**Manipulatives are wonderful and necessary tools for math instruction. However, without some guidelines, these quickly turn into toys for students of all ages, and simply taking them away continually defeats the purpose of having them. How do you establish rules regarding using manipulatives at the beginning of the year?**

It's all part of our classroom management.   It's important to inform students what our expectations are when it comes to manipulatives.  Have a conversation with the class about the tools we use to understand math when introducing the manipulatives!   Then be very assertive in implementing our classroom expectations.  The procedures have to be in place also about how we hand them out and pick them up.

-Diana

I do not get them all out at once.  I get out the manipulatives as I teach the lesson they go with.  Then I have a chance to go over all rules.  1/2 of one day's lesson may be spent on how to care for and use them. Then I don't have to do it each time when I spend longer at first. Anyone not following rules or using them as they should, lose them.  This rarely happens b/c kids love the manipulatives.  (I have seen it happen when a manipulative stays out too long or doesn't get switched out in a center frequently. This is important for the young kids. )   Then before you know it, many manipulatives are out in the classroom but they have been added a little at a time as needed for the lesson. This is important for the young kids. )   Then before you know it, many manipulatives are out in the classroom but they have been added a little at a time as needed for the lesson.

Teresa L.

I go over rules and procedures first and how they will help with the skill being taught.  Then before using them in a lesson, I let the kids play with the manipulatives first for a specified time.  This lets them get the play out of the way.   If after beginning the lesson, they continue to play I take them away and they have to show they know the rules before getting them back.  I also reward students who follow the rules and procedures with a short amount of play time after the lesson.

Marlys Trower

I explain what manipulatives are used for and give illustrations.  I explain I will give them 3 minutes at the beginning to play with them and 3 minutes at the end of the lesson to play with them if they work and follow directions during our lesson.  During the lesson they will need to follow directions.  I also tell them that they are fun to play with, but there is a time and place for that.  I make a deal with them.  I tell them I will give them 3 minutes to make whatever they want.  When the timer goes off that time is over.   Then it is down to business and we use these manipulatives to help us solve our problems. I also give them 3 minutes at the end to make what ever they want. I don't have problems after that.  If I ever had, I would take their manipulatives away for that day. They may try again tomorrow to follow the rules and have fun with them. It works well for me!  Students very quickly understand I mean what I say.  There are always rewards for people who make good choices, that is why I have the 3 minutes at the end of the lesson too. Hope this helps someone. Nancy Hahn

Well I have not ever taught math, but the rules I used in my science labs will apply for math also.  I always reviewed the lab sheet and instructions first, then we collected the tools, and they were to only use them as intended and not to start using them until the lab session started.  I am sure I will follow these basic instructions with any classroom manipulatives.

*Therese Foster*

Before passing out any manipulatives I clearly establish the rules for using them.  I demonstrate how we are going to use them next.  I have them push them to the top of their desk and put their hands in their laps until we are ready to use them.  When they do play with them I usually make them show me with pencil/paper instead of the manipulatives.  They do not like to do this when everyone else is using the manipulatives, so this discourages them from playing with them.

*Lori McKinzie*

*AGS 4th Grade*

I have a rule that math tools and games can only be used for the way they are intended and I will include that in the many things I share with students at the beginning of the year. That being said, I do not want to waste a lot of time handling rule infractions. When using math manipulatives I have students collect materials then I set a timer for one minute. Students can "explore" the manipulatives for that minute. Once the timer sounds they must set the tools down and follow directions. This seems to cut down on problems as it allows students to feed that urge to explore.

*Kathryn Baldwin*