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10 Do's and Don'ts for Fun Grammar Lessons for Your Students

GRAMMAR IS A KEystone IN ESL PROGRAMS EVERYWHERE.

Learning the rules of language can be exciting and energizing and... well, boring. Grammar teachers around the world struggle to make this technical side of language interesting to their students. The good news is it's possible. With a few simple strategies you can banish boring grammar classes and ensure your students are just as excited about grammar as any other aspect of language learning.

DO

1 INCLUDE GAMES.

Just because you are having fun and including a little competition in the classroom does not mean your students are not learning. There are countless games you can use in the ESL class to review vocabulary and grammar and encourage conversation.

2 GET YOUR STUDENTS MOVING.

Getting your ESL students up and moving around the classroom will serve multiple purposes. Not only will physical activity keep your students more awake and focus their attention on the lesson at hand, it will also help them remember and retain the language they are learning. Making physical associations with language concepts is the key to Total Physical Response, a well known and well respected ESL teaching method. Though having students move around the classroom may seem chaotic at times, the advantages far outweigh the drawbacks when it comes to actions in class.

3 MAKE CLASS COMMUNICATIVE.

Communicative classes focus on communication and language use by students rather than theory and repetitive practice. Make a habit of encouraging your students to use the language that

they know to get their meaning across, even when the grammar isn't perfect. In grammar class, include speaking activities and give your students a chance to put their language use to practical applications whenever possible.

4 TEAM UP.

Using group activities, role plays, discussions and other such activities will both keep your students interested in classroom activities and keep them accountable to one another for class participation and task accomplishments. Students sometimes will disappoint their teacher and feel little regret. Disappointing classmates and friends, on the other hand, may be less desirable to them. Take advantage of this by assigning and rewarding group tasks when possible.

5 PARTNER UP, WITH OTHER CLASSES THAT IS.

If you are lucky enough to have native speakers at your disposal, try partnering up with another class in your school for conversation sessions. Conversation sessions in grammar class? Yes! Your students can practice the grammar they are learning, and they can use their conversation partner as a resource for any questions they might have about native speakers.

DON'T

1 SPEND ENTIRE CLASS PERIOD LECTURING.

Even students with the best attention spans have a difficult time listening to a 20 minute lecture in a second language. In addition, postmodern culture has conditioned students of all ages to expect quick changes from one activity to another. On a good day, you can expect your elementary and secondary students to have an attention span equal to one minute per year of age. That means a classroom full of ten year olds, at best, can hope for ten minutes of attention on a given

activity. Keep things interesting for you and your students and plan for quick changes in activities, partners and, when possible, topics throughout your grammar class.

2 KEEP THEIR NOSES IN THE BOOK.

Grammar books often have many great exercises to help your students practice and then master grammar skills, but the classroom may not be the best place for using those activities. When possible, assign written activities for homework and use classroom time for more interactive, communicative activities. Your students will still get their practice in, but they will be saving the less energetic assignments for homework.

3 BE AFRAID TO DRIFT FROM YOUR LESSON PLANS.

Lesson plans are essential in the lives of a teacher, but good teachers know that there are times to veer from even the best of plans. When your students ask questions that lead into practical applications of grammar, use the opportunity to teach those concepts. Granted, every day cannot be an adventure to an unplanned grammar concept, but there are times when teachable moments are more important than what is written in the lesson planner.

4 FAIL TO OFFER VARIETY.

Especially when your syllabus follows the chapters of a book, you may find you offer the same activities for your students day after day, chapter after chapter. Make a point of doing different types of activities with every few grammatical concepts you teach, and if you really want to engage your students, try to meet every learning style every day. When your students are using discussion, research, presentations and other means to learn and practice grammar, they will stay more interested in what you and their fellow students have to say.

5 GET STUCK IN A RUT.

After teaching the same class semester after semester, it is easy to overly rely on prior lesson plans. Even when last year's lesson plans are the starting point, the best teachers are always learning, trying new activities, and tailoring their class periods to the personalities and needs of their students. So even if you have successfully taught this particular grammar class before, be looking for new and interesting ways to teach and practice the concepts you are introducing to your students and then implement them in class.

SOME SAY THAT GRAMMAR, THOUGH THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF LANGUAGE LEARNING, IS ALSO THE MOST BORING.

That does not have to be true in your grammar classroom. When you make a point of being creative and flexible in your classroom, your students will be engaged in class and will become more successful learners of the English language.

How to Take Grammar from the Textbook Pages into the Classroom

“HERE’S THE BOOK YOU’LL USE FOR CLASS. I NEED YOUR LESSON PLANS BY TOMORROW.”

This was my introduction to teaching ESL. My supervisor gave me a book and little else and expected me to create a syllabus and a semester’s worth of lesson plans that would challenge and engage my students and see their language skills soar, all in just a day. Needless to say, I felt like I was in over my head.

I’ve come a long way since then, but it wasn’t always easy. Here’s what I’ve learned about taking a text book and creating an effective learning environment since then.

4 IMPORTANT STEPS TO TAKE WHILE PLANNING YOUR SEMESTER

1 LOOK AT THE SEMESTER

The way I approach my syllabus design now is a lot different than it was for my first teaching job. Then, I took another teacher’s syllabus and copied it substituting my name for hers. Today, the first thing I do is look at the semester as a whole. I’ve taught in ESL programs that ran on four week semesters and others that required nine months of planning. Most of the time, though, my semesters last around 16 weeks. But whether my planning is for months or just days, I start the same. I look at the material I need to cover and divide it amongst semester. This way I have a very general lesson plan for the entire course.

For example, if I need to cover ten chapters in my text book (and it doesn’t matter if the school chooses that book or if I do) I make a full semester plan. If my semester is 16 weeks, I have 1.5 weeks to cover each of those 10 chapters, planning ahead for one week of review and catch up before finals.

2 LOOK AT EACH CHAPTER

Once I have my chapters penciled in on the calendar, I look at each one. I usually start with one or two. The other chapters I plan later. I make a rough plan

by looking at the chapter and the topics it covers. Subheadings are my best friends during this process, and I schedule each of those topics on my weekly planer.

For example, if I have ten topics to cover for chapter one and seven days to do it, I look to see which topics I can teach together. Then I write each topic in its day on my calendar. I may teach two topics the first day, one the second through fourth, and then two the fifth and sixth days. I’ll leave the seventh day for the last topic and also plan some time for review and questions.

3 PLAN EACH DAY

The last step in my lesson planning is deciding what we will actually do in class each day, and I typically plan about two weeks at a time. Often, my text book has exercises I can use in class with my students. I particularly like using partner work and oral activities when the text supplies them. Most written exercises I plan to assign for homework since I’d rather spend class time on communicative activities. Then I look for ways to supplement the activities in the book. This is when I think about learning styles and doing different types of activities throughout the chapter. I try to get my students moving, include physical props when possible, think about how they can communicate with each other, and plan projects, presentations, etc. If I have taught the material before, I look back on what I did and read my own post class notes. If I find activities that were successful, I include them in my plans. If I find activities that were a bomb or were particularly confusing, I make sure I don’t include them this time through. Once I plan each day, I know what activities my students will do in class, what they will do for homework, and that they will have a variety of learning experiences throughout the chapter. I also note any supplies or handouts I will need for class and make a list to keep with my lesson plans.

Daily planning is also when I make my instructional plan. I try to keep lecture to a minimum, but as a teacher I still need to present information to my students.

When I plan my instruction, I look at what I have done in the past, make sure I understand the topic myself, and look for creative ways to present the information to my students.

4 REFRESH YOUR MEMORY

The advantage to planning so far in advance is I don’t get the night-before-class-panic of not being prepared. The disadvantage is that I am more likely to forget what I planned to do, so every day before the next class I review my notes. I note any copies or supplies I will need and gather these. I may also tweak my plans if we are falling behind or are ahead of schedule. I have learned that flexibility is key for this type of planning, and I am always ready to add activities, cut them or shift them to another day on the calendar.

I don’t know if most teachers plan as far in advance as I do, but after fifteen years teaching ESL, this is what works for me.

I like being prepared each day and being able to get the big picture of the school year up front. I find that with advance planning I don’t get that frantic feeling trying to cover half of the text book in the last week of class. I also find that my students learn better when I feel prepared and confident.

If you have a system that works for you it’s a good feeling, isn’t it? But if you have a text book and aren’t sure what to do next, maybe you’ll be able to learn from my experience. If you give it a try, good luck, and don’t be afraid to share what works for you with the other teachers around you.

Grammar Like Vegetables: 5 Ways to Sneak it Into Students' Diets

IT IS EASY FOR ESL STUDENTS TO BECOME INUNDATED WITH GRAMMAR LESSONS.

After all, isn't structure the greatest foundation of language? But the best teachers and the most engaged students don't let every English class center around grammar. And great teachers know the tricks of sneaking grammar "lessons" into classroom activities without their students even knowing they are doing it. Here are some secrets from the pros on how to slip grammar lessons into everyday activities without anyone knowing.

SMALL TRICKS TO TEACH GRAMMAR UNOBTRUSIVELY

1 REPEATING

As a teacher, you are regularly modeling correct grammatical structures for your students, but when they speak they are not always following your example. Some teachers fall into the habit of stopping their students when they misspeak and having them repeat the sentence correctly. And while that may be the best approach at times, those times are rare. Teachers who know this sneaky grammar secret, though, don't make overt correction a regular habit. Because of the way the brain processes language, simply restating what your student said but with correct grammar may be enough to correct your students' usage. So if a student says, "I goed to the store," the sneaky teacher will simply respond, "Oh, you went to the store. When did you go?" In so doing, the student has a correct model of the past tense verb without having his speaking interrupted or discouraged. Then his conscious as well as his subconscious will work together to correct and solidify the grammatical concept in his mind.

2 ANYONE CAN MODEL

You are your students' best example of correct English usage. And when you use a particular structure frequently in your own speech, your

students, whether they realize it or not, will internalize the structure you are modeling. So before you teach the next great grammar topic to your students, make a point of modeling it in your own speech as often as possible. That way when you move on to instruction, your students will already have some familiarity with it and an understanding of how to use it in their speaking.

3 MAKE AN EXAMPLE

When I think back to high school science class, I remember a huge diagram of the periodic table. Natural elements aren't likely to come in handy in an ESL class, but sneaky teachers can still take a page from my chemistry teacher. Don't leave your walls blank. The four canvases surrounding you and your students, otherwise known as walls, can be a constant teaching tool. Use posters, other displays, or create your own masterpieces to teach correct grammar use. Even great teachers lose the attention of their students at times, but as long as your walls are covered with lessons, that time will not be wasted for your students. Plus, seeing the same lessons every day in class will cement them into your students' minds. And if you feel the need, cover them up during testing periods, though that may not be necessary.

4 RISING TO THE LEVEL

In natural speech, whether in a first or second language, a speaker's language use adjusts to approach that of a conversation partner. This means that ESL students who speak with native speakers will, unknowingly, use better grammar and overall skills than those speaking with a nonnative speaker. Bringing these native speakers into your classroom, then, can be a great instructional tool without seeming so. Native speakers are often willing to be conversation partners to ESL students, and your students will love their time with native speakers. If you don't have native speakers at your disposal, though, don't write off this strategy yet. When you pair your students for speaking activities and role plays, try

pairing a low performing student with one excelling at her language learning. Without intention by either speaker, the struggling student will modify his speech to be more like the star student. Be careful, though, not to overuse this strategy or your advanced students will find their language slipping to become more like their partner's.

5 FREE READING

Giving your students an opportunity to read authentic English materials without requiring follow up activities or assessment is another way to sneak grammar instruction into their language learning diets. When students read, they see English grammar used correctly. With enough exposure to language in this form, and when it is paired with ESL instruction, your students will find themselves absorbing the grammar they see on the page. The key here is to avoid putting pressure on your students when it comes to this type of reading. Being patient is essential, and eventually your students will begin to pick up what someone else has put on the page.

ESL TEACHERS ARE A VALUABLE RESOURCE FOR THEIR STUDENTS. THEY HOLD THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TARGET LANGUAGE AND THE ANSWERS TO THEIR STUDENTS' QUESTIONS. THE BEST TEACHERS DO EVEN MORE. WHEN THEY USE THESE SNEAKY SECRETS FOR GETTING GRAMMAR INTO THEIR STUDENTS' DIETS, THEY ARE ABLE TO TEACH WITHOUT EVEN SEEMING TO. AND THEIR STUDENTS ARE THE ONES WHO BENEFIT.

Have You Got It? Three Essential Pieces to Every Grammar Lesson

YOU COME INTO GRAMMAR CLASS FULL OF EXCITEMENT AND ENTHUSIASM.

You present your students with the day's lesson, and clearly explain how to form the future progressive tense. They seem to understand, can do the exercises and don't ask any difficult questions. They must have it, right? So why don't they use the future progressive correctly in the days to come? It's because a good grammar lesson includes more than just how to put words together. Without knowing how to form a grammatical structure, what it means and how to use it, your student's won't be getting all the grammar they need.

3 ESSENTIAL PIECES TO EVERY GRAMMAR LESSON

1 METHOD

The first piece you need for every grammar lesson is probably the most obvious. Your students need to know how to do something, how to form a tense, what helping verb to use, what elements are necessary for a clause. This is method. This is the rule of grammar. If you were teaching a lesson on the future progressive, for example, you would explain to your students how to create that grammatical form. You would show them how to combine the subject of the sentence with the future form of the helping verb be and the progressive form or second form of the verb. This combination Subject + be(fut) + V(2nd form) = the future progressive tense. Your students can now form this tense with any subject and any verb you give them. But that is not enough. They need to know what this tense means.

2 MEANING

Knowing how to create a particular grammatical structure will only take you so far if you do not know what it means. After all, language is a way to express the ideas and mental images in our minds. Without the

meaning, we have nothing. Method without meaning is like memorizing a math equation without understanding what it does. (How many people really know the meaning behind the equation $e=mc^2$?) For the future progressive example, your students need to understand that the future progressive is used for actions that will be in progress at some future time. They need to know what an action in progress entails. They need to understand what a future time might be. When they understand the meaning of the future progressive tense, they can create a mental image of an action happening in the future and being interrupted by another action.

3 FUNCTION

Once your students are comfortable creating the form and know what that form means, it is time to talk about function. In grammatical terms, the function is what the target structure is for. Why do we use that particular grammatical structure? This third piece of the grammar lesson would show students that the future progressive tense is used to talk about an event that will be in progress in the future. That that event may or may not have already started at the present moment. That it may or may not continue after that point in the future. Your students will understand that the function of the future progressive is to describe a scene and what is happening at a point of time in the future – whether that point in time is an actual moment or another event is irrelevant.

WHEN YOUR STUDENTS UNDERSTAND WHAT TO DO FOR A SPECIFIC STRUCTURE, WHAT THAT STRUCTURE MEANS AND WHEN TO USE IT, THEY WILL HAVE FULL UNDERSTANDING OF THE GRAMMATICAL CONCEPT YOU ARE TEACHING.

All three pieces of information are necessary if your students are to be successful language learners. If any of the three is missing, you will see that your students will not know why they should use a particular struc-

ture or what it means when they do, or they won't understand what they mean even when they can follow the correct grammatical formula. For most teachers, teaching the how or form of grammar is obvious. Teaching the meaning and the function may not come through as clearly. That's why the best grammar teachers make a point to spend time teaching all three pieces in every grammar lesson. When you spend equal time teaching method, meaning and function, your students will know not only what to do, but why to do it and how. And when they know that, they will be better language learners and speakers all around.

What Place Does Grammar Have in Speaking Class

GRAMMAR IS A KEY PIECE OF ANY LANGUAGE, AND STUDENTS OF SECOND LANGUAGES SPEND MUCH OF THEIR TIME LEARNING GRAMMATICAL RULES AND FORMS.

At times, though, a student can focus on grammar too much. Throughout my years of teaching ESL, I have had many students who spend the majority of their language learning energy on grammar, writing and reading. Sometimes these students overly pursue written language and don't spend any time on the spoken language. When this happens, the speaking teacher may not know where the fine line between grammar and speaking is, or if there even is a line dividing the two. The following are suggestions on how to include grammar in the speaking classroom without letting it overwhelm your speaking class.

TRY BALANCING GRAMMAR AND SPEAKING IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS

1 KEEP IT COMMUNICATIVE

Communicative classrooms are stressed more these days than they were in the past. ESL teachers want to encourage their students to speak and communicate rather than memorize or follow scripted conversations. Grammar is necessary for good communication, but a communicative classroom entails more than that. When you encourage your students to communicate creatively with the language they know, there are sure to be grammar errors. On the other hand, encouraging this creativity with language more closely approaches how language is used in the real world. In first and second languages, creative communication means getting your message across with whatever tools you have at your disposal. When the grammar isn't right, as long as the message gets across the communication is a success. So in your next speaking class, don't force prescribed grammar into your students' speaking. Let them use what they know

to get their points across and let the grammar be what it will be.

2 WHEN PUSH COMES TO SHOVE

Even with creative language use, though, there are times when the correct grammar is essential to getting the message across. Think of the conditional structure in English, for example. The difference in verb tense can mean the difference between something that happened and something that didn't. "I would have called you" and "I called you" have very different meanings. For situations such as these, it is important to explain the correct grammar to your students and require them to use it appropriately. Teaching grammar this way doesn't mean you aren't maintaining a communicative classroom. On the contrary, without this stress on grammar your students will not be able to communicate accurately. So take a few minutes to give grammatical instruction, and then move on to using what your students have learned. Offer corrections if students are miscommunicating because of grammatical errors.

3 EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE

Most conversation classes that I have taught have been topical in nature. Whether in a restaurant, at a sporting event, or the business world, instruction and activities are focused on one subject area or one topic. These situational contexts can be the perfect venue for introducing grammatical concepts to your class. When the grammar comes naturally as part of the topic at hand, it enhances the lesson rather than retracting from it. For example, I have found that units on sporting events are a great opportunity to talk about interjections. Though not all that common in every day speech, expressions such as yay, go, shoot, and score are peppered throughout the speech at any major sporting event. So before I role-play such a scenario with my students, I take a few minutes to discuss inter-

jections and their function in spoken language. Then, I encourage my students to use interjections as we put ourselves at an imaginary professional sporting event and they use the language they are learning.

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF TEACHING A SPEAKING CLASS AND ARE WONDERING WHERE GRAMMAR FITS INTO THE PICTURE, HERE IS WHAT I HAVE LEARNED BASED ON MY OWN EXPERIENCE. LET GRAMMAR INTO THE PICTURE WHEN IT COMES NATURALLY OR IS NECESSARY FOR CORRECT MEANING. BUT IF YOUR STUDENTS CAN GET THEIR MEANING ACROSS THROUGH CREATIVE LANGUAGE USE, LET THEM. EVENTUALLY THEY WILL LEARN THE CORRECT GRAMMAR FOR EVERY SITUATION (IF THEY CONTINUE THEIR STUDIES), BUT THEY MAY NOT DEVELOP THE COURAGE AND CREATIVITY TO COMMUNICATE IF THEY ARE NOT GIVEN THE CHANCE IN SPEAKING CLASS.

How to Create a Grammar Lesson Plan for a Beginning ESL Class

WHETHER YOURS IS THEIR VERY FIRST CLASS OR THEY HAVE A LITTLE EXPERIENCE WITH ENGLISH UNDER THEIR BELTS, YOUR BEGINNING LEVEL ESL STUDENTS HAVE A LOT TO LEARN.

Teaching a beginning level class can be very exciting, watching students learn, seeing the light bulbs come on, but it can also be very challenging. If you are teaching students with no English background, you may find yourself starting with the ABC's. If your students have had some past experience with language learning, you may not need to cover the most basic building blocks, but you'll still be tackling the foundations of the language. The good news is that beginning students learn quickly. You have plenty of topics to choose from, and you may have more freedom in the grammar topics you cover than teachers of more advanced classes do. So where do you start when it's time to get ready for that beginner class?

HOW TO CREATE A GRAMMAR LESSON PLAN FOR A BEGINNING ESL CLASS

1 SET GOALS

The first step of any good lesson plan is determining the outcomes you are looking for. What grammatical concept are you going to teach? Common in beginning classrooms are the simple tenses, prepositions, adjective and adverb use, sentence structure, information questions and yes/no questions. Choose one, then think about what you want your students to accomplish. Do you want to introduce them to the topic? Give them practice? See them master a skill? The rest of your lesson plan will depend on the answers to these questions. In fact, they might all be goals for the same class but over multiple class periods.

2 INTRODUCE THE TOPIC

When you get to class, you should start your lesson by introducing the topic to your students. You should show

them the structure you are teaching, and be sure to give them one or two simple examples. You will also want to explain why they need to know this topic since it will motivate your students and help them put a tangible context to what they are learning. Of course, since they are beginners you may not be able to get all the why's across, but do what you can. The point is for your students to see the grammatical concept as practical and useful.

3 GIVE EXAMPLES

After you introduce the topic to your students, be sure to give plenty of correct examples of the grammatical structure. Simple examples are good, but don't be afraid to show your students something a little more complex. You are not expecting them to produce the structure like a native speaker at this point, but giving them realistic examples shows them what they may be able to do once they have their foundation in place. Some teachers shy away from using realia in the beginning classroom, but it's never too early for your students to see how language is really used. In your examples, include one or more from authentic language sources. Try looking in a newspaper, a blog or an advertisement for examples, or listen to the people around you and note how these native speakers use language in their everyday speech.

4 PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Now that your students have seen the target structure used correctly, it's time to give them some practice. Exercises in grammar books will do the job, but your students will benefit from a little extra effort and planning on your part. Try to include a variety of activities that will appeal to several different learning styles. Try using props (like index cards or post its) to arrange words in a sentence. Have oral practice as a group and with partners. Sing a song if you know one, or make one up. Direct your students to a website where they can work on interactive quizzes. Get your students up and moving, linking physical movement with grammatical

concepts. The more variety they have in their practice session, the more easily your students will remember the concept you are teaching. Don't leave out good old written practice, but saving it for homework is best.

5 ASSESS

Have your students learned the concept you are teaching? Probably, if you have followed this plan step by step, but it is still necessary to do some type of assessment with your class. Assessment doesn't have to be taking a test, and you certainly don't want to spring a quiz on your students the first day you teach a concept. An assessment simply measures how well your students are performing with the given grammatical concept and whether or not they are meeting the goals you set. Once you have reached the end of your lesson, go back to the goals you set in step one. Check to see if each student has accomplished each goal you outlined. You can do this through simple observation, or you can require more formal written evidence. Vary your assessment according to the goal you have set. If a majority of your students have not met your objective, you know you will have to follow up tomorrow with more activities to help them reach your goals.

PLANNING A GRAMMAR LESSON REALLY ISN'T VERY HARD IF YOU TAKE IT STEP BY STEP.

Preparation, modeling and practice are key. Also, checking to make sure your students have learned what you were teaching will ensure the success of your grammar lesson. Give your students positive feedback when you see them succeeding, and move on to the next challenge once they do.

Three Rules for Clearing Up Definite / Indefinite Article Confusion

A OR THE? THE OR SOME? SOME OR AN? TO PUT IT SIMPLY, ARTICLES CAN BE CONFUSING.

ESL students often find that choosing the correct article in a given sentence is difficult. Perhaps it's because their first language doesn't use equivalents of *a*, *the* and *some*. Perhaps it is because English sometimes seems to be more exceptions than it is rules. Whatever the reason, every ESL teacher will have to teach articles at some point or another. Here are some tips for you and your students for keeping things straight when you face the question of definite or indefinite.

THE DEFINITE/ INDEFINITE ARTICLE CONFUSION: 3 RULES

1 ARE YOU NEW AROUND HERE?

So much of whether the correct choice is *the* or *a* depends on context. Has a particular noun been introduced earlier in a conversation? Is this the first time the object or person is coming up? For objects that are new to the conversational context, *a* or *an* is usually the correct choice. These indefinite articles indicate that a general person, place or thing is being referenced. Take the following sentence for example. *I saw a dog.* Because I am using the indefinite article *a*, the reader can assume that I have not said anything about this dog earlier in my conversation. From this point forward, however, I will use a definite article for the same animal. *The dog tried to chase me.* If I am introducing a plural noun to the conversation, *some* is going to be the correct choice the first go around. This plural indefinite article should be used with the first introduction of a plural noun. *I saw some dogs.* As with singular nouns, any further reference to this plural noun should use the definite article *the*. *The dogs tried to chase me.* (The is appropriate for both singular and plural nouns.)

2 I'VE NEVER MET ANYONE LIKE YOU

The second rule to keep in mind when teaching definite and indefinite articles is this. Unique objects always take a definite article. Most of the time, these unique nouns will also be proper nouns. Since they are names and usually start with capital letters, your students may have less trouble determining what article to use for unique nouns. However, not every unique noun is a proper noun. Take the following example. *I looked at the moon last night.* Though *moon* is not a proper noun and does not start with a capital letter, it is still a unique noun. The earth only has one moon, and so any reference to the moon should use a definite article. Other examples like this include *the* first lady, *the* president and *the* government.

Don't forget that any superlative nouns are unique in that they are the one and only best. (The best ice-cream, the worst movie, etc.) Also, a noun might be unique because of its association with a previously mentioned noun in the sentence. Take the following example. *I got a book on car repair. The cover was very interesting.* Though many books exist as do many covers, this one cover is unique because it belongs to the book that I had already mentioned in the conversation.

3 EVERYONE KNOWS THAT

The final generalization when it comes to definite and indefinite article use comes into play with generalized statements or accepted truths. When a person is stating a general fact, the noun does not take any article. The noun usually appears in its plural form in these factual statements. *Rain (noncount) falls from the sky. Raindrops (count) fall from the sky.* No article is necessary. Similarly, generalized statements use the plural form without articles. *I like cold weather (anytime).* If one were to use an article in this sentence, it would change

the meaning of the sentence. The speaker is no longer making a generalized statement or preference but is talking about the weather on a specific day. *I like the cold weather (today).*

WE MUST CONCLUDE OUR DISCUSSION OF INDEFINITE AND DEFINITE ARTICLES WITH BOTH GOOD AND BAD NEWS.

The bad news is that English is full of exceptions and confusing choices. Your students will have to know and accept that at times they will make errors when it comes to choosing articles. The good news is that those mistakes can be few and far between when students understand and remember these three rules for choosing the correct article.

You Really Should: 5 Activities for Practicing English Modals

CAN YOU? COULD YOU? WOULD YOU? SHOULD YOU? IF YOU ARE ASKING ABOUT MODALS IN THE ESL CLASSROOM, THE ANSWER IS YES.

You should review these unique verb combinations with your students, and you can have fun while you do it. These out of the ordinary modal activities give you and your students a chance to practice can, would, could, and might and have fun at the same time. With them, students will feel good about what they are learning, and you can feel confident that these activities will make a lasting impact on their English learning journeys.

TRY THESE 5 FANTASTIC ACTIVITIES FOR PRACTICING ENGLISH MODALS

1 CAN YOU BINGO

Talking about the abilities that your class members have is a great way to review use of the modal can. The review is even better when you can turn it into a fun and engaging game – like Bingo. To start, have a class discussion about the things a person might be able to do. Include things that some people can do and others cannot do, and make a big list on your board. Once your list has 30-50 abilities, it's time to prepare for the game. Give your students each a blank bingo board (you can find many templates online), and have them fill in the spaces with one of the abilities you listed on the board. Then, when you say go, students mingle around the classroom asking each other, "Can you _____?" asking about one of the activities listed on their bingo board. If the person he asks can do that activity, he marks off the square with their name. If they cannot do it, he moves on and asks another person about that ability or another one on his board. Students can only ask each person about one ability before moving on to ask another classmate, but they can come back to the same people as often as they like. When someone gets five spaces in a row, he calls bingo. If you want to play another round, have students fill in another blank bingo board using differ-

ent activities than they used in the last one. This is a great activity for letting students get to know each other at the beginning of the year. It's also good for students who have been together for a while when the activities are a little more out of the ordinary.

2 WOULD YOU DO THAT?

This tournament style activity gets students thinking about things they would and would not do. Have each person make a list of ten things they have never done – five they would do and five they would not do. (For example, Marie might eat sushi but would not jump out of a plane.) Each person should make sure these activities are listed in random order. Then, have students partner up and exchange lists. The pairs get no more than five minutes to read each other's lists and try and guess what five things their partner is willing to do. Once he thinks he knows the five activities, he shares his choices with his partner. He gets five guesses and should phrase his guesses like "(I think) You would _____." The other person either confirms that he would do the activity or states that he would not do it. The guesser scores one point for every guess he gets right. Then partners reverse roles. The person who guessed more activities correctly wins the round. Losers are out of the competition. The winners then partner up with someone else and play the second round the same as the first. Continue until you have only one pair left and one winner. Award the winner a prize for how well he or she knows his classmates.

3 WOULD YOU, COULD YOU

Bring a little levity to your ESL classroom with one of children's literature's most well-known and well-loved books. Read Dr. Seuss' famous book *Green Eggs and Ham* to your class. After reading, give them the printed text of the book, and ask them to work with a partner to locate all the modal verbs Seuss uses. Then, have those same pairs think of an activity they might not like to do (like eat green eggs and

ham). Using *Green Eggs and Ham* as a model, students should write their own silly book about that activity, complete with illustrations. Once their books are complete, have students read them to the class. Collect the books and make them available in your classroom reading center for students to reread during free reading time. In addition to talking about modals, this is also a good activity for reviewing syllables and rhyme in English.

4 ON LOCATION

Vacations are full of exciting activities and fun things to see. In this activity, students will describe a vacation location using the modal could. Students work in pairs or individually. Each pair chooses a location where someone might go for vacation – the beach, an amusement park, the grocery store, camping, etc. Students work with their partners to write five sentences describing what a person could do at that location. Pairs then take turns reading their sentences to the rest of the class, and the class must then guess what location they are describing.

5 DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?

This activity takes some preparation on your part, but it's sure to get your students talking with modal verbs. To prepare, collect several items from home that make a sound. They could be anything from a bicycle bell to pouring cereal out of a box. Divide the class into two teams. Keep the objects hidden under a box or behind a curtain and make a noise with the object. Teams take turns trying to guess what the object is. On their turn, the team gets 60 seconds to discuss what the item is. As they discuss the sound, they should use sentences like, "It might be a ... It could be a ... It must be a ..." After the minute is up the team must make a final guess as to what the object is. If they are correct, they score ten points. If they guess incorrectly, they lose five points. Once each team has had several turns, the team with the most points wins the game.

It Can Be Done! How to Teach Modals in the Passive Voice

GRAMMAR WAS TAUGHT.

Mistakes were made and corrected. Students were assigned homework, and it was handed in the following day. The students were congratulated on their efforts: do we actually speak like this? Well, certainly not all of the time, but still, the passive voice must be taught, which brings me to the point of this article: how can you teach modals in the passive voice in a way that is painless and hassle-free? I can't guarantee it will be completely painless (it is the passive voice, after all) but here's how you can structure your lesson so that your class doesn't get lost in a whirlwind of may, might and could.

DISCOVER HOW TO TEACH MODALS IN THE PASSIVE VOICE

1 REVIEW THE PASSIVE VOICE

Review the forms of the Passive Voice that were previously taught including progressive forms. The main goal here is not only to review how the structure is formed, but also when students need to use the passive. You can play a game to get them into a "passive voice" state of mind, a game in which they can review the passive in different tenses. But what I really recommend is introducing a "topic" your students can relate to. For example, with a group of adult students, talk about what's been happening in the city: Are streets being repaired? Was a historical site restored? Were new traffic lights installed? Will elections be held soon? In this case, we use the passive because the "subject" responsible for the action is the government, and the important thing is not the subject of every action, but rather the things that are being accomplished.

2 REVIEW MODALS

Very briefly review how we express the different degrees of probability with modals: anything "could" happen (it's possible), but something that "may" or "might" happen is probable. Something that "should" happen

is what we expect (often at a specific day or hour), and we use "must" when we reach a conclusion based on certain information given (You didn't sleep at all last night? You must be very tired?) or when talking about obligations, responsibilities or necessities (You must pass the test to pass the course).

3 PRESENTATION: INTRODUCE MODALS IN PASSIVE

Now is the time to combine both, the passive voice and modals. Ask students questions about the future (future passive): Will Candidate X be elected President? (Cue the shrugging and other displays of uncertainty). Students will say yes, no or maybe. And this is when you say: Candidate X may be elected President.

T: Who else may be elected?

S: Candidate Y may be elected.

T: And Candidate Z could be elected, but that's not very likely.

4 POINT OUT THE STRUCTURE

Show students the structure for using modals in the passive voice:

Person/ object	can could + may might should must	+ be +	past participle of verb
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5 PRACTICE – POSSIBILITY, PROBABILITY & CERTAINTY

Ask questions surrounding a particular context, for example, what's happening in your city. Ask some questions with "will" (future passive): students have to answer with the appropriate modal in passive:

T: Some streets are in bad shape. Will they be repaired?

S1: The streets should be repaired.

T: Will new street lights be installed?

S2: New lights may be installed.

Also, ask some questions of the "what happens if" type: again encourage students to use modals:

T: What happens if someone parks in a "no parking" zone?

S: A fine must be paid.

6 PERFORMANCE – COMPANY MEMO

Tell students they must write a company memo in which they must remind employees of certain aspects of company policy, like dress code or basic office rules. They must try to use modals in the passive.

RE: Changes in company policy

This is a friendly reminder regarding certain office rules. The dress code for most days is "business casual": jeans may be worn only on "casual Fridays". And please help keep the office kitchen clean and tidy. Cups must be washed and put away. Food must not be left on the counter: it may be kept in the fridge, but please be mindful of expiration dates. Finally, I'd like to remind you that all food items that are not meant to be shared should be clearly labeled with your name and kept in the kitchen. Food must not be stored in desk drawers.

Students write up their memos and then switch with a partner, who must underline all of the modals used in passive voice. They may point out any mistakes or suggestions for correction/improvement.

MODALS IN THE PASSIVE VOICE CAN'T BE AVOIDED AND SHOULD BE TAUGHT.

Now, whether they are taught in an engaging, painless way is entirely up to you. In my experience, setting a useful context is always more helpful than random, disconnected sentences. Explain not only the grammar but also how, when and where to use it, and you can't go wrong.

10 Fun, Fabulous Activities for Practicing Adjectives

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR SOME FUN AND UNUSUAL WAYS TO GIVE YOUR STUDENTS PRACTICE WITH ADJECTIVES?

Here are some easy ideas to keep on hand for practice or a quick review.

TRY THESE SIMPLE IDEAS TO MAKE WORK WITH ADJECTIVES THRILLING

1 HUMAN ADJECTIVE BINGO

Have your students create their own Bingo boards for an adjective review game. Give students a blank bingo board and some old magazines. Students should cut pictures of people out of the magazine, one for each blank on the bingo board, and glue them in place however they see fit. Students should use a variety of different pictures and different people. Once the glue dries, it's time to play human adjective bingo. To play, call out different adjectives that can describe people. If a picture on their board matches that description, they can cover the square. When someone calls bingo tell your class to keep their markers in place. The class will have to agree that the people and adjectives match to win the game.

2 CLASSMATE BINGO

Depending on the personality of your class, you can play bingo using the pictures of your students on a blank bingo board in place of pictures from a magazine. Start by giving each person a blank bingo board, and ask them to fill in the spaces with adjectives that might describe a person. Then, instead of pulling adjectives randomly, show random pictures of your students (one person per photo) as well as other teachers and students they might know going about their usual (or unusual) activities. If you take pictures of special events or classroom activities, this game is a great way to make them work double duty.

3 ADJECTIVE ELIMINATION

Divide your class into two (or more) teams to play this adjective elicitation game. One at a time, students come to the front of the room. (If possible, you may want to put some type of divider between the students or use an easel so neither person can see what the other writes.) To play one round, show the two students (and your class) a picture. For the next sixty seconds, each person must write down as many adjectives to describe the picture as he or she can think of. At the end of the minute, have students compare their lists. Any word both students listed gets crossed off. Each student gets one point for every remaining adjective and minus one point for every word which is not an adjective for his team. Continue until everyone has had a turn up front. The team with the most points wins the game.

4 ADJECTIVE MATCH IT

To play this adjective review game, you or your students will need to create a deck of adjective cards. You can use index cards or upcycle an old deck that may be missing a card or two. To prep the game, simply write a different adjective on each card. To play, each person starts with a picture. You might want to choose pictures for your students or have them choose their own. You can use magazine pictures, travel brochures, pictures printed off the internet, or have students bring in pictures they have taken themselves. Each person lays the picture in front of him so he and the other players can easily see it. Then, the dealer gives each person four cards and turns the first card over to make a discard pile. The goal is to get four cards, and therefore four adjectives, that describe the picture in front of you. On each turn, pick up one card either from the draw pile or the discard pile. Then discard one. (Play is similar to Gin Rummy.) The one who gets four cards that describe his picture wins.

5 MATCH MAKER

Can a match made in heaven happen in an ESL class? Your students will be able to answer that question at the end of this activity. Each person in class will play matchmaker for an unattached friend or family member. Each person starts by making a list of adjectives which describe her single friend. The adjectives should describe appearance and personality (both good and bad), and students should also list likes and dislikes for their friend. Then, students go around the room asking questions about their classmates' single friends. The matchmaker's goal is to find someone who is similar to his friend and who he thinks would be a good match. When students think they have found one, they should show you the two profiles and see if you agree.

6 PEN PALS

In this creative activity from teachthis.com, students will work together to create a letter from a pen pal. Divide your class into groups of eight, and make a copy of this blank pen pal form for each student. Students start by filling in the blanks of the first sentence, which gives a name and age for the pen pal. Then they should fold over the top of the paper so no one can see what they wrote. Everyone passes their papers to the person on their right and then fills in the next sentence which describes what the person looks like. Again, students fold down the top of the paper to hide what they have written before passing it to the right again. Continue in this manner, filling in the blanks, folding the top of the paper down, and passing the paper to the right until all of the sentences on each sheet are complete. Pass the paper one more time and have students unfold it to reveal the letter from their pen pal. Be prepared for some entertaining combinations of descriptive adjectives.

7 ADJECTIVES OF A COLOR

This activity will help your students understand how similar adjectives can have different degrees of intensity. To prepare, take a trip to your local hardware store or anyplace else where they sell wall paint. Gather several paint sample cards which have two or more shades from the same family. In class, give your students a pair of adjectives which have similar meanings but are of different intensity. For example, you might use any of the following pairs: hungry/starving, angry/furious, tired/exhausted, small/tiny, big/gigantic, sad/miserable, smart/brilliant, or bad/horrible. Write the general adjective on the lighter end of the paint sample card and the more intense adjective on the darker end of the card. Then divide your students into groups of two or three to make their own set of cards with more pairs of adjectives. You may want to give them the general adjectives as a starting place and encourage them to use a thesaurus to find a match. Encourage students to come up with their own pairs as well. If you like, post these adjective pairs on a bulletin board decorated with a painter's pallet. Encourage students to use more specific, intense adjectives in their speech and writing for more vivid and accurate descriptions.

8 ADJECTIVE DOMINOES

If you don't make a display with the cards from the previous activity, use them to create a set of adjective dominoes. Have students cut each paint sample into two equal pieces so each adjective is on its own piece. Then, have students tape two pieces from different cards together domino style. Play a game of dominoes following the standard rules, but instead of matching numbers match each adjective to its more or less intense partner.

9 EXPANDING SENTENCES

This simple activity not only reviews adjectives with your students but gives them practice putting them in the right order. Start by writing a simple sentence on the board. (The boy is holding a book.) Tell your students that adjectives make a sentence more interesting by giving details. Challenge your students to add adjectives to the sentence you have

on the board, one at a time, to make a more interesting sentence. As they add adjectives, point out the correct order in which to place them. (For a simple summary of how to order adjectives, see this adjective lesson plan on learn4good.com.) Once students are familiar with the process, put them in pairs and give them some additional simple sentences. Give students a few minutes to expand their sentences as creatively as possible and then come back together as a class to share what students have written.

10 ADJECTIVE MIX UP

In this adjective activity, your students will have a chance to be creative and imaginative. Give each student two sticky notes. On one note they should write a noun and on the other an adjective. Encourage students to be creative. Then, have students mingle around the classroom. During this time, they should look at what every other student has written on his sticky notes. The challenge is to use either another student's adjective with her noun or the other student's noun with her adjective and put the two together in a creative sentence. Partners can work together to write one sentence when they are matched, and both should write it on their paper next to their partner's name. Continue the mix up until every student has worked with every other student to write a sentence using these creative words. If you like, have individuals share their favorite sentences with the rest of the class before collecting and checking what students came up with.

Who's the Best? Five Hands-On Activities for Using Superlatives

Who is the best of the best among your students? Who's the brightest? These answers may be tough to find, but that doesn't mean your students can't brag about themselves a little. These hands-on activities for practicing superlative adjectives will give them a chance to share their feelings about the best and the brightest as well as the tallest, most graceful, fastest and more.

TRY THESE 5 HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES FOR USING SUPERLATIVES

1 INCH BY INCH

If you are teaching internationals in the U.S., you probably hear a lot of measurements in meters and kilos. (I know I always do.) This superlative activity will serve double duty as your students measure in inches to determine who in class is the most of the most. Tell your students that they will be taking measurements of each other to determine answers to superlative questions. Choose ten categories for measurement. (You can either do this with your class or before class on your own.) You might want to list the following qualities: the tallest person, the longest hair, the widest arm span, the biggest smile, the thinnest waist, the smallest feet, etc. Whichever categories you use, try and keep them positive to avoid insulting your students. Write the categories on the board, and give each student a measuring tape. (You can often find free disposable measuring tapes at furniture stores.) Then, have students mingle taking measurements and making notes. After ten to twenty minutes, students should write a complete sentence using a superlative adjective for each category. (E.g. Manuel has the widest arm span.) Collect the papers and the numbers to see who got their measurements and their superlatives correct.

2 CLASSROOM OLYMPICS

Who among your students is the most athletic? Everyone in class will

be able to answer that question when you hold your own classroom Olympics. You will probably want to hold these events outside, so plan your Olympics for a day that is warm and sunny. You might also want to ask for one or more parent volunteers for the field day to run different events. Bring some sidewalk chalk, a stopwatch (or get the free app on your phone) and bottled water if you have it. Here are some events you can use. (Feel free to add, modify, or substitute as needed for your resources, class needs, and personality.)

Who can jump the longest?
Who can jump the highest?
Who can sprint the fastest?
Who can hold a squat the longest?
Who can do fifty jumping jacks the quickest?
Who can hold their breath the longest?
Who can bounce a soccer ball from one knee to the other the most times?
Who can hula-hoop the longest?
Who can throw a bean bag the farthest?

Hold events one at a time or have volunteers man each station and record students' results. At the end of the day, give awards to the winners of each event. After the classroom Olympics, have students write a newspaper review of the day including a complete sentence about each winner (and using a superlative adjective in each sentence).

3 BLIND TASTE TEST

Does the Coke/Pepsi debate run deep in your classroom? How do your students feel about other brand name products? To find out, and use superlative adjectives at the same time, hold a blind taste test in your classroom. To set up the taste test, label two identical paper cups A and B, and pour a little bit of Coke in one and Pepsi in the other. Do not let your students know which product is A and which is B but make sure you know the difference. Then have your students taste each one. After they do, ask students to give you

feedback about the two drinks. Which tastes best? What qualities does the winner have that make it excel? What qualities does the loser have that make it fail? Encourage your students to use superlative adjectives when they give feedback. (E.g. A is the most bubbly. B is the sweetest.) Once everyone has had a chance to taste test, reveal which drink is which. If your students enjoy the activity, you might want to do blind tastings of salsa, ice cream, or spaghetti sauce.

4 WHO AM I?

All you need is a printer and some plastic sleeves to make this mystery person game that also gives your students practice using superlative adjectives. Using scissors and tape, a publishing program, or a table in a word processing program, arrange several pictures in a grid on a sheet of paper. These pictures can be your students, celebrities, or a random assortment of people. Print off a copy of the page for each student and slide it in a plastic sleeve. Then give each person a dry erase marker and a partner and your class is ready to play. Secretly, each player chooses one person on the paper as the mystery person. Player 1 asks her partner one question about the mystery person. If possible, the question should use a superlative adjective. (E.g. Is the mystery person the most musical?) Player 1 then eliminates anyone on his paper that cannot be the mystery person by crossing them out with the dry erase marker. Player 2 then takes a turn. Players go back and forth, both asking questions until one person thinks he has determined the mystery person. The first person to guess correctly wins the game.

5 I LIKE TO MOVE IT, MOVE IT

Who in your class likes to move and groove? Who is the best dancer? Find out in this lively classroom dance competition. Start by dividing your class into teams of three. Have each team brainstorm five positive adjectives that might describe how a per-

son dances. (For example, graceful, beautiful, fast, entertaining, etc. Avoid adjectives like clumsy and awkward.) Have each group show you their list for approval. Then tell your students you will have an in class dance party tomorrow and to bring their favorite tunes. On the day of the dance off, one team at a time will choose a song and dance their hearts out. The rest of the class will be their judges. They have only until the end of the song to choose the best for each of their dance descriptives. Each judge should write one sentence using the superlative form of each adjective. (For example, Su-Jan is the most graceful dancer.) Each team takes a turn dancing, and the other teams make their judgments. Once everyone has had their chance to dance, have each group tabulate their results awarding one point for each superlative. Which dancer in the class got the most superlatives? Compile the results from each team to determine who among your students is the best overall dancer. If you can, award that student a trophy to commemorate the win.

THESE ACTIVITIES ARE JUST A FEW OF THE MANY YOU CAN USE TO PRACTICE SUPERLATIVE ADJECTIVES. FOR FIVE MORE HANDS ON SUPERLATIVE ADJECTIVE ACTIVITIES, SEE PART TWO OF OUR TOP TEN.

Who's the Best? Five MORE Hands-On Activities for Using Superlatives

Practicing superlative adjectives gets your students thinking about the best of the best. These activities will give them the chance to share their opinions about themselves, their classmates and celebrities all over the world when they name the best and the brightest.

TRY THESE 5 MORE HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES FOR USING SUPERLATIVES

1 MY FAMOUS FUTURE

True not many of us will be world famous, but that doesn't mean we can't dream that we are. You can let your students imagine a future in which they are award worthy and get practice using superlative adjectives at the same time. Brainstorm with your class various international awards. They might be anything from the Nobel Prize to getting a star on the Hollywood walk of fame. Have each person imagine that they are going to receive one of these awards in their famous future. When they receive the award, the M.C. of the ceremony will give a short speech saying what an amazing person your students are and what they have accomplished in their lifetimes. Have your students write this introductory speech for themselves imagining what they will be well known for in their future. When they do, they should use as many superlative adjectives as possible to show they are worthy of their award. If you like, have each person introduce themselves or their partner during a class award ceremony.

2 THE ARES AND ARE NOTS

What do a pop singer and an Olympic athlete have in common? Do they have anything in common at all? Get your students thinking about what their favorite celebrities are and aren't when they assign each one a positive and a negative superlative. Start by having groups of three students gather several pictures of celebrities. They may be sports stars, television personalities, national leaders, or anyone "famous". Each group should have between ten and fifteen pictures. For each celebrity, the group will write two sentences using

superlative adjectives but without using the person's name. One sentence will be positive. (E.g. This person is the most entertaining singer.) The other will be negative. (E.g. This person is not the most talented chef.) The groups should write each pair of sentences on an index card and, if possible, glue the celebrity's picture to a separate index card. Once they have finished the sentences, have each group shuffle and exchange their pictures and sentences with another group. The second group will try and match the sentences to the right celebrity.

3 PET ELECTIONS

People say that a dog is man's best friend, but who among your students has the best pet? This activity gets your ESL students talking about why their pet is best. Your elementary students will love running a campaign for their dogs, cats, etc. for best pet in the classroom. Is their dog the smartest? Can it run the fastest? Is it the cuddliest? Ask each of your students to choose one of their pets (or make one up if they do not have a pet) and write five superlative statements about it. They will display these statements on a campaign poster along with a picture of their pet, but the posters should not say who owns each pet. Arrange the completed posters around your room, and give the class some time to read about their classmates' pets. After everyone has had a chance to look at the posters, everyone secretly writes down their vote for best pet. Tally the votes and determine the winner. As a prize that person can either bring their pet in for a visit or have the privilege of leaving their poster up for the rest of the week.

4 THE RHYTHM OF THE BEST

Rhythm games are fun for getting students moving and thinking quickly. In this rhythm game, students will have to offer a superlative for members of your class. Start by arranging your class in a circle sitting on the floor, legs crossed. Then get the rhythm started. Together, the class will clap their hands on their thighs, clap their hands together, snap their fingers and then rest. The entire

rhythm should last four beats. Slap, clap, snap, rest. Repeat these motions and keep the rhythm going. Then, have one person say a superlative about someone in the class. On the first beat they should say the person's name. On the second beat they say "is". On the last two beats, they give the superlative. For example, Juan (slap) is (clap) smartest (snap and rest). On the next round, they ask someone else in the circle about another member of the class. The first beat is the person who is being asked, the second beat "what's" and the third beat the person in class being asked about. For example, Lin (slap) what's (clap) Marie? (snap) Lin would then have to make a superlative about Marie on the next count. (Marie is sweetest. Jorge, what's Min?) If a student cannot think of a superlative or cannot complete it in the correct beat, he is eliminated from the circle. The game continues until only one person is left.

5 YEARBOOK SUPERLATIVES

One of the best parts for students getting their yearbooks at the end of a school year is seeing the superlatives. These awards (best dressed, most likely to succeed, etc.) are given based on student votes. Hold your own superlative votes for the members of your class. Have students decide on the categories or decide on them yourself. Then make up ballots where students will vote for their classmates. On the ballot, list the category and then give space for students to write a sentence. To nominate someone, students write a complete sentence using the superlative. (For example best dressed: Michel is the best dressed.) Collect the ballots and tally the votes. If someone makes a grammatical mistake, their vote does not count. If you have the time and resources, create your own superlative pages with pictures of your students and their awards and make copies for everyone in your class.

WHETHER IT'S THE BEST OF THE BEST OR THE WORST OF THE WORST, ENGLISH SPEAKERS ENCOUNTER SUPERLATIVE ADJECTIVES EVERY DAY.

Giving your students a chance to practice them and have fun at the same time will cement the language rule into their minds and put smiles on their faces.

Get It Done!

How to Teach Causatives

YOU FEEL YOU NEED A LITTLE PICK ME UP AND HEAD ON OVER TO THE HAIR SALON TO GET A SUPER CHIC HAIRCUT.

The following day, you walk into your classroom – what will your students say? Nine times out of ten they'll say, "Teacher, you cut your hair!" And you know that's not true because you never touched the scissors. You did not cut your own hair -- you had it done at the hair salon. Ah... there comes a time when we all must teach this distinction, and the use of causatives. And here's how:

HOW TO TEACH CAUSATIVES:

1 SET THE CONTEXT

First, make sure students understand when we use causatives. Ask them questions like:

T: Do you fix your own car?

S: No, I don't.

T: Who does that for you?

S: The mechanic does.

T: Do you cut your own hair?

S: No, I don't.

T: Who does that for you?/Who cuts your hair?

S: The hairdresser does.

2 INTRODUCE THE CAUSATIVES WITH HAVE

Tell students: You don't fix your own car. You have the mechanic fix your car. You don't cut your own hair. You have the hairdresser cut your hair.

Make sure they understand the main idea: You cause the action by having another person do it. You either can't, don't know how or don't want to do it yourself. They should also understand the distinction between having someone do something as a "service" vs. as a "favor". For example, I wouldn't say I had my sister cut my hair, but rather that I asked her if she could do me the favor and trim it for me – she's under no obligation to say yes, and she doesn't have to take orders from me.

3 POINT OUT THE STRUCTURE

This first type of causative is formed like this:

Subject + have (in any tense) + person

+ verb in base form: *I + have (had/will have) + the mechanic + fix (my car).*

4 PRACTICE – SENTENCE TRANSFORMATION

Flashcards, illustrations or images with jobs and occupations are very useful for practice. Show a magazine cutout or picture of someone repairing a computer. Say: The technician repaired my computer. Students should reply by using the causative: You had the technician repair your computer. Go through as many examples as needed and make sure to use different tenses.

You may also want to have students ask each other questions: Do you have the mechanic check the oil or cut your hair? Do you have the dentist check your teeth or your eyes? Etc...

5 INTRODUCE THE PASSIVE FORM OF CAUSATIVES

Similar to the previous is the passive form of causatives: have/get something done. If you're teaching this separately or on another occasion, don't forget Step 1 and set the context. Then say: You have the mechanic repair your car. Or you have your car repaired (by the mechanic).

Make sure that students see that as in any passive form, you focus less on the person doing the action (in this case, the mechanic, and more on the action itself). The important thing is that if you say that you "have your car repaired", you are emphasizing the fact that you are paying for this service because you can't/don't want to do it yourself.

6 POINT OUT THE STRUCTURE

The passive form of the causative is formed like this:

Subject + have (in any tense) + object/thing + past participle of verb: *I + have (had/will have) + my car + repaired*

7 PRACTICE – LOCATIONS

Name a location and have students say what they have done there:

T: At the dentist's office

S: I have my teeth checked at the dentist's office.

T: At the dry cleaner's

S: I have my suits cleaned at the dry cleaner's.

T: At the beauty salon.

S: I have my hair washed/cut/dried/styled.

Give students the opportunity to ask each other questions: Where do you usually have your hair cut? How often do you have your eyes checked? How often do you have the oil changed?

8 INTRODUCE THE OPTION OF USING "GET"

Tell students that in the passive form they can replace "have" with "get" and also say they "get something done". For extended practice, have students summarize the things they get done once a year vs. once a month or more often: I get my teeth and eyes checked once a year. I get my clothes washed once a week. I get my hair cut every three months.

9 CONSOLIDATION ACTIVITY – BUSY, BUSY, BUSY...

Tell students they must plan a party. Or road trip. Anything that requires a great deal of preparation and errands. They must compile a list of things they must get done and who will do it for them. It should look like this:

ROAD TRIP:

I will take the car to the mechanic's and have the oil and the tires checked. I might have the oil changed. I will also have the engine and the brakes checked. Then, I will have my travel agent book my hotel room. One day before my trip, I will have the car washed. Etc...

Another option would be to have them write a story of how someone prepared for an event, like a party: First, Emma had the baker make a special cake. Then, she had her secretary email the invitations. Etc...

You can look for pictures in magazines and cut them out, or you can have your class do that. You can make a comic strip or have your class draw one. You can read a timeless classic or have your class write one up. Isn't it great when you can get so many things done?

In the Mood:

How to Teach the Subjunctive

NOT IN THE MOOD TO TEACH THE SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD?

The subjunctive is used when expressing a command, a suggestion or a wish. Although this is not exclusively so, the subjunctive is most often used with subordinate clauses that begin with that: I suggest that you buy a new car, I recommend that you see a doctor, etc... There is more than one way to teach the subjunctive, but there is one way that could potentially be less confusing – and more fun for your class. So, here's what I suggest you do:

HOW TO TEACH THE SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD (WITH SUBORDINATE CLAUSES)

1 ASK FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Tell your class that you need to plan a weekend trip to a nearby town. Ask them for suggestions/recommendations on different aspects of the planning such as transportation, hotel reservations, what to pack, etc... Review, if needed, that suggest and recommend are verbs that are followed by a gerund. Write their ideas down on the board. So, some of their suggestions might sound like these:

I suggest booking a room a few weeks in advance.

I recommend staying near the beach.

I suggest packing some sunblock.

I recommend being careful in the ocean.

Etc...

2 INTRODUCE THE SUBJUNCTIVE

Ask one of your students to ask you for a recommendation now. Let's suppose he/she asks you which form of transportation to take to a particular location. Look at your class and say: Juan wants to know which form of transportation to take. Write on the board and say: I suggest that he take the train.

Have students look closely at the previous list of recommendations and compare them to this new form. Students should point out the use of that. They should also notice the form of the verb take. It has no s: it's not in third person singular form. Explain to the class that because you are using a that clause after the verb suggest, the verb has to be in the subjunctive. This is the same for any person or pronoun, singular or plural – you are basically using the verb in its base form – point out a sentence with be, for example: I suggest you be early.

3 ASK FOR MORE EXAMPLES

Now, have students re-phrase their previous suggestions by using a that clause: tell them it also works for the verb recommend.

I suggest that you book a room a few weeks in advance.

I recommend that you stay near the beach.

I suggest that you pack some sunblock.

I recommend that you be careful in the ocean.

Etc.

4 POINT OUT MORE BASICS

After coming up the previous sentences students should understand that the subjunctive is just like the present simple form, except:

- In the verb to be
- In the third person singular (I suggest he take, not takes)

Also, point out that the subjunctive sounds more formal than other ways of suggesting/recommending. Brainstorm situations in which they might want to use the subjunctive: in formal business meetings, when talking to clients or in any professional role.

Finally, point out the fact that the use of that is optional: I suggest you buy your ticket in advance.

5 GIVE THEM MORE VERBS TO USE

The subjunctive not only works with sug-

gest and recommend. Give them a list of verbs: insist, request, urge, demand, advise, ask, just to name the most common. Ask your class some questions to practice these: Does your boss insist that you work on weekends? Next, try some questions from students.

6 TEACH THE SUBJUNCTIVE AFTER SOME ADJECTIVES

Write these adjectives on the board: important, best, imperative, essential, necessary and crucial. Tell them that these adjectives may also be followed by the subjunctive when you are giving recommendations, indications or even commands. Provide some examples: It is essential that you pack sunblock for your trip.

7 PRACTICE TIME!

Make this first real practice exercise more controlled: you may choose to either continue with the question and answer mode or give them a worksheet to complete. Correct mistakes as needed, and make sure they are using the subjunctive correctly with both the verbs and the adjectives.

8 PUT IT ALL TOGETHER!

Now is the time to put everything they've learned about the subjunctive to good use. Prepare some simple cards with situations in which someone might need a suggestion: new in town, an illness, trying to improve their pronunciation, etc... Divide your class into pairs. Each student takes a card. Student A presents his/her situation: I want to improve my English, What do you suggest I do? Student B provides suggestions, then they switch. After all the pairs are done, students share the recommendations they obtained: Sarah suggested I watch more movies in English.

AND PRESTO! WITH ENOUGH PRACTICE, YOUR STUDENTS SHOULD HAVE THE SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD DOWN PAT.

Students will find it especially useful in job situations – and they'll speak like real pros, too!

A Conversational Review of Past, Present and Future Language

THE WORLD AROUND US IS FILLED WITH INTERESTING INVENTIONS.

Some have changed the world so much that many of us could not live without them. This exercise gives your students a chance to talk about the inventions they think are most interesting and challenges them to think up another that the world has never seen.

USE THE FOLLOWING PRACTICAL STEPS FOR THE REVIEW OF TENSES

1 WHAT IS AN INVENTION?

Inventions are not the same thing as discoveries, though some people tend to confuse the two. Have students work with a partner and look up the English definitions of these two words. Ideally they will determine the following. Inventions are items or tools that a person created. Discoveries, on the other hand, are items already present in nature which people found. With their partner, students should discuss the difference between the two items based on their definitions and try come up with at least three examples of each. (Discoveries might include electricity, gold, fire, etc. Inventions can be found all around us. They might include cars, clocks, computers, telephones, etc.)

2 PRESENT TENSE AND PASSIVE VOICE

Review the present tense with your students by asking them to list as many inventions they can find in your classroom. (One invention is... I see another. It is...) Make a master list on the board. When a student names an invention, ask him or her what we use that invention for. If your students are less proficient language users, have them use the simple present for their explanation. (People use pencils to write.) More advanced students can phrase their statements in the passive voice. (Pencils are used to write.) Once your class has compiled a large list, have each person choose one invention and write three to five sentences which describe that invention. Each person should take turns reading their description to the class, and the class should try to guess which invention they are describing. Again, students can use the simple present or the passive voice to describe their invention.

3 PAST TENSE

What do Alexander Graham Bell, Henry Ford, the Wright brothers, Thomas Edison and Eli Whitney have in common? They were all famous inventors. Write these names on the board and have pairs of students share any information they know about these people. As they share, they should use the past tense to talk about the inventors and their inventions. After five to ten minutes, divide your class into five groups and assign one inventor to each group. Then, take your class to the computer lab or have them use their tech savvy devices to research their inventor. Each group should gather as much information they can about the inventor and their invention. What did the person need to create his invention? Why did the world need it? How has it changed people's lives? Each group should take notes using the past tense. Once students have completed their research, have each group share what they learned with the class.

4 PRESENT DAY INVENTIONS

For homework, have students make a list of all the inventions they see and use in their homes. Warn them that this list will be extensive but that they should try to make it as complete as possible. They should sort their inventions into categories by room. Inventions in the bathroom might include toothbrushes, toilet paper, running water, etc. In the kitchen, inventions will include knives, dish washers, ice cube trays and similar items. Along with their lists, ask each person to write a sentence describing what each one is used for. These sentences will be in the present tense.

The next day in class, divide students into groups – one group for each room in the house. Give each group several index cards which they will use to create invention flash cards. On one side, they should draw or paste a picture of the invention. On the reverse side, they should list the invention, who invented it, when, and how it helps people today. As students complete their cards, they should write in complete sentences and use the correct form of past and present verbs.

5 FUTURE AND CONDITIONAL

Now that your students have thought about the inventions that affect their everyday life, challenge them to

imagine what the future may be like. In groups of around three students, have your class discuss the following three questions.

1. How do you think the world will change in the next 100 years?
2. What new things will people in the future be able to do? Consider each of the following areas: medicine, transportation, communication and entertainment.
3. What new inventions will people need in order to do these things? List at least five possible inventions for each category.

Throughout their discussions, students should use the future tense to express their ideas. Then, once they have some ideas on paper, have your students choose one invention, either from their list or another they think up on their own.

As homework or in free study time, have your students come up with the details of their invention. What will it do? How will it be built? Will it be sold? How much will it cost? Why will people need it? How will it help people in the future in their everyday lives? As students think up the details about their invention, they should use future tenses to describe the invention and the conditional tense to explain what this invention would do for people of the future. Then, have each person present their invention to the class. The presentation should be three to five minutes and should focus on two things. First, it should describe the invention (future tenses). Second, it should explain how this invention would benefit people in the future (conditional tense).

As a follow up activity, have students draw their invention and write a brief description of it, including its price. Then compile all of the inventions together to create a catalogue. Make a copy for each person in your class and have them vote on which invention they would most like to have. If you like, have each student share which one he chose and why. Be sure to require that students use the conditional tense when they describe what they would do with it.

DOING A TENSE REVIEW WITH YOUR STUDENTS DOESN'T HAVE TO BE BORING. By researching inventions and imagining their own, your students will have fun and still get practice with past, present and future language. Who knows, you might even find a future inventor among your students.

Back to the Future: 7 Activities for Talking About the Future

ARE YOU GOING TO REVIEW FUTURE TENSES WITH YOUR STUDENTS?

Will you find some fun and creative ways to do it? Here are some activities you can use the next time you want to talk about the things that are yet to come.

TRY THESE 7 ACTIVITIES FOR TALKING ABOUT THE FUTURE WITH YOUR STUDENTS

1 WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

We live in a world that is constantly changing, and every day it seems to change more quickly. In small groups, have your students talk about what they think the future will be like. Start with talking about one year from now. What will be different? What will be the same? Then move on to five years, ten years and fifty years. Finish the activity by having each student write about her own life in the future. Review with your students how to write a personal letter, and then have each person write you a letter describing her life in fifty years.

2 GRAMMATICAL CHAIRS

Review the subtle differences between three grammatical structures for talking about the future: present continuous, be going to, and will. Arrange three chairs in the front of your classroom, and label each one either present continuous, be going to or will. Students should then take turns choosing one chair. They should sit in the chair and then use that construction to make up a sentence about the future. Direct students to the correct chairs as needed when they make mistakes. Continue until each person has had at least one turn in each chair.

3 OH THE PLACES YOU'LL GO

Though your class is certainly their favorite place to be (har har), give your students a chance to talk about their vacation plans and practice talking about the future. Before the activity, take several index cards (at least one per student) and write a vacation destination on one side. On the other side, write two things a person might do at that vacation location, one positive and one negative

if possible. Give each student one card. On your word, students mingle around the classroom asking their classmates about vacation plans. Students start by asking their partners if they are going to the location for vacation. For example, "Are you going to Paris for vacation?" The second student answers positively. Then the first student asks their partner if they plan to do the activities on the back of the card. "Will you go to the Eiffel tower?...Will you eat escargot?..." Partners should answer each question appropriately and then switch roles. When two students have finished their conversation, they find new partners and repeat the process.

4 BROWN BAGGING IT

This fun game gives your students a chance to think creatively while using the future tense. Arrange students in a circle, and give one person an empty bag. That person must look into the bag and think of an object that would fit inside it. He then asks the person to his right, "Why do you have a _____ in your bag?" That person then answers using be going to and his plan for the object. For example, an exchange might go like this. "Why do you have a kitten in your bag?"

"I am going to give it to a lonely classmate." If a person cannot answer a question appropriately or cannot think of a use for the object, he is out of the game and must leave the circle. Continue going around the circle until only one person, the winner, remains.

5 MORE THAN WORDS

On the surface, using will in a sentence seems straightforward. One is talking about the future. But the meaning of future sentences using will goes deeper than that. English speakers use 'will' for four different reasons: to predict a future event (It will snow in January), to express a spontaneous decision (I'll do it. I'll ask him out right now), to show a willingness to do something (We'll decorate for the dance), and to make a promise (I will call at seven). Before class, make a list of sentences using will, at least two for each reason. After reviewing the four reasons for using will, chal-

lenge your students to match each of your sentences with the correct reason. Answer any questions your students might have. Then put students in pairs to write their own set of eight sentences. When everyone has finished, have pairs swap lists and determine which sentence goes with which reason.

6 FORTUNE TELLING

This silly role play will get your students talking about one another's futures. If you can, bring in a prop that supposedly has magical powers to predict the future: a crystal ball, a magic mirror, tea leaves, or magical cards. Bring two students to the front of the classroom for a creative role play. Have one student play the fortune teller and look into the magical object or at their partner's palm. They must then make predictions about the person's future based on what they "see". The customer should ask questions about their future as well. Encourage students to be creative and have fun. Once the role play is over, bring another pair to the front for a new role play or have players switch roles. If you like, extend the activity by having each person write about what the fortune teller said using reported speech.

7 PENCIL ME IN

If you are teaching an international class, bring culture into the classroom by having each student plan a vacation for the class in her home country. Ask students to plan a weeklong visit for the entire class to their home country. Each student should think of accommodations, meals and activities. Each student then gives a presentation in which they talk about the vacation that they planned. You should designate the length of the presentation based on their overall English level. Each person should also write up a plan which you should post in the classroom for all to see. After all your students have presented and the vacation itineraries have been posted, have students secretly vote on the one they would choose. (No fair voting for your own.)

THESE ARE JUST A FEW WAYS YOU CAN REVIEW FUTURE TENSES WITH YOUR STUDENTS.

Back to the Future 2: 6 More Activities for Reviewing Future Time

DON'T GIVE UP ON THE FUTURE JUST YET.

Here are six more fun and fresh activities you can use to review future tenses with your students.

CHECK OUT THESE NEW INSPIRING FUTURE ACTIVITIES

1 GET CARDED

When it's time to review the different forms of future verbs, this simple card game will fit the bill. Break your students into groups of about three and have them start a chart on a piece of paper. The chart's three columns should be the following: Predictions (will + verb), Arrangements (present continuous), Future intentions and decisions (be going to + verb). Then give each group a set of 12 cards with events that may happen in the future. Each set should contain four events that would use each of the three grammatical structures for the future. (That is, four predictions, four arrangements, four intentions or decisions for the future.) You might have cards with the following: study for the test tonight, get married soon, go shopping tomorrow, return to my home country after the school year, go on the school's ski trip, or call my mother tonight. Students should shuffle the cards and then place them face down on the table. Each person takes a turn choosing one card and then deciding which column it should go under. If a student is unsure, he can get help from his group. Then, when all the cards have been positioned, students write three more events on blank cards – one for each column. Working together, the group then writes out sentences for each card.

2 NEVER BORED GAME

This activity will give your students a chance to practice speaking using future constructions. All you need is this printable game board and a die for each group of three or four students. Students take turns rolling the die and then moving a place marker to the appropriate space. (You can use coins, paper clips, plastic figures or any other small items for place markers.) Once everyone has rolled and moved, set a timer for thirty seconds. The player in each group

should then talk about the item on his square for thirty seconds. (Each square asks about something that would happen in the future.) He must talk for the full thirty seconds: if he cannot he must return to his previous space. Play until someone in each group reaches the final space and declares himself the winner.

3 ARE YOU SURE?

Once your students are comfortable using basic future grammar, it's time to talk about certainty. What will they do? What might they do? What will they definitely not do? Use a blank die to determine what point in the future your students will talk about. (White board dice are great for this activity, but you can also make your own blank dice from paper or card stock with a simple pattern.) You can label the sides today, tomorrow, next week, next month, next year, and in five years. Then have students come up with some events they may or may not do in the future – some likely some very unlikely. Each person should write three possible future events on a separate slip of paper and then put them into a bag. After you review different certainty modals (will, won't, should, shouldn't, could, may, and might), each student then takes a turn rolling the time die and choosing a slip of paper from the bag. She must then compose a sentence indicating the surety of doing that activity at the future time she rolled. For example, if she rolls "tomorrow" and chooses "get married" she would say "I definitely won't get married tomorrow." Play until everyone in class has at least one turn or until you run out of slips of paper.

4 20 QUESTIONS

This simple game is great for practicing questions with the future tenses. Rather than choosing an object, one person thinks of an event he or she will do in the future. Once he has decided, the rest of the class works together to figure out what that event is. They can ask yes, no questions using the future tense. The person then answers with a yes or no. The class has only 20 questions to ask. If they are able to determine what that person will do before their questions are used up, they win. If after 20 questions they still do not know, the individual wins. If possible, play until everyone has a turn choosing an event and answering

his classmates' questions.

5 COMMON VISION

What will the world be like in fifty years? We all have our own ideas, but those ideas are as different as the people who hold them. As a result, your students will get lots of conversation practice as they try to predict a common vision for the future. Start by having students make predictions in writing about different areas of life. Set the time for fifty years in the future, and have students write a paragraph about home life, school life, work, communication and technology. It is best to have them do this for homework, using the future tense as they write. The next day in class, put students into groups of about five and ask them to share their predictions. Once everyone has shared, students must work with their groups to come up with a common vision of the future. Each person should give reasons and support as they discuss what the future will be like until the entire group can agree on what is yet to come. Then, have each group present their ideas to the class, either on one area of life or on all of them. Give the class a chance to ask questions of the groups after each presentation.

6 I SEE YOUR FUTURE...

Write the name of each of your students on a slip of paper and put them in a bag. Each person in the class draws a name from the bag (if they pull their own they must exchange it for another name). Students should not share the name that they drew from the bag. Each person should then write ten sentences predicting that person's future. Once everyone has written their sentences, have each person take turns reading them to the class. Number the presentations, and have the listeners write a numbered list of who they think each prediction is for. Once everyone has read their predictions and the class has made their guesses, reveal the correct answers and see who got the most correct.

WHO KNOWS WHAT THE FUTURE WILL HOLD. ONE THING IS CERTAIN, THOUGH. YOUR STUDENTS WILL GAIN VALUABLE PRACTICE AND HAVE FUN IN THE PROCESS AS THEY PERFECT SPEAKING AND WRITING IN THE FUTURE TENSE.

Look into the Future: 5 Role Plays for Practicing Future Tenses

ROLE PLAYS ARE ONE OF THE MOST COMMON ACTIVITIES IN ESL CLASSES, AND RIGHTLY SO.

They get students thinking quickly, applying grammar and vocabulary, and putting their language knowledge to practical use. Role plays are flexible, too. You can cover just about any subject area in a role play. The following role plays cover a variety of subjects, but they have one thing in common. Each focuses on using the future tenses, and they are sure to get your students talking. So whether you are teaching the simple future or doing a review of all the future tenses, try one of these role-plays with your students and watch their imaginations go wild!

TRY THESE 5 ROLE PLAYS FOR PRACTICING FUTURE TENSES

1 ENGLISH RESTAURANT

Setting up a restaurant role-play is easy. All you need are one or more students sitting, playing the role of the restaurant patrons, and another student playing the role of server. Servers asks guests, "What will you have?" and patrons answer using the simple future and their meal choice. But with a little more work, a restaurant role play can be far more in depth. Have students write their own menus and use them to place an order. You can also host a "restaurant" for your fellow teachers and students. Have three or four dishes that your guests can order, and have your students play the role of server. (Half the class works as servers while the other half run the kitchen. The groups switch places half way through your time block.) Patrons order food and your students fulfill the duties of a server. If you are in an English speaking country, it's as simple as that. If you are teaching ESL is a non-English speaking country, have servers work in pairs. One person speaks to the guests in English and the second acts as interpreter between server and guests.

2 I CAN SEE THE FUTURE...

Your students will have fun with

this role play, which allows them to imagine and invent their classmates' futures. Gypsies are famous for fortunetelling. Some use crystal balls, others use cards or read palms. Choose one or all of these as part of a role-play set up to practice future tenses. One person acts as the fortuneteller while one or more students act as his/her customers. The customers ask questions about their futures, and the gypsy answers them after referring to his or her magical objects. If you like, give your students advance warning of the role play and encourage them to dress creatively for the fortune telling role!

3 PRESS CONFERENCE

Though politics may not be your students' fields, this mock election campaign will challenge them to pretend it is. All candidates make promises when they are running for office. These promises point toward a better future. Depending on what office a person runs for, these promises might be anything from putting vending machines in the cafeteria to changing national laws. Playing the role of an aspiring politician will give your students the opportunity to talk about what they will do once they are in office. First challenge your class to think of an office which they could pursue someday, and then give them a chance to talk about the better futures they imagine. One at a time, have students come to the front of the room and act as a candidate running for office. The rest of the class plays the role of the press, asking the candidate questions. "What will you do about x, y and z?" Encourage an open and honest dialogue between press and candidate and watch as both use future tenses to talk about what they future will hold.

4 THE BUCKET LIST

English is a complicated language, and little is more complicated than idioms. Perhaps that is why ESL students can run into new idioms every day. The expression "kick the bucket" is an idiomatic reference to dying. From that expression we get the relatively new phrase bucket list. A bucket list is the list

of all the things you want to do before you die (or kick the bucket). Give your students some time to think about what they want to do before they die, and have them write their own bucket lists. Challenge each person to dream big and list at least ten things they want to do before they die. These bucket lists will be the foundation for this future tense role play. Pairs of students will play the parts of a retiree and a teenager. In the scenario, the teenager is sharing the things he or she will do (the items on the bucket list). The retiree, though, has more life experience and a more realistic expectation to what a person can accomplish. Your students should role-play a conversation between these two people. The teenager is bragging about all the things he will do in his life, and the retiree is correcting him with more realistic expectations. For example, the teenager might say he will climb Mt. Kilimanjaro, but the retiree knows he won't climb the mountain. He will only climb the stairs to his fourth floor apartment. After the discussion, have students switch roles.

5 A BABY ON THE WAY

Life certainly changes when a person has a baby. Many of these changes are wonderful – love and cuddles and snuggly smiles from your little one. Other changes are more of a challenge – lack of sleep, dirty diapers and regular crying fits. Your students will argue both sides of life with a baby in this role-play. Put your students in pairs. One person plays the soon to be mother or father. The other person is the longtime parent. The soon to be parent shares about how his or her life will change for the better once the baby comes. The voice of experience will balance the discussion with challenges the parent will encounter: he or she will remind his partner of all the struggles of being a new parent. Have students discuss what is to come after baby comes until both parties can agree on a realistic but hopeful middle ground.

THESE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE ROLE PLAYS YOU CAN USE WITH YOUR STUDENTS AS YOU REVIEW FUTURE TENSES.

Look into the Future: 6 More Role Plays for Practicing Future Tenses

ARE YOU STUDYING THE FUTURE TENSE WITH YOUR ESL CLASS?

Are you looking for some unusual role plays to get them speaking up? In this article you may just find what you are looking for (and what your students will be talking about). These activities will get them thinking about their futures, the environment and how they can help and hinder other people in their plans all while practicing speaking about the future.

PUT INTO PRACTICE THE IDEAS FOR REINFORCING FUTURE

1 HELPING HANDS

This role play works best in groups of about four students and gives them lots of room for independent thinking and creativity. Choose one person in the group to share their plans for a future activity. They will tell the members of their group something that they plan to do, and they will use the simple future to share their plans. For example, someone might say, "I am going to run a marathon." The other members of the group then jump in with the things they will do to help that person accomplish his or her task. One at a time, the students say what they will do. "I'll help you buy the right shoes, I'll run with you when you train, I'll bring water for you to drink during the race." Students continue to offer a helping hand until no one can think of any more ways to help. The student with the original plan should feel free to comment on each offer, and once all the offers have been made the group makes a timeline or plan of when and how they will accomplish the tasks. If you like and have the time, have another person in the group share his plans and repeat the process.

2 TROUBLESOME IN LAWS

In this role play, one student will try to convince another student why his plans are bad ones. One person plays the future son-in-law or daughter-in-law while the other person plays the mother-in-law or father-in-law to be. The SIL or DIL shares plans for after the wedding with the other person. These plans can be about moving, having children, changing jobs or anything that your students can come up with. The in-law then tells the person that what they have planned will

not work. He or she then explains what will happen if the SIL or DIL tries to make these changes using the simple future tense. The first student then changes his plans and shares his new idea using the simple future, and the second student again shows why it is impossible. The conversation continues until one person cannot think of anything else to say. The last person who talks in the dialogue is the winner. Then, have students switch roles and repeat the exercise.

3 IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN

This role play not only gets your students using the simple future: it will also have them thinking about protecting the environment. One or two students play the role of an activist trying to tackle an environmental issue: water pollution, the greenhouse effect, ozone depletion, renewable resources, or any other topics that your students feel strongly about. (Hint: this is a great opportunity to bring science into the ESL classroom.) This student approaches one or two other students in the class who are playing the role of big company executives. Their business practices are damaging the environment in the specific way the activists are trying to prevent. To persuade the corporate tycoon, the activist tells her what will happen if she does not change her business practices. The tycoon, on the other hand, tells the activist how changing business practices will negatively impact the company. Each side tries to convince the other that they are right. As they do, they should use future tenses. The conversation continues until one person agrees with the other or the two give up and must agree to disagree.

4 BACK TO THE FUTURE

If you have the resources, start this role play with a segment from the classic Michael J. Fox movie *Back to the Future*. In this movie a teenage boy travels back in time to when his parents were in high school. His mother falls in love with him instead of his father, and comedic results ensue. Your students will role play this scenario. One person travels back in time to when his or her parents were in high school (the time that they fell in love). Two other students play the parents who are no longer in love with each other because of their time travel-

ling child. The student who travelled back in time must convince the two others to get together by telling them about their future. The parents ask questions about the future and say what they think will happen – either agreeing or disagreeing with their child. Discussion continues until the time traveler can get his parents back together.

5 GAME SHOW WINNINGS

Stage a game show in your classroom to review class material while practicing the future tenses. Have three contestants in your game show answer questions and win money. You should provide the questions to a third student who plays the host of the show. When a person answers a question correctly, the game show host tells them how much money they will receive for answering that question correctly. That person should then tell the host what he or she will do with that money. This role play serves double duty as your students review content information and use the simple future to ask and answer questions.

6 MAKEOVER

Do you have creative and fashionable students in your classroom? If you do, they might enjoy this makeover themed role play. One person plays the part of a celebrity stylist – someone with knowledge of fashion and beauty. The other person plays the part of a person in need of a minor makeover (either a celebrity, themselves, or a fictional person). The two have a conversation about the makeover they are about to give/receive. The stylist wants the makeover to be extreme, including plastic surgery. The person getting the makeover does not feel such extreme measures are necessary. What will the stylist do? How will the person feel when he or she does it? Have the two discuss the possible makeover until they come to an agreement somewhere in the middle.

ROLE PLAYS IN THE ESL CLASSROOM ARE NOT JUST PRACTICAL, THEY ARE FUN. Your students can imagine themselves in strange or comical situations while speaking boldly and thinking creatively. These role plays will do just that and at the same time will give your students practice with future tenses.

10 Fun Games for Reviewing English Numbers

I remember one of my college professors, an ESL instructor and bilingual herself, telling our class that bilinguals always revert to their first language when counting. Numbers, she said, are so abstract that it's hard to produce them fluently in any language other than one's first. Whether she was right or she was wrong doesn't really matter. I have found in my own experience that practicing numbers in English is a beneficial use of time for students at any level. Plus, these activities for reviewing numbers in English are also good time fillers when you have just a few minutes left at the end of class.

TRY THESE 10 FUN GAMES FOR REVIEWING ENGLISH NUMBERS

1 PLAY GO FISH

Go fish is such an easy game, and a fun one too. All you need are a deck of cards and someone to play with. In groups of four, one person deals seven cards to each player. Players then take turns asking specific players for a match to one of the cards in their hand. If they get one, they go again. If they don't, they draw a card from the remaining stack. The player with the most matches once all the cards are gone wins.

2 PLAY DOMINOES

Playing this simple number matching game with a standard set of dominoes will be great practice for your students. Just require them to read the numbers on each side of the piece they are playing before putting it down. But you can make the game a little more challenging by creating your own set of dominoes from some index cards. Rather than putting dots on each side of the domino, write a numeral on one side and a number (in word form – i.e. one, two, etc.) on the other side. Your students will then have to make connections between the numeral and the English word as

they play.

3 HAVE A WAR

With a deck of cards, that is. Using a standard deck of playing cards might not be the greatest benefit to your students since they can play without using English numbers in their mind. Therefore, take a few minutes to create your own set of 52 cards with number words written on them. I find index cards most useful for this. Now your students will have to determine which written number is larger. I may be the worst artist in the continental U.S., but I also include stick figure jacks, queens and kings in my deck. It gives me a chance to teach the words and gives my students something to laugh at (my artistic talent), and I don't blame them!

4 DICE MATCH

This game takes a little longer but has an element of review along with the game factor. Have pairs of students write on post-its the numbers (written out) for two through twelve as a review, or have three students write out numbers three through eighteen lay them out on a desk or table. Then give each group two or three standard dice, respectively. Students take turns rolling the dice. They count the number on the dice and then take the post-it which spells out the number that they rolled. The game is over when all of the post-its have been taken. The winner, of course, is the one who collected the most post-its. If you want to extend the activity, have students put their post-its in numerical order at the end of the game. Each student can also play with their own collection of post-its. The first person to collect all of his own cards wins.

5 THOUSAND CARD WAR

You don't need a thousand cards to play this game which practices reading numbers. Students play in pairs, and each pair needs four decks of cards (tens and face cards removed). On each turn, students lay

four cards in front of them. The first card represents the thousands place, the second the hundreds place, the third the tens place and the fourth the ones place. On his turn, each person must read their number aloud before the pair decides whose number is larger. This is harder than it may seem in a second language, so make sure you give your students enough time to go through their stack of cards at least once.

6 NUMBER CROSS WORDS

This is an easy worksheet to have ready for a few minutes of free time. Create a crossword puzzle with numerals as the clues and written numbers as the answers. You can create a crossword puzzle for free at Puzzle Maker or other online sites. Then copy enough for your class and pull it out for practice or to fill a few unplanned minutes in class when you need it!

7 NUMBER WORD SEARCH

You can also keep a word search handy for number review. Generate a word search at Busy Teacher with number words one through twenty spelled out in the puzzle, but don't give your students the list of number words. Challenge them to remember those words on their own! You can use the puzzle for review or as a time filler as needed.

8 DOUBLE DUTY SCRABBLE

I have always found Scrabble to be one of the most useful games to have on hand for my ESL classes (and you can usually pick up enough sets for your class inexpensively around the holidays). This game can serve double duty in your classroom when you challenge students to keep score using written numbers rather than numerals. Have each student keep his own score, adding the points he gains each turn. For example, one turn might read 'seven plus five equals twelve'. The next turn – 'twelve plus eight equals twenty'. If you like

have each person turn in his paper at the end of the game. Your students will get practice writing out numbers as they also learn new vocabulary from the words their classmates play on the board.

9 NUMBER LINE SMASH

This game takes some space but will get your students up and moving as they practice numbers. Write the numerals one through twenty on brown paper bags (brown bag lunch size), and keep several bags and a marker on hand to replace damaged bags as needed. Open each bag and twist the top so you have a paper bag balloon of sorts. Then arrange these in a circle in an open playing area. (You may need to go outside to have enough room.) Have two students stand in the center of the circle with a rolled up magazine for a bat. Then, say one number aloud. The two students must race to smash the bag that bears that number. The one who smashes it first scores a point. Give everyone in class at least two or three turns. To extend the activity, have each person take a bag at the end of class and find an item that they can place in the bag the correct number of times. For example, someone with the number five might put five pinecones in the bag. Someone with number eleven might find eleven leaves to put in theirs.

10 THE GROWING SNAKE

This game will really challenge your students' abilities to read very large numbers. Students play in groups of three or four, and each group gets one die. A ten sided die is ideal (ten being zero), but a standard six sided die will work just as well. Students take turns rolling the die. On his turn, a student rolls and writes his number on the piece of paper to the left of any existing numbers. He then reads the number on the page. Players take turns rolling and adding numbers to one already on the paper, watching the number "snake" grow with each turn. With each turn the number becomes longer and students must read the entire number. Make sure each person gets at least three turns. By the end of the game, your students will be reading a number at least as long as 111,111,111.

5 Creative ESL Games for Practicing Numbers

IF YOU ARE TEACHING ESL TO YOUNG CHILDREN, YOU KNOW HOW HARD IT CAN BE TO KEEP THEIR ATTENTION.

This is especially true when the language barrier keeps them from understanding what you are saying. And even the simplest language can be overwhelming when a student doesn't understand. Numbers often fall into this simple yet impossible category, but they don't have to. These games for practicing numbers will engage your students and bring smiles to their faces while practicing using numbers in English.

MAKE THE NUMBERS EASY

1 NUMBER MEMORY

One of my favorite games for the ESL classroom is memory. In this simple game, students arrange a set of cards in a grid face down on a desk or table. Each card in the deck has one match, and students take turns flipping over two cards in hopes of making a match. If they make a match with their two cards, they keep it and take another turn. If they do not make a match, they turn the cards back over and the next person takes a turn. The key is remembering which cards are which once they are turned back over. This game is great for practicing numbers in the ESL classroom, too. Make a set of cards for your own memory game: half of the cards should have numerals on them. Their matches should have the number word spelled out. Students play memory matching the number to the number word. It's a chance to have fun and review number words at the same time.

2 NUMBER SCAVENGER HUNT

This time of year is great for taking your students outside and enjoying the beautiful fall weather. You can get some number practice in the next time you are on the playground with a number scavenger hunt. Make a set of index cards with written numbers 1-20 or whatever numbers you want to review with your students. Shuffle the cards and give one to each student. On your go, students race to find one item in the quantity listed on their card. For

example, a student whose card says "six" might race to find six pinecones, acorns, or leaves. Once he finds them, he runs back to you and has you check his count. If he is right, he gets another card and races to complete his new task. Play until you run out of cards (you should have enough so each student could get two or three cards), and the student with the most cards at the end of the game wins. If you like, bring the found items into your classroom to create a nature collage or review natural vocabulary.

3 TURKEY FEATHER MATCHING

This game is perfect for a learning center or a busy bag when November rolls around. Give your students small paper plates and some brown paint, a turkey head, and some google eyes. Students first paint their plates and then use the other pieces to transform their plates into a turkey – everything but the feathers, that is. Collect the turkeys and write a number on the front of each one. These should be larger numbers: your students will be adding other numbers to reach that sum. If you like, staple the turkeys to a bulletin board, but make sure you only staple the bottom and the sides of the turkey. Then, label many dyed clothes pins with written numbers. These numbers should be smaller ones since they will be added together to reach the numbers on the turkeys. Either taking turns or independently, students draw a clothes pin from a bag and place it on a turkey. As they add clothes pins to each turkey, the goal is to reach the number written on the turkey. If necessary, students can rearrange the clothes pins on their turns. Your students will have fun building the perfect birds and reviewing number words and simple addition at the same time.

4 NUMBER COVER UP

In this game, students race to cover every number written on their papers. To create the game boards, list the numbers two through twelve or three through eighteen. You can decorate these papers with seasonal clipart (leaves in fall, snowflakes in winter,

etc.). Give each student one paper, and every group of three students two or three standard six sided dice (depending on which numbers you listed on the paper). Students take turns rolling the dice. Whatever sum they roll, they cover that number on their paper using dot markers, highlighters, etc. Students take turns rolling and marking their papers. If a number is already marked, play simply passes to the next person. The person to cover all of her numbers first wins the game.

5 NUMBER PONG

This exciting game gets students excited about counting in English. Set up a pong board by labeling the top inside of several plastic cups with written numbers one through twenty. Velcro the bottoms of the cups to a board or sturdy poster board (so you can disassemble and store the game more easily) so they are touching on the edges. Place the cup board on a table, and give the first student a ping pong ball. He should bounce the ball on the near side of the table and let it land in one of the cups which is resting on the far side of the table. Whatever cup the ball lands in, he counts out that many markers. You can use dried beans, small pieces of candy, or any other item you have in large quantities as counters. He should count out his winnings aloud in English. Then the next person takes a turn. Play for a certain number of rounds, and the game win goes to the person with the most counters. You could also have students play until they reach a certain number of counters or until they can fill a small cup. Vary the game by letting each student bounce three balls each turn and then adding the numbers before counting out their winnings.

A FUN GAME CAN BRING LIFE TO EVEN THE MOST BASIC OF LESSONS, AND THESE GAMES WILL GET YOUR STUDENTS IN THE SPIRIT OF COMPETITION WHILE THEY PRACTICE USING NUMBERS IN ENGLISH. Whether they are bouncing balls, flipping cards, or running around the playground, your students will end up with smiles on their faces when you use these fun English games in class.

Get It Together: Four Types of Connecting Language in English

MAKING CONNECTIONS.

It's a good idea in the work place, but it's absolutely essential when you are in the classroom. In math class, a simple plus sign is all that's needed, but in the language classroom, things are a little more complicated. Connections in English can happen between independent sentences. Words such as also, in addition and plus will link an idea in one sentence to an idea in another sentence. But connections can happen within a sentence as well. For these types of connections, English speakers generally use one of four types of connecting language.

HOW WE CONNECT IDEAS IN ENGLISH

1 COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

The first type of connecting language in English are coordinate conjunctions. These familiar words include and, but, or and nor. These little words connect words, groups of words, sentences or groups of sentences. For coordinating conjunctions, the words or sentences are on the same level, that is, they are of equal value.

- **And** is an inclusive connector – it creates a positive connection between two ideas, people or things. *I play tennis, and I study physics.*
- **But**, on the other hand, shows contrast between ideas, people or things. *I play tennis, but I do not study physics.*
- **Or** communicates a choice between two elements. *Do you play tennis, or do you study physics?*
- **Nor** shows negative inclusion, that is, neither is true. *I don't play tennis, nor do I study physics.*

2 CORRELATIVE CONJUNCTIONS

Correlative conjunctions are pairs of words that show relationships be-

tween subjects and objects in a sentence. They include both ... and, not only ... but also, either ... or, and neither ... nor. Like coordinate conjunctions, correlative conjunctions connect ideas that are of equal value.

- **Both ... and** shows a similarity or connection between ideas. *Both Jake and Mary play tennis for exercise.*
- **Not only ... but** also shows that a subject has two distinct qualities. *Not only does Jake play tennis, but he also studies physics.*
- **Either ... or** communicates a choice between two elements. *Either Mary can play tennis or she can study physics. She doesn't have time for both.*
- **Neither ... nor** shows a negative similarity or connection between ideas. *Neither Mary nor Jake plays tennis on Sundays.*

3 SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Subordinating conjunctions connect two ideas that are not of equal footing. One idea is subordinate to the other. When a dependent clause is connected to an independent clause with a subordinating conjunction, the result is a complex sentence. English has over thirty common subordinate conjunctions. Some of the most familiar are if, because, since, so that, and when. Subordinating conjunctions can be divided into eight basic categories.

- **Place:** She plays tennis **wherever** she travels.
- **Time:** She feels tired **after** she plays tennis.
- **Manner:** She dresses **however** she wants.
- **Cause/Reason:** She does this **because** she doesn't care about style.
- **Purpose:** She practices **so** she can get better.
- **Result:** She plays **so that** she will

stay healthy.

- **Condition:** She practices **even if** it is raining.
- **Substantive:** Who can know **whether** she is right?

4 RELATIVE PRONOUNS

Relative pronouns also connect a dependent clause to an independent clause, resulting in a complex sentence. When relative pronouns are used, the dependent clause gives more information about something or someone in the independent clause. Relative pronouns include who, whose, where, when, which and that.

- **Who** relates information about a person. *Jake is someone who likes to exercise.*
- **Whose** shows a possessive relationships. *Jake is an athlete whose body shows his efforts.*
- **Where** indicates a place. *The park is where the tennis courts are.*
- **When** indicates a time. *After work is when he likes to play.*
- **Which** is used for things. That is used for both people and things. *Tennis is a sport which (that) will keep you healthy.*

AS YOU CAN SEE, MAKING CONNECTIONS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CAN BE COMPLICATED AND CONFUSING FOR ESL STUDENTS. IF YOUR STUDENTS CAN MASTER THESE FOUR TYPES OF CONNECTING LANGUAGE, HOWEVER, THEY WILL BE SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATORS.

It's All Relative: How to Teach Relative Clauses and Why You Need To

RELATIVE CLAUSES ARE DEPENDENT CLAUSES WHICH DEFINE OR EXPLAIN A NOUN.

They are not the most simple English grammatical construction, and most students don't tackle them until they are advanced in their English studies. Relative clauses, however, shouldn't be left to the very end of a student's grammar curriculum. They are useful and helpful for students who still have a lot to learn when it comes to English, and these dependent clauses doesn't have to be that complicated.

HOW TO TEACH RELATIVE CLAUSES AND WHY YOU NEED TO

1 WHAT IS A RELATIVE CLAUSE?

Relative clauses are sometimes called adjective clauses and follow the noun which they describe. They are dependent clauses which give additional information about a noun in the main clause, and they follow that noun in the complex sentence they create. Dependent clauses start with a relative pronoun: that, which, where, when, who, and whom (though whom has fallen out of everyday use and often sounds overly formal when used). Whose is also used as a relative pronoun but must be followed by a noun in the dependent clause. The correct relative pronoun depends on what noun the relative clause describes.

2 TWO BECOME ONE

The easiest way to teach relative clauses to your ESL students is to start with two simple sentences, two independent clauses, which contain the same noun. For example,

The boy is tired.

The boy is carrying a heavy backpack.

These are grammatically correct sentences, but they aren't very interesting or very realistic for fluent speech. The best strategy, then, is to combine them to make one more interesting and complex sentence. "The boy" is a noun which appears in both sentences, so we can use

a relative clause to combine these two simple sentences into one complex sentence. First, help your students form the dependent clause. Start by replacing the noun in one of the sentences with the appropriate relative pronoun. In this case, the boy is the subject of the sentence and is a person, so we will replace it with "who" to form the relative clause.

The boy is tired.

who is carrying a heavy backpack

We now have a simple sentence and a relative clause. All that remains is to position the relative clause after the noun it describes in the main sentence (independent clause).

The boy who is carrying a heavy backpack is tired.

We have the same information in this one sentence as we had in the two original simple sentences. The complex sentence, however, is more natural sounding and more interesting.

3 FIND A COMFORTABLE POSITION

Relative clauses don't have to describe the subject of a main clause. We can formulate effective descriptive clauses for nouns which act in different positions of a sentence. In the following sentence, the book is in the object position in both simple sentences.

I saw the book.

The boy had the book.

In these sentences, "the book" is the noun which appears in both sentences, and since it is a thing we will use the relative pronoun "that" in the relative clause.

I saw the book.

the boy had that

If we were to combine these clauses as is, we would find that the resulting sentence is ungrammatical and makes little sense. (I saw the book the boy had that.)

Because the noun in the relative clause is in the object position, we must take one more step before combining the clauses into a correct complex sentence. We must first move the relative pronoun to the beginning of the clause, and then we can combine the clauses to make a complex sentence.

that the boy had

We then place the relative clause after the noun in the simple sentence to form the complex sentence.

I saw the book that the boy had.

4 EXTRA, EXTRA

In the two examples we have looked at so far, the relative clauses were used to identify the nouns in the sentence. In other words, we could have been talking about any boy or any book. The information in the relative clause helps identify exactly which boy or which book we are talking about. Because of this, these clauses are called restrictive relative clauses. But not all relative clauses are used to identify a generic noun. Sometimes, the information in the main clause alone is enough to identify it, and the relative clause simply gives additional information about that noun. Take the following examples.

John Milton wrote the book Paradise Lost.

He is my favorite author.

Because we have his name in the first sentence, we know who John Milton is. The fact that he is the speaker's favorite author is additional information. We do not need it to identify John Milton. We can still rewrite the second sentence as a relative clause. We follow the same process as in the examples above, but in this case we have one more thing to talk about: punctuation.

John Milton, who is my favorite author, wrote the book Paradise Lost.

This time, the relative clause is offset by commas because it is extra information: it is not necessary to identify the noun in question. Students often get confused when to use commas and when not to when it comes to relative clauses. Simply put, if the relative clause identifies a generic noun, do not use commas. When the relative clause gives extra information about the noun, offset it with commas. These are known as non-restrictive relative clauses.

5 WHY TEACH RELATIVE CLAUSES?

What is that word that is like a television but just sound? A radio. What is an ency-

lopedia? It is a book that gives information on many different topics. Why does any of this matter? Because these exchanges use relative clauses to overcome communication barriers.

Relative clauses are an extremely useful structure for ESL students to learn early in their English studies. They may not make for the most simple grammar lesson, but they are infinitely practical for students who are still learning. ESL students will find two situations in which relative clauses help them communicate. First, your ESL students may find that they do not know a particular piece of vocabulary for a word they are trying to say. In this case, the relative clause can provide the definition even when students don't know the word and thus help the listener to understand the speaker's meaning.

I lost that thing that you use to control the television.

Most listeners would have little problem understanding that the remote was lost. Using this structure, ESL students can reference any object even if they do not know the specific vocabulary word for it.

What is that thing where you cook meat over an open fire? A grill.

In addition, relative clauses can help your students understand the meaning of unfamiliar words they come across. When a nonnative speaker asks what a particular word is/means, she will very likely receive a definition using a relative clause.

What is an astronaut?

He is a person who travels into outer space.

What is sorbet?

It is a type of icecream that is made with fruit and no milk.

Though the language learner may not have known the meaning of astronaut or sorbet, they can understand the explanation if they know how to use relative clauses.

WHEN YOUR STUDENTS ARE FAMILIAR WITH RELATIVE CLAUSES AND CAN USE THEM IN THEIR EVERY DAY SPEECH, THEY WILL HAVE A VALUABLE TOOL.

They will be able to successfully communicate even when they lack the vocabulary to communicate straightforwardly. Though they may be a somewhat complex grammatical structure, relative clauses are key to being understood and understanding others for ESL students.

Not All Clauses Are Created Equal: A Review of English Clauses

THE DEFINITION OF A CLAUSE IS DECEPTIVELY SIMPLE: A GROUP OF WORDS CONTAINING A SUBJECT AND A VERB (OR PREDICATE).

With that said, English contains a myriad of clauses, and sorting them out and keeping them straight can be difficult for ESL students. Once your students have some foundation in English clauses, you both might find a review of English clauses helpful. Here is a list of what they will need to know and you should cover in your review.

YOUR STUDENTS NEED TO KNOW THE FOLLOWING ABOUT CLAUSES

1 INDEPENDENT VS. DEPENDENT

Simply put, an independent clause is a sentence. It is a group of words containing a subject and a verb which can stand alone. Dependent clauses, also called subordinate clauses, still contain a subject and a verb, but they do not express a complete thought. That is, they need the association with another clause to be grammatical and logical. Here's an example. Remember when your elementary school teacher said never start a sentence with because? That's because this type of clause completes is dependent and must be combined with an independent clause to be grammatical.

2 THE EXCEPTION TO THE RULE

It wouldn't be an English grammar rule if there wasn't an exception, would it? In this case, imperative sentences are the exception to the subject/verb rule for clauses. Though the underlying grammar follows the subject/verb clause pattern, the surface grammar does not. The reason is that the subject in an imperative sentence is implied – the speaker does not actually articulate the subject when he says the sentence. Still, the speaker and the listener know who the subject of the sentence is. Look

at the following example.

Clean your room!

This independent clause contains a verb and its object, but it has no articulated subject. English speakers know that the implied subject is “you” in the command.

3 SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Some dependent clauses start with a subordinating conjunction. A conjunction combines two clauses, and subordinating conjunctions are used with subordinating or dependent clauses. Some common subordinating conjunctions include the following: if, when, because, although, since, unless, where, after, before and whenever. If a clause begins with a subordinating conjunction, is a dependent clause in a complex sentence. Do not confuse these with coordinating conjunctions (and, but, so) which join two clauses to make a compound sentence.

I bought the movie which you recommended. (subordinating clause and complex sentence)

You recommended the movie, and I bought it. (coordinating clause and compound sentence)

4 RELATIVE PRONOUNS

Other dependent clauses start with a relative pronoun. These familiar words (who, whose, that, which, whom) replace a noun in a clause to create a dependent clause. Relative pronouns always appear at the beginning of the dependent clause.

The man who you are dating sounds handsome.

The girl whose books you carried likes you.

I bought the car that is red.

I found the book which you were talking about.

They are the ones whom I saw.

5 RELATIVE ADVERBS

Relative adverbs are similar to relative pronouns. They are used at the

beginning of a dependent clause. They include where, when and why. Rather than replacing a noun in the clause to create a dependent clause, they replace other parts of the sentence.

The park where the magician performs is on the other side of town.

Saturdays when the weather is nice we go for picnics there.

The reason why we do this is to get away from our busy city lives.

6 ZERO RELATIVES

Zero relatives are another possible start to a dependent clause. In the underlying grammar, they are relative pronouns (that, which, who). These pronouns can be omitted, though, in the surface grammar and are then labeled as zero relatives.

The dog (that) I saw in the park looked hungry.

The book (which) you are looking for is in the library.

The boy (who) you love is lying to you.

7 NOUN CLAUSES

Noun clauses function as a noun in a sentence and are sometimes referred to as nominal clauses. They can fill the role of either subject or object in a sentence. They can begin with any relative pronoun, relative adjective or zero relative.

That you are going to be late tomorrow I am certain.

I believe that it is impossible for you to be on time.

8 ADJECTIVE CLAUSE (RESTRICTIVE AND NONRESTRICTIVE)

An adjective clause is a clause that acts as an adjective in a sentence. This type of clause is also known as an adjectival clause or a relative clause. An adjective clause can start with a relative pronoun, a relative adverb or a zero relative. The following examples use a relative pronoun, a relative adverb and a zero relative respectively.

The person who stole my identity

will be caught.

Spring is the time when a young man's fancy turns to love.

I know the person you're talking about.

A restrictive noun clause identifies the noun in the sentence. A nonrestrictive noun clause is not necessary to identify a noun in a sentence but instead offers extra information about the noun. Nonrestrictive noun clauses are offset with commas.

Is the city that you are from big? New York City, which is the biggest city in the country, is my home.

Though not considered a clause, an appositive is a reduction of a relative clause. In an appositive, the relative clause is reduced to just the noun phrase in the dependent clause. Appositives can also be restrictive or nonrestrictive

My brother, a mechanic, always does my car repairs. (nonrestrictive- speaker has only one brother)

My brother the mechanic always does my car repairs. (restrictive – speaker has more than one brother)

9 ADVERB CLAUSE

Adverb clauses, also known as adverbial clauses, function as an adverb in a sentence. They may describe a verb, an adjective, another adverb, or they may modify the entire sentence. They are often classified into seven different categories depending on what type of information they convey.

- An adverb clause of **time** indicates when something happened and can start with the following relative adverbs: when, before, after, until, since and as soon as. *She will wait by the phone until he calls.*
- Adverb clauses of **place** indicate a location and can start with the following relative adverbs: where and wherever. *He sleeps wherever he pleases.*
- Adverb clauses of **cause** indicate a reason and can start with the following relative adverbs: because, as, since. *Since he is coming over later, I will not call him now.*
- Adverb clauses of **purpose** also indicate a reason and can start

with the following relative adverbs: so that and in order that. *He shops on line so that he can avoid crowds.*

- Adverb clauses of **result** indicate an outcome and can start with the following relative adverbs: so ... that and such ... that. *He is such a bad driver that he often gets pulled over.*
- Adverb clauses of **condition** indicate a requirement and can start with the following relative adverbs: if and unless. *Unless you study, you will not do well on the test.*
- Adverb clauses of **concession** indicate a contrast and can start with the following relative adverbs: although and even though. *Even though she was a good student, she did poorly on the test.*

CLAUSES CAN BE A CONFUSING ELEMENT OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR. HOWEVER, STUDENTS WHOSE TEACHERS TAKE TIME TO REVIEW ENGLISH'S MANY CLAUSES AND GIVE THEM AN OVERALL REVIEW WILL FIND CLAUSES MAY NOT BE ALL THAT CONFUSING AFTER ALL.

He...She...It... 5 Activities for Practicing Gender in English

WHEN I STUDIED FRENCH IN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE, ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT ASPECTS WAS REMEMBERING NOUN GENDERS.

I remember thinking, “Is book feminine or masculine? Does a book even have a gender? Why does this have to be so complicated?” It was frustrating at the time, but now I have a greater appreciation of language structure and a deeper understanding of why nouns have gender to begin with. English, unlike French, Spanish and many other languages, does not assign gender to inanimate objects (for the most part, anyway). Our students, then, should have an easy time with gender words in English, right? Wrong. Gender differences still apply, and you might be surprised to see how many gender differences are present in English. ESL students need activities in which they can practice gender these words. Here are some of my favorites that you can use with your ESL class, too.

HE...SHE...IT... TRY THESE 5 ACTIVITIES FOR PRACTICING GENDER IN ENGLISH

1 THE ROLES WE PLAY

Many words in English are male or female specific. Words like husband, father, nephew and groom all refer to men. Other words like wife, mother, niece and bride only refer to women. Still other words can refer to either men or women: cousin, spouse, sibling, etc. As a class, work together to brainstorm all the different words for referring to a person that are gender specific. It may help to think in terms of roles a person plays in a family or relationship. Working together, make three lists of gender specific words: one for men, another for women and the third for words that can refer to either men or women.

2 ALL IN THE FAMILY

Once you have expanded your list as much as possible, give your

students a chance to practice many of these words by creating their family tree. Have students start by diagramming themselves and their parents, and then work backward through their ancestry as far as they can. They should also include aunts, uncles and cousins when possible. You can find a blank family tree template here (busyteacher.org/9274-my-family-tree-for-esl-students.html) or have your students design their own. Then have students share about their family with two or three classmates. After each person has shared general information about the members of their family, challenge your students to take their explanations a step further. Have group members choose two members of the speaker’s family. The speaker must then explain the relationship between those two people. For example, a person might explain, “That is my grandfather and that is my cousin. My grandfather is my cousin’s great uncle.” As each person is speaking, encourage his group members to listen for the correct gender words from their classmates.

3 BEAUTIFUL OR HANDSOME?

In English, some adjectives are used primarily for males, others for females. Using this list of positive personality adjectives and this list of negative personality adjectives, have students note any adjectives which are used primarily for women and others used primarily for men. Working in the same groups, challenge students to add any other adjectives they can think of that are gender specific (e.g. beautiful, handsome, etc.) After talking about the traits on the list, give small groups some discussion time. Display the following questions for them to discuss.

- Are there some characteristics that are positive for men and negative for women?
- Are there others that are positive for women and negative for men? What are they?
- Why do you think these gender

differences exist?

- Do gender expectations reach across cultures or are they culture specific?

4 GENDER AND CULTURE

Cultural values and expectations are often tied to gender differences. Give your students a chance to talk about the expectations and acceptable behavior of men and women in their own countries and compare it to those of their classmates’ home countries. In groups of four or five, have students discuss the following questions.

- Are there some activities in your culture that are appropriate for women but not for men? Are there other activities that are appropriate for men but not for women? What are they?
- What behavior would give a woman a bad reputation in your home culture?
- Would a man gain a bad reputation from the same behavior?
- Is a man expected to work outside the home in your culture? Are women?
- What are a woman’s responsibilities around the home? What are a man’s?

After discussing these questions, have your students write an opinion paper arguing whether these gender stereotypes are acceptable or unacceptable. Encourage students to use personal examples when possible to support their opinions.

5 TO BE PC

In recent years, male specific language has fallen out of use. Words like mankind, fireman, mailman, steward and waiter have been replaced with gender neutral words (human-kind, firefighter, mail carrier, flight attendant, and server). In groups of three or four, have your students brainstorm as many male specific or female specific words as they can. (Think along the lines of job titles.) Have groups share their lists with the class. Then have groups work together

er to list the gender neutral forms that speakers use today. Finish out the class with a small group discussion with the following questions.

- In your opinion, are there some jobs that are more appropriate for men than women and vice versa?
- How have men's and women's roles changed in society over the last fifty years? How are they likely to change in the next fifty years?
- What is your opinion on using gender neutral words rather than male or female specific ones? What effect do you think that has had on how society views men and women?

ALL PERSONS MAY BE CREATED EQUAL, BUT NOT EVERYTHING IS THE SAME WHEN IT COMES TO MEN AND WOMEN. Language, behavior and responsibilities are all affected by a person's gender – some for good and some for ill. Because gender differences can be a controversial topic among your students, these activities will challenge your students to think for themselves and express their opinions, things that are good for getting ESL students talking.

Are You Sure about That? Teaching Certainty and Uncertainty

LANGUAGE CAN BE VERY SUBTLE.

English is peppered with nuances that communicate respect, disbelief, sincerity and certainty (among other things). For students of English, it is easy for these subtleties to get lost in translation, but understanding those words and phrases is sometimes key to understanding what a person is trying to communicate. The subtleties surrounding certainty, for example, can determine how a speaker should respond or what actions she should take. In fact, a whole category of adverbs in English is dedicated to expressing certainty. That's why ESL teachers should make a point of teaching the art of certainty to their students. Though beginning students may not be ready to talk about adverbs of certainty, your intermediate and advanced students should be comfortable recognizing and using these adverbs. Here are some activities you can use with your ESL students when the time is surely right.

CONSIDER USING THESE ACTIVITIES TO PRACTICE CERTAINTY AND UNCERTAINTY

1 CERTAIN OR UNCERTAIN

Give your students a list of adverbs of certainty. Include some that express uncertainty and some that express certainty. Then have students work in pairs to divide the list into two categories - words that express certainty and those that express uncertainty. Students should use their previous knowledge and a dictionary, if necessary, to determine which group each word fits into. You may want to include the following words in your list.

Absolutely	Positively
Actually	Possibly
Allegedly	Presumably
Apparently	Probably
Certainly	Purportedly
Clearly	Reportedly
Definitely	Seemingly
Doubtfully	Supposedly
Evidently	Surely

Hopefully	Theoretically
Hypothetically	Undeniably
Invariably	Undoubtedly
Obviously	Unmistakably
Perhaps	Unquestionably

If your students can add to the lists once these words are sorted, encourage them to do so.

2 ADVERB OF CERTAINTY PLACEMENT

Adverbs of certainty appear before the main verb in a sentence but after the auxiliary verb.

He is absolutely coming tomorrow.
She allegedly stole the diamond necklace.

They can also appear at the beginning of a sentence:

Obviously Anna is in love with the king.

Hypothetically, students start at level one and progress through level six.

After reviewing placement of adjectives of certainty with your class, have pairs of students work together to write five statements that they are sure of. Each statement should use one of the adverbs of certainty. Then, have each pair write five statements they are not sure of, also using an adverb of certainty in each sentence. Tell students to make sure some sentences place the adverb of certainty before the main verb and others place it at the beginning of the sentence.

3 SURELY YOU KNOW...

Surely is an adverb of certainty that serves a specific purpose when it comes at the beginning of a sentence. A speaker who uses surely in this way believes that his statement is true but is looking for confirmation. Consider the following sentences.

Surely you know we have a test tomorrow.

Surely you have told your family about your fiancé.

Though phrased as a statement, each sentence is in fact a request for information from the listener. You can give

your students a chance to practice this structure with this fun lying game. Each student should write three statements about herself – two that are true and one that is a lie. Either in groups or with the whole class, have each person read her statements. The other students should then determine which statement they think is a lie. To check if they are correct in their choice, they should give a “surely” statement expressing disbelief at what they think is the lie. For example, a student might say the following.

I swam with sharks.

I climbed Mt. Everest.

I shot a bear.

Her classmates would then reply with one of the following statements.

Surely you didn't swim with sharks.

Surely you didn't climb Mt. Everest.

Surely you didn't shoot a bear.

If the speaker is wrong in his guess, the first person should give a statement of certainty in reply.

I absolutely swam with sharks.

If the class guess is correct, the speaker should admit the lie and chose the next person to read his statements. Make sure each person has a chance to share her statements and try to fool her classmates before ending the activity.

4 ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THAT?

To give your students some more practice using adverbs of certainty, brainstorm a list of silly statements (either with your students or before class). You might include statements such as the following.

The sky is purple.

Hippos make great pets.

Spaghetti is the best topping on a pizza.

Winter is a great time to visit the beach.

Learning English is quick and easy.

Have students work with a partner and the list of statements. On his turn, the

student should choose a statement and use an adverb of certainty to indicate he is certain his statement is true.

Spaghetti is definitely the best topping for pizza.

His partner then asks, "Are you sure about that?" The first student should then rephrase his statement in the negative form also using an adverb of uncertainty.

Spaghetti is apparently not the best topping for pizza.

Then students switch roles and choose another statement following the same pattern as above.

5 WRITING ABOUT THE FUTURE

In writing, have students make predictions about their futures. Students should write two paragraphs about what their future will be or might be like. The first paragraph should be about his near future – the next semester or the next year. Your students will probably be somewhat certain of the events in this time period. The second paragraph should be about his life far in the future. He might want to think about his life five or ten years in the future. These are events he will probably be less certain about. When writing, each person should include some things he is sure about and some things he is unsure about in each paragraph about his future. Encourage students to use as many adverbs of certainty as possible in their paragraphs. If you teach children, you may also want to have students draw pictures to illustrate their futures and post them on a bulletin board in your classroom.

WHEN YOU ARE CERTAIN YOUR STUDENTS ARE READY TO PRACTICE ADVERBS OF CERTAINTY, THESE ACTIVITIES WILL GET THEM STARTED IN THE PROCESS. Have fun and in the process your students will definitely advance in their knowledge of the English language.

For, To, At, In....5 Big Fun Activities for Reviewing Prepositions

ENGLISH IS FULL OF PREPOSITIONS, AND THEY ESL STUDENTS NEARLY ALWAYS BENEFIT FROM A QUICK, CREATIVE REVIEW OF THESE IMPORTANT LITTLE WORDS.

Here are some activities you can use with almost any class from beginning to advanced that will be big fun and worthwhile review of English prepositions.

TRY THESE 5 FRESH ACTIVITIES TO REVIEW PREPOSITIONS

1 CLASSROOM CLUE HUNT

This game gives your students a chance to practice prepositions of location while reviewing classroom vocabulary. Have your students work with a partner to choose one item in the classroom as their “treasure”. Each pair will write a series of clues using prepositions of location that will direct another team to their treasure. Give each pair a distinct color of sticky notes which they will use to write their clues. Everything should be written on the sticky side of the notes. Before students start writing clues, write the following prepositions on the board: under, between, on, above, next to, behind, in front of, and near. Students will then write a chain of clues using each of these prepositions one time, and each clue will lead to the next and ultimately to the treasure. On their first sticky note, a pair writes a clue that will lead to the second clue. They might write something like the following.

Clue #2 is under the teacher's desk.

Under the desk, that same pair would place clue #2 which also leads to clue #3. (Remind students to write on the sticky side of the notes so their clues will be face down when they hide them.) For example, clue #2 might say,

Clue #3 is above the clock.

Students should write a total of eight clues using each preposition of location one time. Clue number 8 will lead to the treasure.

The treasure is in SuJan's desk.

Once every pair has written their clues, give each pair of students a small star sticker to identify their treasure, collect clue #1 from each pair, have students place their subsequent clues in the appropriate spot, and shuffle and redistribute clues #1 to the pairs. Students then work together to follow the trail of clues left by their classmates to locate the treasure.

2 SOMETHING'S WRONG

In this 20 Question style game, students ask questions to determine what is wrong in a hypothetical classroom. Ask one student to volunteer to answer questions. They should think of an unusual situation that could happen in a classroom, or you can assign an unusual situation to them. For example, you might use the following or similar situations.

The students are under the teacher's desk.

The teacher is in the garbage can.

The books are under the television.

The white board is on the floor.

The rest of the class then takes turns asking questions that use a preposition of location to determine what is wrong in the classroom. If after 20 questions, the class is able to guess the strange situation, they win. If they cannot guess within that number of questions, the student answering questions wins. You can also play this game any time you have a few free minutes at the end of class. It's a great filler and takes no prep on your part!

3 IN MY ROOM

The next time you have some time in the computer lab, try this activity with your students. Start by giving each person a sheet of blank paper and asking them to draw a simple diagram of their bedroom. Ask each person to write a paragraph describing his or her bedroom. In the paragraph, she should use at least six different prepositions to describe what is in

her room. She might write something similar to the following.

My bed is against the wall and under a window. I have a poster on the wall next to the window. I have three large pillows on my bed. The door is across from my desk, and my desk is next to my closet.

When she is finished with her paragraph, read her paragraph and check to make sure she has no errors with prepositions, then have her print out the paragraph. Then using the same file, have your student replace every preposition in the paragraph with a blank and print it again. Now she has a cloze exercise with an answer key. She should staple the first page (the answer key) under the second one and put the diagram on top. None of the pages should have the student's name on it. Then collect the paragraphs and redistribute them among your students. Now each student must complete the cloze exercise using any prepositions that are logical. He should refer to the diagram as needed to complete the paragraph. Once he is finished, he can check his answers with the page underneath. After he checks his answers, ask the person to guess who wrote the paragraph describing this room.

4 PREPOSITION OF TIME DOMINOES

This game gives your students a chance to practice using the prepositions of time in, at and on. Give each person twelve index cards which they will make into dominoes. On the left side of each card, have students write a time. They can choose any time they like for each card, but they should have at least one of each of the following: a holiday, a specific day of the year, a time on the clock, a day of the week, a season, a year, and a time of the day. On the right side of the cards, he should write a preposition of time. He should have three cards that each say at, on and in. Then have students play this unique version of dominoes in groups of three. The person whose

birthday is closest to today lays down the first domino. The person to her left should then place one of his dominos on the chain that would complete the prepositional time phrase. For example, if the first card read July/on, a matching card might read Friday/in. The key is that the preposition of the first card matches the time on the second card (On Friday) or that the preposition player two lays down matches the time on the first card (In July) Play continues around the circle. If a student cannot play a domino, play moves to the next person. The person to use all his dominos first wins. If you like, have students keep their preposition of time dominos to play during a free period or collect them and use them to set up a learning center.

5 PREPOSITIONAL MAZE

All you need for this game is a blindfold and a spirit of adventure. Before the activity, review with your students prepositions of movement (across, around, away from, down, into, off, onto, out, over, past, through, toward, under, up) and how to give directions (turn left, turn right, go straight.) Put students in groups of three, and ask each group to choose one person to walk the maze. Each of these players must wait in the hallway until it is his turn to walk. Once all the players are in the hallway (and you have blocked any windows into the class – no peeking!) the remaining students rearrange the desks in the classroom into a maze. The maze should have only one way in and one way out, but it can have as many tricks and traps in the middle as you like. Go into the hallway and blindfold the first player. Bring them into your classroom and position them at the entrance to the maze. His two teammates should then call out commands using prepositions of movement and directional commands. The goal is to get the player through the maze in the least possible time. If a player bumps into a desk, add five seconds to his time. If a caller says something in his native language, add five seconds to the time. If you like, once each group has had one turn, have your students choose another player to wait in the hallway. Rearrange the desks into a new maze and time the second players. Do the same thing for the third person in each team. Then, add together the scores for all three rounds to determine which team had the best time and wins bragging rights.

Don't Get to the Point: Teaching Indirect Questions

ASKING QUESTIONS IN ENGLISH IS PRETTY BASIC FOR ESL STUDENTS.

Even beginning level students are familiar with how to ask yes/no and informational question in English. Direct questions, those that stand on their own, should be nothing new to the ESL teacher and student, but not all question in English are direct. Indirect questions, or embedded questions, are more complicated ways of asking for the same information, and once your students are at the advanced level they should be able to recognize and use indirect questions. Here is what you and your students need to know about these complex question structures.

TWO TYPES OF INDIRECT QUESTIONS

English has two different types of indirect questions. The first type occur in reported speech – when someone is relaying something that was said at an earlier time. The second type of indirect questions are embedded questions. These questions appear in dependent clauses within a larger statement or question. Though the two types of indirect questions are similar, they are not exactly the same.

REPORTED QUESTIONS

Reported speech occurs when a person tells what someone else said without using a direct quotation. In the example below, the first statement is a direct quotation. The second is reported speech.

“I will be there,” Mark said.

Mark said that he would be there.

Questions can also be changed from a direct quotations to reported speech. When they are, they are considered reported questions.

“Will you be there?” Mark asked.

Mark asked me if I would be there.

To change a direct question to a reported question, your students should make these six changes.

1 CHANGE PRONOUNS

Often in reported questions, the pronouns need to be changed. Note in the previous example “you” is changed to “me” because Mark’s conversation partner is reporting his question. This rule is not universal, however. See the following example.

“Will you be there?” Mark asked Sally. Mark asked Sally if she would be there.

In this case, “you” must be changed to “she” because Sally is not the person reporting the question. To correctly change pronouns in reported questions, your students will have to determine who is reporting the question and who the question is about.

2 CHANGE CONTEXT EXPRESSIONS

Similar to change in pronouns, reported questions may need changes in context expressions. These expressions communicate when and where an activity takes place. Note the context expressions in the following question.

“Will you be here tomorrow?”

When reporting the question, the time and location at the moment are important. For example, if the reporting happens in the same context as the original question, the reported question is as follows.

He asked if you would be here tomorrow.

However, if the reporting happens at a different location and a different time, the reported question may read as follows.

He asked if she would be there yesterday.

To make these changes correctly, students must determine the context of the original question as well as the context of the reported question.

3 CHANGE TENSE WHEN NECESSARY.

Tenses often change in reported questions, and this change is called backshifting. Backshifting depends on the

tense of the quoted question as well as when the reported question takes place. For a brief explanation of how to backshift in reported questions, see this summary (<http://bit.ly/17hjLoh>) on My English Pages.

4 CHANGE WORD ORDER

In direct questions, subject and verb are inverted. For reported questions, the subject and verb are not inverted.

“Are you speaking English?”

He asked if we were speaking English.

5 USE AN IF CLAUSE WHEN NECESSARY

The question words (who, what, where, when, why, how) stay the same in reported questions, but yes/no questions are changed to an if clause.

“Where are you going?”

He asked where I was going.

“Are you going?”

He asked if I was going.

6 CHANGE PUNCTUATION

While direct questions use a question mark at the end of the sentence, reported questions end with a period.

“Did you hear?”

He asked if I heard.

To practice reported question with your class, try this simple exercise. Arrange your class in a circle, and have one person ask a question of the second person on his left. That person acts as though she didn’t hear the question clearly and responds with, “What?” The person between them then repeats the question as a reported question. For example, one round might look like the following.

Student A: What are you doing tonight?

Student C: What?

Student B: He asked what you were doing tonight.

Student C: I’m studying for a test.

Continue around the circle until every-

one has played each part in the dialogue.

EMBEDDED QUESTIONS

Embedded questions, though similar to reported questions are not the same. Embedded questions are questions in dependent clauses associated with a main clause statement or question. The following are embedded questions.

I don't know if he will come.

Do you think he will come?

I wonder where she lives.

Have you seen where she lives?

Like reported questions, embedded questions follow the same grammatical patterns.

specific member of the class. Student examples might look like the following.

I wonder why the sky is blue. Do you know why the sky is blue?

I wonder who invented cheese. Do you know who invented cheese?

I wonder what movie I would like best. Do you know what movie I would like best?

Though they may seem complicated at first, indirect questions can become a natural part of your students' speech.

Beginners may not be ready for this complicated structure, but intermediate and advanced students should be able to use them in their everyday speech.

1

Embedded questions follow the same word order as reported questions.

Do you think he will come?

Not: Do you think will he come?

2

Embedded questions do use backshifting when necessary.

I wonder where Jamie has gone.

Not: I wonder where Jamie did go.

3

Embedded questions use an if clause to introduce embedded yes/no questions.

Do you know if we have a test tomorrow?

Not: Do you know do we have a test tomorrow?

4

Embedded questions end in a period and not a question mark when they are part of an overall statement. It is also possible, however, for embedded questions to end with a question mark if they are part of an overall question.

I wonder where he went.

Do you know where he went?

To practice embedded questions, try this simple exercise in which students ask some of life's big questions. Have students take turns sharing what they wonder with the class. Each student should start with a general statement. She should then ask her question to a