

CLASSROOM DECORATION SAFETY

Why Teachers Decorate

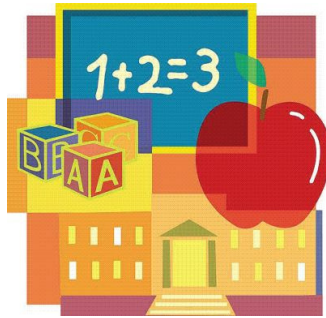
Teachers decorate their classrooms for a variety of reasons. A bright bulletin board can increase student enthusiasm for a new unit, holiday themes can harness excitement for learning, and a generally fun, decorated classroom is one in which students will be more eager to learn. Decorations can be purely ornamental or they can be focused on units of study, but they must always be safe.



Decorating Hazards

Even well-intentioned decorations could pose serious risks to students if used incorrectly. Possible hazards from decorations include:

- **Fires:** Too much clutter on classroom or hallway walls can spread fires more quickly.
- **Poisoning:** Some decorations may be made with toxic substances and could be hazardous if young students were to unwittingly taste them.
- **Trips:** A classroom cluttered with decorations has more trip hazards for unwary students.
- **Cuts:** Paper cuts are common from foil and paper decorations, while glass items could break into dangerous shards.
- **Distractions:** While distracting decorations aren't likely to cause injuries, students' grades can suffer because they can't focus on their lessons.
- **Falls:** Items that are improperly secured may fall and injure students.



School Decorations Safety Tips

To minimize the risks of classroom decorations but still enjoy a fun, colorful atmosphere, teachers should put decorations up carefully and safely.

- Do not stand on chairs, tables, desks, bookcases, boxes, upside down trash cans, etc., to reach above your head!
- Use ONLY district-provided stepstools or stepladders when working beyond your reach.
- Keep ladders out of reach of students.
- NEVER leave a ladder unattended.
- Do not allow students to climb on desks or other unsafe surfaces to help decorate.
- When in doubt, ask for help!!!

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General Decorations

Tips applicable to all types of decorations include:

- Only use decorations in their intended fashion and read all display instructions before use.
- Do not block fire alarms, emergency signs or exits with decorations.
- Confine decorations to suitable spaces such as bulletin boards. Covering windows and ceilings with additional decorations increases the amount of combustible material in the classroom and increases fire risks.
- Never hang decorations from light fixtures, sprinkler heads, vents or radiators.
- Choose decorations with flame resistant coatings.
- Fasten flags, posters, papers and other decorations flat to the wall to minimize exposed edges that could cause cuts or increase fire risks.
- Fasten all items securely for their weight to reduce the risk that they may loosen and fall.
- When removing decorations, be sure to remove all strings, staples and other materials used to hold the decorations.
- Store decorations safely and out of reach of students.
- Never use candles or any other decorations with exposed heating elements.
- Avoid fake snow for winter holiday decorations because it may irritate the lungs when sprayed and could pose a toxic hazard.
- Use only shatterproof, unbreakable decorative items.
- Avoid candy-like decorations that may be a tempting treat for younger students.