

# Avoid Power Struggles

<https://www.pbisworld.com/tier-1/avoid-power-struggles/>

## Why should I do it:

- It is a quick method to de-escalate a student
- It keeps you in control
- Prevents students from feeding off of the attention of the class or others
- Breaks the cycle of escalation, tension, intensity, etc
- Reduces the likelihood of further physical, verbal, and other conflict
- Establishes your position as being outside of the student's tactics and usual attempts to get what they want
- Helps teach students that engaging in power struggles is futile and will not get them what/where they want
- Helps you, the adult, remain calm, clear headed, and more able to make good decisions and actions

## When should I do it:

- When a student is trying to verbally engage you in an argument
- When a student becomes very insistent, argumentative, and will not drop the point
- When a student becomes agitated, raises their voice, becomes physically or verbally aggressive or threatening, or becomes threatening in any other way
- When the issue the student is arguing about is not essential, important, or crucial (choose your battles wisely)
- When a student can't seem to drop it
- When it seems the student is no longer interested in solving a problem, but provoking and being right
- When a student just wants to be correct, right, or win
- When a student seems to be taking it personally and cannot handle the issue, topic, etc
- When giving directives, directions, corrections, or reprimands

## How do I do it:

- This technique takes a lot of patience, support, self-control and self-talk
- Keep responses brief, to the point, and succinct, and avoid lecturing, talking at length, or patronizing
- Use a calm and neutral tone
- DO NOT match the emotional level of the student, rather remain calm, cool, and collected
- State the expectation, then walk away
- Offer several choices, give a timeline to decide within, and walk away
- Try stating the expectation and consequence, tell the student the choice is theirs, and walk away
- Try re-direction if student is able to be de-escalated
- Remove student from situation and discuss the issue after time to calm down
- Use reflective listening "I am hearing that you feel this assignment is unnecessary"
- Ask open ended questions
- Use body language that represents openness: If sitting keep legs uncrossed and lean toward the student, If standing keep arms uncrossed and legs open (people often mirror their emotional response with others' body language, behavior, and words)
- Use humor
- Validate student's feelings
- Tell the student you want to hear what they have to say, but you both need a break or breather before talking

- With belligerent students who argue or engage in conflict on purpose and with intentionality, tell the student you will talk with them later when they can do so appropriately and walk away or state the expectation and walk away
- Try keeping a list of rules and expectations on the wall or other visible location, and when a student attempts to engage you in conflict, simply point to the appropriate and relevant expectation on the list and walk away (you may want to explain this strategy to the student before implementing it)
- Create a class system or protocol for bringing up grievances, disagreements, complaints, issues, problems, etc
- Teach and practice a technique or method with the class on how to have a disagreement with others
- Ask the student trying to engage in a power struggle to go back to their seat and write their concerns on a paper, placing it on the teacher's desk when completed