



## The Escalation Cycle

### Background Reading

#### Avoiding Escalating Behaviors

“Reactive” approaches, such as punishment, that follow problem behavior are time-consuming and fail to teach acceptable replacement behaviors. These approaches may also inadvertently reinforce the undesired behavior.

*Adult responses to student problem behavior may actually cause negative behavior to escalate.*

Keys to avoid escalating behaviors:

- Appropriately intervene early.
- Manipulate the environmental factors.
- Identify replacement behaviors that can be taught.

The following non-verbal strategies may be used to de-escalate acting-out behavior:

- Acknowledge the student’s feelings.
- Remove the student from behavioral triggers.
- Avoid getting into a power struggle with the student.

Verbal de-escalation is the process used to calm an agitated student by using communication, listening, and body language. When a student becomes agitated:

- Provide the student with your undivided attention.
- Maintain eye contact with the student.
- Focus on feelings and engage the student in positive self-talk.
- Monitor your body language — avoid gestures that appear judgmental or non-supportive.
- Avoid power struggles with students.

Reprinted from *PBS LearningMedia*: The Escalation Cycle

<https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/ket-pd-deescalation4/the-escalation-cycle/>

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