

Procedural PRO

What is it?

A tool that uses direct instruction and guided practice to help students become pros at classroom procedures

What are the benefits of using this tool?

Classroom management experts Harry K. Wong and Rosemary T. Wong (2014) remind us that “procedures are the foundation upon which successful teaching takes place” (p. 6). But having procedures that are clear in *our* minds isn’t the same as students having procedures clear in *their* minds. And if students’ grasp of important procedures is fuzzy, then the overall effectiveness of the classroom will be compromised. This tool presents a simple, three-phase process for teaching classroom procedures. The three phases, the acronym for which is PRO, empower students to become pros at the various classroom procedures they learn. The three phases also highlight the gradual shift in responsibility that should come with teaching a procedure to students: the teacher **P**resents the procedure, the class **R**ehearses the procedure under the teacher’s guidance, and over time, students come to **O**wn (internalize and independently execute) the procedure.

What are the basic steps?

1. Identify a classroom procedure or content-related procedure that you want students to master. Break the procedure into a series of manageable steps.
2. Ask students what it means to be a pro at something. Explain that you’re going to use a simple, three-step process to help them become pros at the procedure you identified in Step 1.
3. Use the handout on p. 17 to teach students (and yourself) what the PRO process entails. Help students notice how the PRO process gradually shifts the responsibility of executing the procedure from teacher to students.
4. Present the selected procedure to students in a step-by-step manner. Make sure you
 - Introduce the procedure and explain why it’s important.
 - Explain and model the individual steps. Answer any questions that students might have.
 - Walk through the procedure as a class, completing one step at a time. Give students feedback about their performance after each step, and help them make any necessary corrections.
5. Give students multiple opportunities to **R**ehearse the procedure. Observe, coach, and give them feedback as they practice. The goal is to encourage increasing independence over time.
Note: You can have students practice as a class, in small groups or pairs, or independently.
6. Encourage students to **O**wn or take responsibility for following the procedure without help.
7. Acknowledge students who follow the procedure successfully. Identify students who still need help, and continue working with them until they, too, are pros.

How is this tool used in the classroom?

- ✓ To teach and help students internalize important classroom (and content-related) procedures

EXAMPLE 1: Becoming pros at lining up to leave the classroom*

Before teaching her students the proper procedure for lining up to leave the classroom, a primary-grade teacher divides the procedure into three simple steps:

STEP 1: Stand up and push your chair under your desk.

STEP 2: Be as quiet as a feather when walking toward the door. Walk with “feather feet.”

STEP 3: Line up as straight as an arrow.

She explains the importance of lining up quietly and then **P**resents the steps to students. To check that students understand what’s expected of them, the teacher has them execute the steps one at a time on her command. (“I’ll say, ‘Stand up and push your chair under your desk,’ but you shouldn’t actually do those things until I say, ‘Ready, set, GO!’”) She checks students’ performance after each step and helps students make any necessary corrections (“Let’s try to walk more quietly”).

The teacher and her students **R**ehearse the lining-up procedure regularly over the next few weeks, using the poem below as a guide. They read the poem one couplet at a time (she reads the first line of the couplet aloud; students chant the second line as a class), and students execute the appropriate step at the conclusion of each couplet. After each rehearsal, the teacher assesses and gives students feedback about their performance: Were students as quiet as a feather? Was their line as straight as an arrow?

Here’s how we begin:
We stand up and push our chairs in.
Then, quiet as a feather,
We walk together.
Arrow-straight,
Our line looks great!

After a few weeks of practice, it’s clear that students **O**wn the procedure, as evidenced by their ability to execute the steps properly without needing the support of the poem.

EXAMPLE 2: Becoming pros at the order of operations

An elementary teacher uses Procedural PRO to help students become “order of operations pros.” He begins by explaining the importance of completing mathematical operations in order. Next, he **P**resents the proper order for completing the various operations using the “Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally” mnemonic as a guide. He then models the order of operations procedure for students by working through several specific examples.

Once students have the gist of the procedure, the teacher invites them to **R**ehearse as a class using an example he puts on the board. He instructs students to complete the first step at their seats, while he completes it on the board. When students finish, they look up to check and correct their work and ask for help if needed. The teacher then repeats the process for each successive step.

After several successful practice sessions using increasingly complex examples, students gain the confidence and skill they need to work independently. In other words, they **O**wn the order of operations procedure.

*This lesson is adapted from the work of our colleague, Beth Knoedelseder.

EXAMPLE 3: Becoming pros at start-of-class procedures

A sixth-grade teaching team knows that first-year middle schoolers have, for the first time in their academic careers, several different sets of classroom procedures that they need to master. Recognizing that trying to remember the “getting started procedures” for each individual class can be overwhelming for many students, the team agrees that all teachers will create checklists for entering their classrooms. One teacher’s checklist is shown here:

What should you do when you enter the classroom?
<input type="checkbox"/> Take out your learning log, your daily planner, and a pen or pencil. <input type="checkbox"/> Look at the side board and copy the homework assignment into your planner. <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure you understand the homework assignment. If you have questions, ask me! <input type="checkbox"/> Turn in your homework, or complete “the dog ate my homework” sheet. <input type="checkbox"/> Start working on the daily warm-up activity.

After **P**resenting their start-of-class procedures to students on the first day of school using the checklists as a guide, the teachers encourage students to **C**heck their checklists each day and execute the listed procedures (**R**ehearse). Over time, students become familiar enough with the procedures that they no longer need to consult their checklists. (They **O**wn the overall routine.)

Teacher Talk

- ➔ It’s true that teaching classroom procedures requires an investment of time up front, but since classrooms without clearly understood procedures are classrooms where instructional time gets wasted and behavioral issues become pervasive, we believe it’s a good investment.
- ➔ Learn (and help students learn) where they are on the pathway to owning a procedure by having them periodically rate their comfort level using a four-point rating scale (1 = I’m just getting started; 2 = I can do this with lots of guidance; 3 = I can do this with some guidance; 4 = I can do this on my own!).
- ➔ One way to help students keep track of classroom procedures and execute those procedures properly is to help them create “procedures binders” that include steps/summaries. Keep things manageable by ensuring that students’ binders always contain ten procedures or fewer.
- ➔ The on-my-command technique (Silver, Hanson, Strong, & Schwartz, 1996) that’s used to present and help students execute the lining-up procedure in Example 1 can be used with virtually any classroom procedure. Simply break the procedure into simple steps, develop a command word or phrase (e.g., “Ready, set, GO!”), and instruct students not to execute any steps until you give the command. Having students stop and wait for your command before executing each step prevents them from jumping ahead. It also gives you the opportunity to assess and correct students’ performance *as* they move through the procedure rather than at the end.
- ➔ Explaining why a procedure is important (see Step 4) is beneficial since students are more apt to follow—or work to master—procedures whose purpose and value they understand.