

How To Profile a Class

The **Class** is the focal point of the RF environment. Once you have profiled your Class, you will *start* it, the students will *join* it, and when the Session is over, you will *end* the Class.

Setting up, or *profiling*, the Class takes just a few steps. You name it, define the *Clicker Type*, and establish the *System Type*. These steps are described below. However, before you can successfully set up an RF Class, you must understand the difference between the Open Class Model and the Closed Class Model. (*Open Class* and *Closed Class* are the two *System Types*.)

The Open Class versus The Closed Class

The decision to set up an Open Class or a Closed Class is ultimately based on exclusivity and RF Clicker possession—who can join the Class and who keeps the Clicker. Where an Open Class can be joined by any *Normal* RF Clicker (the default configuration) and by Clickers configured as *Loaners*, the Closed Class was designed to allow only specifically configured RF Clickers to join it. Typically, these configured Clickers remain in the classroom, while the Normal Clickers are kept by the students.

A powered-on Normal Clicker can join any Open RF Class that is broadcasting, even though the Clicker may not be physically in the classroom. That's why some instructors prefer the *Closed Class* Model. Closed Clickers are configured for and linked or bound to the Closed Class and won't even see broadcasting Open Classes. They will only find and join the Closed Class to which they have been linked by the **Class ID** during configuration. And, conversely, Normal Clickers will never see the Closed Class when it is broadcasting, because they have not been configured for the Closed Class and, therefore, don't know the Class ID.

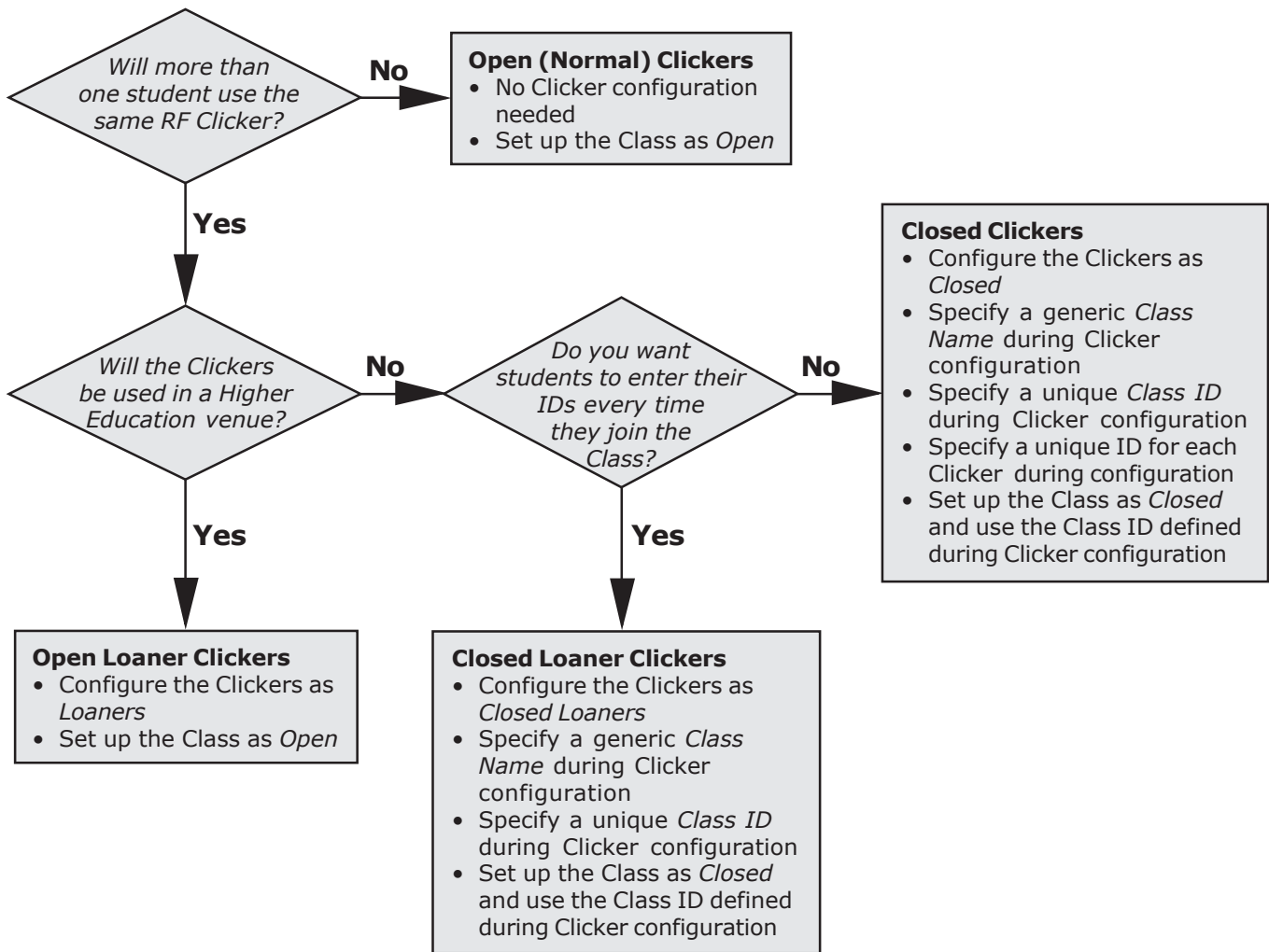
When you decide to set up a Closed Class, you should configure the Clickers first as described in the *How To Configure an RF Clicker*. This establishes the broadcast name of the Class and the Class ID to which all the configured Clickers are bound.

Another issue that must be addressed when you are configuring Clickers is whether or not you want students to enter their Student IDs each time they join the Class. The first time a *Normal* RF Clicker is powered on, it prompts for an ID. This *Student ID* is permanently stored in the Clicker's memory and is transmitted with each Response sent by that Clicker. This is the only time the *ID* must be entered. Each Clicker configured as *Closed* is assigned a unique ID during configuration that is stored permanently in the Clicker's memory and is designated as the *Student ID*.

On the other hand, both *Loaner* Clickers and *Closed Loaner* Clickers prompt for an ID each and every time they are powered on. The input ID is temporarily stored in the Clicker's memory and accompanies each transmission for the duration of the Session. The ID is deleted when the Clicker is turned off. Clickers configured as *Loaners* and *Closed Loaners* are traditionally kept in the classroom and handed out before the Class is started. *Loaner* Clickers are used in Open Classes, while *Closed Loaner* Clickers can only be used in the Closed Class to which they have been bound.

The Decision Tree on the next page graphically depicts the questions you should consider when deciding if or how you are going to configure your Clickers, which Class Model, *Open* or *Closed*, you want to profile, and how you should configure the Clickers for the Model you chose.

InterWrite PRS RF Setup Decision Tree



RF Clickers are configured as Normal when they ship from the factory. Normal Clickers are used in Open Classes and do not require configuration. Clickers used as Loaners in an Open Class, or used as Closed or Closed Loaners in a Closed Class, must be configured. It is best to configure your Clickers (see the How To Configure an RF Clicker tutorial) before profiling a Closed Class.

The Class Name

This is the name that will be broadcast when you start the Open Class. It will be displayed on the LCD screens of powered-on Clickers as they scan for Classes.

The Class Name for the specific Class being profiled here is 10 characters long. It is a combination of the first six characters of the text in the **Course/Instructor** field, followed by the first four characters from the **Section/Location** field. The resulting Class Name and the fields from which it is derived are not editable.

Clicker Type

This indicates the type of Clickers that will be used in the Class. Version 4.xx of the PRS software supports three Clicker Types – RF Clickers only, IR Clickers only, and a mix of RF and IR Clickers.



When you select the IR Clicker Type, the rest of the Class profile options on the New Class dialog disappear. They are not relevant to an IR Class. In addition, before you run a Session for the IR Class, you must already have a Class Roster in place, which is not a requirement of the RF Class.

System Type

The Class **System Type** is either *Open* or *Closed*, with the default set as Open. As described earlier, this setting is related to the Clickers joining the Class. A Closed Class can be joined only by Clickers that have been configured as *Closed* (see the *How To Configure an RF Clicker* tutorial) and have been assigned a Class ID during the configuration procedure, which binds them to the Closed Class. An Open Class can be joined by any *Normal* (the default factory configuration setting) or *Loaner* Clicker.

Clickers configured as *Closed* will automatically find and join the Closed Class to which they have been bound. Normal Clickers scan for Open Classes, which can be a lengthy process (see the *How To Use an RF Clicker, Quick Jump* tutorial), and are free to join any Open Class that is found during the scan. Normal Clickers will never find a Closed Class, so they can never join it, and Closed Clickers will find and join only the Closed Class to which they have been bound.

In practical terms, it generally comes down to a question of *possession*.

- If the Clickers remain in the classroom and are handed out to the students before each Session and returned at the end of it, the Clickers should be configured either as *Loaners*, or as one of the *Closed* types. The Class should be profiled as an *Open System* when Loaner Clickers are used, or as a *Closed System* when Closed Clickers and Closed Loaner Clickers are used.
- If students either own their Clickers or have been given the Clickers to use for the term of the Class, the Clickers do not have to be configured, and the Class should be profiled as an *Open System*.

Loaner Clickers

Another word or two about Loaner Clickers before we get into the details of profiling a Closed Class. Loaner Clickers have been discussed here only in the context of their use as shared classroom Clickers in an Open Class.

Loaner Clickers can also function as true *loaner* Clickers, that is, RF Clickers you will keep on hand in the event a student's Clicker malfunctions, or he has forgotten to bring his Clicker to class. Loaner Clickers can be used in both Open and Closed Classes. (*Closed Loaner* Clickers are configured for use as loaners in a Closed Class.) The most important feature of a Clicker configured as a *Loaner* is that it cannot join the Class, whether Open or Closed, until the student has input his Student ID. Remember, the *Student ID* is the key to identifying the student in the PRS system and is transmitted with each Response sent during a Session to guarantee attribution. The student using a Loaner Clicker is assured of having his Responses correctly recorded and attributed to him, regardless of whether the Clicker used to send them is his own or a loaner.

The Closed Class

The Closed Class is a Class that only specially configured Clickers can join. The Clickers are bound to the Closed Class by a *password*, the **Class ID**, that is known only to them. The benefit of the Closed Class is that only those Clickers that were configured as *Closed* and were assigned the same Class ID will find and automatically join the Closed Class. Normal Clickers will never see or find the name of the Closed Class during a Class Scan. Typically, Clickers configured as *Closed* remain in the classroom.

Note

Configure the Clickers first, then profile the Closed Class, or Classes, to which the Closed Clickers will be bound.

When you select the *Closed* radio button as the *System Type* in the Class profile, the **Set Class ID** button is activated in the **Receivers** section. The **Class ID**, designated when the Clickers were configured, is assigned to the RF Receiver installed in the classroom. That's why it appears in the *Receivers Section* of the Class profile. Click on the Set Class ID button, enter the 4-digit Hex value you assigned to the configured Clickers and click on the **OK** button. The Class ID is now part of the Closed Class profile and binds the configured Closed Clickers to the Closed Class.

More than one Closed Class can be profiled with the same Class ID, meaning that the same group of Closed Clickers can automatically find and join any one of the Closed Classes that share the Class ID. Here's a typical scenario. A number of classes are taught in this classroom, and the classroom Clickers are used for each of these Classes. When the Clickers were configured, a generic Class Name was defined that would be associated with this group of Clickers. Remember, the Class Name defined during Clicker configuration is the name that will always display on each Clicker's LCD screen, no matter which Class is started, because the configuration Class Name is linked to the Class ID that will be shared by all Classes using these configured Clickers. If you are teaching all the Classes, you might use your name as the configuration Class Name. If a number of instructors will be sharing the classroom and the classroom Clickers, perhaps the name of the school would be more appropriate.

When you profile each of the Classes that will use the classroom and classroom Clickers, you will give each Class a unique Class Name, but use the **same Class ID** assigned to the Clickers during configuration. This ensures that, no matter which profiled Class is started, the Clickers will find and join that Class based on their knowledge of the password, the Class ID, which is the same for each profiled Class.

Regarding the configured classroom Clickers: You already know that if you configured them as *Loaners* or *Closed Loaners*, it doesn't matter which student gets which Clicker at the beginning of the class, because each student will have to input his Student ID before the Clicker can join the Class. However, if you configured your classroom Clickers as *Closed Clickers*, you had to assign each one a unique ID as part of the configuration process. This assigned ID accompanies every transmission from that particular Clicker. The Roster for each profiled Class will have to associate each student profile with a specific ID, and you will have to label the Clickers so that each student can easily identify the Clicker that was assigned to him or her. GTCO CalComp has RF Clicker labels that were designed for just this purpose.