

Managing Volume & Voice Levels

Below you will find **4 easy ways** to help manage student volume levels during different classroom activities.

Volume Rubric:

Create a rubric for volume just as you would create a rubric for content. For example, level 1 volume might be a whisper voice, level 2 volume might be a regular voice, and level 3 volume might be a loud voice. Have students practice these levels to create a common language and expectation, then assign different levels to different classroom situations. For example, students might use level 1 volume for pair work, level 2 volume for group work, and level 3 volume during class discussions or student presentations. Post your rubric in your classroom. Consider adding an image for each level that visually represents what each volume level might look like.



Sound Signal + Quiet Sign:



This strategy allows you to let students know they need to lower their voices without you having to use yours. First, choose a sound signal for getting student attention, such as a chime or a hotel bell. Next, choose a visual that indicates “quiet” or “lower your voices.” During pair or group work, use the sound signal to get the class’s attention, then hold up the visual to non-verbally signal to the class that they all need to lower their voices.

Variation: Have a smaller version of your “quiet” visual on an index card. As you circulate around the room, you can use the card to non-verbally indicate to individual students or groups that they need to lower their voices.

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Decibel Apps:

Many apps exist for tablets, phones, and computers that monitor the ambient noise in a classroom. Too Noisy (www.toonoisyapp.com) and Bouncy Balls (www.bouncyballs.org) are two examples of these types of apps. These apps allow the teacher to set a volume threshold that should not be exceeded. As the noise level in the room increases, the graphics on the screen will change as well. If the noise level exceeds the maximum threshold set by the teacher, an alarm will sound until the noise level in the room decreases below the threshold.

Pro Tip: You can offer an incentive for not triggering the alarm more than once during a certain activity. Some apps, like Classcraft Volume Meter (<https://www.classcraft.com/lp/volume-meter/>) include a timer with built-in incentives if students do not exceed the maximum volume in a teacher-determined amount of time. Or a consequence can be attached if the class sets off the alarm more than once during a particular task.



Whisper Fingers



This strategy will help quiet classroom transitions and group work. Start by creating clarity around what whispering is. Have students place two fingers on their throats, just below the Adam's apple, and have them speak in a normal voice. They will feel their vocal cords vibrating. Then, instruct students to speak in a quieter voice. They will still feel the vibration, although it will be reduced. Finally, have students whisper. They will feel no vibration from their vocal cords. When you want students to keep their voices to a whisper during a transition or during group work, have them place their "whisper fingers" on their throats and tell them they are doing a "whisper transition" or "whisper activity" and they should feel no vocal chord vibrations while they are working, walking, or talking.