



A Simple Trick That Makes Modeling Unforgettable

By Michael Linsin

Here at Smart Classroom Management we've written a lot about how to make modeling more effective.

We've covered the importance of being highly detailed.

We've covered [common mistakes](#) and pitfalls.

We've covered silent modeling, student modeling, and a strategy called "the power of one."

We continue to revisit this topic because it's one of the secrets to extraordinary teaching.

By becoming an expert in this one area, you can transform your students from lackadaisical to purpose-driven almost overnight.

It's that powerful.

Which brings us to a strategy you can use whenever you're modeling anything with multiple steps.

It's a trick of sorts that has a unique way of getting students to remember exactly what you expect.

The way it works is that somewhere in the midst of your modeling exercise – regardless of what it is – you're going to add an *insignificant* detail.

That's right. You're going to add a step that has no purpose whatsoever.

For example, let's say you're teaching an art lesson and [you're modeling](#) how you want your students to pick up materials from a side table.

Instead of including only those steps that are needed, you're going to add a step along the way. I recommend something silly like a dance move or animal movement.

It can even be something verbal ("*I love doing me some art!*") or a combination of both.

Funny works well, but it isn't mandatory. Any additional step *that has nothing to do with the lesson or routine* will make it more memorable.

The reason the strategy works is because it causes students to pay closer attention to you. It draws them into a visualization of the steps you want them to take.

With modeling, visualization is everything. If your students are able to see themselves completing the steps successfully, then that's what they'll do — no matter how challenging the task.

It also binds the other steps together into a seamless routine, further embedding a memory map they can call upon whenever they need it. For years I had a poster just inside my classroom door that read "Work Like A Champion Today." It served as a daily reminder to every student of their purpose when they entered the class each morning.

But it was also more than that.

It was the midway point of [a routine](#) that took them from a line on the playground more than fifty yards away to a moment eight minutes later when they were at their desks and working on the first assignment of the day.

I had a small round target just below the inscription that each student would tap on their way in.

It was a touchstone for them that would immediately shift their focus from life outside of the classroom to the expectations and responsibilities within. And I taught it that way.

I taught them that when they tapped the poster, they were making a commitment to give their focused best — no matter how good or how poorly they were feeling that day. Tapping the poster was part of a tradition I wanted them to associate with excellence.

This doesn't mean that adding a step must always, or even ever, have such lofty aspirations. It can be used simply for the novelty of it.

It can be used simply as a small and simple way to get your students to sit up a little higher, smile a little broader, and engage a little deeper.

So next time you find yourself modeling how you want your students to turn in work or transition from math to science, add an Irish jig or an old school "sprinkler" or a line from a favorite book.

"Catasterous!" cried the BFG. "Upgoing bubbles is a catasterous disastrophe."

It will make your modeling more effective and your classroom more fun.

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