

# Behaviour: Physical Environment

**PINPOINT**



*The optimal room arrangement allows you to get from any student to any other student with the fewest steps.*

Fred Jones

**Proximity and access**

Teachers need to be able to get close to their students as quickly as possible. Why? Because proximity is the surest way to manage off-task behaviour. Students need to

**Teacher's desk**

The first thing to address when thinking about better classroom arrangements, is to move the teacher's desk. Why? Because it places 8 feet between you and your students. Get rid of it and bring the students closer to the front. If you think you still really need a desk, place it at the back

**Students' desks**

The traditional group desks versus rows does not throw light on how to arrange desks and why. Draw a plan of your room and work out how to arrange the desks so you have to take the minimum of steps to get to the students the furthest away. Ensure you have clear walkways.

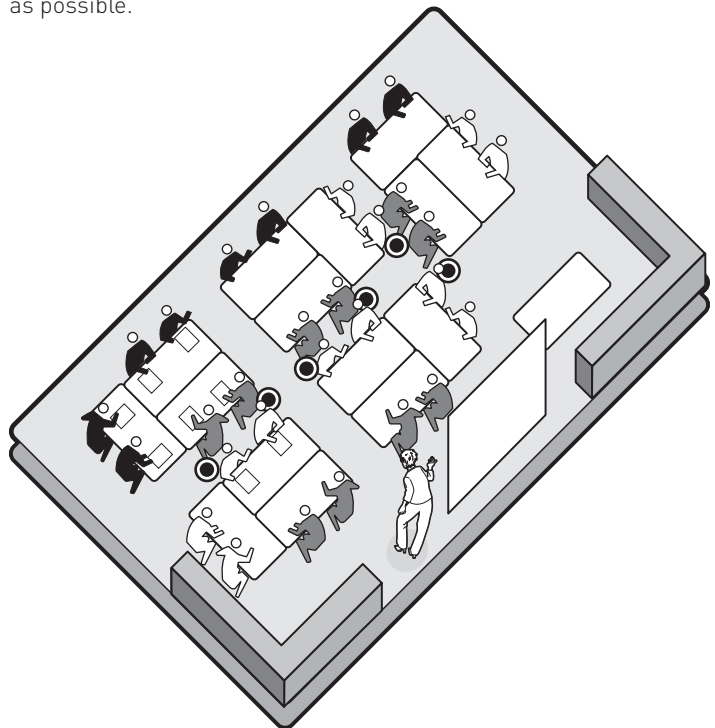
The space gained at the front of the room can be added to by grouping desks closer to allow you to create wider walkways than is traditional. Easy and rapid access is a primary aim.

**Displays**

Think of an IKEA showroom and note the size and simplicity of their display boards. Clear, minimum and visual is what communication experts know works best. No tiny text, no fancy Word Art, no double mounting, no drapes. Think billboard, not Powerpoint. Use the displays for Visual Instruction Plans of the learning behaviours and routines you want to see take place in your classroom. No need to nag — just point to them.

**Location, location, location**

In the layout below, you can see the disadvantages of this familiar desk arrangement. Forget for the moment your views on rows versus group tables, the same dynamics still hold. Teachers should gain proximity to individual students as easily and as soon as possible.



**1** *The purpose of room arrangement is to facilitate mobility and proximity.*

Fred Jones

**2** *The biggest obstacle to working the room in a typical classroom is the furniture.*

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SITUATION	PROBLEM
Very hard to get to	➔ Difficult for teacher to support learning or behaviour
Sitting with back to teacher	➔ Time lost turning to face the front and easily distracted
Sitting facing the front	➔ Easily distracted by other learners facing them
Easily blocked by bags	➔ Learners in control of the classroom?

**REFERENCES**

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