



Teachers with bathroom break problems, raise your hand.

You're not alone. By interrupting class and abusing time in the hallway, kids who always "gotta go" give teachers grief. Yet it's important to allow students to go when they really mean it – holding it in is the number one cause of constipation in kids over 18 months. When developing procedures that will work best for you and your class, there are a few guiding principles to keep classrooms running smoothly and students from having bathroom anxiety.

Students need an environment that lets them know that it's okay to go at school. In creating bathroom rules, teachers should be mindful that using the bathroom is a healthy thing:

Students' Right to Go

Students should be allowed a discrete, flexible way to use the bathroom in school.

- Students should not be embarrassed about going to the bathroom.
- Students should not have to "earn" their bathroom trips and they should not be rewarded for avoiding going to the bathroom.
- Students should not feel reluctant to go when they really need to.

Teachers are entitled to handle issues that go along with bathroom breaks. While teachers must allow students to use the bathroom, they do not have to tolerate abuse of breaks:

Teachers' Right to "No"

Teachers should be able to monitor bathroom use to keep kids safe and accountable for their time.

- Teachers are entitled to know where students are at all times.
- Teachers should be able to teach without bathroom breaks interrupting class.
- Teachers should not tolerate abusing time outside the classroom.

Under these assumptions, finding a balance between students' rights and teachers' rights can be difficult. However, it is possible for teachers to create a "bathroom-friendly" classroom, without sacrificing a productive learning environment. Defining bathroom procedures at the start of the school year is just as important as communicating other classroom rules. Students and teachers both benefit from rules that establish the "when" and "how" of bathroom behavior:

When:

- Teachers should define when it's best for kids to go. For instance, some teachers may prefer that children avoid going during group work and lessons.
- Kids also need to know that there is always an exception for emergencies.

How:

- **One at a Time.** With only one girls' hall pass and one boys' hall pass, each student will have the privacy they need. And teachers know that students are less likely to waste time and roam the halls solo than when they go in pairs.
- **Hand signals.** Hand signals, like a thumb or pinky up, allow the teacher to give a silent nod to the student and keep talking. For the student, it's a discrete way to ask to go.
- **Sign Out.** If kids sign themselves in and out and indicate time, it's easier for teachers to monitor students who abuse their bathroom breaks. If they do, you can bring it up to them privately (with the sign-out sheet in hand), instead of as soon as they return to class, which can be embarrassing.

These are only a few ways to address this issue, but you can find additional tips on bathroom behavior and preventing and treating children's constipation at www.Pedia-Lax.com.