

Active Attention-Getting Techniques

- Use “**Attention Cues**” to let students know it’s time to listen. For younger children, catchphrases like “1-2-3, eyes on me” are sometimes appropriate. Visual cues, such as a physical gesture, can be especially helpful. Research tells us that children with attention problems tend to have more difficulty paying attention to auditory information compared with visual information.
- **Quiet the room.** It’s hard to pay attention in the midst of chaos and noise. Sometimes we are tempted to try talking (or even yelling) over the group, but this can be unpleasant for everyone, catechist included. If the room is especially loud, quietly say, “If you can hear my voice, raise your hand.” At first, only the students closest to you will respond, but others near them will wonder what is happening. Say the same thing again, and more students will raise their hands. This will eventually get the attention of even the noisiest students, who will wonder why others have their hands raised.
- **Positively Reinforce Attention.** When you need a group to quiet down or look your way, start by saying, “Let me see who is listening,” or “Let me see who is ready.” When you see a child who is quiet and attentive, thank him or her for being ready. The other students will notice and begin to do the same.

Classroom Rules

Clear. Make sure your rules are ones children in your students age group can understand and that you respond to developmentally appropriate expectations. For example, for young children, "Use walking feet," or for older children, "Please walk."

Concise. State the rules concisely as possible so children know exactly what they are expected to do.

Positively Phrased. Focus on what you want the children to do, not the behavior you don't want. For example, "Take turns talking," rather than, "Don't interrupt."

Visible. Write the rules on a poster board, or use picture prompts, which are especially helpful for children who are not yet skilled readers.

Assertively Communicated. Don't shout a rule across the room. When you need to redirect a child, go next to that child and speak in a calm but firm voice. This says you are serious.

Backed Up By Action. Make sure that there are positive consequences for those who are following the classroom rules. Missing out on the positive will be logical consequence for those who aren't following directions