Allow the norms to develop organically.

[Responsive Classroom](https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/) has an excellent model for building classroom norms. They suggest allowing students to brainstorm classroom agreements. More often than not, students brainstorm lots of “little rules” like *no running* or *put materials away*.

“I’m not sure I can remember all of these rules,” I say to my students, as Responsive Classroom suggests. “Can we make some more general rules that are easier to remember?”

The digital classroom is no different. Within the first week of live online learning sessions, my students quickly identified some problems, as well as some rules, that would help us learn how to collaborate with one another.

“I can’t hear you, Mr. France,” one student said. “There are so many little sounds.”

“How could we fix that?” I replied.

It wasn’t long until a student suggested that we use the muting function to turn off our own microphones when someone is talking. The class agreed that this was helpful and made it easier to hear. Over the course of the next few days, this turned into a broader conversation about ways we could collaborate in our new digital environment.

They came up with lots of “little rules” like:

* Post to Seesaw activities, not the journal.
* Always post to share work.
* Only use Google Hangouts with teacher permission.
* School related things only
* One emoji at a time
* Stay on Meet the whole time
* Stay muted so we can hear each other.
* Stay on topic.
* Only text with teachers’ permission.
* If you’re late, don’t say hi in the chat.
* Use texting appropriately.
* Only use emojis when necessary or when it’s appropriate.

And afterwards, we came up with our “big, broad” rules that encompass all of these:

1. Act like you’re at school.
2. Use the tools appropriately to help learning.
3. Be a problem-solver using the tools you have.