

# Tips for Students on Setting Boundaries

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As a student, there are tasks that you are expected to do: some you've come to know because they're routine and some tasks that you weren't expecting. In addition to what is required of you as a student, you are also learning to navigate after-school commitments. These responsibilities might include chores, a job, taking care of siblings or other members of your community, or social activities. All of this can cause you to feel stressed, anxious, or overwhelmed. But your health is important when it comes to your overall success in school and in life.

So, how do you participate in setting realistic expectations for yourself so that you can reach your level of success?

Well, you call a **C.A.B.** (Conversations, Advocacy, and Boundaries).

\*Note, you may or may not know what a cab is. Just know that Uber and Lyft are modern-day cabs.

Feel free to Google it.

## Conversations

- Talk with the person setting the expectation.
  - Enter the conversation willing to understand. If your emotions are high and won't allow for that right away, schedule a conversation for a later time.
  - Talking about this can help them understand your perspective and help you understand their perspective.
- Communicate in a way that is most comfortable for you right now.
  - Write a note to your teacher and leave it on their desk
  - Send it by email.
  - Request to chat in person.
- Know when you are free to meet.
  - This will help you when scheduling a time to chat.
- Respect your teacher's availability
  - Unfortunately, teachers aren't (and shouldn't be) available at all times like many of our favorite social media apps. While IG, Tik Tok, Twitch, and others are available 24/7, your teacher(s) is not. So yes, you can send an email late at night, but remember that your teacher needs time to read it, think about it, respond to it, and act upon what you sent.
  - The amount of time your teacher needs will vary. It may or may not happen right away. Be prepared for that. (Revisit understanding as often as you need.
- Ask for the specifics:

- When does this expectation begin?
- What does it look like when I'm trying to meet this expectation?
- How will I/we accomplish this expectation?
- How long will this expectation last?

## Advocacy

Advocating is a way to speak up for yourself to get the support you need. When you advocate for yourself, you help yourself and others become more aware of your needs in a given situation. Here are a few situations you may need to advocate for this school year:

- Homework
  - Advocate for more time. "I have a lot of large projects due around the same time. Can the due date be extended?"
  - Advocate for support with completing it. "I have several commitments between now and then. Can we take a look at my calendar together to come up with a plan for how I can work on this?"
- Academic Needs
  - Advocate for pacing. Sometimes the teacher may be teaching at a speed that is too fast for you. Speak up to ask the teacher to slow down. "I missed what you said, could you repeat that again," or "It would be helpful if you speak a little slower so that I can process the information better."
  - Advocate for resources or extra support. "I am having difficulty understanding this topic. Can I meet with you to get extra support?" or "I think I need to see more examples of this. Can you provide me with more examples or videos to help me practice and study it?"
- Social/Emotional Needs
  - Advocate for breaks. A bathroom break isn't the only break students may need. While your movement may be limited because of safety precautions due to the virus, there are many ways for you to take a break. Tell your teacher, "I am having a hard time focusing, can I take a 1 minute brain break to help me refocus?"
  - If you're experiencing a feeling that impacts the way you show up to class, inform your teacher and your peers so that they are aware of how you feel and what you need. If you need or want to speak with someone at school (i.e., school social worker) about your feelings, request that.
- Policies/Handbook Rules
  - If your school has a Student Government Association (SGA), run for a position or find a way to support peers who are in it.
  - If your school does not have a Student Government Association (SGA), start one!

- If any rules come from the district or other group, let your voice be heard. Student voices should be heard at the local level, the state level, and the federal level. This is important because some expectations that happen in your school come from laws that your principal and teachers are required to follow. Even though you're not an adult yet, you can reach out to the people who help make the laws by writing a letter or email, calling their office, or marching alongside your teacher or trusted adult (with permission) at the next event to advocate for yourself, your friends, your family, and your school.

## Boundaries

Boundaries are the limits we have in relationships, including the one you have with yourself. They help express what your limits are in any given situation. It is important to enter the school year knowing that teacher(s) will have boundaries and so should you. Yes, even students should have boundaries! This means that your peers should have them, too. Important Note: Any boundaries you set should be applied to everyone, even your best friend.

- Set boundaries about the use of your belongings.
  - Are there certain personal belongings you don't want anyone to use? Not even your best friend?
  - Do you prefer people to treat your belongings a certain way when you allow them to borrow them?
- Set boundaries about personal space.
  - Is someone too close for comfort?
  - Is someone too far away for you to express what you need to say without everyone hearing?
  - Is someone's belongings or body in a space you occupy?
- Set boundaries about physical touch.
  - Do you want a hug?
  - Do you prefer a fist bump instead?
  - Do you prefer not to be touched at all?

The way you communicate, what you communicate, and how you communicate are powerful. Remember to use your way of communicating to have important conversations, to advocate, and to set boundaries. Also, use it to encourage your friends to communicate as well. And hopefully, when everyone, including teachers and family, calls a C.A.B. as often as possible, the outcome will be a success. A success that you should experience in the classroom, in the school, in all of education, and most importantly, in your life.