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by Sue Cowley



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About the Author

Sue Cowley is a teacher, writer, trainer and presenter. She qualified with a BEd (Hons) from Kingston University. Although she originally trained to teach primary school children, Sue later moved into teaching English and Drama at secondary level. She has taught in schools in London and Bristol, and also at an international school in Portugal. She reached the giddy heights of 'subject co-ordinator' on the career ladder, but made a conscious decision to stick it out in the classroom, rather than moving into management.

Sue is the author of more than a dozen books on teaching, including the best-selling *Getting the Buggers to Behave*. As well as having a big following in the UK, her books have also been translated into various other languages and her work is popular with teachers in China, India, Poland and Slovenia, amongst many others. Sue divides her time between delivering INSET in schools and colleges, writing books and articles, presenting at conferences and on Teachers' TV, and bringing up a young family. She still spends time working with students 'at the chalkface', helping out in local schools.

Sue's belief is that what teachers need above all else is practical, realistic and honest advice about how to survive and succeed in their classrooms. She bases all her work on her own experiences as a teacher and on tips and advice she's been given by others. In her books, Sue guarantees you a 'theory-free' experience. When it comes to teaching, her motto is: 'Whatever works - for the teacher and for the kids'.

Sue loves to spend her spare time reading crime novels or being out in her garden getting muddy. She lives in Somerset, with her partner, her two children and a cat called Herbie.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to Álvie and Edite, with all my love.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank Tilak, because this book wouldn't have been possible without him. He makes it possible for me to get on with writing, mostly without interruption. Thanks to you for putting up with me and my disorganised (or rather, 'creative') approach to life!

Special thanks go to my Mum, who passed the 'teaching gene' onto me. They do say that it runs in the family.

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Contents at a Glance

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Part I: Developing Your Teaching Style</i>	9
Chapter 1: Building Your Teaching Skills	11
Chapter 2: Understanding Teaching Styles – and Developing One That Works for You	27
Chapter 3: Making the Most of Your Communication Skills.....	43
<i>Part II: Teaching a Class</i>	59
Chapter 4: Preparing and Teaching High-Quality Lessons.....	61
Chapter 5: Getting (and Keeping) a Class Engaged	81
Chapter 6: Getting the Most Out of Your Students.....	97
<i>Part III: Managing a Class</i>	121
Chapter 7: Structuring Your Teaching and Your Teaching Space.....	123
Chapter 8: Building Better Behaviour	149
Chapter 9: Creating a Positive Classroom Atmosphere.....	171
Chapter 10: Handling Challenging Situations	189
<i>Part IV: Dealing with Different Kinds of People</i>	209
Chapter 11: Getting to Know Your Students	211
Chapter 12: Working as Part of a Team.....	237
Chapter 13: Building Bonds with Parents	257
<i>Part V: Succeeding Beyond the Classroom</i>	277
Chapter 14: Climbing the Paper Mountain	279
Chapter 15: Getting Involved in Extra-Curricular Activities	293
Chapter 16: Evaluating and Furthering Your Teaching Skills	305
<i>Part VI: The Part of Tens</i>	315
Chapter 17: Ten Great Ways to Engage with a Group	317
Chapter 18: Ten Key Strategies for Handling Difficult Behaviour.....	325
Chapter 19: Ten Tips for Dealing with Stress.....	333
Chapter 20: Ten Best Book and Website Resources for Teachers and Trainers...	339
<i>Index</i>	343

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

About This Book	1
Conventions Used in This Book.....	3
What You're Not to Read.....	3
Foolish Assumptions.....	4
How This Book Is Organised	4
Part I: Developing Your Teaching Style	4
Part II: Teaching a Class	4
Part III: Managing a Class	5
Part IV: Dealing with Different Kinds of People.....	5
Part V: Succeeding Beyond the Classroom	6
Part VI: The Part of Tens.....	6
Icons Used in This Book	6
Where to Go from Here.....	7

Part 1: Developing Your Teaching Style 9

Chapter 1: Building Your Teaching Skills 11

Developing Your Teaching Style.....	11
Understanding your teaching style	12
Becoming a confident teacher.....	13
Improving how you communicate	14
Managing and Teaching Your Class	15
Creating fantastic lessons.....	15
Being a brilliant teacher.....	16
Taking control of your classroom	17
Using structures to develop effective learning.....	19
Handling behaviour in a positive way.....	20
Creating a positive classroom climate.....	21
Getting to Know the Main Characters.....	22
Building relationships with your students	22
Playing your part in the staff team	23
Handling parents.....	24
Building Your Skills Beyond the Classroom.....	24
Dealing with paperwork.....	24
Balancing your marking	25
Working with your students beyond the classroom.....	26
Reflecting on and developing your skills	26

Chapter 2: Understanding Teaching Styles – and Developing One That Works for You 27

Putting on Your Teaching Character with Confidence	28
Picking the right character	28
Appearing confident – even when you’re not	29
Exploring Different Teaching Styles	31
‘Old-school’ style – strict and scary	32
‘Modern’ style – firm, fair and fun.....	33
Examining Your Own Teaching Style	35
What works for me?	35
What works in my setting?.....	36
What works with my students?.....	37
Reflecting on your challenges	38
Developing Your Teaching Style.....	39
Playing around with verbal and non-verbal communication.....	39
Varying your lessons.....	40

Chapter 3: Making the Most of Your Communication Skills 43

Examining What You Say and Do.....	44
Communication’s all about perception.....	44
Understanding the subconscious messages you send	45
Making Magic with Your Mouth.....	46
Benefiting from volume.....	47
Getting to the truth about tone.....	48
Playing with pace	49
Picking the right words	50
Keeping to the point.....	51
Letting Your Body Do the Talking	52
The eyes have it	52
Facing the facts	54
Helping hands.....	54
Perfecting posture and body position	55
Taking Control of the Space	56

Part II: Teaching a Class..... 59

Chapter 4: Preparing and Teaching High-Quality Lessons. 61

Remembering Your Own Teachers	62
Planning for Success	63
The components of an effective plan	64
The three Rs of lesson planning: Reduce, reuse, recycle	65
No plan, no problem?	66

Structuring a Quality Lesson.....	67
Sharing the lesson's structure with your students	68
Formats for success.....	69
When to let your lessons develop organically.....	70
Delivering a Brilliant Lesson	71
Getting their attention.....	72
Passion and inspiration.....	73
Getting the content right	73
Personalising the learning to the learners.....	75
Making lessons topical.....	75
Dealing with differentiation	76
Keeping lessons interactive.....	77
Don't forget the fun!.....	78

Chapter 5: Getting (and Keeping) a Class Engaged 81

The Keys to Engaging Your Students.....	81
Creating connections	82
Creating engaging lessons for modern students	83
Creating a sense of curiosity	85
Looking at Learning Styles	89
Teaching for different learning styles in the classroom	90
Getting hands-on for learning.....	91
Developing activities for different learning styles.....	92
Creating Multisensory Lessons.....	93
Why the senses are key.....	93
Using the five senses	94
Playing with the senses.....	95

Chapter 6: Getting the Most Out of Your Students 97

Keeping a Class On Task.....	97
Introducing the activity.....	98
Using targets and time limits.....	100
Incorporating rewards	101
Creating a sense of pace	101
Fostering Focused Learning.....	102
Developing focus and concentration	103
Developing good listening skills	105
Managing noise levels	106
Using a Variety of Tasks	108
Hallmarks of a nicely varied lesson.....	109
Achieving variety across different subjects.....	109
Making the Most of Resources.....	110
Different kinds of resource	111
Getting hands-on with resources.....	112
Unusual ideas for resources.....	113

Creating Fantastic Displays	114
Exploring how displays contribute to learning.....	114
Understanding what makes a good display.....	115
Finding interesting places for displays	115
Getting Assessment Right.....	116
Different kinds of assessment	118
The balancing act of marking	118

***Part III: Managing a Class*..... 121**

Chapter 7: Structuring Your Teaching and Your Teaching Space 123

Establishing Your Routines	124
Understanding why routines are so vital.....	124
Creating routines that work for you.....	126
Creating routines to suit different age groups.....	128
Maintaining your routines	132
Managing Your Lesson Time.....	133
Predicting how long activities should take	134
Pacing a lesson to fill the time allotted.....	134
Working with Groups	136
Understanding why group work matters.....	136
Organising your groups	137
Getting the most out of every group member.....	139
Setting Up Your Space	142
Understanding the importance of layout.....	143
Developing layouts for learning.....	144
Managing the learners in the space.....	145
Using a seating plan.....	146
The teacher in the space	147

Chapter 8: Building Better Behaviour. 149

Establishing Your Expectations.....	149
Defining what's inside the box.....	150
Picking the right time	151
Sharing your expectations with your class	152
Helping students mind the rules of the road	152
Making a Class Come to You	154
Getting silent attention	154
Maintaining focus.....	157
Maximising Your Strengths	158
The power of personality.....	158
Creating a powerful relationship	160
Establishing empathy.....	161

Overcoming Your Obstacles 162
 Dealing with nerves 162
 Staying calm..... 163
 Being consistent..... 165
 Maintaining a distance 166
 Staying on track 167
 Avoiding aggression 168
 Finding Strategies that Work for You..... 168
 Matching the strategies to the situation..... 169
 Matching the strategies to your style 169
 Practical strategies for managing behaviour 170

Chapter 9: Creating a Positive Classroom Atmosphere 171

Understanding Why Positivity Is Important..... 171
 Establishing a Positive Atmosphere 173
 Put on a happy face 173
 Make your students feel worthwhile 174
 Use rewards and sanctions appropriately..... 175
 We're in this together..... 175
 Manage your own moods..... 176
 Maintaining your positive atmosphere..... 177
 Getting Rewards Right 178
 Finding the right motivation..... 179
 Choosing and applying rewards 181
 Suiting rewards to the individual student 183
 Setting the Scene for Sanctions 183
 Understanding how punishment works 183
 Applying sanctions 185
 Sanctions in your setting 188

Chapter 10: Handling Challenging Situations 189

Dealing with Confrontation 190
 Understanding why confrontations happen..... 190
 Avoiding confrontation 193
 Dealing with confrontation 195
 Handling the aftermath 198
 Managing Challenging Individuals..... 199
 Handling the refuser..... 199
 Dealing with the aggressor 200
 Coping with the verbally abusive student..... 200
 Winning Back the 'Lost' Class 201
 Spotting the warning signs 202
 Getting a class back under control..... 202
 Coping with a lost class 204

Managing Your Stress Levels	204
Recognising signs of being over-stressed.....	205
Strategies for dealing with stress	205

Part IV: Dealing with Different Kinds of People 209

Chapter 11: Getting to Know Your Students 211

Discovering How to Build Relationships	211
Why good relationships are vital.....	212
Building bonds with your students	213
Using questions to ‘click’ with your class	214
Buddy or boss – getting the balance right.....	216
Treating them as people as well as students	218
Names, names, names – knowing and using them.....	219
Dealing with Different Types of Student.....	225
Differentiating your approaches	225
Handling students with special needs	226
Managing the brightest learners.....	228
Boosting self-esteem and confidence	230
Dealing with those who opt out.....	231
Developing Your Pastoral Role.....	232
Understanding what your pastoral role is about.....	232
Developing your pastoral role.....	234

Chapter 12: Working as Part of a Team 237

Building a Positive School Ethos	238
Fostering a Team Environment.....	239
Supporting other team members.....	240
Taking a consistent approach.....	241
Understanding different perspectives	241
Valuing everyone’s contribution	242
Trying not to pass on your problems	242
Sharing your ideas and resources	243
Rewarding and motivating others	244
Understanding Who’s Who in Your Team.....	244
Teaching staff	245
Teaching support staff	245
Non-teaching support staff.....	246
Finding other sources of support	247
Working with Teaching Support Staff	248
Getting to know your support staff	249
Making the most of your support staff.....	250
Exploring useful roles for support staff	251
Getting to Know the Right People	252
Good acquaintances to make	252
Staff you’re best to avoid.....	253

Chapter 13: Building Bonds with Parents	257
Understanding Parents	258
What parents really want from teachers	259
Looking for the perfect parent	260
Working with the difficult or indifferent parent.....	262
Getting to Know Parents	264
Building lines of communication	265
Getting parents involved.....	267
Using parent volunteers.....	269
Reporting to Parents	270
Handling the parents' meeting.....	271
Writing effective reports.....	274

Part V: Succeeding Beyond the Classroom 277

Chapter 14: Climbing the Paper Mountain.	279
Dealing with Paperwork.....	279
Determining what's essential and what's not	280
Bin it, deal with it, pass it on: The three rules for managing paperwork	281
Your 'To Do' List: A Lifesaver during Busy Times.....	283
Marking Papers and Writing Reports: Achieving the Impossible.....	285
Handling your marking load	286
Dealing with report writing.....	288
Learning the Art of Filing.....	289
Creating an effective filing system.....	290
Maintaining your filing system.....	291
Chapter 15: Getting Involved in Extra-Curricular Activities.	293
Inspiring Beyond the Classroom	293
Just how involved can you be?	294
Why extra-curricular activities matter.....	294
Different types of extra-curricular activities	295
The ups and downs of getting involved.....	297
Taking Time Out for a Trip.....	299
Deciding to take a trip.....	300
The technicalities of trips.....	301
Handling behaviour on school trips.....	303
Getting the most out of a trip.....	304
Chapter 16: Evaluating and Furthering Your Teaching Skills	305
Taking Stock of Your Situation	305
Understanding your strengths and weaknesses.....	306
Considering where you go next	307

Getting the Most Out of Observations	309
Preparing for an observation	309
During the observation	311
Getting feedback after an observation.....	312
Dealing with inspection and inspectors.....	312
Furthering Your Personal Development.....	313
Taking additional qualifications.....	313
Doing something just for yourself	314

Part VI: The Part of Tens..... 315

Chapter 17: Ten Great Ways to Engage with a Group 317

Build a Relationship	317
Use Inclusive Language.....	318
Create Imaginative Scenarios.....	319
Remember Their Names	320
Give a Little of Yourself	320
Find Out What They Love.....	321
Use Imaginative Rewards.....	321
Take Them Outdoors	322
Use the Power of the Peer Group	323
Give 'em a Surprise.....	323

Chapter 18: Ten Key Strategies for Handling Difficult Behaviour . . 325

Stay Calm	325
Ignore Attention Seekers	326
Be Reasonable, But Don't Reason with Them.....	327
Give Troublemakers a Choice.....	328
Stick to Your Guns.....	328
Know When to Be Flexible.....	329
Turn on a Penny.....	330
Apply Lateral Thinking	331
React from Your Head, Not from Your Heart.....	331
Put Yourself in Their Shoes.....	332

Chapter 19: Ten Tips for Dealing with Stress 333

Keep a Sense of Perspective	333
Don't Take Things Personally.....	334
Build a Support Network	334
Create a Home/Work Divide.....	335
Put Up a Wall.....	335
Maintain a Sense of Humour	336
Feel Pity, not Anger	336
Learn to Forgive Yourself	337
A Fresh Start Every Time.....	337
Give Yourself a Pat on the Back.....	337

Chapter 20: Ten Best Book and Website Resources for Teachers and Trainers 339

- Books..... 339
 - Cracking the Hard Class..... 340
 - The Craft of the Classroom..... 340
 - Getting the Buggers to Behave..... 340
 - Surviving and Succeeding in Difficult Classrooms 340
 - The Teacher’s Toolkit 340
- Useful Web Sites 341
 - Primary Resources 341
 - Teachernet..... 341
 - Teachers TV 341
 - The Times Educational Supplement (TES)..... 341
 - Woodlands Junior School 342

***Index* 343**



Introduction

Teaching is one of the *best* jobs you can possibly do. And if you're a teacher already or thinking about becoming one, then I do hope you agree. Teaching is also one of the most *important* jobs you can possibly do. The future prospects of a whole generation of children lie, at least partly, in your hands. And teaching is also one of the most *difficult* jobs you can do. Okay, it's not brain surgery, but it can be challenging, stressful, frustrating, emotionally draining, physically demanding, high pressure and incredibly hard work.

But for all the tough days and all the challenges, teaching's definitely worthwhile. The joy you get out of helping your students succeed makes worthwhile all the effort you have to put in to get them to work their hardest. The excitement of having a class in the palm of your hand makes worthwhile the struggle you had to reach that moment. And of course, the holidays are great as well.

When I go into schools to work with teachers, I ask them: 'What motivates you to turn up at school every day?' Their initial response is always to laugh: 'I need the salary to pay my mortgage!' But within seconds, they highlight all the bits of the job that really make it worthwhile, all the rewards teaching gives them that money simply can't buy.

Teaching's a vocation, pure and simple. If you're only in it for the money, you're in the wrong job. Okay, the salary isn't too bad these days, but as a graduate you can do something a lot less stressful and earn the same money or more. As a teacher you get the chance to make a difference. And you don't find many jobs that can offer you that.

About This Book

I want reading this book to feel like you're sitting down with a friend for a chat. You've asked her for some words of advice because she's been teaching for a while. She has some commonsense ideas about what does and doesn't work, which she's happy to share with you. Your friend has your best interests at heart. She understands all the joys of being a teacher, but she also knows about the demands of the job as well.

This friend of yours doesn't expect you to be perfect, like your head teacher may. She understands that you're a human being and that all your little habits and imperfections are part of what makes you unique. And she knows that in some schools, and with some students, even getting to the point where you can address your class, let alone teach them anything, is sometimes nigh on impossible.

Your friend's keen to give you honest, practical and realistic advice about the things that may actually work in your classroom. She knows that this is what busy teachers really need when they read a book about teaching. She understands that what works in one school or situation may not work in another, but she trusts you to figure out for yourself what works for you. She wants you to try to maintain a positive approach in your classroom, although she fully understands how difficult that can be at times.

This friend of yours also wants you to feel empowered to make changes to your teaching and your classroom practice. She understands that when you're trying to change student attitudes in the most difficult schools, you can feel like a fish swimming against the tide. She knows that sometimes you're very tempted to give up and say 'whatever' as you slap a worksheet on the students' desks.

Your friend wants you to focus on what you *can* change, rather than on what you *can't*. She knows that you can't change your head teacher or senior management (much as you may like to). And you can't change the kids for some other, better-behaved ones (no matter how desirable that may feel at times). But what you *can* change, what you *can* do something about, is your own teaching and your own teaching skills. And that's what she believes this book can show you how to do.

This friend of yours has taught the 'class from hell', but she's also had classes in the palm of her hand. She's taught in many different schools and worked with students of all different ages. She's taught in nursery, primary and secondary schools, with students from ages 3 to 18. She's been a permanent member of staff, but she's done supply teaching as well. She's also watched, worked with and trained many thousands of teachers, both in the UK and overseas. She wants you to know that whatever your teaching situation, she has some understanding of how you feel.

So I hope that as you read this book you feel like I'm that friend of yours. That I'm on your side. I've put the sum total of all my teaching experiences into this book. And I genuinely hope that some of it, and hopefully a lot of it, is valuable to you as you develop your own teaching skills.

My hope is that this book helps you to:

- ✓ Enjoy your teaching and the time you spend with your classes.
- ✓ Develop a teaching style that works for you and your students.

- ✔ Explore interesting and effective ways to communicate with your classes.
- ✔ Understand how you can create and deliver high-quality lessons: ones that help your children gain knowledge effectively and also enjoy their learning.
- ✔ Pick up techniques to help you keep your students focused and engaged and to make your life in the classroom easier and less stressful.
- ✔ Discover the structures you can use in your classroom that allow you to keep everything and everyone under control.
- ✔ Explore the many ways to build better behaviour with your classes and create a really positive environment for work.
- ✔ Handle every situation in the most positive way, no matter how challenging or difficult it feels.
- ✔ Get to know all the different people you work with and how best to build a sense of partnership and team work with them all.
- ✔ Deal with all those bits of the job that happen beyond the classroom walls: paperwork and marking, or extra-curricular activities.
- ✔ Build up a whole battery of teaching skills so that you can deal with every eventuality the job throws at you.

Conventions Used in This Book

A few conventions in this book are designed to help you navigate the text:

- ✔ *Italics* are used to give emphasis and to highlight new words.
- ✔ **Bold** is used to show the key concepts in a list.
- ✔ `Monofont` is used for website and email addresses.

In order to keep things fair and concise, I've used alternating genders in each chapter.

What You're Not to Read

You'll find some stuff in this book that is interesting, but that you don't *have* to read to make sense of what I'm saying. Sometimes you'll see an icon that asks you to 'Think Of' a situation and how you might respond to it. These sections are great for when you have a chance to sit and reflect on your teaching skills, but you can skip them if you're short on time. Similarly, the sidebars are all asides and, although you might find them thought-provoking to read, they're not critical to understanding the book.

Foolish Assumptions

If you bought this book, I think it's fair of me to assume that you're either a teacher already or someone who is considering going into the profession. I don't cover the ever-changing nature of the curriculum and I don't explore the various routes into the profession; I assume that you'll locate that information for yourself, if you need it. What I *do* focus on is the kind of key skills you'll need to become a really successful teacher. You might disagree with some of what I say, but I hope that you'll be open-minded enough to give even the craziest ideas a try!

How This Book Is Organised

This book has 20 chapters, divided between six main parts.

Inside each chapter are sub-sections about the main topic of the chapter. My aim is to make this book both practical and easily accessible. You should easily be able to find and read the topics that are most relevant to you. You may like to dip in and out of the book or you can read it cover to cover (if you have any time left over after all that marking!).

Part I: Developing Your Teaching Style

The first part of the book shows you how to develop a teaching 'style' that works for both you and your students. You find out how to create an aura of confidence, even when you don't feel like that inside. You examine a variety of different teaching styles to help you figure out which approach works for you.

In this part, you also see how you can use both verbal and non-verbal approaches to communicate with, and connect with, your class. You discover how to make the most of what comes out of your mouth and also how to use your body in the most effective way possible.

Part II: Teaching a Class

In this part, you find out all about how to teach your class so that the students learn loads and everyone gains a positive feeling of success. You see how you can prepare and deliver really good-quality lessons. And you discover the different approaches to your teaching that can help you meet the needs of every student.

In this part, I show you how you can get your students interested in their work and keep them engaged right through a lesson. You also find many ways to push your students to achieve their best and to stay focused on the activities you set.

This part also shows you how to maximise aspects of your teaching outside the immediate lesson – things like assessment, resources and displays. You explore how to incorporate a variety of interesting objects and approaches into your lessons so that you can really get the most out of your children.

Part III: Managing a Class

This part helps you discover loads about the ins and outs of actually managing a class and a classroom. You see how routines and structures can help make your time in the classroom both easier and more effective, and how different classroom layouts affect the way your students work.

In this part, you find out the best strategies to use to handle problem behaviour. You investigate how to get better behaviour from your students; how to maximise your strengths as a classroom manager; and also how to overcome any weaknesses you may have.

You also find out how to develop and maintain a positive feeling in your classroom and how to use rewards and sanctions as effectively as possible. And you explore how to handle the really challenging situations and students and cope with the way these situations make you feel.

Part IV: Dealing with Different Kinds of People

In this part, you find out how to deal with the different kinds of people you need to work with as a teacher. You see how you can develop good, strong and positive relationships with your students, and explore how you may develop the pastoral side of your role.

This section also helps you investigate how you can work effectively with the other staff at your school, and which people you may be best to avoid. You also see how to build up the lines of communication with your students' parents or carers and how to develop the kind of positive relationships with them that help your students to work at their best.

Part V: Succeeding Beyond the Classroom

You find a lot of advice in this section about developing your teaching skills beyond the classroom. Whether you need to sort out that ever-growing pile of paperwork or get involved in extra-curricular activities, everything you need to know is here. You also discover how to take stock of your current situation and plan for your development in the future.

Part VI: The Part of Tens

In this final part, you get some quick, simple and effective tips for dealing with some of the knottier aspects of the profession. You get quick, no-nonsense advice on topics as diverse as engaging with a group and dealing with stress.

This part offers a great ‘dip-in’ guide for when your time’s short but your need’s strong. Dive into it and see what you can discover!

Icons Used in This Book

You come across little icons throughout this book. These icons are designed to highlight specific bits of text. These sections give you a particular strategy to use or something important to consider.



Some top techniques, strategies and pointers for you to bear in mind as you develop your teaching skills to the max. Don’t forget these techniques: they stand you in great stead in your classroom.



These are practical ideas and suggestions that have worked for me in my classroom. Often they’re suggestions another teacher’s kindly given to me. Only common sense and realistic advice to be found here!



Watch out! When you see this icon, get primed for some top advice about what to avoid in your classroom and in your teaching.



Take a moment to reflect on things from your own experience or imagine how you may respond to a situation. A chance to think things through outside the pressurised classroom environment.

Where to Go from Here

If you're brand new to teaching, this book contains pretty much every technique I've ever tried, been told or been taught. No matter where you 'land' inside the covers, you can find some practical and honest advice about coping in your classroom. As a new teacher, you may get great benefit from reading this book from start to finish, but you don't do any harm at all if you only have time to dip in and out.

If you have a specific issue in your classroom, then turn to the contents pages to see if you can spot where I deal with it. Often, I cover that issue in more than one chapter. Teaching's a complex business, and sometimes you need to come at your problem from more than one angle to help yourself solve it.

If you're an experienced teacher with plenty of years in the profession, then this book may offer you a reminder of some of the techniques you used to use, but maybe haven't employed for a while. Or it can show you how you *are* doing all the right things, but that sometimes circumstances mean you can't always be perfect.

And if you have a problem that I don't cover in this book, then feel free to contact me via email. I'll see what I can do, although I can't promise an instant solution. To contact me, visit my website, www.suecowley.co.uk, and follow the links from there.

Finally, please remember that *no magic wand* exists in teaching. No simple answer solves all your problems. But if you keep plugging away and never stop improving, then with time you become the best teacher you can possibly be.

