

Reading the Room - Learning About Social Cues

Lesson Objective:

Students will learn how to recognize and understand social cues, how they change depending on the environment, and how to use their personal strengths to adapt appropriately in different settings.

Materials Needed:



- Copy of Chapter 23, *Reading the Room - Learning About Social Cues*
- Pencils and markers
- S.T.A.R. Strategy Poster
- Social Cues Scenario Cards & Group Discussion worksheet
- Home Connection Letter

Introduction to the Topic (10 minutes)

Greeting Outline:

- Welcome the children and have them sit in a circle (if applicable)
- Begin with a brief discussion on social cues.

Greeting and Circle Time Teacher Script

Warm Welcome and Opening Discussion:

- “Good morning, class! Today, we are going to learn about something very important—how to recognize social cues. Social cues are unspoken signals we get from the people and environments around us, like body language, tone of voice, and how people behave in different places.

Discussion Starter

- “Have you ever noticed that you act differently in the classroom compared to the playground?”
- Allow a few responses.
- “That’s because of social cues! “

Read the Chapter (15 minutes)

Story Time Outline:



- Read Chapter 23 aloud. Pause at key moments to engage students and make sure they are following the story.
- Ask questions during key parts of the story.

Story Time Teacher Script:

Prepare the Students for the Story:

- Let's explore how Ollie and his friends learn to 'read the room' on their school trip to the museum."
- (Read the chapter aloud, pausing at key moments to ask questions and engage the children.)

Read the Chapter with Emphasis on Key Moments:

- **While reading**, pause during key moments.
- **Ask Questions:**
 - Why do you think Bennie said the museum is different from the playground?
 - What social cues are the group picking up on when they enter the museum?
 - Why does Harriet instinctively start whispering in the museum?
 - How do the other students in the museum behave differently, and why does the museum guide remind them to slow down?
 - Can you give an example of a social cue that Bennie or Buzz might notice in the dinosaur exhibit?
 - How does Ollie use his strength of planning to guide the group through the museum?
 - Why is it important for Buzz to understand the social cues in the art gallery?
 - What changes in body language or tone of voice might tell Sammy that someone is confused?
 - How do you think Ollie's strength as a planner helps the group stay aware of time and space in the museum?
 - Why is it important for the group to adapt their behavior depending on where they are?

Chapter 23: *Reading the Room - Learning About Social Cues*

The end of April was near, and with it came a school trip to the city museum. Ollie, Harriet, Bennie, Sammy, Buzz, and Betty were excited about the chance to explore the exhibits, but they were about to learn a new lesson, one that wasn't about history or science, but about understanding social cues and how they can change depending on where you are.

As the group sat on the bus, Harriet was practically bouncing in her seat with excitement. "I can't wait to see the dinosaur exhibit! It's going to be awesome!"

Buzz, always full of creative energy, agreed. "And I want to check out the science section. I bet they have some cool experiments set up."

Sammy, who preferred quieter activities, smiled. "I'm looking forward to the art gallery. It'll be nice to take our time and look at all the paintings."

Betty, ever the problem-solver, had brought a small notebook to take notes. "I want to write down anything that inspires me for our next class project."

Ollie, ever the planner, was busy reading the museum brochure, making sure they knew the schedule. "We'll have about two hours to explore, so we'll have to split up the time between all the exhibits we want to see."

Bennie, always calm and observant, smiled. "It sounds like a fun day, but we should remember that the museum is different from the playground. We'll need to be more aware of the social cues around us."

The group exchanged thoughtful glances. Bennie was right. Social cues, things like body language, tone of voice, and even unspoken rules about how to behave, were different depending on where you were. What worked on the playground or at home might not be the same at the museum.

Arriving at the Museum

When they arrived at the museum, the group quickly realized that Bennie's observation was important. The museum was filled with people quietly admiring the exhibits, and the environment felt different from their usual hangouts. Harriet, who was always bursting with energy, instinctively slowed her pace as they walked inside.

"Whoa, it's so quiet in here," Harriet whispered, her voice barely above a murmur. "It's like a library."

Buzz, who was usually full of ideas, also picked up on the change in atmosphere. “Yeah, it’s not like recess. We probably need to keep our voices down.”

As they walked through the first exhibit, Ollie, always the planner, noticed that people were standing back to give each other space. “Looks like we should make sure we’re not crowding people. It’s different from the cafeteria, where we’re always squeezed in together.”

Learning to Read Social Cues

The group made their way to the dinosaur exhibit, where they saw kids from another school running around excitedly. They watched as a museum guide gently reminded them to slow down and be respectful of the space.

“That’s a social cue,” Bennie whispered. “The guide didn’t have to say much, but her tone of voice and the way she looked at the kids told them they needed to calm down.”

Betty, ever the problem-solver, nodded. “It’s like when Ms. Sanchez gives us that look when we’re talking too much in class. She doesn’t have to say anything, but we know what it means.”

Sammy, who was always in tune with people’s emotions, added, “And it’s not just about the words. Sometimes, it’s how people stand or the way they look at each other that tells you what’s going on.”

The group walked through the exhibits, paying close attention to the social cues around them. They noticed that in the art gallery, people were standing quietly, speaking in hushed tones. Harriet, who usually had a hard time staying still, found herself slowing down to match the calm energy of the room.

“I feel like I need to walk slower here,” Harriet said softly. “It just feels right, you know?” Buzz, always creative, grinned. “Yeah, it’s like the room is telling us how to behave without anyone saying anything.”

Using Their Strengths to Navigate Social Cues

As the group explored the museum, they began to use their personal strengths to help them navigate the different environments.

Harriet, full of energy, found ways to channel her excitement without disrupting the quiet atmosphere. She pointed things out to her friends in a whisper, making sure not to disturb others. “Look at that! It’s so cool!” she’d say, her voice low but still filled with enthusiasm.

Buzz, always creative, used his love for art to connect with the quiet atmosphere of the gallery. He admired the paintings with a sense of wonder but kept his voice down, knowing that this wasn’t the place for loud exclamations.

Bennie, ever the steady one, kept an eye on the group, making sure they were aware of the people around them. “Let’s give this person some space,” he said quietly as they approached a crowded exhibit. “We can wait our turn.”

Betty, always thinking ahead, pointed out how social cues changed depending on the environment. “It’s interesting how different places have different rules,” she said. “At recess, it’s okay to be loud, but here, we need to be quiet and respectful.”

Sammy, who was always aware of people’s emotions, noticed that some visitors seemed lost or unsure where to go. “Maybe they’re new here,” he said, pointing to a family looking at a map. “You can tell they’re confused by the way they’re standing.”

Ollie, ever the planner, helped the group stay on track by reminding them of the time and making sure they didn’t get too caught up in one exhibit. “We’ve got about 30 minutes left,” he said. “Let’s make sure we see everything we planned.”

Reflecting on Social Cues

By the end of the day, the group had learned a valuable lesson about how social cues—those unspoken signals we get from people and our surroundings—can change depending on where we are.

“I never really thought about how we act differently depending on where we are,” Harriet said as they walked back to the bus. “But it makes sense. We act one way at school, another way at home, and a totally different way here at the museum.”

Buzz nodded. “Yeah, and it’s not just about following rules. It’s about understanding what’s going on around us, like reading the room.”

Betty, always reflective, added, “And if we can read social cues, we can be more respectful of the people around us. It helps us fit into different environments without causing problems.”

Bennie, ever calm, smiled. “It’s like we have to adapt. Each place has its own vibe, and we can pick up on that by paying attention to how people are acting.”

Sammy, always thinking about emotions, nodded. “And it’s not just about following what everyone else is doing—it’s about understanding how people feel in different places. That’s how we make sure we’re not making anyone uncomfortable.”

Ollie, ever the organizer, grinned. “It’s like we all have superpowers when it comes to reading social cues. Our strengths help us figure out how to act, whether we’re in a museum, at school, or anywhere else.”

As they boarded the bus and headed home, the group felt proud of what they had learned. Social cues, they realized, weren't always obvious, but by paying attention and using their strengths, they could navigate any environment with respect and understanding.

And with that, they looked forward to their next adventure, knowing that no matter where they were, they had the tools to read the room and act in a way that respected the people and places around them.

Post-Chapter Teacher Script

- **Teacher:** “Social Cues can be tricky. They aren’t always the easiest things to get. Sometimes we have to ask what the expectations are, so that we are able to figure out what to do in the situation.”

Post-Chapter Questions

Ask these questions to help students reflect on the chapter and connect it to their own experiences:

- What are social cues, and why are they important?
- How can you tell when someone is sending a social cue, even if they don't say anything?
- What are some places where you might need to read social cues differently?
- Can you think of a time when you didn't notice a social cue? How did it affect what happened?
- How do different settings, like the playground and a classroom, change the way we should behave?
- Why did Harriet slow down and whisper in the museum, even though she didn't have to be told?
- How can you use your own personal strengths to read social cues in different environments?
- What role does empathy play in understanding how other people might be feeling?
- How can reading social cues help you avoid misunderstandings with your friends?
- What is one way you could practice recognizing social cues in your everyday life?

Do an Activity (20 minutes)

- **Students will** work collaboratively to recognize and respond appropriately to different social cues by analyzing real-life scenarios, discussing their interpretations, and reflecting on how body language, tone, and setting influence behavior.

Activity: Social Cues Role-Play (20 minutes)

Introduce Activity

“Today, we’re going to practice recognizing **social cues**—these are the little clues people give us with their voices, facial expressions, body language, and actions that help us figure out how to behave in different situations.

For example, if you’re in the library and people are whispering, that’s a cue to lower your voice. Or if someone crosses their arms and looks upset, that might be a sign to give them space or ask if they’re okay.

I’m going to divide you into small groups. Each group will get a *Social Cues Scenario Card*—it will describe a situation like being in a classroom, meeting someone new, or attending a family event.

Your job is to read the card, talk about what social cues are present, and decide how you would act based on those cues.

After your discussion, each group will share its scenario and your response with the class. Then we’ll talk together about whether the response fits the social situation.”

Activity Instructions

- Divide the class into small groups.
- Give each group a “social cues scenario” card (examples include being in the library, talking to a new student, or attending a family event).
- Each group will discuss how they would act based on the social cues in their scenario.
- After several minutes of discussion, each group will share their scenario and how they would act, highlighting the cues that led to their decision.
- The class will then decide if the group decision was correct or incorrect.



Wrapping it Up

Wrap Up the Lesson (5 minutes)

- “Let’s hear what your groups came up with!

One person from each group will read the scenario and explain how your group would act, using the social cues in the situation to support your decision.

After each group presents, we’ll open it up to the class. Do you agree with the decision? Would you have done something different? Let’s talk about it respectfully.”

- *Encourage students to use phrases like “We noticed...” or “The clue that helped us was...”*
- “You all did a great job reading the room today, literally!
Social cues are all around us, and when we pay attention to them, we make better choices, show respect, and build stronger relationships.

Practicing these situations helps us feel more confident in real life.”

Review and Reflection Teacher Script

Gather in a Circle for Reflection:



- “Let’s gather in a circle and reflect. Today, we used observation and teamwork to understand what people and situations are telling us, even without words.
- Let’s go around and finish this sentence:
‘One social cue I understand better now is...’
- It could be a tone of voice, a setting like a quiet room, or a facial expression you’ve learned to notice. You may pass if you’d like.”

Closing

- “Even small things—like noticing someone’s face or tone—can help us be more thoughtful and kind.

The more we practice reading social cues, the better we’ll get at showing respect, responding with care, and working well with others. But remember, when in doubt, ask, because reading body language and facial cues can sometimes be tricky, and we could misinterpret and get it wrong.”

Home Connection Letter

Sending Information Home:

- “Before you go, I have a letter for you to take home. This week, we worked in groups to analyze and respond to social situations using a “Social Cues Scenario” activity. We practiced identifying clues like body language, tone of voice, and setting to help guide our actions and reactions.”
- Hand out the letters as the children prepare to leave.

Parent Letter

Sending Information Home:

- Provide each child with a letter to take home to their parents explaining the lesson.

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Today, your child learned about the importance of reading social cues and understanding how to adapt their behavior based on the environment they're in. Social cues include things like body language, tone of voice, and unspoken rules about how to behave in different situations, such as school, the playground, or a quiet space like museums and libraries.



We discussed how recognizing social cues helps us navigate different situations and respect the people around us. Your child also participated in an activity where they practiced responding to different social cue scenarios. We also noticed that sometimes it can be difficult to "read" these cues, so when in doubt, ask what is expected of them in the situation.

Please encourage your child to talk to you about what they learned and practice identifying social cues at home or in different settings you visit together.



Thank you for your continued support.

Best Regards,



Social Cues Scenario Cards





#1 You are in the library and everyone is working quietly. One of your friends starts talking loudly to you.





#2 You see a new student standing alone at recess, watching others play a game.





#3 You're at a family event, and an adult is talking to you with a serious face and quiet voice.





#4 Your teacher is speaking in a calm tone and writing instructions on the board, but a classmate is tapping their pencil loudly.





#5 You walk into a classroom where the lights are dim and students are sitting in a circle, listening closely to someone speak.



#6 A friend invites you to play a game, but you notice they're fidgeting and avoiding eye contact.



#7 During group work, one student has their head down and hasn't spoken at all.



#8 At lunch, someone joins your table but doesn't talk and keeps their tray far from others.

Social Cues Group Discussion



Group Members: _____

Scenario Number: _____

1. What are the social cues in this situation? (Tone of voice, body language, setting, etc.)

2. What do these cues tell you about how to act or respond?

3. What did your group decide is the best way to respond in this situation?

4. Was it easy or hard to agree on what to do? What made it easier or harder?
