



UK Edition

Making Everything Easier!™

# Teaching Skills

FOR

# DUMMIES®

## Learn to:

- Get to grips with lesson planning and assessment methods
- Develop effective teaching techniques
- Inspire your pupils and hold their interest
- Command respect in both the classroom and the staffroom

**Sue Cowley**

*Best-selling author and behaviour expert*





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# Teaching Skills for Dummies®

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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.

I'd also like to give a mention to all those teachers I've worked with and learned from over the years. Thanks for letting me nick your ideas and copy your approaches.

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# Introduction

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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 know 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