

Routines and rituals

Welcome to Module 14 of your SEN toolkit!

In this module we look at the importance of enabling routines for SEN learners, and how to set them up.

Aims

By the end of this module, I will be able to:

- recognise the difference between disruptive and enabling routines in relation to SEN
- apply certain routines with SEN learners clearly and include other stakeholders to ensure their successful implementation
- understand the importance of integrating clear routines into classroom management procedures, and involving other stakeholders



Pre-reflection

Change and self-reflection are key elements in our lives, whether we wish to tackle something in our own way of acting or even when we wish to influence others.

What do these statements have in common?

- *"The definition of madness is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result."*
- *"If you do what you've always done you get what you've always got."*
- *"Never change a winning team."*

They're about change. And change, while being a constant aspect of our lives, is often difficult for many people, especially in large and complex organisations like schools.

It seems clear that if something is not working in your classroom context, then you should begin a process of self-reflection. Why is it not working? What can I do to make a difference to my situation? Is there something I must tackle right now? On the contrary, if something is being done well, why change it? Change is possible and as teachers and educators we cherish that thought. Look at what C.S. Lewis has to say:

"There are far better things ahead than any we leave behind". This is all we need to hear in order to better appreciate our current situation.

As Steve Maraboli put it, "The truth is, unless you let go, unless you forgive yourself, unless you forgive the situation, unless you realize that the situation is over, you cannot move forward."

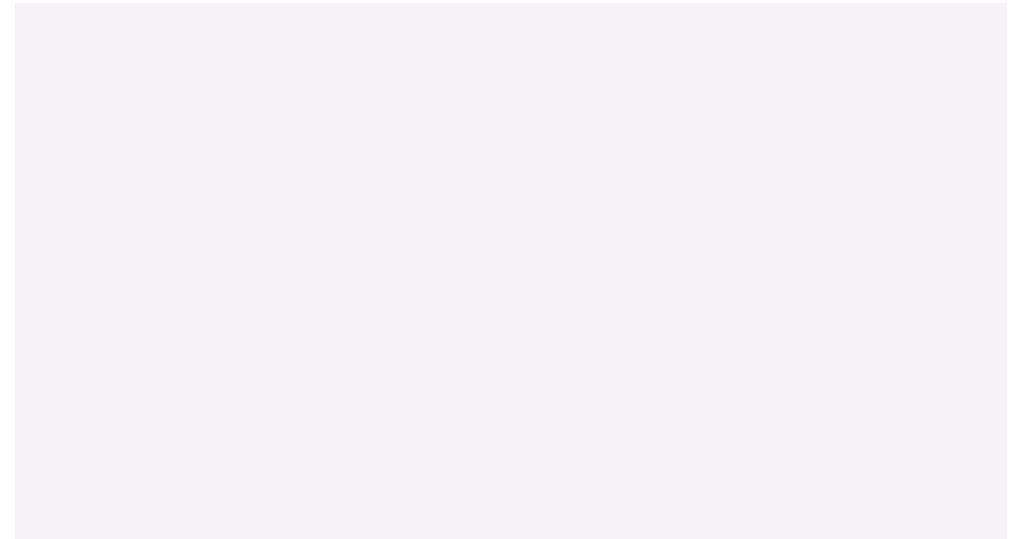
Or, for a more straightforward perspective, take William Arthur Ward's wise words into consideration: "The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails."

Let's now do some self-reflection and begin adjusting some sails. Record your own thoughts and answers in your diary.

- Which things give you hope about the educational context you are in? Which things worry you?
- What is your approach to change in your classroom context?
- To what extent do you reflect on your own practice?

Reflexive questions

Classroom strategies in relation to routines and rituals will vary with different teachers and in different schools, but the truth of the matter is that teachers are asked to be creative and innovative in this regard. Managing routines and rituals will be made easier if simple, personalised teaching strategies for the special needs students are implemented. Teachers are agents of change. Teachers can make a difference! Think about the differences you want to make.



Teacher stories, student stories

In this section you will look at two stories so you can compare and contrast them. Then you will reflect on the reasons why teachers have routines and rituals. We will look at ways to improve your own strategies by listening to the voice of teachers talking about their routines and rituals and why and how they use them.

Let's begin with a teacher reflecting on her approach to routines in the classroom. Then let's turn to a student to see their point of view.

After reading the teacher perspective, reflect on the reasons teachers have routines and rituals. What purpose do they serve? Is it trying to make life easier for me or for my students?

Then, after reading the student perspective, how do you think routines impact the different learners in your classroom? Write some specific points in your diary.

STORY 1 – Teacher

As I understand it, when we as teachers develop classroom routines, the opportunity for misbehaviour is lessened because our students know what is expected of them and what they are expected to do. They also help us to avoid “miscalls,” that is, misinterpreting a child's behaviour as a misbehaviour; for instance, when a child does not know that she (or he) is to sharpen her pencil after the lesson is over, rather than during it, or at least raising her hand and asking for permission. Moreover, if students know the steps necessary to get a particular job done, they are more likely to complete it in an orderly manner.

If we are developing plans for these activities that work for our physical space

and our management style, we can take the approach of trial and error. If a routine is not effective, involve your students in redesigning it.

Structure and procedures are vital parts of classroom management. Every part of the day needs to be thought through and brought into alignment with what works best for your teaching style, your students' personalities, the age group and any special challenges that could cause a distraction.

Start planning as soon as you see the classroom:

- envision each class; ask yourself what you will do and how it can be done easily.
- when your students arrive, get them on board by teaching classroom procedures, along with your content, during the first week of class.
- explain how to enter and leave the classroom
- how to get the needed supplies
- how to turn in and pass out work
- how to work in a group
- how to move between activities and how to exit the classroom
- going to the toilet
- lining up and walking in line
- giving undivided attention upon your signal
- raising their hand when they would like a turn to speak
- be sure to cover your expectations, including how to behave in class and the consequences of misbehaviour.
- proper use of the board and markers (divided into sections including homework)
- page layout for notebooks...

You will not regret having good routines and rituals in place, whether you are a more structured primary teacher or a secondary teacher with many different classes.

STORY 1 – Student

When I was in Primary school, the teachers had very specific routines they used in class and, although I was quite lively as a student, I understood the reasons why I needed boundaries. My teachers, for example, met and greeted all the students at the door. They persistently ‘caught’ students doing the right thing. They taught students the behaviours that they wanted to see. They taught students how they would like to be treated and they reinforced conduct and attitudes that were appropriate. They also agreed rules, routines and expectations with the class and consistently applied them, whether they had positive or negative consequences. They kind of had a passion for their subjects and seemed to work hard to build up mutual trust even when trust was broken. I also noticed sometimes how they kept their emotion for when it is most appreciated by students.

I was diagnosed with ADHD in my first year of secondary school, when I was 12. For me this was a big blow to my self-esteem. I could not figure out why my behaviour changed so much and how poorly I was doing academically. My grades started to drop and by fourth year I left the school and switched to another one. I realised that I did not fit in somehow. When I look back now I see that my secondary school teachers were not as ready to give me boundaries as it happened in Primary School. Yes, of course, there were rules

written in the journal that we all subscribed to, but the teachers in the school all had different routines and expectations from the students. I couldn’t deal with this. My mind, often somewhere in Koo koo Land, was not ready to take so many changes and so many different expectations for behaviour and ways of doing things.

I especially liked my Spanish classes. The teacher was more like a primary school teacher. He always greeted us at the door, had very good routines in place and made us practice our Spanish a lot in class. I adapted well to his classes and I considered it my best subject. I always seemed to be involved in everything and I liked the banter. The other subjects were always difficult for me... but I realise now that the teachers did not make it easy for me to fit in and I felt helpless. I even remember when a couple of times my Spanish teacher confiscated my mobile phone. I never felt I was hard-done by. I was clearly in the wrong and I admitted my mistake... I couldn’t say the same of the other teachers... sometimes they let other students off the hook but not me... I hated that inconsistency.

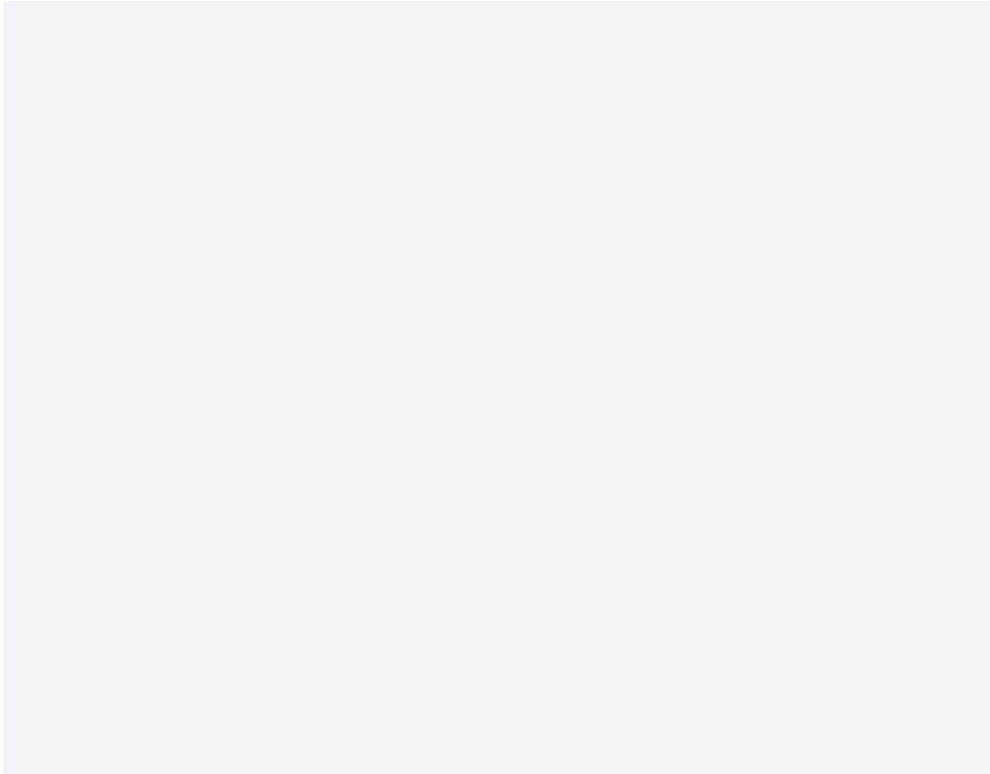
We all somehow find our way in life. Now I work in a travel agency and I have a management position. Spanish helped me greatly to get where I am. I know that it was probably my fault I didn’t know better and my misbehaviour in class was quite common... but I just wonder if teachers had very set routines for me... will I have made it easier for them?

Reflexive questions

We can probably see that all teachers are facing the same issues regarding routines and rituals. Teachers can have a potential positive impact if changes to the classroom routines are made. Students can benefit greatly from strategies that aim at removing obstacles and focusing on real learning.

Let's try and build a positive school culture and climate for students and staff alike by creating expectations around constructive routines and fun rituals.

How do you think, after reading the stories, you can do this?



Routines / Rituals	Working - why	Not Working - Why

Don't teach them all at once!

While it is important to teach routines and procedures the first day or school, it is not a good idea to sit students down and go over this list one by one. Pick out the most important ones like bathroom and hand-raising policy to teach first. Many of them, you can teach as they are needed. For instance, 30 minutes before lunch, you may go over lunch procedures and then practice lining up.

It's ok to make changes!

As your year goes along, if you realize a certain routine isn't working, it's ok to tweak things. Be honest with your students, tell them it isn't working, and then introduce and practice the new way. Don't feel like you have to be stuck with one way of doing things just because that's what you taught them on the first day of school.

We can now think about which would be most helpful for you to implement as a priority (e.g. choose three changes to implement). What success do you want to see when you implement them?

ROUTINES	PURPOSE THEY SERVE

Part 3

Now let's look at ways that you can make the subconscious conscious (e.g. observations, CPD, guidelines, can-do statements, gap comparison, Johari window, etc.)

Make a list of things you could implement so that your routines and rituals improve by observation.

We can now do gap comparison looking at what you are doing in the classroom and where there are areas to improve for your own implementation. What rituals and routines am I already using that can be improved?

WHAT I AM CURRENTLY DOING	AREAS TO IMPROVE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Let's now think of ways you will share this with colleagues and students so as to get their feedback. How can I share the routines and rituals I am implementing with other teachers and students that could benefit from this? Make a list for sharing and be prepared to make changes!

I WILL SHARE THE FOLLOWING ROUTINES AND RITUALS	WHEN AND WITH WHOM

Students and other teachers, unfortunately (or maybe fortunately?), are not mind readers, so it is important that you teach students the routines explicitly. Before you teach the routines to students, it is important that you have put thought into how you want things to run. You can get tons of ideas online and from fellow teachers, but ultimately when the bell rings, you are in charge of your class, and you will want things to run your way. Be sure to spend time thinking through the routines and determining how you want each to go.



Succeeding to plan, planning to succeed

As mentioned before, teachers can create plans, but how effective are they? Let's have a look at the action plan of another teacher as an example (Please see 'Example Routines Elementary' on the next page)

Let's adapt the sample document in some way, or fill in the gaps so you can bring it to your own classroom context. Through this task you will understand better what we mean by 'action plan' so you can complete the main task (part 2) later on. We will now create an action plan for implementing a self-reflective improvement to your routines and rituals. We will follow 3 steps: problem-solution-process.

1. **PROBLEM:** Identify a specific area which you need to improve. This could be from Gap comparison, for instance.
2. **SOLUTION:** Choose / define a set of routines and techniques that you want to implement to improve in this area.
3. **PROCESS:** Decide how you will measure whether those changes have been a success and work out what you need to do next.

THIS IS MY LIST OF CHANGES:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

HOW WILL I MEASURE CHANGES?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.





Example Routines & Procedures (Elementary)

Movement into the Classroom

1. Students assemble in designated area.
2. Teacher greets students.
3. Students and teacher walk to classroom.
4. OUTSIDE classroom, teacher gains students' attention and gives direction for next activity.
5. Teacher opens door and students enter.

Movement out of the Classroom

1. Line leader goes to door.
2. Teacher dismisses rows, tables, or groups when materials are organized.
3. When all children are lined up, line leader goes to end of line.
4. If necessary, the teacher reviews the guidelines for walking to new location (e.g., Stay with the group. Keep your hands and body to yourself. Use a "whisper" voice.)
5. Teacher walks in middle of line.

Use of Bathroom

1. Students should use the bathroom before school, before class, during recess, during passing period.
2. If there is an emergency, students should go to the bathroom during independent work time.
3. Students must sign out, turn over sign, or take a pass.
4. If the privilege is abused, the teacher will meet with the student.

Use of Pencil Sharpener

1. Sharpen your pencil BEFORE class.

2. Have more than one pencil in your pencil/pen pouch.
3. If your pencil lead breaks:
 - a. Use your extra pencil;
 - b. Use a pen, or
 - c. Borrow a writing tool from your partner.
4. NEVER interrupt a lesson to sharpen your pencil.

Correcting Work in Class

1. Students take out correcting pen (pen, red pen, crayon).
2. Teacher shows or tells each answer.
3. Students indicate if answer is correct or incorrect on their paper.
4. Teacher reteaches difficult items.
5. Students use remaining time to correct any items.

Tardy to Class

1. Student arrives late.
2. Teacher continues teaching.
3. Student signs in Tardy Notebook. Checks "excused" or "unexcused."
4. Partner assists late-arriving student.
5. When free, the teacher talks to tardy student.
6. When appropriate, uses "payback" time as consequence.

Absent

1. Partner collects assignments, homework, and notices and puts in desk of absent student.
2. Student returns to school and examines work in desk.
3. Student checks class calendar, noting work to be completed.
4. Student has same number of days to make up work as he/she missed.
5. Completed work is placed in Make-up Work box.





No Materials in Class

1. Teacher sets clear expectations concerning materials.
2. Extra materials are available.
3. Student gets materials and fills out an IOU form.
4. If student has forgotten book, looks on with partner, or
5. Uses loaner book with VERY bright book cover.

Turning in or Collecting Work

1. Students write number on assignment.
2. Students pass work forward.
3. Student Monitor collects all papers from front row seats.
4. Monitor puts in numerical order
5. Monitor places papers in box labeled by subject or period.

If more accountability is required:

1. Students place homework on corner of desk.
2. Teacher circulates and collects homework.

Asking Questions During a Lesson

1. Students raise their hands when they have a PUBLIC QUESTION, one for which the answer will be useful to all students.
2. Students put their hands on their hearts when they have a PRIVATE question (Can I go to the restroom? Can I sharpen my pencil?)

When the teacher has a natural break, he/she will go to student.

Gaining Assistance During Independent/Cooperative Tasks

Red and Green Card

1. Student attempts task, consulting with worked examples in the text or from lesson.

2. When student has a question, the RED side of the card is placed up. (Other signals can be used such as a “Help Wanted” sign or a book on the corner of desk.)
3. Student must continue working.
4. Teacher moves around room monitoring (Walk around. Look around. Talk around.)
5. When teacher sees a RED card, assistance is provided.

Gaining Assistance During Independent/Cooperative Tasks

1. Only When Near
2. When the student has a question and the teacher is NOT near, the student may consult with his/her partner or uses the rule “Three Before Me.”
3. If assistance is not adequate, student circles the item and continues working.
4. The teacher moves around the room monitoring (Walk around. Look around. Talk around.)
5. When the teacher is NEAR, the student may raise his/her hand and request assistance.



Top tips for developing structured and routines and Top questions to start a conversation with other teachers

Quality teaching delivered in a well-managed classroom results in increased learning outcomes. You may worry about what to do when things go wrong but it is important to focus on what you can do to prevent things going wrong. It is always better to be proactive rather than reactive. Quality teachers are consistent, persistent and calm

Top tips for developing structured and routines

The three most important things you can do to become an effective and inspirational teacher are:

- 1 Invest in developing quality student teacher relationships
- 2 Take the time to explicitly teach the routines and behaviours that allow your classroom to flow smoothly and for students to be successful learners
- 3 Find the routines that work for you and your students, teach these, reinforce these and rely on them.

Top questions to start a conversation with other teachers

- 1 What are 3 routines other teachers use to ensure their classroom works efficiently?
- 2 How did the other teacher establish these learning and behaviour norms?
- 3 What is the other teacher's advice for when a strategy or procedure is not working?

Then as a result:

What will you do differently at school next week as a result of these new routines and rituals?

How will you ensure that you apply them in your practice regularly?

Are there ways you can influence other teachers and management so they can also start making changes in their context?

Check your understanding

Take a short quiz to check you've understood the main points of the module.

Let's check on some key concepts introduced in this module by answering this short quiz:

1. In the context of classroom routines and rituals, what could be said to be “the definition of madness”?

- a) It is when routines and rituals go wrong in the classroom context
- b) It is when we recognise there is nothing we can do to change our teaching style
- c) It is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.

2. Managing routines and rituals...

- a) will be made easier if simple, personalised teaching strategies for the special needs students are implemented
- b) is impossible in the context of SEN teaching and learning
- c) should be taught by school authorities.

3. Try and build a positive school culture and climate for students and staff alike by...

- a) implementing activities which involve breaking down stereotypes
- b) creating expectations around constructive routines and fun rituals
- c) bringing the same procedures for all teachers to implement.

4. Research states that:

- a) the behavioural expectations implemented in the first three weeks can be key for success throughout the year
- b) when principals are involved everything works best
- c) the curriculum can dictate the routines to be implemented in the classroom.

5. As your year goes along...

- a) students can help with new routines
- b) if you realize a certain routine isn't working, it's ok to tweak things
- c) bring other teachers into your classroom to test routines and rituals.

Thinking back to the five quiz questions above, which do you think have the most immediate relevance to your own context?

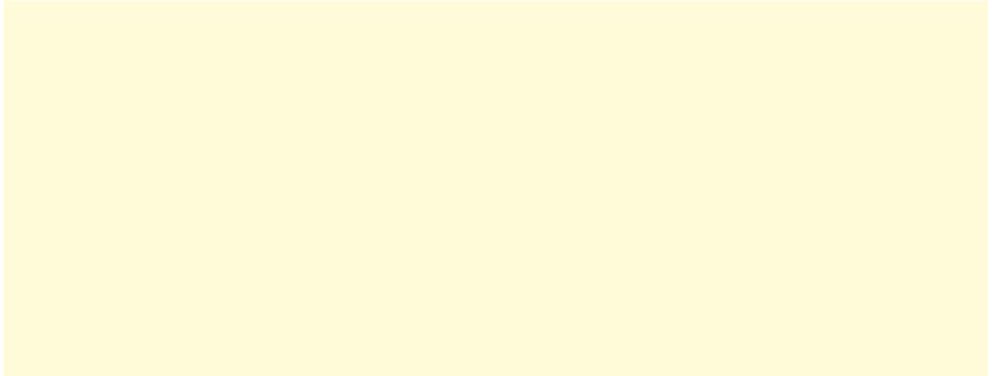
Answers

1.c, 2.a, 3.b, 4.a, 5.b.

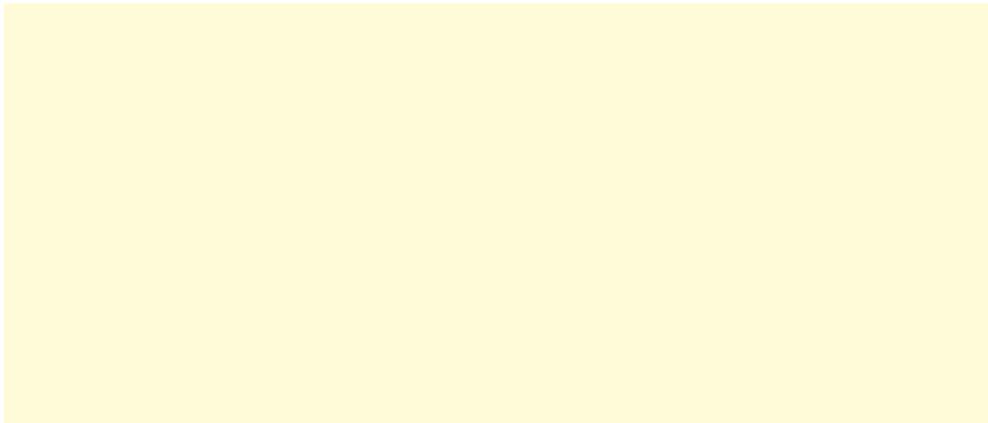
Reflect on the module

In this final section, think about what you've learned this module and how you can use this in your day-to-day working life.

1. What is your biggest takeaway from this module about routines and rituals in SEN teaching and learning?



2. What routines and rituals would you be willing to implement to accommodate the basic needs of SEN students in the classroom?



3. In what way would you put into action the various routines and rituals techniques in your classroom context?

