

# Clean Air Checklist



**1. We keep air vents clear of books, posters, coats, furniture, and other items to improve air circulation.**

**2. We avoid scented products such as perfume, aftershave, creams, and air fresheners.**

**3. We use only unscented markers in the classroom.**



**4. We use water-based, odourless, non-toxic art supplies, including paints, inks, and glues.**

**5. We clean blackboards daily with a damp sponge or rag to reduce chalk dust.**

**6. We store all food in the classroom in tightly sealed containers.**



**7. We keep pet cages clean and store pet food and bedding in tightly sealed containers.**

**8. We open the windows when possible and use portable fans to improve air circulation.**

**9. We inform the principal and head caretaker of any leaks, dampness, or mould growth.**



**10. We put the chairs on desks at the end of the day so the classroom can be vacuumed or mopped.**

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# What you should know about clean air

## Why does clean indoor air matter?

Air quality affects health and well-being. It influences our behaviour and affects our ability to concentrate and learn. We spend over 90% of our time indoors, so we breathe indoor air most of the time.

## What part does ventilation play?

Ventilation brings in fresh air to replace the oxygen used up by people breathing. Lack of oxygen causes headaches and makes it difficult to concentrate. Ventilation also helps dilute pollutants in the air making them less harmful.

## What are volatile organic compounds?

Volatile organic compounds, also known as VOCs are a class of chemicals found in many common products including personal care products, art supplies, air fresheners, and cleaning products. VOCs can cause eye and lung irritation, headaches, dizziness, nausea, and fatigue. Over the long term some VOCs damage the liver, kidneys, and nervous system. Certain VOCs, such as benzene and toluene are carcinogens.

## What is the problem with scented products?

Perfumes, aftershaves, and other scented personal products contain VOCs that can have both short-term and long-term health effects and trigger asthma symptoms.

## Why the concern about art supplies?

Many markers, paints, inks, and glues contain VOCs. Use water-based, odourless, non-toxic products.

## Why should we reduce dust?

Dust is made up of many different types of biological and chemical toxins that are harmful to humans. Wiping up dust with a damp mop or rag can help keep dust levels down.

## Fresh Air Basics

1. Before bringing something into the classroom, find out how it will affect the air quality.
2. Think about what things you can remove from the classroom to improve air quality. Give away or throw away supplies that are no longer needed and are just collecting dust.
3. Improve ventilation and air circulation. Are all vents clear? Can you open windows and doors for more fresh air? Can you use portable fans to improve air flow?

*Review the checklist on the other side to see what you can do to improve the air in your classroom.*

## How do carpets affect air quality?

Carpeting is not a good choice for the classroom. A carpet holds dust that becomes airborne when we walk on it. Carpets have fibres, glue, and under-padding that release harmful gases and particles.

If you decide to have carpet, choose one with a tight weave and short pile. Carpets and the floor underneath them should be cleaned regularly. As an alternative use individual sized mats that can be stored away when not needed.

## Why don't commercial air fresheners work?

Commercial air fresheners either release chemicals into the air to mask odours, or they release formaldehyde to deaden the smell receptors in our nose. In both cases, air fresheners add pollutants to the air. The best way to freshen the air is to eliminate sources of odours and to increase ventilation.

## Why are pets a concern in the classroom?

Pets shed hair and skin into the air; their bedding releases fumes and particles; their feces can grow bacteria; and their food may attract pests. Furry pets often aggravate allergies and asthma.

## Why should food in the classroom be supervised?

Food left in the classroom may attract insects and rodents and release biological contaminants into the air.

## Why is mould a health concern?

Leaks and dampness can lead to mould growth. Moulds are living fungi that release spores into the air that we inhale. Some moulds contribute to respiratory diseases, allergies, asthmas, and other conditions.

