

How Do You Get a Class's Attention? Primary teachers Share Their Best Tricks

Every teacher knows the moment: the class is buzzing, and you need silence – fast. So what's the trick that actually works?

We asked, and loads of teachers (1,128 to be exact!) shared their favourite attention grabbers. Here are the most popular (and a few quirky!) ways to get pupils listening again.

The Classics That Always Work

- "1, 2, 3... eyes on me!"
This old favourite came up again and again. Lots of teachers told us they get their students to respond, "1, 2... eyes on you!" According to our tappers, it's simple, rhythmic, and surprisingly effective.
- Countdowns
Many teachers swear by a countdown from 5 or 3 – sometimes getting quieter with each number, or showing it on their fingers. The clear time limit gives pupils a chance to settle. This was particularly popular with teachers in KS2.
- Clap Back
Start a clapping rhythm, and the children clap it back. Works well across ages and is quick to reset the energy in the room.

Fun and Memorable Phrases

Warning - what you're about to read WILL get stuck in your head!

- "Macaroni cheese!" / "Everybody freeze!"
It's just a silly rhyme but tappers told us that their pupils love it. More than one said that it "works like magic" when things get noisy.
- "Hocus pocus!" / "Everybody focus!"
Speaking of magic...this call out was one many reported using. They said they liked it because it "added humour".
- "Everybody stop, hands on top!"
Everyone knows that mouths can be quiet but hands are still rustling 🖐️. This call and response tackles the problem by adding a physical action to keep pupils still as well as quiet!

Non-Verbal Signals

- Raise a hand – Many schools use this as a consistent, silent signal. But note – although some teachers love it, others mentioned in their responses that they find it slow.
- Tambourine, bell, or chime – A distinct sound that cuts through chatter without needing to shout. Lots mentioned installing "doorbells" in their room!
- The silent stare – It's an oldie but a goodie – standing still and waiting can be powerful, though it requires patience and consistency.

What Teachers Say

- "Clapping rhythms work every time – even in Year 6."
- "I banned myself from shouting. Now I just raise my hand and wait."
- "It depends on the class. One year 'Macaroni cheese' was golden, the next it flopped."

The Takeaway

There's no single magic formula. The best attention grabbers are varied, playful, and consistent – and often change from class to class, or even term to term.

■■ What about you? Do you stick with one method, or mix it up? Share your favourite attention grabbers with us using 'contact us' in the app, and we'll keep adding to the list!