

# PBIS Rule Posters – Best Practices

These Best Practices are based off information from the PBIS.org web site, guidelines from the OSEP Training Center, including the SET (School-wide Evaluation Tool), and other industry sources.

**Choose three to five behavioral expectations.** PBIS.org states, “The school will focus on three to five behavioral expectations that are positively stated and easy to remember. In other words, rather than telling students what not to do, the school will focus on the preferred behaviors.” Choose positive behaviors that meet the unique challenges your school faces.

**Get buy-in from the staff.** According to the OSEP Training Center, schools should “ensure at least 80% of the staff buy into the chosen expectations.”

**Meet posting requirements.** The SET (School-wide Evaluation Tool) survey asks, “Are the agreed upon rules & expectations publicly posted in 8 of 10 locations?” The 10 common locations may include: restroom, hallways, classroom, assemblies, playground, pick-up/drop-off area, cafeteria, library, computer lab and bus. Think of what your chosen behavioral expectations look like, sound like, and feel like, in these different settings. Strive to bring those experiences to life with visual examples in your rules posters.

**RESTROOM**  
RULES / EXPECTATIONS  
**Be a Bobcat!**  
VOICE LEVEL 1

**Be Kind** Respect everyone's privacy  
Take turns & wait patiently  
Use nice words

**Be Safe** Use equipment properly  
Use walking feet

**Be Responsible** Wash your hands  
Dispose of trash properly  
Respect equipment

Keep it simple.

Use a literary device to make it memorable, like an acronym (ROAR, SOAR, PAWS, PRIDE), an an alliteration like “Be, Be, Be,” as shown in this sample.

Put rules posters up in at least 8 locations throughout your school.

Get staff buy-in on your rules.

Use picture words to create a visual of what the targeted behavior looks like, and reinforce it with actual pictures, or illustrations.

Use your school colors to reinforce your school culture/climate.

Keep it friendly. If you use your mascot, use a version that is not snarling or aggressive looking.

Use graphic to indicate appropriate voice level

Create a sense of community around your mascot.

Use visual examples of what the positive behaviors look like in a school setting.

Start with a verb.

Keep rules short.

Limit the number of rules to 3 or less if possible.

Use diverse examples if using photos of people, or use your mascot because it can represent all types of people.

State behaviors in a positive way.

**Use an acronym.** Using acronyms like SOAR, ROAR, PAWS or PRIDE are popular and effective ways to make your PBIS behaviors easier to remember. Typically, these are tied to the type of mascot your school has, so it lends itself well to building a mascot-centric culture, which is an extremely effective foundation for PBIS programs.

**Show visual examples of positive behavior.** This can be tricky because behavior concepts like “respect, responsibility and safety” are not picture words. You have to come up with examples of what your targeted behaviors look like in a school setting. For example, “responsibility” in the bathroom can be demonstrated

with a picture of washing hands in the sink, and throwing paper towels away in the trash can. “Respect” on the playground can look like one student sharing/giving a ball to another so they can take their turn. “Safety” in the pick-up/drop-off area can look like children looking at a traffic cross-walk signal. These are not easy images to come up with, but there are clipart images of school mascots demonstrating positive behaviors like this through Mascot Junction.

**Include noise level guidelines.** Different areas of the school have different noise/voice level requirements. These are easily incorporated into rules posters. A numbering system is commonly used. 0 can mean silence.

1 can mean whisper only. 2 can mean normal speaking voice. 3 can mean speak loudly enough that everyone in the room can hear you. 4 can mean outside play voice level is acceptable. These numbers are often conveyed visually by a hand holding up a number of fingers.

**Keep it simple.** Make it easier for young children to remember the rules. According to the OSEP Technical Assistance Center, at least 70% of 15 or more students should be able to state 67% of the rules. 90% of the staff should also be able to state 67% of the rules.

As a general rule, try use no more than three rules per expectation, per area. If you have four behaviors in your acronym (or theme), and three rules/expectations for each, across eight different areas of the school, you can end up with more than 90 rules in your matrix. That’s a lot for a child to remember. Keep the language brief, and to the point to make it easier to absorb and recall. Rules posters help break your matrix up into smaller pieces that make the information easier to digest and remember.

**Keep it positive.** Always describe a positive behavior, not behaviors that you want to avoid. For example, “Throw trash away in the proper receptacle” is better than “Do not forget to throw your trash away.” The second statement actually paints a mental picture of forgetting, whereas the first statement creates a mental image of the desired action.

**Use picture words.** Strive to create mental images of the desired behaviors when writing your rules. Avoid using the word “don’t.” There is no picture associated with it, so when you say “Don’t jump off a cliff,” all it does is create a mental image of jumping off a cliff. A better way of communicating the point would be to say “Stay at least 10 feet away from the edge of the cliff at all times.” A shorter version would be better for posters because space is limited, and it’s human nature to skim copy, rather than read every word. “Stay away from cliffs” would work well.

**Be inclusive.** If you use photos of children and staff members to showcase positive behaviors, make an attempt to represent all sexes and a variety of ethnic types. One big advantage of using your school mascot as the visual role model is that it is non-sexual, non-ethnic, and totally inclusive.

**Use caution with photos.** Avoid using photos of your own staff and students. People are flawed. Things happen, and if a featured student or staff member has a less-than-stellar episode, it can taint the positive image you are trying to project in your posters. Again, this is another advantage of using your school mascot as the behavioral role model.

**Start with a verb.** Bullet points are more effective when started with a verb. Basically, it’s because you are telling people to take an action, instead of just reminding to make a passive observation. For example, it’s better to say, “Be responsible” than it is to say “Responsibility.” It puts the concept in motion. It may not be

possible to force verbs into an acronym, but you may be able to find ways to use them in your matrix and rules posters.

**Create a sense of community.** It means something special when a child realizes, for example, that they are part of an eagle community, and they have eagle friends, eagle rules, and an eagle way of doing things. It's very engaging, visual, and easy to comprehend. Plus the emotional incentives for enjoying social success inside the group to which they self identify, are hard-wired, and incredibly powerful. It gives educators a very powerful tool for reaching and teaching students. A mascot-centric climate can serve as a highly effective framework for school climate and culture transformation.

**Color counts.** Use your school colors in rules posters to help bring all aspects of your school together. Consistent use of color helps reinforce your school culture and climate.

**No snarling.** If you use your mascot as a positive behavior mentor, consider how kid-friendly the design is. Mascots are often rendered with an aggressive expression on their face. For younger children in primary schools, a more kid-friendly version is more in keeping with positive behavior and inclusiveness.



**About Mascot Junction:** Mascot Junction specializes in helping schools bring their PBIS programs to life, using their school mascot as positive behavior role model. Products include: posters, banners, signs, clip art sets, gotcha reward templates, award certificates, t-shirts and other visual aids that are customized with a kid-friendly version of their school mascot and details of their PBIS program. Learn more at [MascotJunction.com](http://MascotJunction.com), call 816-916-1377 or e-mail [info@mascotjunction.com](mailto:info@mascotjunction.com).