



## **FREE REPORT: 25 Ways to Get Silence from a Noisy Group**

If you struggle to get your students' attention during lessons here's a nifty collection of ideas which may help. This report is a sample from the full '**55 Ways to Get Silence from a Noisy Group**' which is available with our Take Control of the Noisy Class teacher pack. For more details on how to get your copy, (as well as the other 30 classroom silencers), see the end of this report...

### **#30: Countdown**

*"5; Okay it's time to stop and look this way. Excellent, very quick on that table. 4; pens should be down, books and mouths should be closed, very good you two, you're listening to me. 3; still too much noise over here, that side of the room are perfect. 2; Just waiting for the last few people now, all conversations should be stopped, hands on the desk in front of you. Well done, you've got it. 1; Thank you! OK, this is the next part of the lesson..."*

### **#31: Call Backs**

*"If you hear me, clap your hands."*

(Those that don't hear will stop to see why other students are clapping).  
If the noise continues, add other actions:

*"If you hear me snap your fingers, wiggle your nose, or wink, etc."*

### **#32: Sir Yes Sir!**

If you've seen the drill scenes in 'Full Metal Jacket' or 'An Officer and a Gentleman', you'll know exactly how this one works. You might also want to warn teachers in any adjoining classrooms!

**You:** *Whenever I need you to listen really closely to me I'm going to say one word: "atten-tion!"... and I want you all to respond by shouting "sir yes sir!" [John Wayne drawl] Okay?*

**Students:** *Okay sir!*

**You:** *Atteeeeeen-tion!*

**Students:** *SIR YES SIR!!*

### **#33: Teach them a routine for giving you attention**

Spend some time teaching a routine for giving attention quickly so that students get into a HABIT of becoming quiet whenever you ask...

**i. Explain the routine:** "Whenever I say, 'I need you to be quiet right now'(insert a phrase of your choice – or use a noise-maker), I want you to stop what you're doing and look at me."

**ii. Model the routine:** Show how this will work in different scenarios. Make it fun by playing the role of a noisy student (with some eager volunteers) while the rest of the class give you the instruction.

**iii. Practice the routine:** Get your students to start talking and then give your signal for them to be quiet. Do this a few times until they do it instantly. Practice when they aren't expecting it – wait until they are engaged in an activity and then give your instruction.

**iv. Give them a score each time they practice:** Giving them a score adds a touch of fun to the routine and also appeals to students' natural urge to want to do better. Having the class work towards a common goal also builds community.

**v. Repeat if necessary:** If they don't manage to quiet down straight away repeat the routine. Make them go back to talking with each other and then give your instruction again. Repeat this until they get it right – especially in the early stages.

**vi. Praise them for getting it right:** During the initial early stages of teaching any new routine make sure you acknowledge the fact that they are doing as you have asked. Give them plenty of verbal praise and perhaps a class reward such as a video or early dismissal – they need to know that their efforts are appreciated.

**Variation:** At the beginning of class, show them that when you want them to stop, look and listen in a hurry, you will perform a certain action or make a certain noise. For example, every time they see you put a finger on your lip and a hand in the air, they will know to immediately do the same. This is easier and usually more effective than raising your voice or trying to talk over the crowd when they are busy or off-task. You

can also bring in a rain stick or a small instrument like a harmonica that can be used in this way.

### **#34 : Settle Down Elvis**

We had this created as an example of a fun attention grabber. It will wear thin/drive you mad (delete as appropriate) with over-use but some groups will love it. You can download your own copy from our Lesson-Ology site and play it on your whiteboard if you have one:

<http://www.lesson-ology.com/content/free-stuff>

### **#35: 'All Stand'**

At the first sign of talking or murmuring, pause and say, '*Stand up please*'. Have them stand behind their chairs while you continue with the lesson. If anyone carries on talking while standing, write their names on the board and tell them to move to the front desk.

### **#36: Reward quiet students**

Praise quiet students throughout the lesson. Make a list of these students and let them go slightly earlier than other students. Don't make a fuss, just let them go early while those who were talking are kept back for a minute or two. A sanction doesn't have to be particularly harsh in order for it to be effective. In this case, two minutes stood behind a desk while their peers trot out to the bus will be excruciating for some students. You will only have to do it a few times for the message to get through - good behaviour is rewarded.

### **#37. I only ask twice**

Give class a clear instruction: "*Everyone stop talking and look this way please.*" Acknowledge and thank those who comply. For the rest, write on the board the date and current time followed by: '*Asked class to be quiet*'. Some more will settle; thank them. For those that don't, write the time followed by: '*Asked class to be quiet for second time*'. Then announce: '*I only ask twice*'.

Then write down the names of any students who are still talking under the heading 'Still Talking'.

Tell them it's a new system – explain that it is understandable for people still to be talking after the first request (some people might not hear you) which is why you ask twice. Carrying on after that however is

unacceptable and anyone who has their name on the 'Still Talking' list will receive a two-minute detention at the end of the lesson (or other consequence of your choice).

Follow up with them at the end of the lesson. Explain that you want them to succeed and that if they are to get the best from the lesson they will have to do as they are asked, that it's not good for them and it's not fair on other students. Don't shouting or display anger – you'll lose them that way. Instead try to give the impression that you want to help them but also that you won't tolerate them talking over you. They will see you as fair if you approach them in this manner. Tell them that next time it happens they will have to choose between full detention with a phone call home or being shot into space without a helmet.

### **#38: Zero Tolerance**

Give ONE warning and follow up EVERY SINGLE TIME with your stepped consequences.

Calmly state the name of the student followed by *"first warning"*.

If they continue talking or start arguing with you, calmly say, "(name), you have chosen to carry on talking/argue with me. You have therefore chosen to (insert consequence) ". For a full range of consequence suggestions see Take Control of the Noisy Class:

[www.takecontrolofthenoisyclass.com](http://www.takecontrolofthenoisyclass.com)

### **#39: Start the Clock**

Write on the board: *'This lesson is 60 minutes long and you won't leave this room until you've had the pleasure of 60 minutes of my awesome teaching. I'll start the clock whenever you hold up the lesson and add that time to the end of the lesson.'* Then stand with a stopwatch - start the clock when they are quiet. When they interrupt stop the clock again.

### **#40: Whisper**

When the classroom noise level is getting out of control, whisper something along the lines of: *'If you can hear my voice raise your hand, and you'll get 5 minutes of free time at the end of the day'*. That way, anyone who is listening will hear and will get the reward, but those who were not will seethe with jealousy.

### **#41: B-R-I-L-L-I-A-N-T**

Remember, it is better to focus on the behaviour you WANT to see rather than that you don't.

Tell the students at the beginning of class that every time they are listening attentively, staying on task etc. they will get one letter of the word BRILLIANT written on the board. If they get all of the letters by the end of the day, they get a class reward.

#### **#42: Secret Agent**

Tell the class at the start of the lesson that you are going to secretly pick one student at random to be the Secret Agent (you can put names in a hat or, to save time, just by picking a number from the class list/register). **Important:** none of the students must know the identity of the Secret Agent. Tell the class that as long as this student has a good lesson (you can formalise this by giving them a behaviour or work target of some sort), the ENTIRE class will receive a reward.

#### **#43: Remember - your class is your mirror**

If you are lively and excited, your enthusiasm and energy will spread round the room and your students will mirror your behaviour. Similarly if you are calm and relaxed, you will help create a calm, relaxed atmosphere in your room. I don't need to explain what will happen in your classroom if you like to talk...

#### **#44: DJ**

Play some nice relaxing music in the background (it's amazing how many students actually start requesting classical tunes once they've heard them a few times). Turn the music off when you want their attention or to signify the end of a period of work.

#### **#45: Consequence Cards**

Here's how to turn a simple deck of cards into a behaviour management tool that students' attention right from the start of the lesson:

Get a regular playing card for each student in your class and write each child's name on a different card. Shuffle them up and get ready to wave goodbye to unresponsive students. From now on, whenever your students come to class they are going to be like putty in your hands – at least for the first few minutes. Why? Because you're going to assign a nasty task to the unlucky soul whose card you pick at random from your deck.

Kids love to see their peers suffer so this is a real winner. Don't worry though, I'm not suggesting you give them a painful or embarrassing forfeit, just a challenging one.

As an example, I drink wheatgrass juice whenever I want to annoy my partner, Sally. Despite its many health-giving properties, it has the most disgusting, pungent smell (and taste) and turns our kitchen into a hazardous area for several hours. A small shot glass of this dark green, slime-like liquid is enough to send most students scurrying for cover so the threat of 'tasting' it offers the perfect penalty. Indeed, any task which is slightly unpleasant yet entertaining should get the desired response – a classroom full of cheerful, wide-eyed, hopeful young people, all enthusiastically waiting to see what happens next. All you need to do whenever you want silence is to reach for the pack of cards. I'm not kidding when I say this works beautifully.

Now, I'm not suggesting you turn your lessons into an amusement park – so before I get accused of putting entertainment ahead of learning please remember these ideas are to be used sparingly! Unless they work for you as well as they do for me. ;-)

#### **#46: Pictionary**

An abstract picture sketched on the board with the words 'Can you guess what this is?' will catch students' attention as they walk in the room. Don't say anything but as soon as someone guesses what it is, give them a card with a keyword related to the subject topic and get them to come up and draw a sketch to represent the word on the card. The person who guesses what it is swaps places with them and is given a new keyword. You can formalise this game by creating teams, giving time limits etc. or you may prefer it as a quick impromptu starter.

#### **#47: Black Circle**

Draw a circle on the board. Fill part of it in if they keep on talking after you've signalled quiet. When it is filled, there is a consequence, e.g. 5 minutes' detention etc.

#### **#48: Anchors**

This is a technique from those clever NLP people and it works like magic. It takes a little time to set up an anchor but once established, they can literally work wonders with challenging groups. Anchors can be locations, pieces of music, body positions, props, actions etc. and can be used to

automate a variety of teaching processes. Here's an example of how a location anchor can be used to get attention from noisy students whenever you want to tell them something:

Step 1: Stick a piece of tape on the floor to mark a location in the room

Step 2: Tell students that whenever you stand on this mark, you will tell them something of extreme importance

Step 3: Rehearse use of the anchor by walking slowly and deliberately to the mark several times over the next few minutes so that students get into the habit of quietening each other down when they see you approaching it.

Step 4: Before the end of the session, use the anchor to get student attention as in step 3 but continue to give them a very important announcement which includes information which is of benefit to them e.g. *"Important announcement everyone; because you've all worked so well I'm going to let you all go two minutes early."*

Do this two or three times with similar messages throughout the lesson and your anchor will be sufficiently embedded. From this point on, you should only need to walk towards the mark on the floor and the students will suspend talking to hear what you have to say. Protect the efficacy of the anchor by giving occasional treats to students as you did when embedding the anchor.

For a more in-depth tutorial on the use of anchors in the classroom, my good friend and colleague, Pearl Nitsche, has produced a fantastic video. You can watch it here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKjzknWxLUo>

#### **#49: You can keep your hat on**

*As above but get yourself a crazy hat rather than a spot on the floor.*

#### **#50: Fun Routine**

The beauty of this routine is that students get to make as much noise as they want. It's a bit of fun and I've always found fun to be one of the best ways of getting a negative group on side in the shortest possible time; especially if it involves allowing them to make a lot of noise. Explain to students that whenever you sing out certain words, they must respond as a group.

#### **Example 1:**

Teacher calls out: "Daaa da da da..." (2 second pause) "Daaaa da da da..."

Students respond: "Daaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

**Example 2:**

Teacher calls out: "Day-Oh, Daaaaaaaaaayyy-Oh!"

Students respond: "Daylight comes and I wanna go home!"

**#50: On Your Mark**

*First pick a spot where you are going to stand and can be seen by the whole class. Tell students that WHENEVER you stand on this spot they must IMMEDIATELY stop talking and sit in silence. Try to make a game of this – have a few practices where you let them talk while you walk around the room and then walk towards the mark. Look at them to let them know you will soon be on the mark and then JUMP with a smile. Do this a few times to build it into a routine.*

**#51: Lights**

This only really works in dark rooms or in winter. Switch the lights on and off once or twice to signal silence.

**#52: Tangible reminders**

Younger students will appreciate the tangible image provided by a reminder to use their '30cm' or 'partner' voices rather than just being told to be 'quiet'.

**#53: The Silent Register Game**

Turn reading/taking the register into a game: read their names in silence by slowly mouthing each name. Students have to guess the name by reading your lips. It gets everyone's attention, and they love it.

**#54: Teams**

Put your students into table group teams. Get them to come up with a team name and perhaps a logo, graffiti tag or coat of arms to get them working together. Put a score sheet on the wall and keep a tally whenever you ask for silence or need their attention. Whichever team is still talking when the others are silent loses a point. Team spirit, peer pressure and the element of competition tends to make this work quite well with some more malleable groups.

**#55: Get to know them**

This is easily the most important strategy of all. The other 54 are, in the main, 'quick fixes'. What works with a tough group more than anything else is to get to know your students and build positive, trusting relationships with them. Once this essential piece of the teaching puzzle is in place your ability to manage tough, noisy students will improve beyond belief.

For a STACK of relationship-building ideas together with what is, in my opinion, the greatest video tutorial on building the vital teacher/student relationship with hard-to-reach students make sure to check out our **[Behaviour-Ology](#)** classroom management suite. A month's access is available **free** to Take Control of the Noisy Class customers.

I hope you liked the ideas in this little report. For hundreds **more ideas like these** from our teaching colleagues around the world, be sure to visit the following thread on our blog:

[http://www.behaviourneeds.com/blog/2013/01/31/win-a-free-copy-of-take-control-of-the-noisy-class/#disqus\\_thread](http://www.behaviourneeds.com/blog/2013/01/31/win-a-free-copy-of-take-control-of-the-noisy-class/#disqus_thread)

Good Luck...

**Rob Plevin**

Director, Behaviour Needs Ltd

[www.behaviourneeds.com](http://www.behaviourneeds.com)

[www.takecontrolofthenoisyclass.com](http://www.takecontrolofthenoisyclass.com)

**PS**

To join Take Control of the Noisy Class and get access to a complete system for succeeding with challenging groups of students go here:

**[www.takecontrolofthenoisyclass.com](http://www.takecontrolofthenoisyclass.com)**