Classroom Management

1. Make sure kids know and understand instructional expectations before laptops are permitted to be used.
2. Arrange your classroom so that you're able to see all laptop screens easily. If you are unable to do this, consider your students and make sure you are able to see the potential problem spots easily as you navigate your classroom. Do a walk through before students bring laptops to class. Do you normally arrange tables in a circle? If so, having kids sit inside the circle when using laptops may make the technology more manageable. Some teachers find it easier when kids face one direction and the teacher is stationed at the rear of the class. Whatever you choose, move about the classroom throughout the class and vary seating arrangement.
3. Set limits for which resources students are permitted to access during specific lessons and communicate this to students before the activity begins. If you're doing a whole class activity on a site like Quia, this is pretty simple. When students are doing research projects, it may involve limiting tools available and doing frequent progress checks.
4. Even used laptops will retain a charge for 2-3 hours of careful use if fully charged before school starts. This being said, if you choose not to allow kids to be plugged in while in your classroom, communicate this clearly in advance. If students are allowed to plug in, set clear expectations for safety. Power strips and chargers should be kept out of traffic areas. Check with your maintenance people to find out fire codes for your community; many areas don't permit power strips plugged into extension cords.
5. Have clear procedures in place for what to do when something isn't working. Should students ask peers or you for help? Should they be sent to tech support? Are there loaners available, or should they look on with another student? How you handle malfunctions will likely vary from lesson to lesson. As you get to know your students, you'll know which ones will be good tech helpers when something goes wrong.
6. Survey your students formally or informally to get to know their tech skills. You'll be pleasantly surprised where your best tech helpers come from. Spend some time chatting about technology with your more tech-savvy students. Remember, it's your responsibility to guide your students through learning your content. You don't need to be a tech expert to teach effectively with technology. When appropriate, let the kids take over the tech support. It can be a huge time-saver as well as build self-confidence for your techier students.
7. Time students as they take out and set up their laptops and let them know you're doing it. Most classes can get set-up down to 4 minutes or less. Reinforce your expectation of quick set-up and notice kids who take longer. They may need assistance from the tech team (possible software conflicts, virus, or other issue). As students practice efficient technology use, speed and safety become part of the routine. Consider incentives for the class when they meet the goals for quick set-up and tear down.
8. Test the sites you plan to use ahead of time. Make sure your school isn't filtering a resource you need (and try to do it enough in advance that your tech team can unblock something you need). Make sure the computers you're using have any necessary plug-ins so that multimedia features work properly.
9. Use your specialists if you have them. If you're going to have kids do research projects, consider contacting your tech coordinator or librarian for pathfinders or hotlists students can use.
10. If you're planning to use a specific piece of software with kids, give them 1-2 days' warning to make sure they have time to verify it's functioning properly and that they haven't accidentally uninstalled it. If they need help reinstalling, have them your tech support. If your students don't have admin rights on the machine, make sure you have access to necessary software on the current laptop image.
11. If you decide your lesson will require other hardware, such as cameras or headphones, see your media/tech coordinator well in advance to arrange check out. If you don't have many hardware options at your school, consider having students bring their own. Many kids have their own digital cameras and would be happy to bring them to school.
12. Work through your lesson to determine which tech skills are necessary for successful completion. Check your tech scope/sequence to make sure you have an idea how familiar your students are with this skill so you can plan for enough time for completion and extra skill instruction, if necessary. If the skill isn't listed on the s/s, contact your tech coordinator. They're likely to know the curriculum taught in each grade as far as tech skills are concerned.
13. After you try something new, take note of what went well and what didn't. Revise for the next time you need to teach the unit and prep in advance. It will save you time the next year/term. If you feel students will need extra skill reinforcement, notify your tech coordinator and/or teaching/grade level team.
14. If you have a projector, use it to project the class "to do" list and a time frame. This can be a great reminder for students who may not be the best listeners during the lesson intro. Some teachers find timer widgets useful.
15. Use the server and/or your website (or other web tools) to distribute lesson resources electronically. Not only will it save trees, it will help you and your students be better organized.

16. If you have specific expectations for documents turned in, such as headings and formatting, practice them as a class and put a sample on your website. Review it with the kids on a projector. You may even want to set up a template to simplify the process.
17. Remember, your students' computers connect to your projector as easily as yours. Given a little advance notice, many students are happy to demonstrate a skill for the class (and make you available to assist needier students).
18. Take advantage of Web 2.0 tools (blogs, wikis, GoogleApps) for classroom projects and student collaboration in class and out. Remember that one of the biggest advantages to technology use is the ability to extend the school day and expand beyond the boundaries of your classroom.
19. You'll occasionally have students who will have frequent issues with their computers ("Frequent Fliers"). When these issues feel too frequent, or too well-timed, feel free to verify the issue with a member of the tech team. They may need 1-1 with a techier adult or with someone who can tell if it's misuse or general user error.
20. Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate. Your peers both within and outside your may have great ideas to offer about classroom management and techniques/strategies to use in the classroom.
21. Choose some "commands" for classroom management and practice them with your kids. Some ideas:

- *45 your screens* - students lower their screens to approx 45 degrees so the computers won't overheat or sleep, but students won't be distracted by the screen
- *Lids down*, *I want to hear 20 clicks (if you have 20 kids)*, *Close 'em* - close the computer; all eyes on the teacher
- *Hands on your heads, Reach for the stars...* - hands off the computers and someplace where you can see them
- *Shut down, 5 minute warning* - Shut down the computer and pack it up.
- Teacher lowers screen - Student isn't allowed to raise the screen until teacher conference or the teacher raises it (When a student doesn't comply as directed).
- Nonverbals - music, chimes, light flash, bells, buzzers, timers, etc., can be used effectively to gain student attention during projects
- Visuals - give students a "flag" (colored index card, post-it, etc.) to put out when they need you for a non-emergency question rather than impatiently raising a hand.

Late breaking tips from the trenches...

- *Make sure you're logged out of any email applications and AIM before connecting to a projector.*
- *Don't be afraid to separate a child from a computer when (or before) a situation worsens. Use your instinct.*
- *Avoid having a child use your computer (unless you have multiple accounts available), especially if you have admin rights to your machine.*
- *If a "tech expert" gets out of hand in class ("That's not the way I do it!" or "I know a better way!"), remember that you're the adult (and remind as necessary). Yes, there may be more than one way that works, but sometimes you need to be willing to say that you acknowledge multiple methods, but you need students to do it your way this time. Sometimes this is best done in a private conversation; you don't want to bruise an ego if you don't need to, and you don't want to get sucked into a power struggle.*

What if a student doesn't comply with your technology expectations?

Remember, as the teacher you are the adult in control. Communicate to your students that not meeting appropriate use expectations in your classroom will result in loss of privileges, detention, communication home, or whatever logical consequence you see fit. Although technology is often one of the best tools we have for instruction, it isn't the only one. In a pinch, students can make due in the short term with pencil, paper, and old-fashioned textbooks and reference books. Most students, when they realize this is the alternative to a technology-rich experience, will modify their behavior accordingly. Avoid making loss of technology a long-term solution. If you're really integrating the technology well, not allowing access to a tool/resource may be unfairly putting up a barrier to learning. Similarly, you shouldn't punish an entire class because one or two members of the community are a challenge. With a solid plan (and a back up - either a back up plan or an instructional peer), you can make it work for everyone in your class.