't improving, and they crumble by February into a heap of misery, throwing out all their sanction procedures with their good intentions and self-esteem.

Who can blame them?
It seems at first that the pupils will never like you, and the bad ones are still... well, bad. Phone calls home, detentions and reports still aren't working, and it all looks hopeless.

And that is the secret and the problem. It takes time for pupils to get used to your rules, and they will initially resent you for it. But they're learning, despite appearances. It's at exactly the point you feel it isn't working that you need to keep going.

Once you break through the seemingly impenetrable gravity of those initial months, perhaps the first term or two, you achieve escape velocity and fly into orbit. Keep going. Keep every one of your procedures in place. Keep making the phone calls home, keep chasing the detentions, and keep putting the pressure on your pupils, even when you don't feel like it.

You are part of a greater team that has their best interests at heart. You are in charge; so act like it, even when on the inside you feel at your weakest. They need you to be the boss.

THE RULES

- Take charge
- Dress the part
- Be first
- Be prepared
- Make eye contact
- Make an impact
- Be consistent
- Be patient
- Keep it up

TOP TIPS

Ignore questions without a hand up. Ignore them completely. They'll soon learn.

You will feel tempted to be kind, laugh and say friendly things. Resist, for now.

Try to avoid saying "I'll get Miss/Sir if you don't behave." This teaches them that you're not in charge; Miss/Sir is. Use others as a last resort.

Meet the parents

When it comes to discussing other people's children you need to approach with caution. If it's praise you'll have few problems, but tread carefully if you need to criticise, says Stephen Calladine-Evans.



Parents' evening can be nerve-wracking for a new teacher but your worst anxieties can be eased by following five basic rules:

Rule 1

Prepare well but don't bring too much evidence. A few notes beside each pupil's name will suffice for most five or 10-minute sessions.

The general trend of grades, the current level of attainment and a target clear enough to be remembered the following day are quite sufficient. So rather than: "She is very quiet in class," you can compliment the standard of written work and say: "She should aim to answer one question in each lesson." Bringing all the exercise books or folders of work to the table can give the impression of not knowing the class and, if you rummage around to find a book, can make you look disorganised.

Rule 2

Accentuate the positive but don't avoid bad news. For most parents and carers the evening can be daunting. If you have bad news, tell them at the outset but make it clear that the story is not all doom and gloom. So phrases such as: "I'm sorry to tell you that..." should be replaced with: "I'm going to tell you some of the good things that

they've been doing and then I'm going to pick some areas for development."

When you have finished with the bad news, make sure that you have made it clear what positive steps can be taken to address the issue. Even if a dozen things are wrong, talk about no more than three. You might feel better for getting it off your chest, but it's unlikely to change things.

Rule 3

Make it personal but not too personal. In praise, make sure you are praising the child. In criticism be critical of the behaviour or action. Condemn the child and it is set in stone. It is the behaviour that needs to change and that's best achieved by explaining how the child will benefit from the change.

Rule 4

It should be a dialogue rather than a monologue. A stock repertoire of questions can open up the session into a discursive experience. "Are they enjoying the subject/topic?" is a classic attempt doomed to failure because of the closed structure. Keep questions open: "How do you think they feel about the subject/topic?"

If disaster strikes and the approach to you is hostile, keep a calm and collected expression, neither confronting nor confuting. Note down the issues and then tell the parent or carer that you want to recap.

When you have read back the points, tell them that these clearly require more assessment than is currently available in the limited time. Arrange an interview or record contact details and assure them that you will work with them to resolve the matter.

Rule 5

Stand up. When greeting stand up and shake hands. Welcome them. Smile with your mouth and your eyes. Invite them to be seated. By doing this you are asserting, in the nicest possible way, three important features – you are happy to see them; you are there to collaborate, not confront; you are in control.

Stephen Calladine-Evans is an experienced school senior manager.

All eyes on you

When it comes to assemblies, there's a right way and a wrong way. Kate Aspin tells you how to make an impact, whatever your subject matter.

Taking your first assembly can be a baptism of fire whether it's before 30 children or 300. But there are things that you can do to lower the fear factor.

First, ensure you have watched others take assemblies and that you know the policy and practice of your school. You should also discuss music and themes with the person responsible.

Candles, props, posters and PowerPoint pictures help reinforce the message that assemblies are a different learning environment.

Classical music is safer and calmer than the current number one – this can lead to spontaneous clapping or singing, which is not the environment you want.

If you struggle with some of the older children, get them involved, holding props, doing drama, helping with younger volunteers. It keeps them in line and the others interested too.

With younger children, use puppets and make assemblies as active as possible. If you're using stories, go for intrigue and interest; stop new ones before the end and discuss what might happen, especially if it has a moral dilemma. With a familiar story it helps to have a repeating line that they can all chorus.

Add a bit of the “sparkle factor” and it is easier to keep their attention. The story of Jesus turning water into wine can be improved upon by using clear jugs of water and a tiny bit of food colouring

Kate Aspin is a senior lecturer in education at the University of Huddersfield.

Comment section

Words make all the difference to proud parents. Think before you write, says Sara Bubb.

Report writing. It's time consuming and on top of all the work you do for your everyday teaching. But reports have to be done well: they're the most important thing you write as a teacher. Every word will be analysed and kept for posterity.

Preparation is key. Speak to your headteacher and induction tutor about what's required. Over the past 10 years, people have been trying out different ways to make the process quicker, easier and more useful.

Computer-assisted report writing is going out of fashion because the results sound bland. Comment banks can be handy to look at to get you started but the best thing is to make some notes on key achievements and necessary improvements.

Ask pupils to do a self assessment of what these might be. If assessment for learning is working, these should be accurate, so use them to write specifically about individuals. Then draw up a timetable, but pace yourself because they are not something that you can knock off in a rush.

Choose a straightforward pupil to write about first to get you in the swing, but show it to a senior member of staff for approval before doing the rest.



Shine on

Being observed is scary, but you can turn it to your advantage. Sara Bubb explains how.

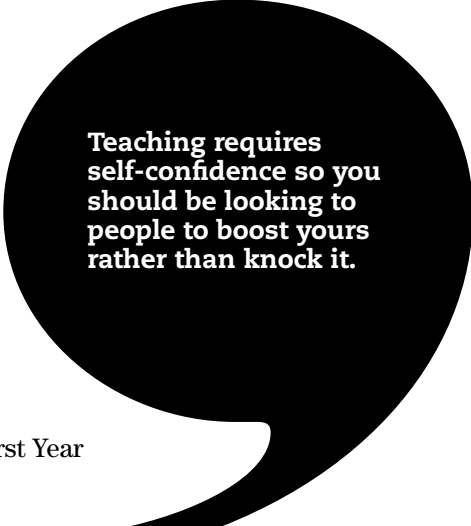
Have you been observed yet? It is easy for things to slip so you'll need to nudge your induction tutor into organising it soon. You should be observed within your first four weeks of teaching in England, and then once every six to eight weeks, with written feedback. In Scotland, five observations are recommended between August and December and four between January and June, one with someone other than your supporter.

You should be judged on your progress towards meeting induction standards but lots of people like to pretend that they are inspectors and grade lessons. I don't think they should because it's unhelpful, unnecessary and may even be inaccurate (is your judge a trained inspector?) but if you are assessed that way, be prepared.

Obviously you'll prepare well, but make sure you show good subject knowledge. Insecurity normally exposes itself when you try to answer those funny questions children ask, under the pressure of knowing an observer is listening hard.

Make observations work for you so that you develop. Teaching requires self-confidence so you should be looking to people to boost yours rather than knock it. It can be damaging to have your every move analysed, so let your induction tutor know what helps and hinders progress.

It's bad enough when a lesson doesn't go well but when someone has been in the room observing the chaos, you can sink to new levels of humiliation. Shedding tears in the staff loo is a normal reaction, but dry your eyes and see the feedback session as a way to get help. That's what induction is all about. Teaching is tough. People aren't born super-teachers. Everyone has to work at it.



Teaching requires self-confidence so you should be looking to people to boost yours rather than knock it.

Q&A



Q I'm a new teacher in a school that is waiting for the call from inspectors. Will I be observed and if so, what will they be looking at?

A The odds of being observed depends on the size of the school. Most inspections are shorter than they used to be so time limits the number of teachers inspectors observe. Ofsted's rules for inspection change regularly. The latest framework starts in 2012. Recently, the emphasis has shifted from evaluating the headteacher and senior management team to paying more attention to what is happening in the classroom.

However, if you are a new teacher school and there are weaknesses in your work, the inspectors will want to know what the headteacher and other school leaders have done to monitor you and provide guidance and support. The inspector will probably look at children's books and the lesson plan for the lesson seen, but those arrangements will be for all teachers and will be agreed with the headteacher at, or just before, the start of the inspection.

Fret no more

If you're under pressure, confide in someone. It always pays to talk, says Tom Lewis.

Stress is not unique to teaching. But unlike many jobs, there is hardly any let-up for teachers: no ignoring the phone for half an hour, few opportunities to get away and often not enough time to get all the work done.

Stress can come from many sources. Poor pupil behaviour and conflict with colleagues are frequently cited, but they are not the sole causes.

Often problems are exacerbated by other factors. Some teachers are reluctant to admit that they're having trouble because they are concerned about being judged as weak or incapable. This can lead to isolation, particularly if they don't want to worry their families. Our advice is to talk to people: either trusted colleagues, friends or the Teacher Support Network on 08000 562 561, or Teacher Support Scotland 0800 564 2270.

Many teachers are unable to say no. This is particularly true of new teachers who are keen to impress. For many, the realisation that they are allowed to say no can be a massive relief.

At the least, teachers should feel free to give a negotiated yes, where they are willing to help out with extra work, but not at all costs.

The passion many teachers feel for the job means that it can take over their lives. It is important in these circumstances to re-establish yourself as a person who happens to be a teacher, not someone whose sole purpose is to serve their school.

Combating stress is the responsibility of the whole school community, not just individual teachers, and this process often starts with senior management.

Keeping teaching innovative, without reinventing the wheel, is another way of reducing stress. There's a wealth of resources online that can help, as can sharing knowledge between teachers in your school and beyond.

Organising your time properly seems like an obvious suggestion, but even small, simple changes, such as prioritising your tasks, making a to-do list (which will also act as a gratifying ledger if it includes everything you do in a working day) and avoiding putting things off too much can make dramatic differences to your emotional well-being.

Tom Lewis was a teacher for 16 years and is a former counsellor with the Teacher Support Network.



Breathe easy

Our breathing becomes much shallower when we're stressed or anxious. This means that there's a less effective supply of oxygen going into the body, causing an imbalance of carbon monoxide, which can increase the sensation of distress and helplessness.

The trick is to learn to breathe through from the diaphragm, not just from the chest.

Breathing exercises are calming and can be done anywhere, anytime. Start by exhaling all the air out of your lungs. Breathe in gently through your nose, counting up to five as you do so. Hold it in for five seconds.

Exhale all the air again as you count to five. Repeat the process as many times as you need to, aiming for about 10 big breaths every minute.

Dulcet tones

Forget the interactive whiteboard, your voice is your most important teaching tool. Hannah Frankel looks at how to protect and improve it.

The voice is the bedrock of teaching, but few new teachers have training in how to use it to their best advantage.

An animated and well-projected voice can make lessons entertaining and more effective; a dull monotone can make them flat and lifeless.

Your voice will come under immense strain over the course of your teaching career. Sore throats are an occupational hazard, but there is also the risk of causing permanent damage.

There are things you can do to protect your voice, and to make it more lively, ultimately making sure your pupils are more likely to listen to what you are saying.

Avoid vocal stress

- **Keep hydrated:** drink plenty of water and avoid heavy smoking, excessive alcohol and spicy food.
- **Warm up your voice** daily with gentle humming, sliding up and down the pitch scale, and a few tongue-twisters.
- **Try not to shout** over background noise. Use a whistle, bell or clapping to get attention.
- **If you have a cold,** make sure you rest your voice.
- **Try not to clear your throat** excessively, it is like rubbing sandpaper on your vocal chords. Swallow hard instead or try sipping water.
- **If hoarseness persists** for longer than three weeks consult your doctor.

Make your voice more lively

- **Record yourself** teaching and listen to it. Ask others how they perceive your voice and make changes accordingly.
- **Listen to a radio DJ** or a good talking book and note how the speakers vary their pitch, speed and tone to entertain their audience.
- **Take time to breathe** – this will slow down your delivery, allow you to collect your thoughts and avoid strain on your voice.

Watch your step

How to look after your feet

- Avoid high heels, or if you can't resist a touch of glamour, stick to four centimetres or less and make sure you stretch your heel and calf muscles.
- Go for comfort and a flexible sole, rather than a tight fit. Laces or straps are better than slip-ons, which let your feet slide around and upset your natural alignment.
- Alternate between at least two pairs of shoes so you're not in the same ones all the time.
- Don't wait until you're in pain before you get help – book in regular appointments with a chiropodist or podiatrist.

Taking care of your feet isn't easy, but it is essential if you want to get through the working day comfortably, says Steven Hastings.

It's not just dancers and runners who need to look after their feet. Standing at the front of a classroom, trudging through long corridors and lurking in the dinner queue all take a toll.

Busy teachers can walk five miles or more in a normal day. Add in hard floors or ill-fitting shoes and it is a sure recipe for sore feet.

A quarter of the body's bones are in the feet and even though many of them are tiny, they have plenty of weight to support. Teachers are among high-risk workers who pile on the pressure with long periods of standing, while crouching down to low desks puts stress on the toes.

Poor foot care can cause anything from cracked heels, blisters and corns to deformed toes. And after a day in the classroom, general soreness and swelling is common.

Long-term consequences can be more worrying. Pain in the knees and back, alongside spine and posture problems, can often be traced back to the feet, while wearing high heels can cause permanent shortening of the calf muscles.

Busy teachers can walk five miles or more in a normal day. Add in hard floors or ill-fitting shoes and it's a sure recipe for sore feet.

INFORMATION BANK

ENGLAND & WALES

September

Show your induction tutor your Career Entry and Development Profile (CEDP). Discuss your needs (transition point two). Draw up an individual induction programme with your induction tutor. Have your first observation.

October

First parents' evening. Half-term review of progress.

November

Lesson observation.

December

Assessment meeting.

Complete assessment form for term one and send to the appropriate body.

January

Set new objectives for term two. Lesson observation.

February

Half-term review of progress.

March

Lesson observation.

April

Assessment meeting. Complete assessment form for term two and send to appropriate body.

May

Lesson observation. Half-term review of progress.

June

Lesson observation. Observe lessons in other schools.

July

Final assessment meeting to judge whether you have met the standards. Complete final assessment form and send to appropriate body.

August Holidays!

SCOTLAND

August

Set up initial supporter meeting and draw up Professional Development Action Plan for term.

September

Observed sessions should be taking place – five by December.

October

Make sure you are keeping progress on the online CPD Tracking Record up-to-date.

November

Formal supporter meeting recommended for this month.

December

Interim profile should be completed with information and evidence from this term.

January

Continue documenting professional development for your portfolio, revisiting timetable, action plan, tracking record.

February

Supporter meetings carry on – 12 recommended between January and June.

March

Observed teaching sessions carry on – four advised between January and June.

April

Make sure your CPD Tracking Record is up-to-date.

May

Completion of final profile with information and evidence gathered.

June

Final profile to be submitted to the General Teaching Council for Scotland.

July Holidays

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

Training and Development Agency for Schools

www.tda.gov.uk

(Part of the Teaching Agency from April 2012.

www.education.gov.uk)

General Teaching Council for England

0370 001 0308

www.gtce.org.uk

(Disappears April 2012. Some functions taken over by the Teaching Agency)

General Teaching Council for Wales

02920 460099

www.gtcw.org.uk

General Teaching Council for Scotland

0131 314 6000

www.gtcs.org.uk

General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

028 9033 3390

www.gtcni.org.uk

Teacher Support Network

08000 562 561

www.teachersupport.info

Teacher Support Scotland

0800 564 2270

www.teachersupportscotland.info

Teacher Support Cymru

08000 855 088

www.teachersupport.info

UNIONS

ENGLAND

National Union of Teachers

020 7388 6191

www.teachers.org.uk

National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers

0121 453 6150

www.nasuwt.org.uk

Association of Teachers and Lecturers

020 7930 6441

www.atl.org.uk

Voice (formerly Professional Association of Teachers)

01332 372 337

www.voicetheunion.org.uk

SCOTLAND

The Educational Institute for Scotland

0131 225 6244

www.eis.org.uk

Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association

0131 313 7300

www.ssta.org.uk

National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers Scotland

0131 523 1110

www.nasuwt.org.uk

Voice

0131 220 8241

www.voicetheunion.org.uk

WALES

National Union of Teachers Cymru

02920 491 818

www.nut.org.uk

National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers Cymru

02920 546 080

www.nasuwt.org.uk

Association of Teachers and Lecturers Wales

02920 465 000

www.atl.org.uk

Voice Cymru

01332 378 029

www.voicetheunion.org.uk

NORTHERN IRELAND

National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers

028 9078 4480

www.nasuwt.org.uk

Ulster Teachers' Union

028 9066 2216

www.utu.edu

Association of Teachers and Lecturers

028 9078 2020

www.atl.org.uk



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