

# HOW TO TEACH ADULTS

## LIKE A PRO

30 TOP SECRETS EVERY TEACHER OF ADULT LEARNERS SHOULD KNOW

ADULTS ARE:

autonomous...

highly motivated...

a wealth of knowledge...

BUT ALSO:

never on time...

easily frustrated...

have lots of other commitments...



TEACHING ADULTS: IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS THAT MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

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# Sure-fire Ways to Help Teens and Adults Overcome Shyness

“Maria sits in the ESL classroom and understands most of what her teacher and classmates say. In fact, she knows most of the answers to her teacher’s questions. But she never raises her hand. Just the thought of speaking out loud in front the class fills her with anxiety and fear.”

Maria sounds just like some of the teen and adult students you may have had over the years, if you are an experienced teacher. **But even the most seasoned teachers may have a hard time drawing out shy students and getting them to do what they signed up to do: SPEAK English.**

Whether it’s just first day jitters, occasional shyness, or more of a chronic problem, here are some ways in which you can help your shy students overcome their fear of speaking in class:

**HELP** Your Students Overcome The Fear Of Speaking

## 1 STRUCTURED SPEAKING TASKS WITH CLEAR DIRECTIONS

Some students are not exactly shy by nature but simply have no idea what to say or where to start. While their classmates use trial and error, they prefer to stay quiet and not risk embarrassment. One great way to help them overcome this fear of embarrassment is to provide **speaking tasks with a structure and defined guidelines**. When assigning role plays, for example:

1. Don’t leave the roles wide open: *Student A is checking in at a hotel. Student B is the hotel desk clerk.*

Some students may not know how to begin or what exactly is expected of them.

2. Do provide clear guidelines: *Student A is checking in at a hotel. You have reserved a*

*double room for 7 nights and you specifically requested a room with an ocean view. Student B is the hotel desk clerk. You can’t find a reservation under Student A’s name. You give your guest another room, but one that has no external view*

The more specific your instructions are, the easier it will be for shy students to participate, as they will have the structure they need to feel more confident.

## 2 USE THEIR INTERESTS TO DRAW THEM OUT

It happens again and again. You have a shy teen in class, but as soon as you mention their favorite book series, like the Harry Potter or Twilight books or movies, or popular TV shows, pop stars, anything that teens are really into these days, **their eyes light up**. You see they want to participate in the discussion, and it’s hard at first, but then they open up. **Why? Because it’s a topic they are passionate about.**

The same happens with adults. Adult learners are often self-conscious and insecure about their speaking skills or pronunciation. But as soon as you ask them to talk about something they are passionate or feel confident about, there’s no holding them back.

**Some topics that usually spark more enthusiasm in students are:**

- Trips, exotic destinations, travel experiences, etc.
- Hobbies
- Music
- Books
- Sports
- Special skills or abilities (flying planes, painting, sculpting, playing a musical instrument, etc.)

## 3 BE SILLY AND HAVE FUN!

If the entire class is doing something silly, shy students have no reason to be self-conscious. Some great ways to introduce silliness into the ESL classroom (and practice English speaking skills at the same time) is with **tongue twisters**. These work great with adults, too! Pick a tongue twister based on a consonant or vowel sound you want to practice. Then you say it as fast as you can. Students will see that you’re being silly and don’t care what they think. Students will follow suit, even shy ones.

## 4 NEVER, EVER, ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR SHYNESS

You know they’re shy. They know it. Their classmates certainly notice it. **But never, under any circumstances acknowledge their shyness**, or that they are different in any way.

Every student in your class is there for a reason, and this reason is to learn English. Period. If you set shy students apart in some way, you’ll be doing them a disservice. They won’t accomplish their language learning goals. **Create a friendly, open environment, one in which a shy student feels that it’s ok to make mistakes, that it’s all right if you don’t have the perfect pronunciation.** The important thing is to simply speak.

## SO, IT ALL BOILS DOWN TO ONE THING. SELF-CONFIDENCE.

Which is something shy students often lack. Allow them to talk about things they know a great deal about and don’t put them on the spot by making them talk about something they know nothing about. Give them speaking tasks with guidelines they can follow. But above all, give them an environment where they can express themselves freely, with no pressure.

# 15 Tricks to Get Your Adult Learners Talking

**AT THE VERY BASE OF IT, THE WHOLE POINT OF KNOWING A LANGUAGE IS TO SPEAK IT, READ IT AND BE ABLE TO WRITE IT. BUT SPEAKING IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FORM.**

When language first evolved, people originally spoke. The written word is, in historical terms, only a very recent invention and there have been thousands of languages before which were never written down. Knowing the correct grammar forms, how to read it and theoretically how to form sentences is all well and good, but **the English language is no use to someone if they are unable to speak it.**

It is important, therefore, to get one's students talking in every possible situation. Some teaching methods have two things which are known as *Teacher Talking Time and Student Talking Time (TTT and STT)*.

When one sets out to teach a class, the ultimate goal is to help them speak English better than they have before. Theoretically it should work out thus: the teacher does most of the talking in the beginning, but this quickly ceases to the point of where the students are speaking at the end. One knows that the class is a definite success when students are chatting amongst themselves in English.

Below is a list of interesting tips and tricks which will help one to encourage their adult learners to speak more during class.

**HOW TO** Get Your Adult Learners Talking: 15 Tricks You Should Try

## 1 DISTRIBUTE QUESTIONS

This is a very simple method. After a reading exercise, one will generally ask students about the text at hand. Sometimes it can be tempting to ask everyone generally, but a great way to get specific people to speak (particularly those who are quite shy)

is to single them out and ask the question. This might seem simple, but it is something many teachers forget.

## 2 ROLE PLAYS

It cannot be stated enough how important a role play is within the world of language teaching. Practical language use is practised within these exercises, and therefore it will allow the students to use what they know in a more creative manner. These can generally be quite a lot of fun.

## 3 FIND AN INTERESTING TOPIC

Getting a topic which is somewhat controversial might do well to stimulate debate in the classroom. An example would be if one were speaking about, say, immigration, some people might be interested in speaking their mind about this particular topic. Be careful, however, as sometimes one might touch on a sore or sensitive point, so monitor what kind of materials are used in class.

## 4 ASK THEM ABOUT THEMSELVES

**Everybody enjoys speaking about themselves.** If one is teaching a business class, then this will undoubtedly be a great opportunity to inquire as to what job everybody does. Maybe you could go around the room and question everybody in turn about their role and responsibilities. Since people enjoy speaking about themselves in general, you will get a lot more conversation from them this way.

## 5 ENCOURAGE THEM TO ASK QUESTIONS

Try and encourage students to ask questions about various topics themselves. For example, one might say, "And why do you think Sonia did this..?"

Usually directing it at a person will help. Ask them why they think a par-

ticular verb form is correct, and instil in the students that asking questions will lead to better proficiency within the language.

## 6 TEACHING PRONUNCIATION

Sometimes, depending on where you are teaching, students may not be pronouncing certain words in a correct manner. Different languages have different phonetics, therefore one needs to be sure that the students can speak in a way that is as close as possible to that of a native speaker. Pronunciation classes can also be a lot of fun.

## 7 DEBATES

Holding a debate in class is a great way of getting the students to talk a bit more. Sometimes the topics can become somewhat heated, and this will encourage them to use their newly acquired skills more creatively.

## 8 NEWS STORY

Similar in the way to a debate, discussion over a particular topic of current news will allow students to express their views. This may not work for all students, of course, so it is important to ask them.

## 9 TURN TO YOUR NEIGHBOUR

Probably one of the oldest methods. Students who split up into pairs find that they are obliged to talk. In order to ensure this, keep walking around the class until the end of the exercise and make sure that everyone is speaking.

## 10 TAKE A CLASS POLL

Ask a question about a particular topic and take a poll. An example could be, "Should the government fund student tuition?"

Students can then air their views and discuss them.

## 11 EYE CONTACT

If a student is particularly stubborn, a good idea would be to **keep eye contact until they say something**. This usually makes them feel uncomfortable and that they are obliged to speak. It works wonders for most students.

## 12 NAME SAYING

When asking questions, for example about a text, be sure to **say the name of a particular student**. This way they will know that you are addressing them and will have to reply accordingly. Do this on students who happen to be shy and don't speak much in class. It will give them an opportunity to speak which they can't refuse.

## 13 WHAT DO YOU THINK..?

Similar to the previous one, every now and then stop when reading an article if an important issue is raised and **ask the students' opinions on it**.

## 14 EXPLAIN TO ME...

Trying to get the student to explain a particular topic you have just explained will set the wheels in their head in motion. Of course, one can help them along, but it is important to make sure that the student does most of the talk.

## 15 SUMMARISE.

Finally, a really good way is to **get the students to summarise a particular topic in their own words**. This may be a challenge for beginners, but overall it can help in their practise of speaking.

**THERE ARE OF COURSE MANY MORE TIPS AND TRICKS WHICH ARE GOING TO HELP STUDENTS TO OVERCOME THEIR SHYNESS. SOMETIMES THEY NEED TO BE BROUGHT OUT IN FRONT OF THE CLASS IN ORDER TO BOOST THEIR CONFIDENCE.**

Always remember to **correct**, and instil in them that correction does not mean they failed. Mistakes are important, as they help us learn and move on.

# Adults And Children: The Differences Every Teacher Should Know

## TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE CAN OFTEN BE AN EXCITING CAREER FOR MANY.

Whether you are choosing to do it on a gap year, or as a full time career, you are likely to come across a wide range of different people.

Sometimes we may be required to teach children, even though we do not have experience in the area. Some language schools will give a mix of students. There will be those there who are looking to improve their English for general use. There will be those who are looking specifically for business English whilst others simply want to progress. It is important to garner, in the first class, what the actual intentions of the student are before going ahead with the plan. This way, you will find it easier to tailor a class to the specific needs of that student.

Before going ahead, however, you need to remember that adults, children and indeed teenagers are all different. Children learn in different ways to their older counterparts. As a result, you need to be able to make sure what to include in certain classes and what to leave out.

## THE DIFFERENCES

Between Adults & Children You Should Know

### 1 CHILDREN AND LEARNING

One of the first things you should remember about kids is that their brains have more elasticity than those of adults. You could say that their brains are not “formed” yet, so to speak. As a result, it is easier for children to learn a new language.

Try to remember your own personal experience, if you know a foreign language. If you learned it at the age of 7-10, learning new words most likely came easier to you, and you probably found yourself understanding simple phrases quite easily. However, as we become older, taking on a new language becomes a lot more difficult.

### 2 GAMES, STORY-TELLING AND MORE

It is also important to **include age appropriate materials in your classes**. For example, children are not going to be interested in reading articles about the state of the economy, or even the fashion industry. In fact, most kids generally won't like reading articles at all! Other techniques need to be employed.

**Games:** Both adults and children love games. Therefore it is important to include these as much as possible in the class. In doing this, the teacher will be able to let words sink in easier. Often they can include games such as *Hang Man*, *Pictionary*, *Simon Says* and much more.

**Story Telling:** This is another effective technique. All children love story time. **Find a simple fairy tale to tell the children, or make one up yourself!** Afterwards, ask questions by putting the characters in different situations (*“Sally's grandmother is ill, what should Sally do?”*).

This way, kids can come up with their own answers. Effectively, you will be able to get the children to write their own stories. This can be incredibly beneficial in terms of their production skills.

**Attention Spans:** Children also tend to have short attention spans, so it is important for you to realize this. Long, drawn-out exercises which involve a lot of silence will not work. The kids will become agitated, start fidgeting and lose interest. Keep them engaged at all times. Posing questions, getting everyone involved in the exercise, and generally **keeping them on their toes** is always a good idea and can prove very effective.

### 3 ADULTS AND LEARNING

**For older people, learning a language can be a challenge.** There are some who do this professionally for translator jobs, and will generally have a gift for this. But for many adult learners,

this is going to be new territory. Specifically when it comes to learning English, many might have had previous instruction in school as children. This is particularly true of those who live in Western European countries.

### 4 TOPICS OF INTEREST, HUMOUR AND ACTIVITIES

**Keeping adults engaged is just as important as doing so with children!** You might find that there are some students who are intent on learning, and will do their best to concentrate. This may not always be the case, therefore it is important to keep the class as interesting as possible.

**Activities:** Games are possible option for adults as well. A lot of the time, they might have be tailored to suit adults. More “grown up” type games and activities will be useful in this regard. Debates are often a great way to get adults talking. Often, the students will end up speaking more and arguments can break out. As long as it does not get out of hand, this can be incredibly positive. **The less you have to do, the more of a success the class is!**

**Humour:** It is also a good idea to have a sense of humour. Just be aware how humour translates in different cultures. In Germany, for example, the people are notorious for being humourless. This isn't necessarily the case, as it can differ from one region to the next.

**Topics of Interest:** If you are teaching business people, then topics related to what they are doing (for example, someone who works with pressured air) will probably spark up the students' interests a bit more.

The Internet is a wonderful resource in this sense, and you can find information on almost anything with the click of a mouse. Remember, most adults will also like to take a logical approach, but overall **with both children and older students, using the language in a practical way is the most beneficial method.**

# Why Adults Are Learning English (and How You Can Help Them)

*Adult English as a second language learners are a unique collection of students.*

They do not take English simply to meet an institutional requirement or check something off their transcripts. They study English for their own purposes, to meet their own goals, and for personal reasons which influence what they expect from their teachers. For the most part, adults study ESL for one of three general reasons, and for each reason there are ways you can tailor your classes to help your students have the best ESL experience possible. Therefore, **whether the purpose your students study is academic, business or personal, you can design your class to meet their specific needs.**

**WHY** Adults Are Learning English & **HOW** You Can Help Them

## 1 PREPARATION FOR ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENTS

**The majority of adult ESL students come to the United States in pursuit of higher education.** Whether they are planning on simply attending university or plan to move onto more complex academic pursuits, like law school or medical school, students of English for academic purposes have specific needs. They are looking to language as a means to an end. Sometimes schools require them to take ESL classes. Other times, they study the language in hopes of a higher TOEFL score. If your students fall into this population, make sure you **design a class that will prepare them for future academic requirements.**

**Test taking** will be an important topic to cover in class. You should give them experience with different types of testing and assessment as well as different instructional styles. The more often you bring guest speakers into the classroom, the more it will benefit your students since they will be exposed to many different educators in their futures. As for your relation-

ship with them, keep it personal and encouraging. Help them understand appropriate interaction between a student and teacher in the U.S. Be a mentor to these students as many of them will return to you for encouragement or advice in future semesters. Be realistic when assigning homework, but be serious when you grade. You will not help these students by allowing them to sail through English classes. In fact, you will actually hurt them and may cause them to lose money if they have to retake required courses later in their studies!

## 2 FOR USE IN BUSINESS

**Less common than students learning English for academic purposes but still quite common are ESL students who study for business reasons.** Whether they work for an international company or are looking to do future business in the U.S., **business English students will want real, practical and purposeful English language instruction.** While there is always benefit to be gained from traditional teaching methods and materials, business English students will appreciate hands on and practical uses for English. You should use as many **authentic materials** as your students can handle, and put them in realistic situations to practice language. Rather than staging a debate, for example, ask students to **negotiate a contract.** Instead of reading a novel, read a simple but fun **business book** (Who Moved My Cheese for example). Assign a **business letter** to your writing class rather than an essay. These practical assignments will prepare students for how they will be expected to use their language skills. In your language instruction, do not neglect to teach cultural expectations and appropriate behavior for business settings. You may need to teach your students how to give a good handshake and what is considered appropriate business dress. By using English in real settings with typical expectations, your students will be ready to put their language skills to the test in the real world. Keep your

relationship with your students professional, thinking of them as colleagues rather than students. Make sure that everything you do in class has a purpose and a practical application in the real world.

## 3 FOR PERSONAL REASONS

Even though most of your students will be studying English for academic or business purposes, there are sure to be a few who are studying for purely personal reasons. For some, overseas English classes will be like a vacation, a way to see the world and learn something in the process. Others may be studying to keep a visa current or to stay in the country legally. They may even already have superior language skills. For these students, **a casual class with fun as a main ingredient will be most engaging.** Keep homework on the low side and make sure class includes lots of **discussion and creative activities.** This does not mean that you should fail to take class seriously, but putting too strenuous expectations on this minority group will only frustrate them as well as you. Get out of the classroom whenever you can to take a field trip or learn in real life settings. If you plan social activities, include day trips and short travels that will be fun for your students. Nurture a friendship with your students and have fun together. Some of these students may just turn out to be your lifelong friends!

**AS YOU CAN SEE, THERE IS A GREAT VARIETY IN THE REASONS ADULTS STUDY ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE.** Each population has specific goals and desires, and the best teachers will want to teach to their students' purposes.

For classes where you have all three kinds of students, and that often happens, do your best to meet the specific needs of each student and try not to get frustrated if some students tend to disengage. You can only do so much in one class, but keeping your students' needs and intentions in mind will help you reach all of them the best way you can.

# Adult ESL Learners: Homework Assignments That Work

**ADULT ESL LEARNERS MAY NOT HAVE A LOT OF TIME OUTSIDE OF CLASS TO DEVOTE TO THEIR ENGLISH STUDIES BUT ASSIGNING HOMEWORK ONCE IN A WHILE CAN BE BENEFICIAL.**

Having students complete exercises at home allows them to maximize their speaking time during class periods. Since adults are often very busy, it is important to assign homework only when you feel it is necessary.

**TRY** These Homework Assignment Ideas

## 1 READING TEXTS AS HOMEWORK? WHY NOT?

For discussion lessons, **send students home with the reading assignment** instead of setting aside time for them to read it silently in class. You should introduce key vocabulary beforehand and give students some topics or questions to think about during their reading so that they will know what to focus on. You can then do some pronunciation practice and comprehension checks in the next lesson. A discussion could also be based on the material students read.

This type of homework activity really makes the most of the time you have with students and gives them an opportunity to think about the material before having to discuss it.

## 2 USE THEIR IMAGINATION!

This activity is especially good for students of Business English but could also be used in other lessons to focus on giving advice, voicing an opinion, or politely agreeing or disagreeing.

**Give students a dialogue** to read and ask them to think about the different characters. These dialogues could be based on work, school, or personal interactions. In the next class, discuss students' opinions of the characters from the dialogue and give students some options for **what the next part**

**of the dialogue could be.** Ask students to defend their choices. For instance, give students a conversation in which two colleagues are discussing Employee C and end the material you give them for homework with one person complaining that Employee C did not deserve to get a promotion.

In the next class you can talk about the appropriateness of this conversation, what students think of the two characters, and what the other character should say next.

## 3 'INTERVIEW YOUR GRANNY ABOUT ...'

Simple interview activities can be done with students of all ages. For this activity, **ask students to interview family members or friends.** This is especially good practice for using reported speech but can be used to talk about other topics too. You can provide students with some basic questions to give their interview some structure and have them build on it using their own questions.

In the next lesson, students can report their findings and discuss the material with the rest of the class.

## 4 ROLE PLAYS FOR HOMEWORK ARE FUN, TOO

Adult learners are generally more reluctant than younger students to do role plays but if you think your class would be willing to give it a try, **sections of the activity can be assigned as homework.**

Students will have to work together in class if you want them to develop their own scripts but they can practice and memorize their lines as homework. Since students may not be able to meet one another outside of class, be sure to give students some time to practice together in their groups before the final presentation.

You must allow enough time for students to prepare for the role play so

**spread it out over several weeks.**

Remember that you do not have to make it the focus of all your lessons from the time it was introduced until its completion. Introduce the activity in one lesson, check to see if students have any questions about it in each class period after that, give them time to practice, and finally have students present their role plays.

## 5 WORKSHEETS WORK WONDERS

Some worksheets may also be appropriate for homework. If there is an exam coming up, students may appreciate optional study material for further practice.

While **crosswords** are not a great use of class time for adult learners, providing students with an occasional crossword for homework may be fine. They are enjoyable and do not take long periods of undivided attention to complete: in fact, crosswords can be done gradually in free time such as during the commute to work. They are good practice material because they focus on **checking vocabulary comprehension or expanding vocabulary** - both of which are very important to adults.

**WHILE ADULT LEARNERS MAY HAVE LESS TIME THAN YOUNGER STUDENTS FOR HOMEWORK, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THEY DEVOTE TIME TO THEIR STUDIES IN ORDER TO MAKE PROGRESS.**

Talk to students at the beginning of the course about what they expect in regards to homework and ensure that you always give students plenty of time to complete exercises.



# Classroom Management for the Adult (and Not So Adult) ESL Student

*If you tell other teachers what you do, - and if that is teaching ESL students at the college level, they exclaim, "Oh, that must be great! You don't have any classroom management issues. Because your students really want to learn." Well, yes and no, you instantly think.*

It is a great job, indeed. And adult ESL students rarely have classroom management issues like throwing spit wads and shoving each other—they do, however, make and receive cell phone calls during class and update their Facebook profiles. ESL students, like students in general, come to the classroom for a variety of reasons, intrinsic love of learning is probably not primary among them in most cases.

This is complicated by divergent notions of what is appropriate classroom behavior — not only from what students were taught in their past education experiences but also from instructor to instructor on the same campus. One instructor may not be bothered by the student text-messaging under the desk — or at least, not say so — while another may come unhinged. So how does the teacher manage the classroom under such circumstances?

## CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

for the Adult ESL Student

### 1 GET IT IN WRITING: PUT EXPECTATIONS IN SYLLABUS

If you are really bothered by use of cell phones and other electronics during class time, say so in the syllabus. If you'd really prefer students spend the majority of time speaking English in class, rather than breaking into discussion groups in their primary languages, say that as well, and give a reason.

### 2 HAVE A PLAN

Have a plan. Break course objectives down and have a plan for the semester, week, and day.

If students are busy doing relevant work, there is less chance they will become classroom management concerns.

### 3 TRANSPARENCY IS THE KEY

Make your plan **transparent**. Put the day's or week's or semester's plan on the board or class website so students know what they should be doing moment to moment.

### 4 HAVE A CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT PLAN, TOO

Also have a **classroom management plan** in place, whether it is in your head or in writing. But think through what you would do in certain situations: what you would do if you find a student had plagiarized her paper or what you would do if a student could not seem to stop talking through your lectures.

### 5 VARY GROUPING STRATEGIES

Students tend to get bored when in one activity or grouping for too long. If you have done a teacher-fronted, whole-class activity for ten minutes, you could notice that often your students begin to drift and to hold side conversations. This is a sign that it's time to **vary the instruction**, to break students into small groups for further practice. Usually once the activity has changed, the negative behavior disappears.

### 6 DISCUSS IT IN PRIVATE

Although classes as a whole tend to have a specific "climate," and

often it's the case an entire class is just difficult to manage, **sometimes there is an individual student with problematic behavior**, such as consistently (and disruptively) arriving late. If behavior like this develops in one student, it's usually best to **meet with the student privately and discuss the situation**. Often the student is unaware that there is a problem and is very apologetic and promises to improve.

Other times the student knows the behavior is a problem, but it is rooted in some other academic or personal concern, like loss of transportation or simple misunderstanding of how important it is to be on time in a classroom. The teacher can discuss the situation with the student, and often the problem can be solved with one meeting.

### 7 BE POLITE BUT DIRECT

Be polite but direct about what you want students to do or not do. If you are bothered by a student bringing food and drink into class and loudly consuming it throughout the class, it is all right to tell the student -- privately, so the student isn't embarrassed -- but usually students who demonstrate inappropriate behavior like this are not going to pick up on subtle hints that their behavior is inappropriate, so being direct is necessary.

### 8 DON'T LET THEM CROSS THE LINE

It is rare but not unheard of that **student behavior can cross the line from merely inappropriate and annoying to alarming**, especially if there are suspected drug abuse or mental health concerns.

For example, a number of years ago, an immigrant student who had acted a little odd all semester, enough so that most of the other students avoided

him, was in my ESL class. One day, when apparently upset over his failing grade, he came into my office, shut the door, and asked, “*Do you love your husband?*” Startled, I replied simply that I did. He then asked, “*If you love your husband, why don’t you love your students?*”

The behavior of shutting the door and then the bizarre dialogue was enough to alarm me into dropping a note to my dean, who I think must have then had the student into his office for a stern conversation because the student disappeared from the program shortly after. Of course in most cases, this is not the outcome we would wish, but in reality not all students are able to benefit from all educational settings.

## 9 LAST RESORT

Involve authorities as needed. Although ideally instructors should develop the skills to deal with the vast majority of classroom management issues within their own classes, it is all right in certain circumstances to involve higher authorities — sometimes the police, if you feel your immediate safety is in jeopardy.

Although it is rare, sometimes student behavior warrants intervention from others. Instructors should have on hand the phone numbers of their dean, campus security, and the police to be notified depending the level of behavior: a case of repeated plagiarism should be referred to the dean, for example, while calls to security or the police should be reserved for threats to property or personal safety.

**YES, CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IS A CHALLENGE, AND MOST CLASSES DO NOT MAGICALLY ORGANIZE THEMSELVES INTO ACTIVE AND RESPECTFUL GROUPS OF STUDENTS—NOT EVEN CLASSES OF ADULTS, NOT EVEN ESL STUDENTS.**

This requires the hard work of a teacher. However, the well-conducted class can be achieved with planning, varying grouping, being direct, and involving others when needed.

# How to Teach a Christmas Lesson Adult Learners Will Never Forget

CHRISTMAS IS A HOLIDAY THAT ADULTS ENJOY AS MUCH AS CHILDREN.

The preparations, the shopping for gifts, the cooking, and the singing is not hard for a grown-up to get into the spirit of Christmas. So, with this in mind, **why not give your adult ESL learners a Christmas lesson they'll never forget?**

This is a great opportunity for students who come from different backgrounds to share things about their culture and learn from others. It's also a wonderful way to practice all four skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 TALK ABOUT WHAT WE USUALLY DO TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS

Ask students what they usually do during the holiday season, how they prepare for Christmas, and what they do on *Christmas Eve* and *Christmas Day*.

If you have students from different countries, ask them what they will be doing for Christmas this year. Will they be doing anything differently? Will they try out something new? What do they usually do in their country of origin?

### 2 TALK ABOUT CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS AROUND THE WORLD

Ask students who are familiar with other customs to tell the class about them. Do they know about Christmas celebrations in other countries? Which countries? Are they very different from typical North-American or European customs? Has anyone ever been to a South American country for Christmas? Or any country where it was hot, and there was no snow for Christmas?

Take as long as you want, but **make sure students are fully engaged in the discussion.**

### 3 READ ABOUT CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS AROUND THE WORLD

There are a lot of websites where you can get this information, but *Santa's Net* has a wonderful collection of traditions from around the world. Choose a few and print them out for your class, or have them read the pages directly on a computer or laptop. Don't forget to **introduce key vocabulary before reading.** At BusyTeacher.org, we have some great worksheets in our Christmas section, like the Christmas Traditions around the World worksheet and the Christmas Traditions Quiz, which are great post-reading activities.

### 4 WATCH A CHRISTMAS VIDEO

Now that your students are more familiar with Christmas vocabulary and traditions, they should be ready to watch a Christmas video! Choose one that is appropriate to your students' level.

Highly recommended for upper-intermediate to advanced students is The History Channel's *Christmas Unwrapped: The Truth about Christmas*, a fascinating documentary about the true origins of many modern day Christmas symbols and customs. At FanPop.com you can watch all five parts of the video, but the first 10 minutes gives you plenty of information to work with. There are also several other videos to choose from. Don't forget to **provide short pre-viewing, viewing, and post-viewing activities.**

### 5 GIVE THEM A SPEAKING TASK

The speaking task should relate to the video they've just watched. Give them roles to play out: One student could be a famous historian and another the interviewer who asks questions about the origins of some Christmas traditions, or one student could be travelling to a foreign country and another student offers information on how Christmas is celebrated there.

### 6 GIVE THEM A WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Here are some suggestions for Christmas writing assignments, which you may adapt to your students' level:

- Give them writing prompts to begin a Christmas story: *"Sally took the last batch of gingerbread cookies from the oven. Suddenly..."* etc.
- Give them an essay topic *"Is Christmas more about shopping than the birth of Jesus these days? Describe a Christmas memory from your childhood... What is Christmas really about?"*

Assign the writing task for homework if you're short on time.

### 7 WRAP UP THE LESSON WITH A CHRISTMAS CAROL!

Choose any Christmas carol or song where several typical Christmas traditions and activities are mentioned, like *making a snowman, riding sleighs, roasting chestnuts*, etc. Ask students to listen to the song and identify which of these activities or traditions are mentioned.

**EVERYONE KNOWS IT'S EASY TO PLAN A CHRISTMAS LESSON WITH KIDS, BUT DON'T LEAVE YOUR ADULT ESL LEARNERS OUT OF THE HOLIDAY FUN! THEY MAY NOT HAVE COLORING PAGES, CRAFTS, OR CROSSWORD PUZZLES, BUT THEY'LL ENJOY THEIR CHRISTMAS LESSON JUST THE SAME!**

# Teaching Adult Learners: How To Handle Attendance Problems

WITH ADULT LEARNERS, TEACHERS FACE A UNIQUE SET OF CHALLENGES. UNLIKE WITH YOUNGER STUDENTS, DISCIPLINE AND MOTIVATION ARE GENERALLY NOT A PROBLEM. FOR ADULT CLASSES ONE OF THE MAJOR CONCERNS IS ATTENDANCE.

Adults will often have a lot of commitments: family and work demand the majority of their time and **English classes are not always a priority**. While you cannot demand that all your students attend class all the time, there are some things you can do to help maintain the flow of the course.

## DO'S AND DON'T'S

### 1 DO: BE PUNCTUAL

Once you have met several times, you will have some idea of who might miss classes more often than others. **Regardless of the size of your class, it is important to start on time** so that other students do not feel like they are wasting their time.

By starting on time you will also show latecomers that the class does not revolve around them. Make it clear that latecomers will have to catch up by looking at another student's notes or the notes on the board. This way you will not need to repeat your first couple minutes of class whenever another student walks in.

### 2 DON'T: GRADES

Adult learners are less interested in their grade thus making participation a large percent of it will not encourage students to attend. For younger students grades are important because they affect things such as college applications and job opportunities but giving an adult student a low grade will not affect much besides his confidence and willingness to participate in activities.

In adult classes, you do not have to give overall grades if you would rather not. It is important to **give students**

**constructive feedback and corrections** but providing a letter grade is almost meaningless.

### 3 DO: BE SYMPATHETIC

Understand that students have lives outside of class and that **certain things are definitely more important than learning English**.

There are probably times in the past where you have had to skip class because of work, an illness, or a family emergency so it is only fair to be considerate when students say they will not be able to make it to class. Some things such as business trips will not even be in their control so you cannot blame them for absences related to certain activities or events.

### 4 DON'T: LECTURE

Telling students over and over again the importance of attending class is also not going to make a huge difference in attendance.

Obviously **students know they should attend lessons** but repeatedly telling them that is unlikely to improve the situation and will only waste even more class time. Often this type of lecturing will feel more like punishment to the students who attend regularly and arrive on time than to those people who come late or miss lessons.

### 5 DO: HELP

You should help students catch up after missing a class so that you will not have to review all the material you covered in the previous lesson. You can **create study material by organizing notes for each lesson**.

Try not to spend too much time on this. Fleshing out your lesson plan should be sufficient. Email this to students who do not attend class to help them understand the material they missed. You can also **encourage students to buddy up** so that if one of them misses class, the other can share his

or her notes.

### 6 DON'T: GET FRUSTRATED

It can be extremely frustrating when students skip class week after week. The best thing you can do is **stay positive about the situation and devote extra attention to the learners who do attend**.

If you are frustrated during lessons, it will have a negative impact on your students because you are not performing your best and it could affect their moods too.

### 7 DO: ADVISE

Perhaps the class is too easy or hard for students missing class so they are uninterested in the material you are discussing. The class could also just meet at a particularly inconvenient time. If a student misses class regularly, you might want to suggest he switch to another class or **consider one-on-one lessons**. You can explain that missing class means that he is not getting the full benefit of taking the course and will not improve as rapidly.

Luckily if you are teaching one-on-one classes, attendance will not affect other students so while it can still be frustrating for you, you can simply save the material you prepared for another lesson.

Adult learners can be a pleasure to work with but one of the downsides you are likely to face is having students repeatedly miss class due to conflicts with other commitments. **IF THIS HAPPENS IN YOUR ADULT CLASSES, CONTINUE TO TEACH LESSONS AS PLANNED AND DO YOUR BEST TO HELP STUDENTS CATCH UP WHEN NECESSARY.**

While attendance issues can be frustrating, there are definitely ways you can deal with them so that everyone can still get the most out of the course.

# Teaching Adults How-To: Advantages and Challenges

## TEACHING ADULT LEARNERS CAN BE VERY REWARDING, BUT VERY CHALLENGING AS WELL.

We mustn't forget we're dealing with individuals who have their own lives outside of school, some with very busy schedules. **But adult learners are also better equipped for dialogue and exchange. They come to class with a set of tools and information that can be of great use to us.**

On the one hand we present the advantages that come with teaching adult learners and the way you, as an ESL teacher can maximize their great potential for learning. And on the other hand, we examine the challenges we face and suggest some ways to overcome them.

## The **ADVANTAGES** Of Teaching Adults

### **A**UTONOMOUS LEARNERS

When we teach English to adults, we're dealing with individuals who, to a greater or lesser degree, have a set of study skills, acquired in their previous schooling. At the very least, they possess writing, summarizing, and note-taking skills. They know perfectly well what it's like to attend classes, and the greater their commitment to their learning, the more organized they are, and the more skills they are willing to deploy.

*How do we fully take advantage of their previously acquired study skills?*

Ask them to produce a summary of a video seen in class, or a reading assignment. Encourage them to prepare charts or graphs. Feel free to **assign more challenging types of homework assignments**, not necessarily more time-consuming, as most adults learners don't have a great deal of free time on their hands, but they may handle more mentally-challenging exercises. They may even make a Power Point presentation for their final examination. **Never underestimate**

them.

The first characteristic of adult learners you should learn is that they are not children, and they don't need help with their homework.

### **M**OTIVATED INDIVIDUALS

**Most adults who enroll in English courses, do so of their own volition.** This is another characteristic of adult learners.

Their needs may vary, but the fact of the matter is they feel an interest in learning, a need, sometimes even an urgency to study English. Some need to improve their English communication skills to do business or have better chances of advancement in their careers. Others want to travel to English-speaking countries and want to get around on their own. Others still, simply enjoy it, or studied it when they were kids and want to take their English to the next level. Even those who are "forced" to study due to circumstances like relocation to an English-speaking country have a specific reason to learn, and a goal that will motivate them to learn.

*How can we take advantage of their motivation to learn?*

Although your students may have the initial motivation to enroll in classes, it may vanish into thin air if they suddenly face activities and tasks that don't inspire them to learn.

**To effectively motivate them, simply consider their goals.** Do they want to learn English to do business? Plan activities that specifically cater to this goal, like job interviews, business realia, or business email writing. Are they learning just for fun? Provide a variety of activities that will keep them engaged, like videos, games, or even field trips.

### **A** WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE

One of the greatest advantages of teaching adult learners is the in-

credible amount of knowledge and experience they can bring to class.

We mustn't forget that although they may know little English, **they most likely know a great deal about something else, whether it is their professional area of expertise or simply a hobby**, and these may be things you know nothing about. Some of this knowledge may be highly specialized or industry-related (pharmaceuticals, marketing, manufacturing) or basic knowledge of things you have no experience in like cars, sports, crafts, maybe even other languages.

*How can we tap into this wealth of knowledge?*

It's as easy as asking your adult students to talk about what they know about. For example, a beginner who is really into cars can make comparisons: *A Mercedes is more expensive/faster/more efficient than a Ford.* An advanced student can give a presentation on marketing basics for the rest of the class. If you're teaching business English to adults, you can practically ask them to teach you everything they know about business!

**This is why it is absolutely essential that you become very familiar with your students backgrounds and interests.**

## The **CHALLENGES** Of Teaching Adults: What Adult Learners Want

### **L**ACK OF TIME

Very few adult learners have tons of free time on their hands. Most have full time jobs and careers, some study, and it's hard for them to find the time to take an English course, let alone do homework and study after class.

*How can we overcome this challenge?*

Rather than excusing them from doing homework or at home activities, give them **several, but shorter** tasks

to do. For instance, instead of giving them something that might take them from 20 to 40 minutes, give them a 5 or 10 minute exercise, but several, so that they may do one a day, in between meetings, or while they're on their lunch break. Ask them to watch a 5 minute video while they have breakfast and then summarize it.

Keep the tasks short and focused.

## F RUSTRATION

Unlike children, adult learners tend to be very self-conscious, particularly about the way they speak and their pronunciation. They also tend to get frustrated more easily. **They get discouraged if they think they've made little to no progress**, especially advanced students who may feel they've reached a language plateau, beyond which they can't progress. Finally, they are also very hard on themselves sometimes, demanding unrealistic things like perfect pronunciation or listening.

### *How can we help them?*

- First, inform your students on what should be **realistic goals**. Make sure they're clear on what the course program is for the year and what they are expected to learn. Also, explain to them that their brains are not as flexible as children's brains, which makes it practically impossible for them to lose their accent. This does not mean that they can't improve their pronunciation, but that they'll always have an accent that is part of who they are.
- Secondly, to help them track their progress, end each class with a *What have you learned today?* They may have learned about a specific topic, a new tense, or a whole new set of vocabulary. **But make sure they are aware of this.**

**BY FAR THE BEST THING ABOUT TEACHING ADULT LEARNERS IS THE AMAZING THINGS YOU'LL LEARN FROM THEM. GIVE THEM EVERYTHING THEY NEED TO ADVANCE AND GROW, BUT ALSO BE OPEN TO EVERYTHING THEY'LL SHARE WITH YOU. YOU'LL SEE HOW YOU GROW AS TEACHER TOO!**

# Teaching Adults: They Know More Than They Tell

**MOST PEOPLE WITHIN THE ESL INDUSTRY WILL KNOW THAT THERE IS A HUGE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TEACHING ADULTS AND TEACHING CHILDREN.**

It has been proven that children's minds tend to be more "elastic" in the sense that they can be shaped and moulded quite easily. With this in mind, a lot of teachers use this to their advantage to help the children absorb the language more.

**Generally, children will pick up language naturally much faster than adults.** This isn't to say, however, that adults aren't capable of learning either. Many have already been in school and had a go at learning a second language before, so they may be using their own internal methods in order to commit the variety of grammatical rules to memory.

**HOW TO** Teach Adults:  
Important Things To Keep in Mind

## 1 ADULT EDUCATION: A DAUNTING EXPERIENCE

For a lot of adults, the idea of returning to education can be a somewhat daunting one. A lot of the time, they may not have been in school for a number of years and are now unsure of classroom protocol. Doing tests might worry them just as much as any teenager might be worried about the idea of sitting down to an exam.

**It is important always to be friendly and smile, let them know that this is nothing to be afraid of.** No matter what one is learning, if one is a beginner then there is no shame in making mistakes.

Whilst some people will embrace learning the new language fervently, a great deal might find themselves intimidated and simply sit in the class and not contribute.

## 2 CONTRIBUTION AND IT'S IMPORTANCE

It is important for every student to participate in a class, and this couldn't be more true with regards to language learning.

**Language isn't something like history which can be committed to memory through rote learning.** Yes, phrases, sentences and words and even grammatical structures can be memorized but they also need to be practised. The old saying "practise makes perfect" holds very true in this regard. **People need to learn to get out of their comfort zone and try out new things.**

One of the best ways of getting people to participate is to design a game or a role play scenario whereby everyone has a line or a piece to say. Not only will this bring them "out of their shell", so to speak, but it will also help that individual to learn that others might be in the same situation as themselves.

## 3 ELICITING WORDS

Most of us who have gone through teacher training sessions will understand the importance of eliciting words.

For those students who have been learning the language for a long time now, they will find that they do indeed know quite a good bit of vocabulary. The trick is trying to get them to reveal this to the rest of the class.

**Eliciting words is essentially getting them to think of the specific word themselves,** rather than the teacher simply writing it down on the board. Doing this will get the mind working, and allow the wheels in their head to start turning. Simply writing a word on the board and having them copy it down won't allow it to stick. **In thinking it up for themselves, it will challenge them to pursue their own knowledge further.**

## 4 EXPERIENCE

One of the major points about teaching adults is that **they have a huge amount of experience within their specific fields of work or life.**

As such, they have picked up a lot along the way and those who have been in education for much longer will have a huge amount of experience within the sector. The teacher should then use this to their advantage.

A good idea might be to **organize a class where different learning methods are discussed,** and questions asked about which ones work best for some people. This can also be a good way of finding out what the needs of one's students are. Furthermore, those who may even be teachers themselves will be able to share their own insight and knowledge.

## 5 DON'T UNDERESTIMATE

It is important for a teacher as well not to underestimate their students. Adults might have already picked up some words and phrases in English **from previous experience,** this mainly being due to it being one of the most widely-spoken languages in the world at the moment. Keep in mind that one's students will always have prior learning experience, and this can be a great help to any teacher.

# What Adult Learners Want: Know Them To Teach Them Better

**ADULT LEARNERS CAN BE A PLEASURE TO TEACH BECAUSE THEY ARE USUALLY MORE SELF-MOTIVATED THAN OTHER ESL STUDENTS.**

They often choose to study English to help them in their careers or with other personal goals such as obtaining student visas for English speaking countries. These learners may be more eager than primary and secondary school students because they view English as a global language and are aware of what they can gain by improving their communication skills.

**GET TO KNOW** Your Adult Learners Better

## 1 KNOW WHAT THEY WANT

For adult students, you can often **plan your lessons based on what your students' goals are.**

If students need to learn English for work, you can introduce business related vocabulary and talk about various work situations. Related topics could include travel, numbers and currency, and casual conversation because these are relevant for business people who use English at work.

If students are studying English in order to obtain a particular visa, be aware of what test or tests they will be required to take or what skills they need to demonstrate. This information can be found online and students may already know what their weaknesses are based on previous scores.

Advanced adult learners may simply want some regular speaking practice so that they can increase their fluency and range of vocabulary. With beginners, the content of your classes will obviously be more similar to those for younger learners but you can still include specific material to better tailor lessons to fit your students' needs.

**The goals of your adult students will dramatically affect your curriculum.**

## 2 KNOW HOW THEY BEHAVE

**Adult learners are often eager to improve their speaking skills.**

Unlike with younger students, discipline is not a major concern. Some learners may try to shift the course of lessons from the material you have prepared to free discussion. This could happen when students are uninterested in the lesson material so develop creative lesson plans (that's exactly what Busy-Teacher.org is here for!) and talk with students at the beginning of the course about free discussion sessions. Perhaps one class a week or the first ten minutes of class can be devoted to this.

Once this is established students may be more willing to focus on the lesson material during other periods.

## 3 KNOW WHAT TO FOCUS ON

As with any other ESL course, the focus needs to be on communication. While encouraging students to speak may be the most important part of classes with younger learners, **adult learners are often really enthusiastic about speaking activities** so developing their **listening skills** becomes more important. Especially at the advanced level, students need to be able to introduce their opinions, give advice, and politely agree or disagree so that regular discussions flow smoothly and students do not come across as being inconsiderate or rude in social situations.

This is very different from the basic question-and-answer structure that students start off learning as beginners and requires both good speaking skills and active listening skills. **Unlike when students read, listening and responding to people requires rapid comprehension** of material after only one repetition. It takes a lot of practice for students to do this so be sure to teach them phrases such as

or *"Can you please repeat the question?"* too.

## 4 HELP THEM BUILD SELF-CONFIDENCE

Beginning adult learners may feel self-conscious about their speaking abilities so it is important to build their self-confidence **through encouragement and by starting out with simple exercises.**

They will be much less willing than children to sing silly songs or engage in certain activities so plan exercises that appeal to them. A class full of adults may be reluctant to sing *"Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes"* but if you are working with beginning level adult students, you can find an alternative method of practicing the same material. Singing songs and other activities may not seem like studying to your adult students so your approach to these classes will have to be different.

Create exercises that have a serious, rather than fun, approach based on topics that students are interested in. Also, the content rather than the format of lessons will keep them engaged.

**WITH ADULT LEARNERS YOU ARE ABLE TO ADDRESS A MUCH WIDER RANGE OF TOPICS BUT ULTIMATELY THE CONTENT OF YOUR COURSE WILL DEPEND A LOT ON WHY YOUR STUDENTS ARE STUDYING ENGLISH AND WHAT THEIR GOALS ARE. WITHOUT HAVING TO WORRY ABOUT DISCIPLINE, YOU WILL HAVE MORE CLASS TIME TO DEVOTE TO IMPORTANT THINGS LIKE LEARNING ENGLISH.**

*"I'm sorry, I didn't quite catch that."*



# How to Teach English to Beginners

## STUDENTS JUST STARTING THEIR ENGLISH STUDIES RISK BEING OVERWHELMED BY NEW MATERIAL.

Showing them that lessons can be fun and that they can perform well is important to get them engaged in and positive about your classes. Your curriculum should be designed with this in mind so be sure to **dedicate plenty of time to each section**. If students are doing better than expected, simply use the free lesson period to review or better yet, have fun with a cultural lesson or holiday activity.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 LESSON MATERIAL

Especially with beginners it is important to **go slowly**. There is a steep learning curve at the very beginning of their studies especially if you are the first to introduce them to the Latin alphabet.

Try to introduce manageable chunks of information and do not add in more information until your students are comfortable with what they have already covered. This may mean that they are not able to understand the purpose of learning certain things initially but perhaps after a few lessons on a topic, you can help put it all together and then **they will be amazed at how much they have learned**.

For example, in one lesson you may teach your students the words *I, you, he/she/it* and what they mean but they cannot make sentences with this vocabulary until you give them some verbs to work with which may not be appropriate until a later lesson.

### 2 TEACHER TALKING

In the classroom you will also have to **slow down your talking speed**. Students are never going to understand you if you are talking a mile a minute.

If you assist a teacher who is not a native speaker and would like you to speak at a normal speed, you can speed up slightly but a normal speed would not be appropriate for beginners.

At the intermediate and advanced levels, you may speak more rapidly as their grasp on English increases and they can follow you better but it may still be challenging for them. When you do choral repetition or drill exercises, be sure to **enunciate clearly and be loud enough for the entire class to hear you**. It is often difficult for people to understand you, if your mouth is hidden from view which is odd because your students are supposed to be listening but even so, try to direct your attention towards your students, as opposed to the blackboard for instance, when you are talking to them and hold flashcards at an appropriate level.

### 3 PRACTICE

Choose practice activities that are simple, easy to understand, and easy to explain. Using lots of words that students don't recognize to explain how to do a practice activity is only going to further confuse them.

In many cases a **demonstration may be your best option**. As your students improve, you can introduce more complex activities but if an activity ever takes longer to explain than to complete, it is not worth doing again.

Practice activities should revolve around students having the opportunity to speak English so even worksheets should be used for that purpose. After a worksheet has been completed, ask for volunteers to read the questions, translate the questions, and give the answers.

**Try to involve as many students as possible and give them continuous positive feedback.**

### 4 HAVE FUN

Language studies give students the opportunity to learn in a different way. English should not be taught the same way Mathematics or History is taught. There is no room for lectures because luckily as the teacher, you already know how to speak English while the students really need to practice more than anything else.

**Getting students to communicate with you and each other in a positive creative environment should be the goal of every language teacher.** You can incorporate many different games into your lessons and with lots of miming and role plays students will probably laugh at you, in a good way, on more than one occasion.

Taking the focus away from grammar rules and focusing on communication will encourage them to try their best, which is all you can really ask of them.

STUDENTS JUST BEGINNING THEIR ENGLISH STUDIES HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA WHAT TO EXPECT SO IT IS BENEFICIAL TO YOU AND ALL THEIR LATER ENGLISH TEACHERS TO HELP THEM ENJOY IT BY ENCOURAGING THEM AND SHOWING THEM THAT LEARNING ANOTHER LANGUAGE IS NOT AN OVERWHELMING TASK.

# 15 Secrets to Teaching Adults

TRADITIONALLY, THE IMAGE OF THE TEACHER HAS ALWAYS BEEN A STERN AUTHORITY FIGURE WITH A BLACKBOARD AND CHALK. ORDINARILY THEY PRESIDED OVER A CLASSROOM FULL OF KIDS. WITHIN THE ESL INDUSTRY, HOWEVER, THE CLIENTELE CAN RANGE FROM THREE YEARS OF AGE TO EIGHTY AND BEYOND!

A lot of teachers will find they have to teach younger people however many more will also be teaching adults. This is obviously true with regards to those within the world of business English. Sometimes it can be a little tricky, particularly if those adults are a lot older than yourself. Many factors need to be taken into account, such as **respect and making sure you do not patronize** them however many people sometimes feel that they are doing this without meaning to.

**HOW TO** Teach Adults: 15 Secrets

## 1 KEEP THE CLASS RELEVANT TO THE AGE GROUP

It could be quite common, especially for younger English teachers, that most of their students will be older than them. As a result, it is important to **keep the topic of the class relevant and be something that they will understand**.

Discussing aspects of modern youth culture might not appeal to those within the age bracket of fifty onwards. So it is always important to keep anything you talk about relevant so that the associated party will be more interested and in tune with what you have to say.

## 2 BE PASSIONATE

Having an interest in your own subject is vitally important. **No one will learn anything if the teacher doesn't seem to care**, and seems to just be giving the class rote-learning.

Learning things by heart definitely does work in some cases, but a lot of the time when teaching language it is important to **show an interest in it**.

Adults can tell immediately if you don't have an interest in what is going on,

and they themselves will then be likely to switch off.

## 3 ENCOURAGE THEM TO ASK QUESTIONS

A lot of the time, the people you will be teaching may not have been in school for many years. They might not be sure what proper classroom protocol is, so it is important to **make sure that they ask as many questions as possible**. When teaching the class, perhaps it would be a good idea to frequently tell them, *"Now, does anyone have any questions?"* If a student is unsure of this, then they will usually raise their hand and ask something.

## 4 KEEP THEM ENGAGED

Keeping students engaged is important for any age group, and this is a vital skill that most teachers will learn over time.

Sometimes one might be tempted to just focus on those who are participating, and leave more quieter ones to their own devices. **Try and include everybody in the class equally**, asking various questions more so to those who don't speak as often.

Simply standing at the board and listening off a load of information won't help it to stick in their heads.

## 5 DISTRIBUTION

Distributing practice is also another thing, closely tied in with the previous point. Make sure that everybody gets a chance to speak and practice their new skills. Sometimes, one student may be more talkative than the others and hence not give the rest of the class time to have their say. So it is important to **come up with an idea or an activity whereby everyone can be involved**, and therefore allow everyone to participate.

## 6 SMILE

Smiling might seem like one of the most simplest things in the world, but it is quite easy to forget at times! Try to remember that the world of teaching has probably changed a lot

since your students' day, and therefore their own experiences of teachers might've been tough, stern people who never smiled. **Showing a happy, pleasant face will definitely get the whole class more relaxed!**

## 7 RECOGNIZE LEARNING STYLES

**Everybody has different ways of learning and adults are no different.**

Visual learners tend to be the most common, and so one should keep this in mind but also remember there may be other learning styles present. Do some research on these specific styles and see which ones your students will fit into. It will then be a lot easier to incorporate the techniques into the class.

## 8 BE FLEXIBLE

Quite a lot of beginner teachers go into their first lesson with all of the purest intentions. They will have a plan written out, usually involving group work and the like, think that everything will go smoothly and accordingly.

**Sometimes, however, the class might veer off on a different path.** Don't panic if this happens, just remember that as long as you keep on topic in some form, the class is a success.

At the end of the day, however, it is also important that the students are ultimately speaking English.

## 9 CORRECTION

If the teacher is younger, then it can be quite daunting when a student makes a clear mistake. Often, they may simply ignore the mistake because they're afraid of patronizing the student. Don't be, just **correct them in a way which sounds less patronizing**.

This usually involves something along the lines of, *"That was a good sentence but... Can you think of a way of improving it?"* It will encourage the student to examine their own

grammar and make the correction themselves.

## 10 TOPICS OF INTEREST

Oftentimes people will feel that they are getting nowhere when a student simply wants to speak about their job, or their cat, or even their wife! Since they usually are the ones paying for it, they will argue that they can have the right to do this. Naturally, this is true but it doesn't mean that nothing can't be learned from the class. If they want to talk incessantly about their pet, then simply incorporate that into the whole lesson. **The more they talk, the better their English will become!**

## 11 ENCOURAGEMENT

Every student needs encouragement at some time or another, and more so than adult learners. The older they are the more reluctant they may seem. This can be a particular challenge so it is important to always **make sure that they are on board with the topic of the lesson.**

## 12 DEALING WITH TENSION

Sometimes, particularly when teaching business English, one might find that they are teaching senior managers and secretaries. This unusual mix may cause a little bit of tension as the bosses may not feel comfortable at being at the same level. It is important to **steer conversation away from anything that might be related to their current work, and to focus solely on the lesson to avoid conflict.**

## 13 SPEAK ENGLISH

This might seem like an obvious one but it is important to remember that, especially with those who are beginners, many might be tempted to slip into their native tongue and this can be detrimental.

Often, students might start talking amongst themselves, usually if they're simply asking for instructions. If this happens, inquire as to what they are talking about and see if they can say it in English. This will help them to learn some new vocabulary and the teacher won't feel so isolated.

## 14 ELICITING WORDS

Having the students **think of or come up with their own words** rather than simply telling them is important. In doing this, the students will find that they already know the vocabulary and just need to "let it out" so it to speak.

## 15 HAVE FUN!

No one ever said that school and learning had to be boring, so it is important to **make the class fun** which will in turn engage the students a lot more.

Think of various games and ideas which can be done that will get everyone involved. It will also help to loosen up the atmosphere a bit and get some of the more shy students talking!

**IT IS ALWAYS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER, AT THE END OF THE DAY, ADULT STUDENTS ARE NOT REALLY THAT DIFFERENT FROM YOUNGER ONES.**

They have more life experience and will be a lot more critical, perhaps even pick up on certain things faster, but they are still novices when it comes to English (for the most part) and you are there to teach them a new language.

# 5 Strategies for Teaching the Beginning ESL Student

*There are a lot of advantages to teaching beginning ESL students: they are motivated learners not yet burned out on language study as students at a later level often are because it does take a long time and is oftentimes difficult.*

Beginning ESL students generally have deep respect for teachers and the learning process, often coming from cultures where these attitudes are still practiced and not having yet been exposed much to American attitudes, which are generally not so respectful. In addition, a beginning ESL class often has fun classroom activities such as songs, plays, and outings rather than dictations and research writing. And, let's not forget to mention, beginning ESL students often give the teacher flowers at the end of the term, a practice common in many other countries.

However, there is still that sinking feeling that sometimes comes in about the second week of the term when working with very beginning students, when the instructor realizes the students really know little beyond "hello," "yes," and "no." **Where do we even start? Vocabulary? Grammatical structures? Basic literacy skills? Help!** There is help available. Teaching the beginning ESL student need not be a difficult and bewildering process if some basic principles are addressed.

## 5 STRATEGIES

### 1 ADDRESS BASIC CONVERSATIONAL NEEDS

Traditional language instruction begins with teaching the alphabet, or numbers, or conjugating often-used verbs. It is, of course, difficult to take a needs assessment at this level, but we already know what beginning students really need is some **basic greetings and farewells and other language for getting along in their communities**, such as asking for directions or the costs of items. They don't really need to conjugate the verb "to be," although this may be taught in the context of introductions, for example: "I am Stacia, he is Gilliam." **The focus, however, should be on basic**

**conversation.** Grammar should be taught in context of the conversational skills rather than as a focus on its own. Students should work in pairs or small groups much of the class period so that they can practice their English skills, preferably with speakers of languages other than their own, so that English is the common language the pair or group must use to communicate.

### 2 FOCUS ON LANGUAGE FOR COMMUNICATION

**Students don't need to know how to recite numbers and colors in their second language.** People rarely do that in their first languages, for that matter. What students do need to know is how to give their birthdates and identification numbers or ask for a specific color of item in a store. Continue to focus on communicative needs of students and **contextualize language** in teaching students short dialogues for places they will be visiting like the store, a restaurant, a library, and so on.

### 3 LANGUAGE FOR LIFE SKILLS

**Identify those language skills students will need to learn to survive in the community.** What will they need to say in situations such as applying for a job, requesting a repair or refund on an appliance, looking for an apartment, visiting the doctor's office, and so forth? When students have enough English, take a needs assessment, either oral or written, to find out which life skills are most important to them: looking for housing or talking to a doctor, for example? Have them practice dialogues in groups or pairs, and they may even perform short sketches in front of the class.

### 4 TRANSITION INTO ACADEMIC SKILLS

**Students will need to learn academic language in English,** of course — how to read and write it and analyze its grammar. Begin working on these skills while students continue work on life skills: have students read short nonfiction or fiction pieces related to their in-

terests, answer questions about them, and write responses.

Give short lectures on important topics, such as the structure of the U.S. educational system, and have students take brief notes.

### 5 IDENTIFY SCHOOL AND CAREER GOALS

**Toward the end of the term, begin discussing with students various school/career options.** Many students, of course, will already have identified such goals, but they may be less sure on how to go about accomplishing them as our educational system and its connections to the workplace can be a complex maze even to students born in this country.

Begin by identifying several educational options locally: for example, the community college and state university and then go beyond that, as necessary. Also discuss several possible career paths that are available from studying at those institutions, and it is likely at least one or two students will be interested (like the dental assistant or nursing fields from studying at the local community college, for example). Find out what careers students are already interested in and discuss where they might get information on this field: a number of students have an interest in pharmacy, for example, and a nearby private college, University of the Pacific, has a recognized pharmacy department with several programs. You might consider having a school counselor or representative from a department of student interest come in to your class to talk about opportunities.

No one said teaching beginning ESL would be easy.

**BUT WITH SOME PERSISTENCE, FOCUSING ON COMMUNICATION AND TRANSITIONING TO ACADEMIC SKILLS, THE TEACHER CAN TAKE HER CLASS FROM NOVICES TO STUDENTS READY TO BEGIN THE JOURNEY TOWARD THEIR ACADEMIC LIVES AND CAREERS!**

# Top 8 Tips on Teaching Absolute Beginners

When we talk about low-level students, we're not talking about teaching the students about the difference between present simple and past simple tenses. We are talking about a level 0 student who can barely string a single sentence together or has utter difficulties when answering the question *'How are you?'* **Teaching absolute beginners can be quite a tough task**, especially for native speakers with little understanding of the L1 of the students. Nevertheless, with a little bit of help and the right guidance, a teacher can definitely make a strong improvement to the student providing them with the confidence they need to take them to the next level.

## HOW TO Teach Complete Beginners

### 1 SMILING HELPS

Ah yes, number one on the list, a **smile is something that can be understood on a universal level**. When building a rapport with your absolute beginner, smiling will build trust and show him or her that you are there in a supportive capacity. Body language is also a useful tool when teaching English, as it is often said that about 70% of our communication is done through body language. Body language is great when trying to get answers from student, showing if the student is incorrect, or even if you want to elicit an answer from a student.

### 2 FIND AN ASSISTANT

When you're teaching a group of absolute beginners, it is more than likely that you will have **one of the students in the class who would be a little bit above the others**. You should use this student to your advantage and make them your class assistant. This class assistant can help communicate the task, vocabulary and other useful things that the other students may not yet have an understanding.

By finding an assistant in the class, this **makes things easier and creates a great atmosphere** in the class where the students can help each other in the learning process.

### 3 USE REALIA, FLASHCARDS AND OTHER VISUALS

Realia is ESL jargon for anything that is 'real'. Realia is great method when it comes to teaching vocabulary, as students are able to simply put the vocabulary with a real life object. This can be done with practically anything, from the whiteboard marker in your hand, or even flowers from the garden. Another common form of realia is photos. Photos make a great way to show the students an object or person that is real. One activity that works well with absolute beginners is learning about families. Both you and the students can take your family photos into the class and share them while describing the relative in the photo. Flashcards and other visuals, such as PowerPoint presentations are an ideal way to learning new vocabulary.

### 4 KNOW A FEW BASIC WORDS AND PHRASES IN THE STUDENT'S LANGUAGE

While many language schools discourage any usage of the teacher using the L1 of the student, we find that using a few words and phrases here and there prove to be extremely helpful. This helps with getting your point across in the class, and teaching some of the simpler vocabulary.

### 5 SPEAK..... SLOWLY.....

This is one of the more obvious tips to make the list, but teachers should be reminded to speak slow. With vast number of coffee addicts who rely on their fix to get through six-straight hours of teaching, sometimes we can tend to get a little ahead of ourselves. Always keep this somewhere close to the forefront of your mind, or write it at the top of your lesson plan in big writing.

### 6 TEACH ALL FOUR SKILLS

For early learners of English, it is a good idea to give them a broad range of activities. This ensures that they can make an improvement in all areas. Learning a variety of skills will also help with other areas of English too. By practicing reading, the students will get a very good

understanding of grammar and vocabulary, as they can see the words correctly used and in context. Listening is also a good way to learn new words while helping their speaking. By listening to a recording, students should try to copy the manner in which a native speaker says the words. This will help significantly later down the track in accent reduction.

### 7 REPEAT, REPEAT, REPEAT

When teaching absolute beginners, it is important to **repeat all commands in order to give them a chance to listen to the individual words**. By repeating your commands, the students are more likely to understand what you are saying, as they may be able to understand specific words, and then contextually put the action and word together. For more advanced students at about a level 0-1, one ideal way of improving the student's vocab is to repeat the instruction using different words. If the student is unfamiliar with the vocabulary, they can generally use their brain to connect the dots while learning through the context.

### 8 CHILL, RELAX, BE CALM. DON'T STRESS!

Even though sometimes you may feel like you're not helping, or that the work you are doing is in vain, give it a few weeks. Things will begin to pan out nicely after a few weeks as you begin to find your feet and **build a strong rapport with your students**. They will also begin to understand your teaching methodology and begin to pick up on all visual clues, hand signals, body language, and everything else that you employ in helping them learn the target language. If you put in the time with them, they will always look back on you as **being their first English teacher who really made the effort to help and assist them**.

**TEACHING ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS CAN BE A TOUGH TASK, BUT WITH A LITTLE KNOW-HOW AND THE RIGHT ATTITUDE, ANYONE CAN SUCCEED.**

The above eight steps should make your ESL teaching life all that much easier when your academic manager assigns you a group of level 0 students.

# How to Teach the Verb “To Be” to Beginners

## THE VERB “TO BE” IS THE FIRST VERB STUDENTS LEARN IN THEIR ENGLISH STUDIES.

It is used extensively in the English language and will allow students to create simple sentences with the vocabulary they have learned to date.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 WARM UP

For this first lesson, it is best to focus on only the *I, You, He/She/It structures* which you can build upon in later classes. If students have not really done a lot of activities with the words *he, she, and it*, you may want to consider simply using names in the practice activities. Once you have determined what you would like to cover in the first lesson, use the warm up activity to **review the vocabulary** students will need later on in the lesson. A short simple drill activity would be ideal.

### 2 INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

During the introduction section of your lesson, introduce any new vocabulary you plan to use in this lesson. Some emotions and adjectives would be good because students will then be able to form complete meaningful sentences. Introduce words such as happy and sad if students have not yet learned them. **Use flashcards to drill vocabulary** and have students complete some simple worksheet activities for further practice.

### 3 INTRODUCE “TO BE”

Show students how to make sentences such as “*I am happy. You are happy. Jenny is happy.*” Ensure that students understand how the subject and forms of the verb are paired. You can practice this before introducing the full sentence structure you would like students to learn.

Call on students to make sentences choosing a subject, verb, and adjective from columns on the board.

Without introducing the question form “*Is she happy?*” you can use such questions to test comprehension and students should understand what you are asking. Have them answer by saying “*Yes, she is happy.*” so that they continue to practice saying the target structure.

### 4 PRACTICE SIMPLE

You can use worksheets for practice. Have students complete a fill in the blank exercise where they must choose am, is, or are to complete sentences to ensure that they understand which form of the verb agrees with certain subjects. You can also have students match sentences with images or with translations for practice and to test comprehension. As a class check the answers before continuing on.

### 5 PRACTICE COMPLEX

Students can then complete an activity such as **Battleship for further practice**. You can adapt this classic game for use in the classroom. While it can be time consuming to explain, especially to beginners, your students will enjoy playing and it can be used to practice a wide variety of topics.

To play Battleship students should work in pairs using a worksheet. For this class, the grids on the worksheet might have *I, You, He, She, Jenny, Ms. Smith* in the first column and *happy, fun, from Korea, sad, silly, from America* in the first row. Students then practice sentences such as “*I am silly.*” to try to locate and sink all of their opponents ships first.

There may not be enough time in the first lesson to begin this activity but devoting the second lesson entirely to Battleship would give your students lots of speaking practice.

For a third class, introduce the question that goes along with this target structure and have students play using the same worksheet but by mak-

ing questions such as “*Is Ms. Smith from America?*”

The really great thing about this activity is that students essentially have to speak in order to play whereas with board games students may be tempted to simply roll the dice and move their pieces around the board without really practicing English.

### 6 REVIEW

As a general review activity you can divide students into groups and play **Hangman with sentences or words from their textbook**. It is perhaps not appropriate to play the original game in your classroom so you can just adapt it so that no one actually hangs.

One adaptation is to simply have a very large fish where when students guess incorrectly, a little fish gets closer and closer to being eaten. This is not very accurate as you can either draw the game out or end it whenever you choose.

Another method of playing is to assign a point value to certain things. For example, if a group guesses the letter *a* and there are three in the sentence, the group would get three points. A correct guess of the entire sentence would be five points while there should be a penalty for guessing the entire phrase incorrectly but no penalty for guessing a letter that is not used. You can alter the scoring anyway you would like to make it more appropriate for your class.

Once your students are quite confident with making the sentences practiced in this lesson, you should include the plural *we, you, they* as well.

**AS THE FIRST VERB THEY STUDY, “TO BE” IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR YOUR STUDENTS AND IT IS ESSENTIAL TO GET THEM TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE FORM OF THE VERB IS AFFECTED BY THE SUBJECT OF THE SENTENCE.**

# How to Teach Present Simple to Complete Beginners

At the outset new students are convinced that they cannot communicate in English at all, but by the end of this lesson they will hopefully be able to confidently introduce themselves to anyone they meet in a simple and yet meaningful way.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCTION

There is no warm up activity to introduce any grammatical term or vocabulary. Assume that your students have limited linguistic knowledge, or none whatsoever.

**Write the substitution tables on the board.** Get it right from the start. Make sure they have a model to practice and follow. Maybe they know the structures already but it's good to reinforce the grammar and if they are real novices they will need to follow your guidance. Keep it basic. You are teaching the verbs 'to be' and 'to do' only – which will form the foundations of their learning.

### 2 PRE-TEACH PRONOUNS

Ensure they know pronouns or you will be wasting a lot of valuable time. Use gestures, mime, pictures etc. to elicit or re-iterate grammar outlines.

There is often confusion with the masculine/feminine form. Teach 'I am. You are (singular). He/She/It is. We are. You are. They are (plurals).' Show contractions – 'I'm etc.'

### 3 ELICITING NAMES

You write your name on the whiteboard. First name only. Ask your students "What's my name?" "What is my name?" Repeat. You may get a whole host of answers 'Michael / You are Michael / You're Michael / Your name is Michael / Mr Michael / Teacher Michael etc. Correct the errors and write clearly on the board 'My name is Michael.' 'I am Mi-

chael. I'm Michael'

Teacher models Q & A. Ask all the students their names – going randomly around the class. Make sure that there is plenty of movement and friendly gesturing with an open hand. **No pointing.** Get your students motivated and animated. Stress that you need first names only. It's much more friendly.

Now introduce family names. Write your name on the board – Angelo. Then present the full sentence 'My name is Michael Angelo.' Advise your students that this is the standard format in English, as there are cultural differences e.g. in Japan the surname precedes the given name. Repeat the exercise with all the students - 'What's my name?' Get full and abbreviated answers. Repeat many times around the class.

### 4 PRACTICE TIME

'What's his name?' 'What's her name?' Get students up and doing a mingling activity. Get them to report back to you the names they have learned. This is fun, practical and breaks the ice in a new group. Can they remember the people they have been introduced to? This is the time to check. Practice for as long as you feel necessary.

Don't assume they have mastered this first step easily, as you will often find later that the elementary work is quickly forgotten.

### 5 REVIEW ON THE BOARD

Ensure you match your spoken practice with written examples. Do concept checking for your question practice. 'What's his name?' Show contractions on the board. 'His name is ...' or 'He's ....'

Ask your group to chorally answer/ move around the class and ask students randomly.

### 6 EXPLAINING JOBS

Ask the class "What do I do?" 'What's my job?' As students answer, make sure you write the answer on the board for future reference. 'You are an English Teacher.'

Get them to repeat and point out the 'an' article if it has been omitted. Ask all the students individually 'What do you do?' You may not be able to elicit, so you will have to introduce the relevant vocabulary. It would be useful to have pictures, or flashcards of popular jobs to provide a point of reference especially for visual learners.

Get your students to answer correctly and move pairs around to incorporate group practice. Ask and report back their findings. Teacher asks group members as a whole and then calls randomly on specific students e.g. 'What does Manuel do?' Response – 'He's an engineer.' Practice/drill articles 'a' and 'an.'

### 7 DESCRIBING WHERE YOU LIVE

Ask your students 'Where do I live?' Use body language and drawings to show your home's location. The students probably don't know, so you want them to ask and therefore elicit the question 'Where do you live?' Demonstrate on the board the word order. The name of your street, etc. - the smallest place first – village/town/city. Get students to ask their partners and then practice by doing a mingling activity. Get feedback. Students report back where the other students live. 'She lives in ....' Be alert because the preposition is often missed or dropped

### 8 INTRODUCE HOBBIES

'What do you do in your free time?' Elicit hobbies vocabulary from students and write on the whiteboard. Have pictures/ flashcards etc. Use gestures and mime. **Have fun but focus on simplicity.**

Like/do/enjoy differences in nuance will pass over their heads at this level. Concentrate on the verb 'to be' as before only at this stage and give models through presentation. *'My hobby is tennis'* etc. Get students to ask their partners. Ensure there is feedback time to the group and the teacher.

## 9 CONSOLIDATION OF MATERIAL LEARNED

Write the 4 questions on the whiteboard and model answers.

1. What's your name?
2. What do you do?
3. Where do you live?
4. What do you do in your free time?

Drill the students chorally and individually. Questions followed by answers/alternate roles/ask randomly. Ensure that the students are quite clear on the 4 questions and there are no errors in their answers. Practice and repeat as necessary. Give feedback and rectify errors using examples on the whiteboard.

## 10 LIVE PRACTICE AND FEEDBACK

Students must introduce themselves to everyone in the class. Set the scenario with mime etc. – *'Imagine you are at a party and meeting for the first time. You must talk to all your class members.'* Teacher walks around monitoring and giving assistance when required. Error spotting/correcting. Focus on fluency rather than accuracy, unless mistakes are too blatant.

Final error rectification and exemplifying on the board before students must act independently.

## 11 BRIEF INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION AND CLOSURE

The students introduce themselves to the class using the 4 sentences learned and practiced. *'Hello. My name is ... I'm ...a/an ... I live in ... My hobby is ...'* Aim for fluency rather than accuracy, as this is a big step and a major accomplishment for absolute beginners.

Randomly ask students any of the 4 questions. Assign homework practice and advise that the next lesson will begin with the self-introductions covered. Stand at the door and ask students 1 of the 4 questions, as they exit to give them a sense of real achievement.



# 5 Non-Verbal Ways to Do Error Correction

## EFFECTIVE ERROR CORRECTION IS ONE OF THE THINGS ESL TEACHERS STRUGGLE WITH THE MOST.

If you correct them too much, you might make them feel discouraged and compromise their fluency for the sake of accuracy. If you correct them too little, they'll continue making the same mistakes. Achieving the right balance is a daunting task, although not an impossible one. And when doing on the spot correcting, do you simply supply the right answer? Although it is certainly an option, you should sometimes give your students the chance to correct themselves. There are several verbal strategies you may use, like **asking them to repeat what they've just said**, or **repeating the sentence yourself but pausing** to let the student fill in the "blank" correctly.

However, here are the 5 best non-verbal ways to do error correction.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 USE A GRAMMAR FLAG

Once you have your students actively engaged in some drilling exercises, use a little red flag to "flag" their mistakes. **The flag goes up if they make a mistake** and students instantly know they should go back and say it again. You may also use the flag in others types of activities, or whenever you wish to work on accuracy.

### 2 USE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Students are sometimes self-conscious enough without having to endure constant corrections. So, how can you effectively correct them and not stomp on their confidence in the process? When a student makes a mistake, like saying a verb in the past tense incorrectly, use an *exaggerated* facial expression to signal the mistake. **Give them an open-mouthed, wide-eyed stare. Or arch an eyebrow.** The more "theatrical" the facial

expression is, the funnier it'll be. You'll be effectively signalling that a mistake has been made, but students won't take it so seriously.

### 3 USE GESTURES

Another very effective way to show students they've made a mistake is through gestures, some of which may be specific to the kind of mistake. Teachers typically **gesture backwards** with their hands or point to the back to show students they haven't used the verb in the past. Students often use the wrong pronouns: it's quite common to hear a student say, *"She went to the movies with your boyfriend."* To which you simply reply by pointing to yourself with a look of shock or surprise. You may also implement a gesture to indicate that students should repeat something, or say it again, and if they repeat the mistake, you can raise a finger to show them where in the sentence the mistake is, though they have to figure out what they are doing wrong.

### 4 USE VISUAL REMINDERS

Very often students forget the final "-s" in the simple present, third person singular. You may have a big **S** stuck on a wall that you can point to on such occasions, or point to something that will trigger the right response, like the picture of an S-shaped snake. Visual reminders are also great for vocabulary-related mistakes. A student may say *"childs"* instead of *"children"*. You point to a picture of a group of children to indicate that something is wrong, while the student has to figure out he or she used the wrong plural.

### 5 USE FINGER COUNTING

How can you correct mistakes in word order in a non-verbal way? Fin-

ger counting is simply perfect for this! Say a student used the wrong word order to ask a question: *"You are a teacher?"* Ask the student to repeat the question and then show him or her how you count the words on your fingers. Show the student how the first two fingers are in the wrong order, so that the student understands the question should start with "Are you..."

**YOU CAN GET AS CREATIVE AS YOU LIKE WITH YOUR FACIAL EXPRESSIONS, GESTURES, AND VISUAL REMINDERS. REMEMBER HERE THAT THE ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO HELP STUDENTS LEARN FROM THEIR MISTAKES, AND IF YOU SIMPLY SUPPLY THE RIGHT ANSWER, THEY MAY NOT FULLY INTERNALIZE IT.**

Some teachers have even been known to hum well-known songs to trigger the correct response, like Depeche Mode's *"People are People"* when students make the classic mistake, "people is".

# 7 Best Ways to End a Lesson

Who among ESL teachers does not understand the purpose behind a warm up activity? We all agree that it's important to get students focused, to introduce a task or topic, to break the ice, or simply place your students in "English mode".

**But what about cool downs?** Many teachers are not aware of the importance of a cool down. And what is exactly this importance?

Many teachers just play a game or let students work on an activity till the bell rings. When you do this you neglect to give your students closure on what they have learned for the day. You're not capitalizing on your **unique opportunity to effectively wrap things up in a way that will benefit your students' learning.**

**THE WARM UP AND THE COOL DOWN ARE LIKE THE INTRODUCTION AND THE CONCLUSION OF AN ESSAY.**

An essay with no conclusion has a very abrupt ending. If you just let students work on an activity till it's time to go home, you are not only giving them a sudden and abrupt ending to the lesson, you may also come across as disorganized and improvised. The cool down, however, clearly shows students that this is the way you planned for the lesson to end and that you're ending it like this for a reason. The cool down has its own purpose.

**HOW TO** End a Lesson – because those last minutes matter!

## 1 WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED TODAY?

It goes without saying that you should never end a lesson by introducing something new, just to leave your students hanging till the next class. The best way to end a lesson is to give students some kind of review activity, so that they may see the progress they've made in just one lesson. One of the most common and easiest to implement is simply taking the last 5 minutes of class to ask your students, "*What have you learned today?*" Notice, here, that you're not the one telling them what they've learned. They may give you a list of new words, or say they learned to speak about what they did in the past

or what they will do in the future, etc... Students may pick up something they missed earlier. Also, it's important to speak in functional ways, for example not say they learned to use the "simple present" but rather that they learned to speak about their habits, schedules, and everyday activities.

## 2 PERFORMANCE CORRECTION AND FEEDBACK

Right before the last 5 minutes of class you can have some sort of performance activity, for instance a role play. Usually we don't correct students during the role play so we don't interrupt the flow, but when they're done you can end the class with corrections of words or expressions they used incorrectly, things they forgot to say, etc. and your students will go home with these corrections fresh on their minds. Students may also give their opinion or feedback on their classmates' performance.

## 3 60 SECONDS

Choose a few students and give each 60 seconds to speak about something you've covered that day: what they did yesterday if you worked on simple past, talk about Halloween, professions, or animals. Older learners may even give a "how to" lesson, they may also summarize a story they heard, or place themselves in another person's shoes, like a celebrity, profession, or even animal. But they must speak for a full minute. To motivate students to speak, you may choose to reward the student who says the most, or includes the most information, with a reward sticker.

## 4 WRITE AN EMAIL

Ask students to imagine they have to write an email to a friend or family member and tell them what they did today in their ESL class. Students have a chance to summarize what they've learned in written form. This writing activity may be tailored to any topic. If you talked about farm animals, ask students to write about their favorite animal and why it's their favorite. And the same goes for foods, sports, celebrities. Adult learners may write a business email with the new vocabulary they've learned.

## 5 SAY GOODBYE

For very young ESL learners the best way to wrap up a lesson is with a goodbye song or saying goodbye to a puppet. The puppet may "ask" them questions about something they learned, and even give them a short "review" by asking, "What's this?" or "What's that?" or any other question or expression they may have learned. You may set aside this special time with the puppet every day at the end of the class, so children know what to expect, and even though they may be very young, they will still have this sense of closure.

## 6 TIDYING UP

After a special holiday class, or right after a lesson packed with arts and crafts, ask students to help you tidy up the classroom. Make sure you factor in this tidy up time when you plan crafts. Letting students run off with their art work just to leave you in a classroom littered with papers and art supplies gives them the wrong message.

## 7 SHARING WITH THE CLASS

Another great way to end your class is by asking your students to share whatever it is that you worked on that day: a fall collage, a painting, they may read something they've written. The important thing here is to give them a space to share something they've produced with the language elements they've learned. Even adult learners may read a letter or email they've written.

**YOU CAN DO ANYTHING YOU WANT TO WRAP UP YOUR LESSON AND BE AS CREATIVE AS YOU WANT TO BE.**

However, it is essential that you provide these three things:

- a time for students to cool down after an activity-filled class,
- some sort of review of what they've learned,
- the proper closure to the day's tasks.

Keep these three essential points in mind, and you'll come up with great, effective ways to end your lessons every time!

# 9 Five-Minute Activities That Will Save Your Lesson One Day (And Maybe Your Reputation, Too)

**TEACHERS ALWAYS NEED TO HAVE AN ACTIVITY OR TWO ON HAND IN CASE A LESSON TAKES A LITTLE BIT LESS TIME THAN EXPECTED OR DOES NOT WORK OUT EXACTLY AS PLANNED.**

Some activities that work well in one class totally flop in another so you will have to be flexible with your lesson plan and able to adapt when necessary.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 SHORT READING ACTIVITIES

With a reading passage, you can conduct this **short reading race** to give students some more pronunciation, speaking, and even listening practice. Have students stand up and tell them that each column of students is a team. For this activity the first student should read the first sentence, the second student should read the next one, and students should continue reading sentences until the entire passage is complete and then sit down. The first team to read all the sentences and sit down wins. You can play again using the same passage starting with the student in the back or make each row a team instead.

To help students make their reading sound more natural, introduce **slash reading**. To do slash reading, simply read the passage aloud to the class pausing when it is natural to do so while students repeat after you and make slashes or breaks in their text.

### 2 SHORT WRITING ACTIVITIES

**Shiritori** is a Japanese game that has been adapted for ESL classrooms. For this game make each column of students a team and give them space on the board to write. You should write one word on the board and a member from each team should rush to the board to write a word that starts with the last letter of your word. The next team member then has to think of a word that starts

with the last letter of the word his team member wrote. Students continue taking turns writing words on the board until you stop the game. It should be very fast paced. You can stop when groups start running out of space to write and decide the winner based on number of words or points. One point for 1-4 letter words and two points for 5 letters or more seems to work well but words with spelling errors and duplicates do not count.

**Boggle** is another activity students can do in groups. Give each group a piece of scrap paper, draw a boggle letter grid on the board, and have students find as many words as they can within the time limit. You can create your own grids but be sure that there are enough word possibilities for your students to find. Give students a scoring system, ask them to score their papers and hand them in. In the next class you can announce the winning team and the best word.

Another popular favorite is **Hangman** but it is best to avoid the hanging imagery in the classroom so a scoring system would be better. You can choose the sentences and have students work in groups, taking turns, to figure out the answer.

### 3 SHORT SPEAKING ACTIVITIES

**Crisscross** is a great warm up game. Ask students to stand up and start by asking a question, the student who answers correctly can choose his row or column to sit down, continue by asking another question. The game ends when everyone is sitting down. You can add a twist if there are a lot of questions you want to review with the class. Have just the first row of students stand up and when a student gives the correct answer, have him sit down and ask his team member, the student sitting directly behind him, to stand up. For this activity teams should be even or you will have to work in a way of making them even and you can draw this activity out by keeping the teams neck and neck.

**Fruit Basket** is another speaking game where students sit in a circle with one less chair than participant. One student stands in the middle of the circle and makes a sentence. After the sentence has been said everyone that the sentence applies to must switch seats leaving another student in the center. Sentences such as *"I am a student."* are sure to get everyone moving.

**Chinese Whispers** is another speaking activity that can be done in the classroom. Think of some sentences to use, form teams, and ask the first student in each column to come to the front of the classroom or into the hallway to be given the sentence. The first team who writes a sentence on the board should receive points but the most points should go to the team that has the sentence most similar to the original.

### 4 SHORT LISTENING ACTIVITIES

**Bingo** is a classic game that you can use not only in numbers lessons but also when talking about letters or even words and phrases. If you have noticed that students struggle with the pronunciation of numbers such as thirteen and thirty, you can have a short Bingo session using only these numbers. Rather than make Bingo cards, have students fill in the grids themselves.

**Karuta** is another Japanese game. Have students sit in groups and spread vocabulary cards face up on the desks. When you say a word aloud, the student who grabs the correct card first gets to read it aloud and keep it. The student with the most cards at the end of the game wins. This can help students with spelling, listening, and pronunciation.

**THESE ARE JUST SOME OF THE MANY EXCELLENT FIVE TO TEN MINUTE ACTIVITIES YOU CAN USE AS WARM UPS OR WHEN THINGS DO NOT GO EXACTLY AS PLANNED.**

# How to Teach Using Gestures and Mime

## A LOT OF TEACHING ENGLISH IS ABOUT ACTING.

Keeping your energy high and being creative with your lessons will make your students more attentive. Outside of role play activities, you can use gestures and mime in many different ways. These can aide your students in communicating, understanding, and participating during your lessons.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 GIVING DIRECTIONS

Using particular gestures or expressions in the classroom will lead students to associate them with a particular thing. For example, if you always use the same gesture when you say *“Please stand up.”* students will become accustomed to it and stand up when you use that gesture even if you occasionally leave out the oral instruction. You can have gestures for when you want students to repeat something after you, make groups, or sit down too. This can be especially handy when you want to communicate something to your students in a noisy setting. For instance, if you say *“Please turn your desks to make groups of four.”* students will begin moving around and making noise as they rearrange their desks so they may miss your verbal instructions to sit down but if you also gesture for them to sit down, at least some students will see it and react accordingly which will cause the remaining students to follow suit.

### 2 VOCABULARY

Using gestures and mime is important when it comes to vocabulary too. You can use them to **elicit certain words and phrases from students**. If you teach very young students, it is also common to associate gestures with words to help students remember vocabulary better. Using

the same gesture every time you say a particular word or phrase will help these students associate the two.

### 3 PRACTICE

In practice dialogues, you can incorporate gestures and mime. If you are teaching a conversation where a customer is complaining about something to a store clerk, for instance, you can tell students that the store clerk should act completely shocked at hearing the news, look apologetic, or whatever else you can think of to make the scenario more realistic. In a conversation where two people are meeting for the first time, have students shake hands **as they would do a real life situation**. These details make practicing dialogues more fun and interesting.

### 4 PRODUCTION

**Activities and games which use gestures and mime can be fun for the whole class.**

If you have just finished a section on feelings, make a list of feelings on the board and have students choose a slip of paper from a hat. Each slip of paper should contain a sentence such as *“You are happy.”* Students should keep their sentences a secret. Have one volunteer at a time mime his/her sentence while the rest of the class tries to guess it. This would be a good review activity.

To check individual comprehension, you can use the same basic idea but instead turn it into an interview activity where students have a sheet of paper with all the emotions listed as well as their secret emotion. The idea is that students go around the classroom miming and guessing emotions in pairs and getting a student signature for each emotion. When you go through the worksheet as a class you can have students read aloud

from their worksheets sentences like *“Jane is sad.”* and ask Jane to mime being sad for the class.

### 5 CULTURAL

If you are teaching English in a country such as Japan, it is important to consider the fact that lots of communication is **nonverbal**.

When your students have the opportunity to go abroad or interact with other native English speakers, your students may use polite language but if their body language is interpreted differently, they will not have made as good an impression as they were capable of. **Your use of simple gestures will help your students.**

For instance, you can shrug when you do not know the answer, wave to students when you see them outside the classroom, and gesture for students to come up to the board. This will expose students to the types of gestures common in a culture different from their own. Certain gestures may be the same but have different meanings so it is important to explain what they mean to you so that students are not confused.

**GESTURES AND MIME CAN BE REALLY HELPFUL IN NUMEROUS CLASSROOM SITUATIONS AND USING THEM OFTEN CAN ASSIST BOTH YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS.**

Do not force yourself to use certain gestures but do what comes naturally and when you find what works for you, stick with it and your students will adapt.

# ESL Activities to Teach to the Seven Different Learning Styles

*An essential part of being a great teacher is first understanding that students learn in different ways and then varying our teaching style to meet each of those of learners' needs.*

Any classroom will include learners of every persuasion. As teachers, we must try to reach each of the seven learning styles in our instruction: **visual, verbal, physical, aural, logical, social and solitary**. Though it is challenging to teach to all of these styles, it can be done.

## HOW TO Teach to All Learning Styles

### 1 VISUAL

**Visual learners learn best through what they SEE and are probably the easiest to connect with through typical classroom instruction.** By writing words on the board or having your students read information in their textbooks or on the internet, they receive visual input and are able to absorb the material you present. In addition to these traditional learning tools, using pictures in class will help meet the needs of the visual learners among your students. As it happens, these methods all work well with language instruction, and your visual learners may be some of your strongest students as a result.

### 2 VERBAL

**Verbal students learn through WORDS, both spoken and written, and probably learn languages more easily than other types of learners.** Since verbal learners will be naturally drawn to language learning, you may find many of them in your ESL classes. Incorporating both speaking and writing activities into your classroom, something that almost every ESL teacher must do, will give these students the types of input that will help them become not just second language learners but also second language acquirers. Since ESL classes are verbally focused and purposed, these may be the students who learn most easily in your class, no matter what types of activities you do.

### 3 PHYSICAL

**Also known as kinesthetic learners, physical learners benefit from using their bodies and sense of TOUCH as they learn.** By using techniques like **total physical response**, you will help your physical students make body connections with linguistic information. In addition, something as simple as having students write their answers to questions, which engages the hands as they hold the writing instruments, will help your students cement the knowledge they seek into their minds. Keeping this student in mind, give students opportunities to write the language they are learning, both in class and for homework, on paper and on the board, and get their bodies involved in learning whenever possible.

### 4 AURAL

**Aural learners acquire information best through SOUND.** Sometimes these learners are classified as auditory or musical. For these students, listening to lectures, videos and themselves talk all help them learn. Giving listening activities in class where students listen for a specific structure may be beneficial to your aural learners. In addition, music can be a great resource for these students. Try putting grammar lesson to song or using songs (with printed lyrics) to teach grammar structures, vocabulary or phonetics. Include as many types of listening in class as you can, and invite guest speakers and give practice lectures on a frequent basis all with your students' proficiency level in mind.

### 5 LOGICAL

**Do you have any mathematical geniuses in your classroom?** They are probably logical learners who are using reasoning, systems and **LOGIC** to absorb information. For these students, language learning will come most easily from a linguistic approach. Linguistics, known as the science of language, defines rules and patterns that languages follow in their grammar, syntax and phonology. If you are already familiar with the linguistics of English, try teaching your students syntactic or phonological rules. Diagramming sentences will also

help them understand the grammar that is beneath the surface structure of English sentences.

### 6 SOCIAL

**Social learners enjoy and benefit from WORKING IN GROUPS** as they learn. Since so much of language learning is communicative in nature, your social learners will probably have many opportunities for quality learning through discussion groups and learning activities such as jigsaws. Try to encourage talking in class rather than squelching it, and these students will benefit the most. Also give group work a chance in every area of the curriculum. Your social learners will appreciate it and your more advanced students may be able to support and encourage their classmates who might be struggling!

### 7 SOLITARY

**Students whose strongest learning style is solitary function best in self-learning environments and working ON THEIR OWN.** Because the goal of language instruction is communication, these students may struggle with group activities or discussions in class. If you intentionally keep a balance in your classroom, including some individual learning periods and creating learning stations throughout your classroom, these students will have their specific learning needs met. Homework is another way these students will be able to learn independently, so encourage independent study when you can but do not sacrifice communicative language use to do it.

## THE HUMAN BRAIN IS AN AMAZING CREATION.

That people who share a common system of biology can have so many differences when it comes to learning is humbling.

Keeping these learning styles in mind and intentionally planning for each of them as you develop your curriculum will make you a better teacher and give your students the right tools they need to learn, no matter what learning style is theirs.

# What Every Teacher Should Know about Reaching Older Learners

## IF YOU GET THE CHANCE TO TEACH OLDER LANGUAGE LEARNERS, YOU ARE IN FOR A REAL TREAT.

Whether you have a whole class of seniors or a few elder students sprinkled into your classes, you will want to take careful consideration of your older learners. They are a joy to teach and a welcomed addition into any classroom. Follow these tips and you will have a great time learning from, as well as teaching your older learners!

## HOW TO Reach Older Learners: What Every Teacher Should Know

### 1 USE THEIR LIFE EXPERIENCE

Older adults have a lot of life experience under their belts and also have well-developed learning strategies that have served them well in other settings. They can use these strategies to their advantage in language learning, too. As with all learners, **you want to tap into their experiences and expand upon those whenever possible.**

Language learning should give older students the same safe environment in which to share their past and also learn from the others in the class. Teachers should be flexible enough to allow different approaches to the learning tasks inside the classroom.

This also connects to their motivation. Older learners almost always have a very pointed reason why they are studying, and that reason will be their primary motivation. It is a good idea to **get to know them** and their story so that you have a good basis for what types of lessons and themes will attract their attention and motivation.

### 2 LEARNING STYLES

**Older learners will bring a lot to your classroom, but you also need to be flexible and patient with their learning patterns and styles.**

They often prefer to be presented with fairly analytical formal grammar and

need to be given a lot of controlled practice, before moving into more fluency-based communication activities. It may take seniors some time to adapt to spontaneous oral practice, and they may request a lot more explicit explanation and detailed grammar presentations.

You will have to bend a bit more than usual to accommodate what works for them. **Let them take a lot of notes** and refer to them in practice. Also **let them ask questions**, but don't let them dominate the entire class. You can guide them into the world of more laid-back learning, and chances are they will grow to appreciate it. It will take a conscious effort on your part to create a relaxed and informal learning environment to help them find their rhythm.

### 3 BUILD THEIR CONFIDENCE

If you are big on constant error-correction, you may want to lighten that as well. **Older learners are particularly sensitive to making mistakes and often don't take too kindly to consistent error correction.** They can actually be too hard on themselves and may exhibit perfectionist tendencies about minor grammar errors.

Older learners often have not spent much time in a modern classroom. **When they were in school things were very different**, and this may be their first classroom experience in several years. Seniors are generally accustomed to very rote learning, little oral practice and much more written proof of their skills. They generally aren't used to being corrected in front of a group, and even if your style is unobtrusive, give them time to acclimatize to this type of correction.

**A good way to avoid error-correction awkwardness is to provide opportunities for learners to work together**, focusing on understanding rather than producing language. You can also reduce the focus on error correction in order to build learners' self-confidence and promote language learning. Teach-

ers should emphasize the positive and focus on the good progress learners are making. Provide opportunities for them to be successful and to show off their success.

### 4 RECOGNIZE THE CHALLENGES

You'll want to be aware of the challenges that your older learners are facing. Also realize that their challenges may be different from other students in the class.

One of the common challenges is **serious health or personal issues**. If this is the case do your best to accommodate them, listen to them if they are willing to share, and help the class become a support system for the student. Other health problems may be less dire, like mild vision impairment or hearing difficulties. Those you can easily accommodate in your classroom by simply giving them a seat close to the board, providing handouts (with large fonts) in addition to oral instructions. If their personal issues or ailments impede their attendance try to be understanding and flexible.

Another challenge seniors may be up against is **feeling lonely or disconnected from society**. If this is the case, often the class is their connection to other people and to new and interesting things. There's not much to do here but be aware of their situation, offer support and understanding, and provide the sense of community that they are looking for.

### TEACHING OLDER ADULTS SHOULD BE A PLEASURABLE EXPERIENCE.

Their self-directedness, life experiences, and motivation are a great addition to any classroom. They will be successful especially if you get to know them and sustain an environment where all the learners in the class get what they need, delivered to them in the way that they need it.

# Expert Sharing: Making the Most of Your Students' Knowledge

## EVERYONE IS AN EXPERT ON SOMETHING.

For some people, expertise comes with a particular job. It could be a computer-programming expert, a teaching expert or a driving expert. For others, expertise comes from a passion. A person could be a self-proclaimed ice-cream expert, a Justin Beiber expert or a skateboarding expert. You can use the expertise each of your students has to offer to help them practice their English in real and effective ways.

## HOW TO Make the Most of Your Students' Knowledge

### 1 GET THE DISCUSSION MOVING

Start your expert unit with a class discussion. Ask your students what it means to be an expert. Help them understand that **an expert is someone who is very skilled at something or who holds a great deal of knowledge about a particular thing.** Take some time at this point to review vocabulary words associated with being an expert: *advice, experience, expertise, familiar, knowledge, wisdom.* They should understand that a person can be an expert on anything, and that people become experts in different ways. He may have read a lot of information on a topic. She may have handled the same situation many times to become an expert. He may have taken lessons to become an expert. She may have learned to be an expert by having a job or other responsibility. Anything with which they have extensive experience is their area of expertise. Pair students and have them discuss with each other what their area of expertise might be. You can give them some discussion questions to help:

*What are your hobbies?  
What do you do in your spare time?  
Do you have a job or chores that you do often?  
What are you good at?  
What do you know that other people don't?  
What do you like to read about?  
What kind of television shows do you watch?*

Once your students have determined their areas of expertise, they can begin

to share what they know with the rest of the class.

### 2 COMPILE THE INFORMATION

Now that your students have determined their areas of expertise, tell them that they will be **sharing their expertise with their classmates.** You can **choose either a written or an oral project** though doing both would be ideal. Give your students some class time to think about their area of expertise and make some notes to themselves. They can think about the questions they discussed with their partners, but they can also make a list of what someone else should know about that area of expertise.

*Is there a certain process someone might have to follow when baking the perfect muffin?*

*Are there particular qualities a person should look for when making the perfect match?*

*Is there essential information a person needs to know if her car breaks down?*

Students should then focus on the information they will share by **listing bullet points for four different areas of their expertise:**

- what they are an expert on,
- how they became an expert on the topic,
- how they have used their expertise,
- what others need to know about it.

From this point, **students can begin writing a rough draft of either a paper or a presentation** answering these questions with one paragraph focusing on each question.

### 3 SHARE YOUR WISDOM

After students have compiled their ideas and written a rough draft, now it is time for them to share their expertise with the class. First, students should write a final draft of their four paragraphs. Then, have each student plan to **give a presentation** to the class on his or her area of expertise. This may mean that they *play an instrument* in front of the class, that they *demonstrate how to cook a particular item*, or that

they *give a power point presentation* on the subject of dinosaurs. Encourage your students to be creative and make the presentation interesting. You may want to give them an assigned amount of time for the presentation.

The second way students can share their expertise with the class is through **nuggets of wisdom.** A nugget of wisdom can be like a piece of gold under the right circumstances. Ask your students how expert knowledge might be very valuable in a particular situation. Can they think of any times they needed specific knowledge? Then allow your students to share their nuggets of wisdom with the class through this activity. If you can get a **burlap** sack, use that. If you cannot simply draw one on a large piece of paper and post it on a bulletin board. Label it "Golden Nuggets" and give each student three or four small pieces of yellow paper. Students should then tear the edged of the paper unevenly so each piece is shaped like a gold nugget. On each paper, your students should share one piece of important knowledge from their area of expertise. Make sure you do this, too: your students want to know about you as well. Then post the nuggets on or around the sack you already put up on the wall. Give students time to read each other's bits of wisdom.

Finally, allow some time for **question and answer** to round out the sharing experience. Ideally, each student should have some time in front of the class to answer questions from his classmates. Make sure each student has at least one question to answer by asking it yourself if necessary. Also, make sure your students know it is okay to say they do not know the answer to a question. Most likely, though, they will be able to answer the questions that their peers ask.

## EVERYONE HAS VALUABLE KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE, AND THE TEACHER DOES NOT HAVE TO BE THE ONLY ONE WHO PRESENTS IT TO THE CLASS.

Take advantage of all your students have to offer by giving them an opportunity to share their expertise. Not only does it inform your other students, it builds each child's sense of self-esteem and self worth. Try it and you may become an expert, too.

# How to Teach Current Events to ESL Students

Natural disasters, catastrophes, and current events, in general, are great sources for speaking or reading tasks, and connect students with situations that are real, that may be affecting thousands of lives somewhere in the globe. Current events lessons also raise awareness of environmental issues, for example, or inform and educate students in a broader sense.

Needless to say, unless you're teaching highly-advanced students, you will not be able to simply cut out a newspaper article and read it to the class. **News stories must be adjusted and adapted** to your group's English reading or comprehension level. Still, taking the time to summarize a news article in fewer, easier words won't take you too long, plus you'll have the added benefit of using the vocabulary and structures you yourself have taught your students.

So, let's get started, and let's see how you should proceed once you have achieved a news piece that is suitable for your students' level.

## HOW TO Teach Current Events

### 1 START WITH A WARM UP

You must **set the mood for the topic** - you can't just dive into the news piece, right? For example, if the news piece is about a natural disaster, such as a tsunami, earthquake, hurricane, or mud slide, introduce the topic and asks students to tell you what it is, where it takes place, what the consequences are, what causes it, etc...

You may also ask for predictions. Give them the headline and ask them to predict what the article is about. If the headline mentions the "*Benefits of a Healthy Diet*", ask them what they think these benefits are.

### 2 PRE-READING/LISTENING TASKS

Some great pre-reading or listening tasks are:

- True or False – Students may not

know what is true and what is false - ask them to guess!

- Synonym matching – Students guess and try to match the synonyms in two columns.
- Sentence matching – Provide sentences that have been cut in half. Students try to match the beginning to the end of the sentence.

### 3 READING/LISTENING TASKS

You may choose to either read the news piece out loud, or print copies for everyone to read. No matter what you choose, be sure to give them a task to complete. Some examples may be:

- Gap-filling (with options)
- Gap-filling (without options)
- Multiple-choice questions
- Sentence matching

And many others, but make sure tasks are more targeted towards reading/listening comprehension and not entirely open-ended.

### 4 POST-READING/LISTENING TASKS

Some great activities or tasks for post-reading or listening are:

- Open-ended questions: why, what, where, who, how, etc...
- Discussion questions
- Debate
- Arts or crafts project
- Games to practice vocabulary or grammar

Whereas during the reading students were tested on their reading comprehension skills, in the post-reading they must somehow **put everything they learned together**, and hopefully produce something out of what they

learned.

**Use these steps and create engaging lessons out of any current event you think your students might find interesting.** But, if you're short on time, we've got great news for you! There are websites that provide news stories that have been tailored specifically to the needs of English learners.

- **BreakingNewsEnglish.com** provides news stories based on themes, in HTML format or PDF, which means they are ready to download and print. The website also provides MP3 audio for listening tasks, which you may easily download to your computer. Talk about taking the guesswork out of teaching current events!

- **BBC.co.uk** also has great news stories that have been adapted for adult learners, but most are a bit outdated. Still, there are plenty that may still be of use in the ESL classroom. They also come with audio and a file for download.

- **The New York Times' Learning Network** offers up-to-date news stories targeted towards children in grades 3 to 12, which means that most can be used for ESL students as well.

- **CBS Broadcasting** offers **LiteracyNet** with full, abridged, or out-lined news stories.

**SO, NOW YOU HAVE NO MORE EXCUSES. WE'VE PROVIDED YOU WITH EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KEEP YOUR STUDENTS IN THE LOOP AND INFORMED ON WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE WORLD THEY'RE LIVING IN.**

And to remain informed on what's going on in the ESL world, be sure to check out BusyTeacher.org on a daily basis for your dose of teaching resources, tips, and advice.



# 7 Terrific Telephone English Activities for Adult ESL Learners

**FOR THOSE WHO SPEAK ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE, SPEAKING ENGLISH ON THE TELEPHONE CAN BE ONE OF THE MOST CHALLENGING AND FRUSTRATING TASKS.**

On one hand, listening comprehension proves to be more difficult on the phone. On the other hand, it is sometimes absolutely necessary for those who do not live in English speaking countries to communicate with others in English – and on the phone.

**So, for most adult ESL learners, speaking on the telephone in English is an essential skill.** Fortunately, it is one that may be improved, if you give your students fun, interactive activities to help them practice.

**TRY** These 7 Telephone English Activities with Your Adult ESL Learners

## 1 LEAVE YOUR MESSAGE AFTER THE “BEEP!”

**Have students practice leaving each other messages.** First, try to gather as many recording devices as you can: MP3 players, digital recorders, laptops with microphones, or even your students' own cell phones (there's no need to actually make calls, just use notetaking software like Evernote or any other that may be used to record voice notes on cell phones).

If you have a large class, have groups of two or three students share one device. Have students record their outgoing messages, then students take turns leaving messages for their classmates. This works best if you give each student a specific reason for calling.

## 2 COULD YOU REPEAT THAT, PLEASE?

**Students practice asking the other speaker to repeat or clarify something they did not understand.** Divide students into pairs and assign the roles of caller (Student A) and non-native speaker (Student B). Student B pretends they speak very little English so

that Student A has to ask B to repeat everything they say. Variations include adding background noise, static, or having Student B speak very softly. You can also give them specific instructions/complications, like a difficult name to spell, or asking for directions.

## 3 I NEED TO CONFIRM YOUR DETAILS.

**When conducting some transactions on the phone, we are quite often asked to supply personal details to confirm our identity.** Give your students this situation or a very similar one: Student A wants to purchase an item on eBay, but is unable to make the payment. Student B works in Customer Support and will help Student A complete the transaction. But before they can do that, Student B asks Student A a series of personal questions, from address to phone number, ID number to mother's maiden name. A fun twist is to ask Student B to ask as many questions as he/she can, including ridiculous things, like a pet's name!

## 4 PLEASE HOLD. I'LL CONNECT YOU TO THE RIGHT DEPARTMENT.

**This is a great way to have students practice their reason for calling over and over again.** Give Student A a reason to call Customer Support. Student B takes the call, but then connects Student A with another department (Sales, Technical Assistance, Accounts Payable, etc...) Student C then connects A with D and so on. Student A must repeat the reason for calling each and every time.

## 5 MIMIC THE CALL

**This works great with beginners who are not yet familiar with common telephoning expressions and their appropriate intonation.** Play a telephone conversation while students read and mimic the call as it plays – the goal is to follow the rhythm and copy the intonation to match the speakers in the audio. Play the audio track again, but

this time lower the volume, and then a third time with the volume even lower. Play the track as many times as needed, till students are able to act out the situation comfortably without listening or reading.

## 6 THE VANISHING CALL

**Write out a complete telephone conversation on the whiteboard.** Have students take turns reading it out loud. Then, erase one or a few words, depending on how long the conversation is. Students once again read it out loud and include the missing word(s). Continue erasing words, a few at a time and having students read the conversation, until all of the text has been erased. Students must then say it completely from memory.

## 7 WHAT DO YOU SAY NEXT?

**Print out role play cards that include a variety of reasons for calling (*making/changing appointments, asking for someone on the phone, a problem with a bill/invoice*) and proper responses to these situations (*“The doctor is available Tuesday morning”... “He’s at a meeting right now. Would you like to leave a message?”... “I’ll put you through to Accounts Payable”*).** Student A picks up a Reason for Calling card and calls Student B. Student B has to choose the appropriate response from the set of Response cards.

Remember to teach your students plenty of expressions/responses, and don't be afraid to repeat, repeat and repeat some more.

**MOST TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS ARE BASED ON A CERTAIN REPETITIVE SET OF PHRASES FOR TALKING ON THE PHONE. THE MORE YOU EXPOSE YOUR STUDENTS TO AND THE MORE YOU PRACTICE THEM, THE EASIER IT WILL BE FOR THEM TO HANDLE A VARIETY OF TELEPHONE SITUATIONS.** And if you're on the lookout for more great speaking activities, BusyTeacher has over 100 Role Plays worksheets that you can download and use today!

# Getting to First Base: Teaching Resumes and Cover Letters

*Some years ago, when I was job hunting, a friend, a senior teacher who had been on numerous hiring committees, looked at my resume and asked why I hadn't put down some of my committee experience.*

I responded that I thought that would come out in the interview. At this, my friend pointed out that there was usually little time in a thirty-minute interview for these details, and while such details as committee and volunteer work might actually be a deciding point in interviewing someone, they were rarely the focus of the interview itself. This conversation represented a sea-change in my view of cover letters and resumes: as screening devices that determined whether a person gets interviewed, while the interview determined whether the individual gets hired.

**ESL students might have similar misconceptions on the hiring process, as it is highly cultural.**

Some cultures, for example, don't have a complex hiring process as in the U.S. Rather, people are more or less "placed" in jobs after college. Still other cultures rely more on networking and family connections. While all of these systems exist to a more or less degree in most societies, in the U.S.'s system hiring is largely competitive, where employers put out their call for employees, and then job seekers compete for these positions, sometimes hundreds of applicants for one vacancy. It is in this context that cover letters and resumes should be taught. The purpose of the cover letter and resume is to make the job seeker look good — in fact, so good that the potential employer wants to meet the job seeker and interview him or her because this is simply the best candidate for the job.

**HOW TO** Teach Students Cover Letters and Resumes that Get the Job

## 1 PUT COVER LETTERS AND RESUMES IN CONTEXT OF JOB HUNTING

Because students may unfamiliar with our job hunting process, which varies from culture to culture, **explain a little**

**bit what job applicants can expect to go through** in looking for a job. After students understand the process, then they will understand the purpose of writing a cover letter and resume, and having a writing purpose is critical to good writing.

## 2 WRITE A COVER LETTER THAT GETS ATTENTION

At this point, now that they understand the job hunting process, students are ready to learn about **cover letters, the job applicant's introduction of himself or herself** to a specific company for a specific job. It is usually addressed to a specific person, the contact person from the job announcement, and outlines some of the applicant's skills that are particularly important to the job. The purpose of the cover letter is to get the reader to take a second look at the resume.

## 3 TAILOR THE RESUME TO THE JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

If the purpose of the cover letter is to attract attention to the resume, **the resume's purpose is to motivate the company to call in the applicant for an interview.** Therefore, the instructor should now hand out a collection of "help-wanted" advertisements, either from the newspaper or internet. Students should all select one, from a field in or one related to that they would themselves eventually like to work in. Once the students have advertisements, they should design a rough draft of their resume based on their advertisements.

So if my advertisement reads *"Teacher needed to teach a summer English class in intensive, six-hour blocks,"* I will want in my resume to highlight the experience that demonstrate the skills of teaching English in intensive, short-term formats. I will not, in this resume, focus so much on my skills and experience as a writer as that is not so relevant to the job sought.

## 4 FOCUS ON GETTING THE INTERVIEW

Do the cover letter and resume get applicants the job? No, in most cases. The purpose of the cover letter and resume

is to get applicants an interview, and that is what job seekers should be thinking about at this stage — how to write a great cover letter and resume to get an interview. **It is the interview that may get the applicant the job.**

## 5 FOCUS ON APPEARANCE AND FORMAT

It's the content that matters, right, not the appearance of the cover letter and resume? Actually, as with most things in life, **appearances do matter.** The content matters too, of course. But if the resume is so riddled with spelling and grammar errors that the interviewer can't see past them to the content, or the bizarre, spiky font of the cover letter hurts the interviewer's eyes and she doesn't want to read it, then the content won't matter because the reader is stuck on the bad "packaging." So students should not feel obligated to be "creative" in format and should **have a teacher or friend look over their cover letters and resumes before sending them out.**

## 6 PRACTICE WRITING COVER LETTERS AND RESUMES

As a last step, **have students practice writing cover letters and resumes to the job announcements they have chosen.** They can do rough drafts in class, having a peer look them over. They can then take them home to write the final drafts, using their peers' feedback, turning them in the next class session. Some students may be interested in actually sending theirs out to the employer!

Even if they don't send them out, students will have created their first resumes which can, in the future, be tailored for real job searches.

**WRITING COVER LETTERS AND RESUMES CAN BE A MYSTIFYING PROCESS THAT CONFUSES NATIVE SPEAKERS AT TIMES.**

However, by explaining the job hunting process, placing resumes and cover letters into the context of this process, reviewing various examples, and practicing, some of the mystique will be removed, and your students will move one step closer to becoming employed.

# From ESL Zero to Hero: How to Teach Absolute Beginners

IN TODAY'S GLOBALIZED WORLD, MOST BEGINNER ESL STUDENTS HAVE HAD SOME CONTACT WITH THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, USUALLY THROUGH THE INTERNET, MOVIES OR TV.

They have most likely studied English at some point in their lives and abandoned their studies – they are often referred to as **false beginners**. But every now and then, we come across an **absolute beginner**, someone who has had so little exposure to English, they can't even handle the most basic greetings, verbs or vocabulary. Whether you are teaching a complete group of absolute beginners, or a few within a group of false beginners, here are some tips that will help your students go from ESL zeroes to heroes!

**HOW TO** Teach Absolute Beginners

## 1 PRIORITIZE LEARNING GOALS

Absolute beginners have had so little exposure to the English language, they have absolutely nothing to build on. Naturally, you'll start with the basics, but consider what they'll need to know first. Does it make sense to start with a list of foods in English? Or colors or numbers? Probably not. What they need to know first is how to introduce themselves and greet others. The natural progression from there is the use of the verb "to be" (*I am from... He is from...*, etc.). Then you'll progress on to possessives (my country, your name, his family) and so on... **Give priority to the language they will need first and foremost.**

## 2 DON'T ASSUME ANYTHING

Don't make assumptions about what your students know. **Assume they know nothing.** For example, to practice the verb *to be*, you ask them what nationalities they are, only to find out they don't know how to say nationalities in English. **Countries and nationalities** should be taught first, and then practiced with the verb "*to be*". And this goes for a multitude of vocabulary and

expressions. Don't assume a student will be able to answer you if you ask, "*How are you?*" Absolute beginners won't know how to reply, unless you've specifically taught them.

## 3 CELEBRATE SMALL ACHIEVEMENTS

**Absolute beginners will tell you they don't speak English – till the very end of the course.** What they're thinking is that they don't speak English fluently, or like you, for example. But make sure they're aware of what they can do. If on the first day of class they've learned to greet each in English, end your lesson by celebrating this, "*Congratulations! You can now introduce yourself and greet each other in English*". Take the focus away from what they can't do and **focus on what they can do** instead. This proves to be tremendously encouraging!

## 4 USE THEIR SENSES

**Absolute beginners may not have enough knowledge to understand explanations, synonyms, definitions, i.e. anything you describe with words.** Instead, use their senses to maximize learning. The easiest to use with beginners are visual aids like flashcards, but don't forget to include plenty of gestures, as well as real life objects. The use of realia will allow you to utilize several senses at the same time, and it's often more engaging than two-dimensional pictures. Don't forget to use things they can smell and taste, too!

## 5 SHOW, DON'T TELL

Because they haven't been exposed to the English language enough, try to **minimize their reading of dialogues and conversations, and act out the situations**, instead. Consider this: when you teach students to reply to a "*How are you?*" do you have them read this short exchange first or just act it out directly? Of course, it's a lot better to **simply show them how to reply.** This goes for most of the expressions and functions they will have to learn.

## 6 BUILD ON WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED BEFORE

It is essential for absolute beginners to **review what they've previously learned, and it's a great idea to start each lesson with a brief review.** But you can also re-use previously taught language points and introduce them into a new context. Say you are now teaching your students how to ask for directions. Student A is walking down the street with a friend, Student B, when they run into Student C. A introduces B to C (they review how to introduce someone), and then C asks A for directions.

## 7 KEEP IT REAL

Just because students are absolute beginners, it doesn't mean they can't handle real life situations. You should still **teach in context, and provide as many examples of real life situations and real props as you can.** Even though real maps, brochures or catalogues are filled with vocabulary they won't understand, it is important to help your absolute beginners deal with, precisely, these types of things. Show them how to pinpoint the information they may need like a phone number, address or website. Make sure they understand that it doesn't matter that they can't read the entire brochure, the important thing is that they learn to obtain what they need from it.

**BY THE TIME YOUR ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS FINISH THEIR COURSE, THEY WILL PROBABLY STILL NOT FEEL CONFIDENT ENOUGH TO SAY THEY "SPEAK" ENGLISH. THAT'S OK. THE IDEA OF "SPEAKING ENGLISH" IS TOO VAGUE IN THIS CONTEXT.**

Try providing them with some specific examples of what they can do now: go shopping by themselves, ask for assistance, order food in a restaurant, etc. Ask them to remember what it was like when they knew none of this. Tell them they are your heroes for learning so much and overcoming their language barriers. They will feel like heroes, too!

# Addressing Cultural Conflict in the ESL Classroom

*Once a number of years ago in a class of ESL students, two young men with different perspectives on the issue of capital punishment got a little too heated in their debate.*

In fact, it became so heated that one of them finally asked the other if he'd like to "take it outside." The other students broke into shocked and nervous laughter — shocked probably because this was class of seminary students, young men studying for the priesthood...

A few years later in a different class and different discussion, on the topic of gender relationships, a young lady from Kuwait spoke up in front of the class for the first time to express the view that women were "weaker" than men. She probably just meant physically weaker, in general, but this position brought howls of outrage from the other women in the class as well as some of the men — gender issues being a rather touchy point to most Americans. Nadja, the Kuwaiti woman, appeared so crushed by the experience — this free and frenzied exchange of ideas that is, regrettably, so much a part of U.S. discourse — that I spent a long time talking to her after class, assuring her that the other students had been attacking the idea put forth, not her, personally — but this still did not completely resolve it for her... she still felt attacked, as I would have.

Both of these situations are among my least proud teaching moments. In both cases, I failed to respond to and contain the situation adequately because I just didn't see it coming — and by the time the conflict had developed, it was too late to do much about. In short, I wasn't trained to referee.

**Trained in it or not, however, refereeing these kinds of exchanges and resolving them so that each party feels respected and the class can continue has become part of our jobs.**

**HOW TO** Manage Cultural Conflict in the Classroom

## 1 ESTABLISH THE RULES

Start off the term with the rules

of discussion or debate. I've called them the "Rules of Engagement"— before you even engage in debate, the students have to understand and agree to these rules. You can even include the students in establishing them: most will agree that it's important not to interrupt, to listen, to be clear, etc. Establishing these rules is important because you can then refer back to them as necessary: "Remember we agreed to listen to each other? Let's wait until Nadja is finished." It's very hard to establish these rules "on your feet" in the moment you need them!

## 2 PRACTICE

Before tackling a debate like capital punishment or abortion, which are likely to get heated, **have students practice on "harmless" topics first:** Cats or dogs? Vanilla or chocolate? People can only get so outraged on these topics -- but many students when debating them will pretend commitment to or moral outrage on the topic: "As a lifelong ice-cream eater, I must say I understand yet object to your views on vanilla..." At the same time, they are practicing such skills as recognizing the other party's viewpoint, stating their own clearly, and supporting it, while maintaining respectful language. Developing these skills will help them when debating such topics as gun control, which typically draw much stronger responses.

## 3 REACT

In both of the situations described at the beginning of the article, I failed to react appropriately because I was too surprised. But it is necessary for instructors to **respond to such situations**, even if it is just to say, "Stop. This isn't appropriate."

To not say anything is to suggest you condone the behavior. Even though I talked to the Nadja after class for quite awhile the day of her unfortunate introduction to American-style debate, our relationship was never quite the same: she didn't trust me again, rightly seeing me as having failed to contain this situation.

## 4 DEBRIEF

As I couldn't really pretend with Nadja that the conflict hadn't happened, it isn't possible to pretend so with a class as well. The conflict has occurred, whatever damage there is has been done, and the class cannot pretend otherwise. Therefore, it is necessary to **discuss the situation and debrief and derive** whatever teachable moments there are from it. One night in a graduate course in education a few years ago, two students there got a little heated in their exchange of ideas on — ironically — classroom management. Because I was at this time more prepared for such exchanges, I waited until before break and then asked the small class to wait. I simply reminded them of their obligations as both students and educators to maintain a respectful environment and that they were invited to share their views, but this necessarily implied listening respectfully to others as well. The students readily agreed, and there were no further incidents in this class.

## 5 CREATE A CONTINUING DIALOGUE

Such incidents as recounted in this article can become part of continuing dialogue in the class, especially if the class syllabus deals with sensitive issues. **The dialogue should be focused on skills required in a civilized society and academic community** — to hear each other out, to listen to other viewpoints without attacking, to state one's own without becoming defensive, and so on. It is these skills that are so lacking in our society that mastering them will put students ahead of much of the public (including their leaders).

**MANAGING CONFLICT THAT ARISES IN THE CLASSROOM IS DIFFICULT FOR MANY EDUCATORS, PERHAPS BECAUSE WE BY NATURE SEEK PEACE AND AVOID CONFLICT, AND WE HAVE LITTLE EXPERIENCE IN MANAGING DEBATES, ARGUMENTS, FIGHTS, AND OTHER FRACASES.**

However, our role as educators is not only to seek peace but to maintain it, as well as to teach our students how to.

# The 10 Commandments of the Ethical ESL Teacher

*Not long ago, I was having lunch at a local cafe, and I witnessed an interesting conversation between a woman and her parents.*

In all fairness, I wasn't deliberately eavesdropping — the other party was quite loud, and at one point, the daughter even pulled out a small laptop to demonstrate a musical performance on YouTube for her parents. This show was the topic of their conversation. This woman had recently returned from a visit to Japan, having taken this music — and her religious beliefs — to the Japanese people. In fact, she blithely told her parents, the earthquake in Japan presented “a unique opportunity” to her organization and their outreach efforts, an opportunity missed six years ago in the wake of the flood in New Orleans.

Appalled if oddly fascinated by this perspective — another group of people's tragedy your own “unique opportunity” — I shifted to a table across the room.

However, the conversation haunted me for the rest of the day. Although the woman said nothing about being a teacher — she seemed to be involved in missionary work for a religious organization — I think the dilemma shown here, namely the possibility of exploiting the misfortunes of others, can apply to ESL instructors. In fact the spread of English has itself been connected with imperialism, the domination of people from developing countries by those from developed. While of course the actual practice of ESL instruction by most of us is far removed from this historic context, there are still implications of abuse of authority in this kind of imbalance of power.

What are some ways to minimize these possibilities if not eliminate them entirely? I think it lies in a series of key principles or “commandments,” if you will, to borrow the language (if not the ideology) from religion.

## THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

of Ethics and the ESL Teacher

### 1 YOU WILL NOT PREACH TO YOUR STUDENTS. YOU WILL NOT SHARE YOUR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OR OTHERWISE “WITNESS.”

This should seem obvious, but I have seen it happen. Especially around the time of religious holidays, the impulse to tell religious stories seems strong. Resist it, please. Not all students — indeed sometimes none of your students — will be of your religious background.

In addition, for those of us raised in a Western European context, there is a tendency to think of holidays like Christmas or Easter as “universal.” They really aren't.

### 2 NOR WILL YOU PREACH YOUR POLITICAL BELIEFS.

I've seen this happen at the university level in particular — instructors taking class time to share their political convictions.

Even if I happened to share those beliefs, the practice always left me with negative impression, my trust in the instructor diminished, as I saw him turn on students who challenged these politics. I was always afraid I would be next.

To this day, largely because of experiences in classes like that, I won't state which side I am on in a class debate on some issue like stem cell research. Indeed, one exasperated student at the end of a debate recently said, “*And when will you tell us about your position, Dr. Levy? We've told you ours!*” Fair enough — because the debate was over, I calmly gave my “side” on the issue, conceding points to the other side as appropriate. But this was **after** students had had the chance to develop their own opinions on the matter.

### 3 NEITHER WILL YOU SELL MATERIAL GOODS TO YOUR STUDENTS, INCLUDING YOUR WRITTEN WORKS.

Class is neither a place for selling your child's Girl Scout cookies nor a place to promote your latest book. Students' wallets should be kept out of sight for the duration of the class so that they can focus on their work — not on how they will pay for these increasingly expensive sessions.

### 4 YOU WILL NOT ACCEPT GIFTS FROM YOUR STUDENTS.

Not only should you not solicit goods from students, but you shouldn't accept them. Because of the imbalance of power between student and teacher, money and clothing or food items all carry implications of coercion that doesn't exist in most relationships, and teachers should be wary of accepting gifts from students. I've at times put a brief statement in my syllabus that teachers at the college level generally don't accept gifts from students and that **the best “gift” students could give a teacher is to study hard.**

### 5 YOU WILL NOT ESTABLISH A CASH FUND OR OTHERWISE COLLECT MONEY IN CLASS, HOWEVER NOBLE THE PURPOSE.

Another “no brainer,” you would think — however, I have seen teachers set up a class “piggy bank” and “charge” students a quarter every time a language other than English was spoken in class. No matter that students seemed to appreciate the strategy and that the money would go to classroom items at the end of the term — there are just **too many negative implications** here for actual money to be used in the classroom.

Play money would be more appropriate in this case, with the individual with the most “cash” at the end of the term winning some token prize.

## 6 YOU WILL NOT PRACTICE THERAPY ON YOUR STUDENTS.

Once a student came to me about being in an emotionally abusive relationship with her American boyfriend. Shocked, I helped and listened to her as much as I could. A large mistake — because when, predictably, her grades began to suffer, she expected me to understand and make concessions because she had confided in me — an ethical dilemma I could have avoided had I stuck with what I'm trained to do, teach English, and referred her to counseling services for her relationship troubles.

Of course we want to help our students — teachers by nature help. **There can, however, be a fine line between helping and hurting.**

## 7 NOR WILL YOU FORCE STUDENTS TO PRACTICE THERAPY ON YOU.

I was once in a class where the instructor was going through a messy divorce — the details of which I knew well by the end of the term. I can recount those details thirty years after the fact -- although I don't remember the course content. Enough said? **Class should be seen as a temporary and intellectual sanctuary from both student and instructor personal problems.**

## 8 YOU WILL NOT BEFRIEND YOUR STUDENTS.

This seems strange as we are trained to be friendly with our students and establish a comfortable class atmosphere. A friendly demeanor is fine, but when the instructors crosses the line and befriends students she may find herself in a situation like that of my colleague "Deborah": at a club late at night, comforting one sobbing student because the student's date — Deborah's other student — had abandoned her. Teachers shouldn't get into situations like this. **You are not your students' peer, so don't cross that line!**

## 9 YOU WILL, HOWEVER, TREAT YOUR STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES WITH RESPECT AND NOT PLAY FAVORITES.

Enough on what you can't do! So what can you do? You can welcome

your students with joy every morning, teach them to the best of your ability, never show disrespect even if their behavior might be earning it, and extend that same respect to their families when you meet.

## 10 YOU WILL ISSUE GRADES BASED ON STUDENT WORK, NOT ON YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STUDENT.

And finally, really what it comes down to is to always grade your student based on their work. If you have avoided establishing a material or personal relationship with your students, you can do that!

**SO THERE YOU HAVE IT, THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF THE ETHICAL ESL TEACHER!**