



Respect at school

This resource is for students with disability, their parents and caregivers, and schools, to learn about respectful behaviour and why it is important to include students with disability in decision-making.

About this resource

This resource was funded by the Australian Government. It was designed by students and young people with disability and their parents and caregivers, with help from Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) and Inclusion Australia.

The Australian Government acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We acknowledge their continuing connection to land, water, and community. We pay our respects to them and their Elders past and present. We pay our respects to the continuing cultural, spiritual, and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Note on language

This resource uses person-first language (e.g., ‘student with disability’). But this approach does not suit everyone, and many people prefer identity-first language (e.g., ‘disabled student’).

It is up to each person how they choose to identify. We encourage you to ask people what they prefer. We also acknowledge the deep history behind all these terms.

This resource is for students with disability and their parents and caregivers. When we say ‘your child’ this means any child you are responsible for.

Additional resources

This is one part of a group of resources. You can find them on the [Australian Government Department of Education website](#) or by scanning the QR code.

This resource is also available in Easy Read, Auslan, and several other languages. You can access those versions on the [Australian Government Department of Education website](#) or by scanning the QR code.

Content note: *This resource mentions discrimination and poor treatment at school. It also covers the negative feelings that this can cause. For support you can call Lifeline on **13 11 14** or text **0477 13 11 14**. You can also contact Kids Helpline on **1800 55 1800**.*



Scan the QR code

Who this guide is for

This guide is for students with disability and their parents and caregivers.

What this guide is for

This guide is to help you understand:

1. how you should be treated at school
2. that you have **rights** under the ***Disability Standards for Education 2005*** (DSE).

What are the Disability Standards for Education 2005?

The DSE are **standards** for the education of students with disability and are part of Australian law.

Standards

Standards are what we use to measure how well something is done. Standards help us make sure things work well.

The DSE

The DSE explain two important things:

1. The rights of students with disability.
2. What schools have to do to help students with disability to get their rights.

What this guide covers

This guide looks at what respect is, why it's important and how everyone can work together. It covers:

- [What does respect look like at school?](#)
- [What does respect feel like?](#)
- [What can happen when respect is missing?](#)
- [What needs to happen to make a difference?](#)

What does respect look like at school?

Respect shows in how we treat and connect with people.

Respect in how we treat people

You should be treated well at school. Your school and teachers should take steps to keep you safe.



Australian law makes it illegal to treat you unfairly:

- because you have a disability
- because you complained about someone treating you unfairly because of your disability.

If you are treated well, you are treated with **respect**.

Treating people with respect means:



You treat everyone how you want to be treated. But you don't treat everyone the same. **Everyone is different.**



You understand that everyone **learns in different ways** and at different speeds. Your teacher should be flexible in how they teach you. You should be flexible in how you learn with your classmates.



You're aware of where people are at right now. This means you **try to understand:**

- what's going on in people's lives
- what they are feeling.



You **accept people's right** to:

- choose what they want to do
- have privacy
- have personal space.

Remember, it's up to them if they want to be hugged or touched or shake hands.



You don't judge people for their choices or preferences. You **value their opinions**. This makes them more confident to express what they feel and think.



You **accept and appreciate** all different:

- opinions, ideas and beliefs
- religions
- ages
- gender identities and sexualities
- backgrounds
- disabilities.
- cultures



You're **accepting** of everyone as a person.



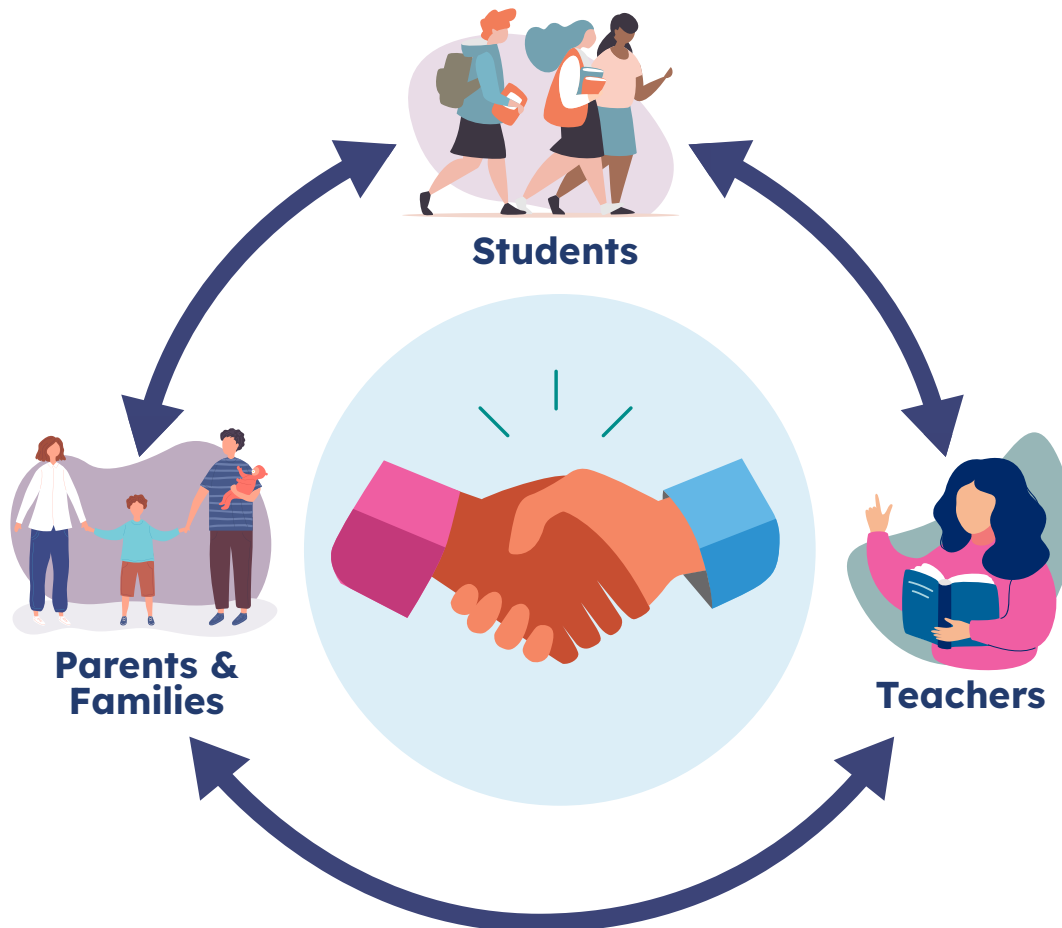
It's impossible to agree on everything. But even if you disagree with someone, you remember to do it **politely**.



You **respect** people even when you don't like them. You don't have to like someone to respect them.

Respect in how we connect with people

Respect at school is about relationships between parents, caregivers, students, teachers, and support staff.



REMEMBER

- It helps if parents, caregivers, teachers, and students are all on the same page.
- You should talk with each other and make decisions together. This is important so you don't misunderstand each other.
- You might not agree at first, but try to stay respectful. You can always have a deeper talk about why you disagree.
- You and your classmates should respect each other as well. You should include each other in activities.

What does respect feel like?



Respect

You feel listened to

You feel happy inside

You feel good

You feel included

People trust each other

You feel connected to people

People are on the same page

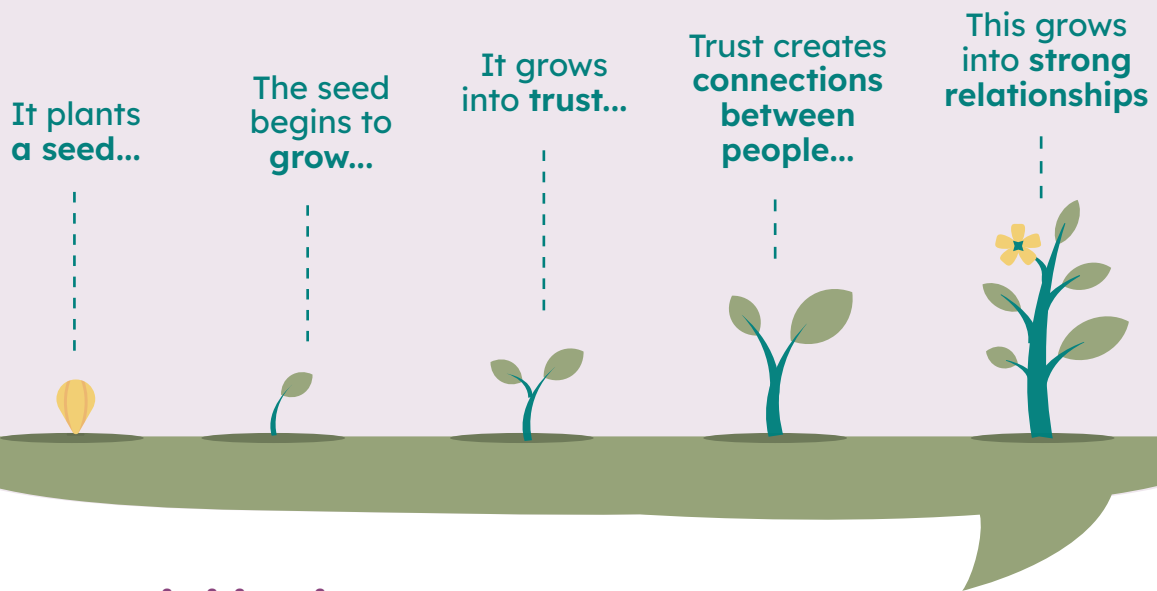
You can set boundaries

You feel like you belong

People don't keep score



When you show respect over time
Respect grows into something more



Accessibility is part of respect

Accessible means that you can get, get to, or use something. This can be a place, object, activity, or information. Your school shows respect when it makes things accessible.

These things might be:

- providing certain equipment or technology
- your classwork
- your classroom
- the school building
- the playground.

You and your school should work together to make sure you can join in.

You should start talking about this as early as possible.

Try not to wait until you have a problem. You and your school can plan to stop problems before they happen.



Inclusion is part of respect

Your teachers and school should:

- be inclusive
- be supportive.

You should be part of the school community.

What can happen when respect is missing?



When people aren't respectful, they might:

- break your trust
- not respect your boundaries.



REMEMBER

- This isn't your fault.
- Trust can take a long time to build. It can take time to feel people have earned it.
- Some people may never earn it. It's okay to feel this way.
- Your feelings and opinions are important. This is true no matter what your age or situation is.

What needs to happen to make a difference?



Tips for students

1. You should respect other people and expect those around you to do the same.
2. If you think something is wrong, talk to a trusted person. This might be a parent, friend, teacher or someone else. They can guide you if you need help.
3. Outside help is available as well if you need it. E.g., an independent advocate can help you to make decisions. To find an advocate, visit (<https://www.dana.org.au/find-an-advocate/>).



Tips for parents and caregivers

1. Look out for signs that your child isn't being treated well. For example, their behaviour may change.
2. Your child might come to you with a concern. Plan what you will do if this happens. Find out who to talk to at the school.
3. Organise a meeting between you, your child, and the school. See what solutions you can come up with together.
4. Work together to build or rebuild respect.
5. Independent help is available – e.g., an independent advocate. They can bring new ideas about the situation. They can also help with plans to make sure things happen. To find an advocate, visit (<https://www.dana.org.au/find-an-advocate/>).





What teachers and schools should do

1. Get to know students and what works best for them.
2. Work together with students, parents and caregivers.
3. Make sure plans get put into action. Explain the reason if this doesn't happen.

More information and support

- *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2005L00767>)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018C00125>)
- Disability Australia Hub (<https://www.disabilityaustraliahub.com.au/>)
 - A list of disability organisations
- Disability Gateway (<https://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/>)
 - Links to services, advocates and information
- Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) (<https://humanrights.gov.au>)





<https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005/information-resources-students-disability-and-their-caregivers>