

**Creating an
Honorable Classroom
(An Introductory Flip-Book)**

JEFF KARON, PH.D.



The Honorable Classroom
www.thehonorableclassroom.com

“When autumn winds blow
not one leaf remains
the way it was.”

—Togyu, 1740



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THE NATURE OF RULES FOR CONDUCT:

Keep your rules simple and few. Everyone should be able to recite them—for credit, of course! Humans can remember easily 3-5 rules.

Keep your rules positive, rather than a list of “don’ts.”

Keep your rules general, but provide examples that fit under each one. Thus, you need not develop rules to cover every contingency.

If you attempt to anticipate every contingency, every misbehavior, you will be frustrated. Humans will find a way around every specific rule. Share this point openly with your students. **STRATEGY:** Share your strategic thinking openly with students. They will appreciate your transparency. **DEEP STRATEGY:** Students will wonder if you have a deeper strategy at work.

Conduct

“Consider yourself lightly; consider the world deeply.”

—Miyamoto Musashi, “The Way of Walking Alone”



Here are four rules that will help build and maintain **honor** in your classroom:

MAINTAIN FOCUS.

MAINTAIN RESPECT.

MAINTAIN OBLIGATIONS.

MAINTAIN TIME.

These must be defined concretely for your own application. Engage students in considering the form of these rules: the wording assumes that students already are respectful, for example. They will understand the importance of positive phrasing.

STRATEGY: Whenever possible, use positive forms. Train students to use them as well.

Rules

“Leave other people’s mistakes where they lie.”

—Marcus Aurelius, Emperor of Rome, *Meditations*



If a student comes in late, or in some manner disrupts the class, teach the student to apologize to the whole class, not to you specifically. *You must be unrelenting in this.*

You should **model** an apology if you misstep in some way.

Discourage abject apologies. Encourage **dignity** in word-selection, as well as physical bearing. Apologies always should be made standing up. If, for example, a cell phone interrupts a lesson or speaker, the phone's owner should stand and apologize.

A well-made apology should be accepted.

STRATEGY: A formal apology.

**Stand. Face the whole class. Speak directly.
Maintain your dignity. Maintain your audience's dignity.**

When Rules Are Violated

"It is easier to be wise for others than for oneself."

—La Rochefoucauld, *Maxims*



Constantly use the metaphors **strong** and **weak**: these categories come packaged with their own justifications. Why, students inquire, should we learn this? Your answer—suitably demonstrated and amplified throughout the course—should reinforce the ways that learning **rules, techniques, and strategies** strengthens the student in a particular arena, and often in multiple ones.

If a student asks why the class is studying something, answer “Because doing so makes you stronger.” Teach students to repeat the answer back to you. *You must be unrelenting in this.*

Make sure that students answer with strength—doing so will make them feel stronger.

STRATEGY: Always acknowledge questions. Do not always answer them: doing so is a sure way to weaken your **position**, and ultimately weaken your students. From the first day, defer questions that should be answered later. Remain firm. **Model** strength yourself.

Strength

“Those who are first on the battlefield and await the opponents
are at ease; those who are last on the battlefield and head into
battle get worn out.”

—Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*



PREPARATION OF SPIRIT:

Your best **ally** will be preparation, but not the unbalanced, over-preparation of compulsive notes, slides, and outlines, though they have their place if used in moderation. Marshall yourself: before each class period, refuse all contact by phone or visitor, if possible. Even five minutes spent meditating or sitting quietly will improve your physical and mental bearing. You must be unrelenting in this practice.

You must not rush to class. You must instead plan so that you can enter in a dignified, focused manner. If your plans are interrupted, re-enter the classroom.

STRATEGY: If your students approach you with questions or comments just as you enter, politely defer them until after class. You must pursue this strategy with vigor.

Spirit

“The surface
of the water mirrors
many things.”

—Masumo Kato



Ask students to write a definition of “honor.” Create a tangible code of conduct. Post it.

Here is an old list of virtues:



Justice
Bravery
Loyalty
Benevolence
Sincerity
Politeness
Honor

STRATEGY: Guide students to understand the tension between virtues. They should develop concrete examples from their experience. For example, being **Sincere** (telling the truth) can conflict with **Politeness**. Wherever possible, build an appreciation for **balance**, rather than absolutes.

Virtues

“Throughout your life advance daily, becoming
more skillful than yesterday,
more skillful than today.
This is never-ending.”

—Yamamoto Tsunetomo, *Hagakure*



Here are some assignments that will strengthen students and support an honorable classroom:

1. Shake someone's hand firmly today.
2. Slip a short poem or saying into a conversation today.
3. Carry one book with you everywhere for one full day.
4. Help someone regain honor this week.
5. Make fun of no one for one full day.
6. Take care in how you speak for one full hour today.
7. When you learn something, it does not matter if you are bored or interested if you say, "This makes me stronger."
8. Observe an argument between other people. Analyze its causes.
9. Think strategically today.
10. Act as an honorable leader at least once this week. Dash forward onto the battlefield of your day.

Practice

Dr. Jeff Karon has over twenty-five years' experience teaching at the university, college, and high school levels. He is the founder and owner of The Honorable Classroom, a tutoring and training service that promotes excellence in work and school. His training and teaching has included reading, composition, literature, technical writing, professional communication, research writing for MBA students, creative writing, study skills, test and college preparation, critical thinking, logic, philosophy, and rhetoric. He has presented workshops and seminars to teachers and professionals at the local, state, national, and international levels on writing, speaking, ethics, creativity, and behavior management.

For more information on **The Honorable Classroom**, please visit www.thehonorableclassroom.com, or email Dr. Jeff Karon at jeffkaron@aol.com.

