

**Autumn Discussions on the
Portuguese Primary English Teachers' Discussion List**
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Discussion nº 2 - Friday 3rd November to Friday 11th November
“Consequence and Reward in the Primary Classroom”

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Discussion summary documents

TIPS FOR GETTING SILENCE / WHOLE CLASS ATTENTION

1. "Countdown":

Count down from 10 to 1, or 5 to 1, or even 3 to 1 if your students are very responsive. It works because, despite themselves, students will join in – once some join in others will notice and also join in, even if they're not sure why - when they're finished you've got what you need - the whole class finishing one mini-activity all together, leaving you to direct them after that.

2. "1-2-3, Look at me. 1-2-3, Listen to me."

This came from MacMillan's Little Elephant teacher's book - it works because it's also accompanied by gestures that reinforce what the teacher wants, and students can join in with the gestures before they can join in with the words. They learn quickly, however, to join in speaking as well.

3. "Hands on your head":

I learned this routine from my long-time colleague Julie Bridge whose range of techniques is unparalleled! Another motivating one for students to join in with - the whole routine is (teacher calls it out and does the actions with the students - it needs pointing out to students first that they should join in - they will pick up the idea very quickly!): "Hands on your heads, hands on your shoulders, fold your arms - Shhhh!" Again, students all join in, and the finish point should be a roomful of quiet children - if not repeat it. Be prepared to take quick advantage of the quiet however - it won't last long!

4. "Magic Word":

The idea needs explaining to students first - Portuguese really helps here! At the beginning of the class, establish the magic word for today - students can suggest it, or the teacher can set it (from recently covered vocab?). The magic of the word is that whenever it is mentioned in the class, it will send all the students to sleep! Play with it and practise it a few times - it's fun for the students to just collapse on their desks and pretend to be asleep. Use it when you want to bring a noisy activity to a close, and also use it at unexpected times (in the middle of instructions or in the middle of feedback) to keep the idea fun. It works!

5. Silence:

Silence can be very effective as well. Especially when students are used to us as teachers being lively, vocal and making lots of eye contact, to see the teacher standing to the side of

the room, silent, looking up to the ceiling or down to the floor, obviously waiting, can have as dramatic an effect as something loud. I usually find that one by one all students fall silent and hush each other till everyone is quiet. True there are usually one or two who then like to break the silence with a noise or a comment, but they do not generally get the approval of their classmates. When you do get silence, thank them. They have just done something positive for the class.

An additional element to the 'silent routine' is to write time wasted on the board. Usually, I sit quietly in the corner if the class has dissolved into Portuguese, are doing their own thing and have forgotten I am there. I make a point of looking at a clock. After a minute I write + 1 minute on the board, after two minutes, I rub out 1 and write 2 etc, etc. Usually after 3-4 minutes the class will have noticed and ask what I am doing. I explain that that is the amount of time they have wasted and so the amount of time I will be adding to the end of the lesson. This usually shocks them and I explain that if they continue to waste time I WILL introduce the system. Usually after this, when it happens again I just have to sit quietly and as the noise level dies down ask them if they want time added to the lesson - this generally has the desired effect.

6. Using classroom space effectively

Within the classroom we can use the front area of the classroom more effectively. One way to do this is to imagine 2 circles on the floor. You can draw 2 chalk circles on the floor. This helps the children too. You thus have a 'telling off area' a 'I need your attention as I'm going to give instructions' area. They need to be quite far apart - so that they are clear.

As a teacher, it's quite hard at the beginning to remember to go to the circles to 'give your instructions' or to 'tell the class off'. BUT if you can manage to.... then the class becomes quiet before you get to the telling off area - thinking <uh oh! we're in trouble!> or at least telling others <Olha a professora!>. Likewise, with the instructions. Like any technique this works wonderfully with some groups, and not at all with others!

7. Teacher's Hand Up

I have agreed with my students that as they need to raise their arm when they want to say something or ask a question, to avoid having them all speaking at the same time, I decide to do the same when noise becomes a problem. I stand, raise my arm and wait. Usually the kids tell each other to be quiet. In the end I say «thank you» and I go on without «preaching». It works!

If students are all calling out when they should be putting their hands up, then I will put my own hand up as a demo of what they SHOULD be doing (usually accompanied by a mouth-zipping gesture!), but I haven't used it for when I want to speak over the hubbub. I can imagine it works a treat.

8: Other Clear Signals

I use a different strategy to call their attention whenever they're making too much noise and whenever I want to speak and they don't seem to listen: I use a maraca (one I made out of a coke plastic bottle). I just shake it and it makes sufficient (agreeable) noise for them to notice:) I also use for other purposes this being just one of the uses I have for it:).