

Role play: “I want a word with you.”

Parent: I want a word with you.

Teacher: Yes, but you shouldn't interrupt when I'm speaking to someone else.

Parent: It's about you picking on my daughter again.

Teacher: How silly, I've never picked on your daughter.

Parent: You're meant to teach kids, not bully them.

Teacher: I'm sorry, but you're an extremely rude man and now you're making a fool of yourself.

Parent: Shut up and just tell me this minute - why have you put her in detention again for something she never did?

Teacher: The reasons were explained in the letter. If you carry on like this, you'll make things worse for your daughter and for yourself.

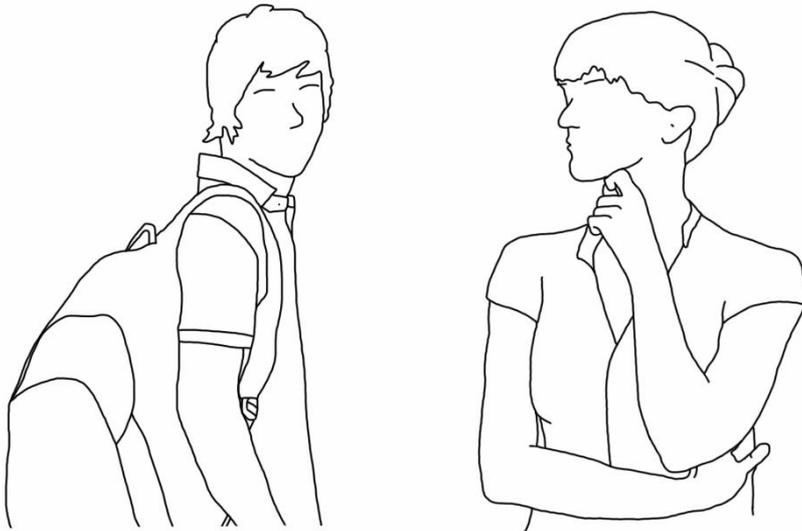
Parent: You can't threaten me. I'm reporting you, I'll get you banned from teaching.

Scenario extension: Ryan and Rajesh

Ryan appears to be highly anxious so the teacher quickly takes him outside the classroom and asks him what's going on. He calms down a bit and during a brief conversation tells them that:

- He is tired, which makes him irritable.
- His parents are divorcing and he's struggling with that.
- He's not done the homework you set and he doesn't want to get into trouble.
- Rajesh shouldn't go out with Jenny as Asian and white shouldn't mix.

The teacher has already been out of the classroom five minutes talking to Ryan, but can hear the other students getting noisier.



If you were in the teacher's position, which points of conflict would you address? What outcomes would you want to achieve for these? What would your priorities be? – or you may have recognised other issues and points of conflict of your own.

Points of conflict

- Ryan and Rajesh have disrupted the class.
- Ryan has not done the homework you set.
- Ryan has made an inappropriate and racist remark.
- A misunderstanding between Ryan and Rajesh over a spilt drink.
- Rajesh shouldn't have had a can of drink in class.
- Ryan and Rajesh possibly both want to go out with the same girl.
- Ryan's behaviour is unacceptable as he is tired and irritable.
- Ryan's behaviour is unacceptable as he is struggling with his parent's divorce.
- The way Rajesh spoke to Ryan.
- The way Ryan spoke to Rajesh.
- Ryan's use of swearing in the classroom.
- Previous fights being unresolved.

What you say and what they hear

I never said you took the money.

Five perspectives on conflict

1. Tell



2. Talk to



3. Talk about



4. Support



5. Motivate



The Conflict

The Conflict

Scenario: Get your point across

You are a senior member of staff in charge of the queue at the canteen during lunch time. The queue is very long and you notice a pupil push in. The school rules say that he should have to go to the back of the queue but he refuses and says “But I was here all along”. The other pupils are visibly frustrated with him for having pushed into the queue and you need to make sure that it keeps moving otherwise some pupils may not get their lunch.

Scenarios for discussion

- You're a head of department, talking to a student who is disputing a detention given to them earlier by another teacher. They were being disruptive in class.
- You work in a school office, talking to a visiting member of staff who is furious because he's been told he cannot park where he used to.
- You are teaching a class and one boy is acting out and disrupting the rest of the class. During group discussions, when the classroom is noisy, he is singing and drumming on his desk with pencils.
- You are a teacher at parents evening telling the parents of a previously 'straight A' student that you are unlikely to be awarding them an A for their end of year assessment.
- You're a form teacher, talking to a parent whose child does not follow the school uniform guidelines and the parent doesn't agree with them either.

Scenarios for review

Year 10 boy is in your office with his mother to discuss his aggressive and racist behaviour towards other students. The mother was very embarrassed and halfway through the conversation he suddenly gets up, swears at his mother and runs out of the room. You and his mother eventually catch up with him in the corridor but by this time he has taken a baseball bat out of his bag and is ready to swing.

You are supervising another teacher's lesson. One of the students starts to mess around and attempts to draw others into it too. You ask her to stop and to get on with her work. She refuses and becomes verbally abusive towards you. As the bell rings you are stood by the exit and ask the girl to stay behind. She says 'no way' and rushes towards the door.

A teacher you manage has escorted a student to your office, both are highly agitated. The teacher is shouting at the student and calling him demeaning names. The student tells him to 'piss off'. The teacher is angered by this rudeness and demands that you give the student a 'rollicking in front of the rest of the class.' The student, fed up being shouted at, is now sitting uncooperatively in a chair.

It is lunchtime and you are supervising students in the yard. Suddenly a van drives through the gate and heads towards a group of Somali students at speed. All students scatter, screaming and luckily van hits a tennis post and stops. The driver (a parent) gets out of the van and walks towards the students shouting angrily.