

Physical contact with children



While physical contact is discouraged, there are some circumstances where contact with students is appropriate.

Many new TAs ask whether it's okay to touch children and if so, what is and isn't appropriate. A common question is whether it's okay to hug young children, especially if they have a minor injury. The answer to this question (and most others like it) is normally 'no' – do not touch a child unless it's necessary (such as to keep them safe or to render first aid). Here are some other broad guidelines:

- Do not offer hugs, kisses, or allow students to sit on your lap.
- Do not carry them, hold their hand or touch them in any way that could be seen as inappropriate.
- Do not routinely hug students; discourage young children from hugging you while taking care to not embarrass them.
- Do not put your hand around a student to use a keyboard.
- Do not grab a student by the wrist or arm.
- Do not use (or threaten the use of) any form of physical punishment.

- Do not discuss, expose or engage in any act of a sexual or overly familiar nature (including repeated and unnecessary touching or caressing, telling jokes of a sexual nature, making suggestive remarks or using obscene language).
- Do not try to get a student's attention by touching him/her (e.g., tapping on the shoulder, giving a light tap with your foot) or throwing something.
- Do not make physical contact to manage behavioural issues.
- You may momentarily and occasionally touch a student on the back to congratulate them (i.e. non-intrusive touching), for first aid and at other appropriate times.
- Where possible, use only verbal and non-verbal directions to show students how to complete tasks (e.g., in a drama, art or HPE (sport) lesson, model and explain how to do something – refrain from touching students).
- Obtain consent if you need to touch a student or an item in their possession (e.g., 'can I tie your shoelace for you?'). This is called '**informed consent**'.
- Any contact that you do make should be minimal (known as the 'least intrusive level of prompt') and take no longer than the time required to achieve the task (e.g., to show them how to do something).