

Water bottles in the classroom - does it wash?



Water lost each day through breathing, sweating and going to the toilet needs to be replaced, especially in hot weather. Not drinking enough fluid leads to dehydration which can cause headaches, impair short term memory and reduce attention span.

Why allow water bottles in the classroom?

Children rarely drink enough during break times at school. Some teachers comment that they let students leave class to have a drink from a fountain, but children may not think to ask, and other students can use 'going for a drink' as an opportunity to 'go for a wander'. Children who bring a water bottle into the classroom, and are reminded to drink, will drink more each day.

Practical considerations

While there are clear benefits, water bottles in the classroom can pose some practical issues. The following table adapted from *Education and Resources for Improving Childhood Continence* outlines and addresses some of the concerns teachers may have.

CONCERN	SOLUTION
<i>Children will misbehave</i>	Any initial silliness soon vanishes. Involving children from the outset will encourage ownership and responsibility.
<i>Children will disrupt lessons with extra visits to the toilet</i>	While this might happen initially, it should settle down after a few weeks. For most of us the bladder soon adjusts to cope with a larger intake. Some schools find that the number of toilet visits decrease, as children no longer ask to go to the toilet to access water fountains.
<i>Bottles will get mixed up</i>	Bottles should be clearly named with a permanent marker or washable label and re-marked regularly.
<i>Children will fiddle with bottles or suck or chew on caps</i>	Some children may do so but they would otherwise have fiddled with something/somebody else! They may be kinaesthetic learners who actually benefit from fiddling with a bottle as they listen!
<i>Bottles will make a mess and ruin work</i>	Place frozen bottles in clear plastic bags to minimize mess as they thaw. Sports caps minimise spillage. Bottles could be kept on the floor or in a central position in the classroom.
<i>Children may put other drinks in their bottles</i>	Transparent bottles will minimise this risk and regular spot-checks can be made. Involving pupils from the outset and regularly promoting the benefits of water will also help.
<i>Bottles may be unhygienic</i>	Bottles should be washed regularly in warm soapy water and left to air dry upside down. Children should be discouraged from sharing bottles.
<i>Water bottles are costly</i>	Bottles can be any clean, clear bottle (e.g. an empty juice or water bottle).