

HOW TO TEACH BEGINNER LEARNERS

LIKE A PRO

37 TOP SECRETS EVERY TEACHER OF BEGINNER LEARNERS SHOULD KNOW

Start

WHETHER YOU ARE TEACHING
ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS
OR FALSE BEGINNERS,
THIS BOOK WILL HELP THEM GO

FROM ESL
ZEROS TO
HEROES

SO WHAT DO WE DO
WHEN OUR STUDENTS
REALLY KNOW LITTLE BEYOND
"HELLO," "YES," & "NO?"

WHERE DO WE EVEN START?
VOCABULARY? GRAMMATICAL
STRUCTURES? BASIC
LITERACY SKILLS?

HELP!

THERE IS HELP AVAILABLE:

OUR BEST RECIPES ABOUT
TEACHING BEGINNER CLASSES

TEACHING
BEGINNERS CAN BE
A TOUGH TASK

 STUDENTS JUST BEGINNING THEIR ENGLISH STUDIES HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA WHAT TO EXPECT

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From ESL Zero to Hero: How to Teach Absolute Beginners

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

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

HOW TO Teach Absolute Beginners

1 PRIORITIZE LEARNING GOALS

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

2 DON'T ASSUME ANYTHING

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

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

3 CELEBRATE SMALL ACHIEVEMENTS

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

4 USE THEIR SENSES

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

5 SHOW, DON'T TELL

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

6 BUILD ON WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED BEFORE

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

7 KEEP IT REAL

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

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

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

Top 8 Tips on Teaching Absolute Beginners

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

HOW TO TEACH COMPLETE BEGINNERS

1 SMILING HELPS

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

2 FIND AN ASSISTANT

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

3 USE REALIA, FLASHCARDS AND OTHER VISUALS

Use what, I hear you ask? Realia is ESL jargon for anything that is 'real'. Realia is great method when it comes to teaching vocabulary, as students can be able to

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

4 KNOW A FEW PHRASES IN THE STUDENT'S LANGUAGE

While many language schools discourage any usage of the teacher using the L1 of the student, we find that using a few words and phrases here and there prove to be extremely helpful. This helps with getting your point across in the class, and teaching some of the simpler vocabulary. While many ESLers have been converted to the theory that students will learn by being constantly exposed to the language, they should think back to their own time at school when they were learning a different language. Surely if native English speaker with a level 0 in Japanese walked into a class where the teacher spoke only Japanese, then the level 0 English-speaker would probably have gained very little. Same rule applies for students learning English.

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

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

6 TEACH ALL FOUR SKILLS

For early learners of English, it is a good idea to give them a broad range of activities. This ensures that they can make an improvement in all ar-

eas. Learning a variety of skills will also help with other areas of English too. By practicing reading, the students will get a very good understanding of grammar and vocabulary, as they can see the words correctly used and in context. Listening is also a good way to learn new words while helping their speaking. By listening to a recording, students should try to copy the manner in which a native speaker says the words. This will help significantly later down the track in accent reduction.

7 REPEAT, REPEAT, REPEAT

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

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

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

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

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

What You Need to Know if You Teach Absolute Beginners

Almost without exception, when I tell people that I teach English as a Second Language, they ask, “Oh, what languages do you speak?”

Though I would like to answer with polylingual authority, the truth is I am only fluent in English. “Well, don’t you need to speak their language before you can teach them English?” is the most common retort. The answer, as most ESL teachers have discovered, is NO. You do NOT have to speak a second language to teach English to those who know none whatsoever. Teaching English to absolute beginners, though, is not a simple task. Where does the teacher start when he or she has no common ground with the students waiting for instruction?

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TPR (TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE)

1 NATURAL LANGUAGE

Dr. James A. Asher developed an answer to that question with his second language learning method called Total Physical Response. He based this method on the idea that a person learning any language, particularly a first language, has a period of time in which he receives linguistic input without producing linguistic output. In other words, language learners take in information about a language before using that language for speech. In the early stages of Total Physical Response instruction, the teacher does the talking, and the students take it in. Later, after students have become comfortable and understand what they hear, do they speak the second language.

2 THE PHYSICAL CONNECTION

The key component of this language method, as one might guess from the title, is the physical response that the learners use while taking in the linguistic information. Students who mindlessly listen to a teacher they cannot understand are more likely to fall asleep than become fluent, but when they make

appropriate physical responses to the statements of their teacher, learning comes easily and quickly.

3 SUCCESS

It may be difficult to believe that students can have such a positive response to language instruction that needs no books and little preparation on the part of the teacher, but they do. I remember the first time I experienced the Total Physical Response technique from the other side of the desk. I was attending a lecture in graduate school when my teacher walked into the room on the first day and started speaking to the class in Hebrew. The class was confused initially: after all, we were there for a lecture on syllabus design. Our professor said several sentences to the class, pointing to herself (teacher) and pointing to us (students). She showed us the difference between two students in the front row (male and female form of the word), and wrote the corresponding words on the board. She sat down and stood up. Then she told us to do the same. Through that instruction and those movements, we learned the word for sit and the appropriate verb endings for first person singular, second person plural and second person singular. At each point, she wrote the vocabulary words and verb conjugations on the board. This exercise was the first ten minutes of class, and to my own astonishment, to this day I remember the Hebrew I learned in those few minutes, fifteen years later, though I have done no further study of the language!

4 IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH

I can personally attest to the success of Total Physical Response as a student and as a teacher, and I believe that any ESL teacher with a class of absolute beginners will find TPR the best method of language instruction. To use TPR in class, talk to your students. Use repetition. Write down words on the board. Above all, get your students moving.

Start with imperative statements. Sit down. Stand up. Pick up your pencil. Then, tell your students narratives. I

am walking to the door. I am picking up my pencil. You are standing up. You are picking up your pencil. She is standing up. He is standing up. Be flexible when you teach with this method. Look for signs of comprehension in your students, and do not pressure them to produce language until they are ready to volunteer it. Keep reminding yourself that they are learning even if they are not producing English, and they will use that language to communicate when they are ready.

5 MANY BENEFITS

Many benefits come with instruction through TPR. Students feel less pressure to produce perfect language. You can use TPR with a mixed level class or with students with learning disabilities. TPR takes little preparation on your part. Kinesthetic learners, often the last that teachers think of when making lesson plans, are in their learning style glory! TPR is an effective language learning method for both children and adults, large and small classes. Most of all, your students will have fun moving around the classroom and engaging in their own learning process.

TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE WILL FIND, IF THEY TEACH ANY LENGTH OF TIME, THAT THEIR STUDENTS COME WITH ALL LEVELS OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY, AND SOMETIMES THOSE STUDENTS ALL SHOW UP FOR THE SAME CLASS.

But when you are teaching a class of beginners or have beginners in your mixed level class, TPR may be the way to connect with all of your students. This method of instruction will have long term positive effects for your students. Not only that, their language learning process may be more in line with how languages are naturally acquired by first language speakers. All this will come together to make your students more engaged in class and give them longer lasting language knowledge. Whether you teach in the east or west, north or south, or have students from every corner of the globe, TPR is a way to bring them together and help them achieve a common goal!

5 Strategies for Teaching the Beginning ESL Student

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

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

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

TRY THESE 5 STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING THE BEGINNING ESL STUDENT

1 ADDRESS BASIC CONVERSATIONAL NEEDS

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

text of introductions, for example: "I am Stacia... he is Gilliam..." The focus, however, should be on basic conversation, - grammar should be taught in context of the conversational skills rather than as a focus on its own. Students should work in pairs or small groups much of the class period so that they can practice their English skills, preferably with speakers of languages other than their own, so that English is the common language the pair or group must use to communicate. This is in contrast to the traditional language instruction that most Americans have been exposed to and is still practiced in many parts of the world, where students sit in rows and wait for the teacher at the front of the room to call on them, and they may speak once or twice a class period, if that.

2 FOCUS ON LANGUAGE FOR COMMUNICATION

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

3 LANGUAGE FOR LIFE SKILLS

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

4 TRANSITION INTO ACADEMIC SKILLS

Students will need to learn academic language in English, of course—how to read and write it and analyze its grammar. Begin working on these skills while students continue work on life skills: have students read short nonfiction or fiction pieces related to their interests, answer questions about them, and write responses. Give short lectures on important topics, such as the structure of the U.S. educational system, and have students take brief notes.

5 IDENTIFY SCHOOL AND CAREER GOALS

Toward the end of the term, begin discussing with students various school/career options. Many students, of course, will already have identified such goals, but they may be less sure on how to go about accomplishing them as our educational system and its connections to the workplace can be a complex maze even to students born in this country. Begin by identifying several educational options locally: for example, the community college and state university and then go beyond that, as necessary. Also discuss several possible career paths that are available from studying at those institutions, and it is likely at least one or two students will be interested: there are always one or two students in my beginning ESL classes who express interest in the dental assistant and nursing fields from studying at the local community college, for example. Find out what careers students are already interested in and discuss where they might get information on this field: a number of students have an interest in pharmacy, for example, and a nearby private college, University of the Pacific, has a recognized pharmacy department with several programs. You might consider having a school counselor or representative from a department of student interest come in to your class to talk about opportunities.

NO ONE SAID TEACHING BEGINNING ESL WOULD BE EASY.

But with some persistence, focusing on communication and transitioning to academic skills, the teacher can take her class from novices to students ready to begin the journey toward their academic lives and careers!

How to Teach English to Beginners

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

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

HOW TO PROCEED

1 LESSON MATERIAL

Especially with beginners it is important to go slowly. There is a steep learning curve at the very beginning of their studies especially if you are the first to introduce them to the Latin alphabet. Try to introduce manageable chunks of information and do not add in more information until your students are comfortable with what they have already covered. This may mean that they are not able to understand the purpose of learning certain things initially but perhaps after a few lessons on a topic, you can help put it all together and then they will be amazed at how much they have learned. For example, in one lesson you may teach your students the words I, you, he/she/it and what they mean but they cannot make sentences with this vocabulary until you give them some verbs to work with which may not be appropriate until a later lesson.

2 TEACHER TALKING

In the classroom you will also have to slow down your talking speed. Students are never going to understand you if you are talking a mile a minute. If you assist a teacher who is not a native speaker and would like you to speak at a normal speed, you can speed up slightly but a normal speed would not be appropriate for beginners. At the intermediate

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

3 PRACTICE

Choose practice activities that are simple, easy to understand, and easy to explain. Using lots of words that students don't recognize to explain how to do a practice activity is only going to further confuse them. In many cases a demonstration may be your best option. As your students improve, you can introduce more complex activities but if an activity ever takes longer to explain than to complete, it is not worth doing again. Practice activities should revolve around students having the opportunity to speak English so even worksheets should be used for that purpose. After a worksheet has been completed, ask for volunteers to read the questions, translate the questions, and give the answers. Try to involve as many students as possible and give them continuous positive feedback.

4 HAVE FUN

Language studies give students the opportunity to learn in a different way. English should not be taught the same way Mathematics or History is taught. There is no room for lectures because luckily as the teacher, you already know how to speak English while the students really need to practice more than anything else. Getting students to communicate with you and each other in a positive creative environment should be the goal of ev-

ery language teacher. You can incorporate many different games into your lessons and with lots of miming and role plays students will probably laugh at you, in a good way, on more than one occasion. Taking the focus away from grammar rules and focusing on communication will encourage them to try their best, which is all you can really ask of them.

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

What Do You See? 8 Steps to Teaching Basic Vocabulary

Picture books are a useful tool for the ESL teacher, especially when she is teaching younger students.

Picture books can be a great help in reading and writing lessons and can even be the basis of a conversation class. For vocabulary lessons, simple books with repeating phrases are particularly useful. One such book is Bill Martin's *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do You See?* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown_Bear,_Brown_Bear,_What_Do_You_See%3F) which teaches basic colors and animal vocabulary.

If you have beginning students who need a lesson or a review on colors and animals, here are some activities you can try. Your kids will have fun, and they will learn as they play with Martin's prose.

HOW TO TEACH BASIC VOCABULARY

1 GET READY

Start by reading the book to your class. It is best if you can introduce the book before you plan to do the rest of the activities so your students have some familiarity with it.

2 MAKE MASKS

On the day you plan to start the activities, read the book to your class again. After you read, give each student a picture of one of the animals in the book, and ask them to color the animal like the one in the book.

Make sure you have at least one of each animal represented in your class, and having multiples of the animals is okay, too. Have each student cut out his or her picture and glue it to a paper plate. Then, have them glue or tape a tongue depressor to the plate. Each person now has a mask which shows one of the animals in the book.

3 ROLL CALL

With your students holding their masks, read the book again and have each person stand when his animal is speaking. Have your students sit down again when the next animal speaks. After you read the entire book, say each animal again and have your students stand for their animal.

4 REVIEW THE ROLES

On the following day, repeat the activity. Then have student exchange masks and read the story again. They should stand when the animal on their mask is speaking. If any of your students have learned the chant, encourage them to say it along with you.

5 LOOK AND SEE

Then rearrange your students so they are sitting in the same order as the animals in the book. Starting at the beginning of the line, ask each student what he sees. "*Sam, what do you see?*" for example. The student should answer with the name of the animal next to him. He can say either the animal's name (e.g. *red bird*) or the entire phrase (*I see a red bird looking at me*).

To make sure everyone has practice with more than one animal, have your students exchange masks and repeat the activity. Continue until every student has had the opportunity to be each of the animals in the book.

6 REVIEW

On the third day, prepare for your color and animal lesson by hanging poster paper in the front of your room, one page for each of the animals, and glue a picture of each animal to a poster.

Distribute the masks again before reading the book one more time, and encourage your class to chant along with you. Many of them will be good

at it by now.

Like the previous two days, have each person stand when his animal is speaking.

7 WHAT DO YOU SEE?

Tell your students that now you are going to play a game. You will say their name and ask them what they see. They should respond by naming an object in the room as well as its color. For example:

*"Hyun, Hyun, what do you see?"
"I see a brown desk looking at me."*

Give each of your students at least one turn.

8 A CLASS COLLAGE

Then, make available to your students some old magazines. Tell each person that she should find one picture among the magazines for each of the animals, and the color of the object should match the color of the animal. When a student finds an appropriate picture, have her come to the front of the room and point out the poster where her picture belongs. She should also tell you the color of her object. Then have her glue her picture to the correct poster.

Give your class enough time so everyone can find one picture for each of the animals. When you finish, you should have a collage of magazine pictures for each color in the book. You should also have a good read on how well your students have learned their colors.

THESE ARE SIMPLE ACTIVITIES THAT TEACH SIMPLE VOCABULARY, BUT IF YOU ARE TEACHING YOUNG ESL STUDENTS, YOUR CLASS WILL LOVE IT.

Once your students know their colors and animals, there are many follow up activities you can do to reinforce their new vocabulary.

How To Teach English Using Games: The Original Hangman

THIS ALL-TIME FAVORITE IS FOR COMPLETE BEGINNERS OR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS. IT IS USEFUL FOR SPELLING, DICTIONARY WORK, STUDENT INTERACTION AND EMPOWERMENT, FAMILIARIZATION WITH PREFIXES AND SUFFIXES, TEACHING NUMBERS AND LETTERS TOGETHER AND SIMPLE EDUCATIONAL FUN. IT IS DESIGNED SIMPLY TO REMIND US OF THE TEACHING APPLICATIONS OF THIS WORD GAME IN ITS BASIC FORM WITHOUT THE FRILLS.

This game has a very simple format, but can be built upon to practice not only simple vocabulary, but also the use of vowels and consonants in word creation. Common letters can be elucidated as well as many language structures such as prefixes and typical word endings.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 INTRODUCE THE RULES

Introduce the rules by initially demonstrating a word on the board without the gallows or the noose. Personalizing the word adds reality and therefore it is a good idea to choose the name of one of the students. They will probably be surprised to find their name contains some of the 'English vowels' i.e. A,E,I,O,U. Make a line for each letter of the word and count out the number of letters and write the appropriate number underneath. Draw their attention to the name e.g.. "It is a five letter word. It has 2 vowels. The first letter of the word is ...". Get your students to check the spelling of their own names and their partners to their left and right and delight in their discovery of this striking similarity with the English Language.

2 DEMONSTRATE

This is a group game for everyone. Begin with a demonstration on the board so that students can clearly visualize how to play. Then a simple

description. The students have to guess your mystery word. "This word has a certain number of letters" and they have to elicit them one by one.

Ensure the rules are understood by concept checking. As they call out a letter of the alphabet the teacher will cross it out from A-Z written on the board for reference and put that letter in the mystery word, or draw a body feature on the Hangman as appropriate. It is important to show visually that for each letter missed, one body part is drawn on the Hangman. The object of the game is to guess the word before being hanged. The students normally have 9 attempts (Head, neck, body, arms, legs and feet), but optional features can be added if the word is too difficult to guess (eyes, ears, nose, mouth, hair).

3 PRACTICE

Practice vocabulary already introduced, if appropriate e.g. popular hobbies. As the game focuses largely on letters and spelling practice, also incorporate pronunciation of the targeted words and by numbering the letters teach the practical usage of cardinal and ordinal counting. Once the unknown word has been ascertained, speaking should be encouraged to use the vocabulary in context and thus add to the language content.

4 PLAY HANGMAN!

Initially the game may be played as a group activity and dictionaries are permitted as this encourages future usage, when relevant. The students can guess the full word at any time, but you should impose a penalty if wrong. This is to prevent random and careless guesses and keep control of the students and the game. To encourage student empowerment the person who correctly guesses the word can then come to the board and chose a secret word himself/herself for the next game.

WITH INSTRUCTIONS. THE GAME AND ITS RULES CAN BE EXPLAINED VERBALLY AND VISUALLY.

The students can sit in a horseshoe configuration using seats only as this activity does not require pens, papers or desks. This will also enable moving people around easily if smaller groups are utilized later in the game.

It may be used as a warmer/closer or filler depending on the time available.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE ANY HANDOUTS

How to Teach Descriptions

Generally when introducing descriptions for the first time, textbooks and instructors focus primarily on describing people. The simplest way to teach descriptions is to use the structures “He/She is ~.” and “He/She has ~.” With these two simple structures, you can introduce and practice your new vocabulary quite extensively. Since learning how to describe someone is a lesson for beginners, more complex sentence structures such as “The tall girl with curly brown hair is in my class.” should not be used at this time.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 WARM UP

Use a warm up activity to review the basic sentence structures you plan to use in this lesson. You can ask for volunteers to answer questions which require them to use these particular structures. Another idea is to conduct a short activity. Have the first student in each column of desks stand up, and explain that only these students can volunteer to answer your question. The first student to volunteer and answer the question correctly can sit down and the person behind him must stand. This becomes a race to see what column of students can finish answering questions first. In order to play this game, the columns should be even but you can adapt it to work in most classes.

2 INTRODUCE BASIC VOCABULARY

Using flashcards or drawings, introduce a new set of vocabulary. Adjectives like tall, short, long, short (write it on the board twice because these words are usually practiced in pairs), straight, curly, thin, fat, old, and young would be a good place to start. Drill these using your flashcards or drawings.

3 PRACTICE

Have students complete some matching or fill in the blank exercises. The images used on these worksheets should clearly demonstrate what you are trying to convey to your students and should even match the images on the flashcards if possible.

This will help reinforce the flashcard image, word, and meaning.

4 INTRODUCE ADDITIONAL VOCABULARY

When describing people, there is some additional vocabulary that should be introduced. Words such as freckles, glasses, a mustache, and a beard, for instance, may be appropriate however your textbook will help determine which words should be used in this lesson. Use choral repetition to practice pronunciation. Check comprehension by asking questions such as “Who has glasses?” and have volunteers answer using people at your school, famous people, or cartoon characters.

5 PRACTICE

A short practice activity that combines both sets of vocabulary would be appropriate at this point in the lesson especially if only a few words were introduced in the second set. You could show students images and ask for volunteers to say one sentence about the person in the picture or have a worksheet that required students to write a few sentences about some images. Matching exercises may also be appropriate and be sure to check the answers aloud as a class for further speaking practice before continuing to the production activity.

6 PRODUCE

Students should now be able to accurately describe someone so give them the opportunity to produce material of their own. You can ask students to write a description of themselves or a partner and have students volunteer to read their descriptions aloud near the end of the lesson. You could also have students work in pairs and play a version of Guess Who? Obviously having enough of these games for your entire class is not feasible but you can adapt it for use in the classroom. Simply make up a worksheet with twenty to twenty-five images. Tell students to choose one image and then take turns answering yes/no questions based on the image they have chosen. Students can then put Xs next to images that have been

eliminated and the first student to correctly guess his partner’s chosen image wins. It may even be possible to play this game multiple times within a single class period.

7 REVIEW

You can ask students comprehension questions to review the new vocabulary words at the end of the lesson or ask for sentences that describe some of the images you used earlier in class. Whatever activity you use can be used as the warm up for the following lesson too.

LESSONS ON DESCRIPTIONS ARE IMPORTANT BECAUSE MOST OF THE VOCABULARY CAN BE USED TO DESCRIBE MORE THAN JUST PEOPLE AND THIS IS USEFUL IN MANY FUTURE LESSONS AS WELL.

Since this vocabulary will resurface during the course of their studies, it will be important to review it frequently. If students enjoyed a particular activity more than others, make a note of it and reuse that activity when it comes time for a review.

How to Teach Using Games

A WIDE VARIETY OF GAMES CAN BE USED WHEN TEACHING ENGLISH.

The key is to ensure that everyone fully participates and has enough practice with the lesson material to play. If students are not confident, they will struggle and not get the most out of the activity.

HOW TO USE GAMES

1 WHOLE CLASS GAMES

Some games such as interview activities, bingo, jeopardy, and board games can be played by the entire class.

- An interview activity to practice the “Where are you from?” and “I’m from ~.” structures might start by handing out slips of paper with eight to ten different country names. Students can then be given a worksheet with all the country names written on the left and told that their goal is to get a student signature for each country by mingling with their classmates and asking the target question. When asked the target question, a student should respond based on the slip of paper he received.
- Bingo can be played with numbers, letters, vocabulary words, or many other topics you may want to practice.
- Jeopardy is more of a review activity because it focuses on listening and does not give students lots of speaking practice. The easiest thing to do is have students make groups of four to five, write categories and stars for each answer on the board, and explain that groups will get three points for a correct answer after the first clue, two points after the second clue, and only one point after the last clue. You will need five or six categories and perhaps five answers per category. If you would like to focus on a particular tense, simply use that tense for at least one clue per answer. You can choose the first category but after that, the group who provides the correct answer first should choose the category. This activ-

ity could take a whole forty-five minute lesson and the group with the most points at the end of class wins.

- Board games are often best played in small groups but if introducing a very challenging game, it may be a good idea to play as a class first. A group of students can be represented by a game piece and students can work together to answer questions. In the class following this, students can play the game in groups for further practice.

2 GAMES IN SMALL GROUPS

There are also lots of games that can be played in groups of about four students.

- Board games where students move pieces and answer questions or form sentences based on images make for good practice activities. For practicing the “If ~, then ~.” structure a Chutes and Ladders layout may be fun for students.
- Card games such as Go Fish, Memory, and many more can be adapted for classroom use. When you are teaching comparatives, card games can be an invaluable tool. You can also use simple card games to test comprehension by making up decks of cards with letters for example. Have students spread all the cards face up on their desks, you then say a letter aloud, and the first student to slap the correct card gets to keep it. Repeat until all the cards are gone and the student with the most cards at the end of the game wins. To make this more challenging, you can tell students that if they slap the wrong card, they have to take one card out of their pile.

3 PAIWORK GAMES

There are many of pair activities students can do to practice English but very few of them take the form of a game.

- The best and most versatile one by far is Battleship. This will take a lesson to explain and practice but once your students are familiar with it, can be played as a twenty to thirty minute activity. Battleship is best used to practice tenses. The worksheet consists of two identical seven by seven grids, one above the other. The first box in the upper left is kept blank, the first row is filled in with phrases such as “play soccer” and “study English”, and the first column is filled in with words such as “I, You, He, We, They, The students.” Students should secretly draw their “boats” on the grid. Typically one boat should have five squares, one boat should have four squares, two boats should have three squares, and one boat should have two squares. Boats can only be drawn vertically or horizontally. On the board practice the structure that students will use for the activity for example “I played soccer. You studied English.” until every row and column has been practiced and then instruct students to say “Hit”, “Miss”, or “You sank my ship!” when appropriate just like in the original game. Students can usually play two or three times before moving on to another activity.

AGAIN, THERE ARE LOTS OF DIFFERENT GAMES OUT THERE THAT CAN BE USED IN THE CLASSROOM. BE CREATIVE AND HAVE FUN! ENSURING YOUR STUDENTS HAVE THE NECESSARY INSTRUCTIONS AND PRACTICE BEFORE STARTING ANY ACTIVITY WILL MAKE IT MORE ENJOYABLE AND BENEFICIAL FOR YOUR STUDENTS.

How To Use Printable Flashcards For Teaching ESL

Flashcards can be an excellent learning and teaching tool especially when introducing new vocabulary or drilling familiar words. Besides being used by the teacher, they can also be used in a variety of activities and even posted around the classroom for students to reference.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 INTRODUCING NEW VOCABULARY

The words on these flashcards should be in a simple font, large enough for students at the back of the classroom to see, and printed in an easy to read color. Generally the reverse side of the card would have an image or a translation. When introducing new vocabulary hold the flashcards up high enough for everyone to see and do some choral repetition with students one word at a time revealing the reverse before moving on to the next word. It is easiest when holding a set of flashcards to remove the front card and move it to the back as opposed to moving them back to front. Especially with beginners, only a handful of words should be introduced at a time.

2 DRILLING VOCABULARY

After introducing new vocabulary, it is a good idea to review it often. At first, pronounce each word, have students repeat each word as a class, and prompt them for the translation. This will be slower in the beginning however as they become more familiar with the words, there will be no need for you to demonstrate pronunciation or prompt them. When the students get to this stage with a set of vocabulary, challenge them by flipping through the words at a faster pace. Translations are no longer necessary.

3 PRACTICE

Small sets of flashcards can be used in a variety of fun activities. Here are some easy ones.

- A variation on Snap – Cards can have words, pictures, or numbers printed on one or both sides. Students play in groups of three to five. First have students spread the cards out (face up) on the desk in the middle of each group. Then simply say one vocabulary word aloud at a time. Students, upon hearing the word, must repeat it and slap the corresponding card. The student who slaps the correct card first gets to keep it and the student with the most cards in each group wins the round.

- Go fish – Cards can have printing on only one side and must be opaque. The deck must have two or four of each card depending on how many vocabulary words you would like to use. Around 50 cards in a deck would be good. Students play in groups of three to five. First have students shuffle the deck and deal five cards (face down) per student. Put the remaining cards in a pile (face down) in the middle of the desk. Students take turns asking other members of the group for cards trying to gather the necessary two or four cards of a particular word. You can make the asking and answering dialogue more or less complicated depending on your students. The simplest method is to have the student whose turn it is look directly at another student and simply say the word he is looking for. The student being asked for a card can then either respond by saying the word and handing the card over or saying “Go Fish” in which case the student whose turn it is must draw a card from the center pile.

- Memory – Cards can have printing on only one side and must be opaque. The deck must have two of each card or perhaps have an image and a word for each vocabulary word. Students play in smaller groups usually no more than four. Students should start

by shuffling the cards and laying them out (face down) in a square or rectangular grid. Students take turns flipping over two cards trying to find a matching pair. If a matching pair is found, the student whose turn it is gets to keep both cards and the student with the most cards at the end of the game wins the game.

4 REVIEW

Before tests and quizzes, challenge your students with lots of flashcards by combining all the sets they need to review. It may be a bit overwhelming but if they have truly been building upon their knowledge during the course of their lessons, they should perform well. Difficulties with large sets of flashcards or vocabulary would suggest that they require more practice when new vocabulary is introduced and more consistent practice of words they have already learned.

THERE ARE MANY GAMES, WHICH YOUR STUDENTS ARE SURE TO ENJOY, THAT MAKE USE OF FLASHCARDS. AS LONG AS FLASHCARDS ARE CLEAR AND SIMPLE, THEY CAN BE INVALUABLE IN YOUR TEACHING.

How to Teach Numbers

NUMBERS ARE TYPICALLY TAUGHT EARLY ON IN ESL COURSES.

This means that students generally have very limited English abilities so it is best to proceed slowly, taking several classes if necessary to cover the material. The first time numbers are introduced, limit them to numbers one through ten and then build up to one hundred. Larger numbers can be introduced at another time.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 WARM UP

Your students are, at this stage, probably beginners so try to review material that was covered in the previous lesson and keep lessons enjoyable so that students will not develop an aversion to your classes. Lessons prior to this may include letters so you can play letter bingo. Each student should have a five by five grid. Have them fill in the grid with letters and then say letters at random until one or more students have gotten bingo.

2 INTRODUCE NUMBERS

Use flashcards to introduce numbers one through ten. Flashcards should have both the numeral and the word for each number. This will probably also include introducing some new vocabulary so choose words that will be used often in your classroom and words where the plural form is made by simply adding -s. Words like teacher, student, book, pencil, and desk would all be appropriate. Use choral repetition for pronunciation practice and then drill using the flashcards.

3 PRACTICE NUMBERS

If your students are not familiar with the Latin alphabet, they have probably been using worksheets to practice forming letters of the alphabet. You can use a similar worksheet to help them practice writing out numbers like one, two, three, etc. This is a good opportunity for them to practice letter and word spacing. If your students are familiar with the Latin alphabet, matching or fill in the blank exercises may be more appropriate.

4 CHECK

With beginners, it is important to check comprehension frequently. Students may be confused or hesitant due to lack of understanding but will often be unwilling or unable to ask for help. A group activity will get your students on their feet. One activity is to make groups with the same number of people as you call out. For example if you say "Four" students should make groups of four and when you call out the next number they should run around trying to get into appropriately sized groups. Another activity is to split the class into two to four teams. Each group should determine in what order students take turns and be given a portion of the board to write on. When you say a word aloud, the student whose turn it is should run to the board and write the numeral. If your students do very well, tell them they have to spell out the word and maybe later on, as a review activity, students have to spell out the word of the number that comes after the one you say aloud. At the end of the game, the group with the most points wins.

5 INTRODUCE MORE NUMBERS

When your students are confident using numbers one through ten, introduce numbers zero to one hundred. Focus primarily on the numerals and pronunciation. It is a lot of new material to take in but there is a pattern so stressing one through ten as well as multiples of ten will be really important. The difficult part for most students will be eleven to nineteen and confusing numbers like thirteen with thirty. Keeping this in mind, practice difficult areas more often than others.

6 PRACTICE

Make decks of cards for numbers zero to one hundred with numerals on one side and words on the other. For the purposes of this activity have students spread out the cards numeral side up. Students should play in groups of three to six. When you call out a number, the first student to say and smack the appropriate card gets to keep it. The winner

is the student with the most cards at the end of the game. If your students are struggling with certain numbers, feel free to also write the numeral on the board but be sure to say it first. You can use this same deck later on to practice reading and the difference between -teens and multiples of ten.

7 PRODUCE

Since you recently used bingo in your warm up, students should be familiar with the game. Ask them to fill out new grids with numbers zero through one hundred and play multiple times. You can also play another group activity where students stand in a circle and take turns saying numbers in order from zero to one hundred. Perhaps students say a number and then the name of the classmate who will say the next one or some other variation to keep things interesting. When they have mastered that, you can ask them to skip numbers with threes and sevens, including thirteen and seventy for example, to make it more challenging.

8 REVIEW

Worksheets may be an appropriate review activity but any activity you played during your numbers classes, could be conducted again as a review.

NUMBERS ARE USED OFTEN DURING ESL COURSES. ESPECIALLY BEFORE LESSONS ON TIME OR SOMETHING SIMILAR, A REVIEW IS GOING TO BE NECESSARY. STUDENTS WILL MOST LIKELY CONTINUE TO BE CONFUSED BY THE PRONUNCIATION OF CERTAIN NUMBERS SO SPECIAL SHORT CHALLENGE ACTIVITIES MAY BE A NICE BREAK FROM OTHER TOPICS AS THEY ADVANCE THROUGH THEIR ENGLISH STUDIES.

How to Teach Ordinal Numbers

ONCE STUDENTS HAVE LEARNED CARDINAL NUMBERS, YOU WILL HAVE TO INTRODUCE ORDINAL NUMBERS AS WELL.

This lesson should not directly follow the one on cardinal numbers because students need a lot of practice with those before being introduced to this topic however they are both beginner lessons and as such will most likely fall within the same school year. If students have had enough practice with cardinal numbers, this lesson should be fun and easy. You can use some of the same teaching materials and games too!

HOW TO PROCEED

1 WARM UP

Use the warm up activity to get students thinking about cardinal numbers especially if it has been a long time since you last practiced them. You can do this by using decks of number cards to play games like Memory or Go Fish in small groups or by playing a game such as Bingo as a class. To review more vocabulary, you can make up a story as a class instead. You can start by saying "I went to the store and bought one cat." for instance, have the next student repeat your sentence and then add "and two ~." and continue on until everyone has contributed. If you have a very large class, you may just want students to say a number and an item instead of repeating everything each time but this will give them less number practice.

2 INTRODUCE ORDINAL NUMBERS

Since ordinal numbers have nothing to do with amount but rather with position, do not start off by using numbers but instead use images of other vocabulary words to simulate a race on the board. You can talk with your students about the positions of each item by saying for example "The dog is first and the cat is second." Begin with just a few words or images on the board and work your way up to give students practice using the first ten ordinal numbers. Introduce the word 'last' as well since this is a position related vocabulary word. Once

students understand the meaning of these words, you can use number flashcards and choral repetition for pronunciation practice.

3 PRACTICE

Using the same number cards as in the warm up activity, students can play games to practice these new words. Memory would be great for pronunciation practice as long as every student says the correct ordinal number aloud when he turns over a card. If students cannot be encouraged to actually say the words aloud, you may as well move on to another activity. You can use BusyTeacher's ordinal numbers worksheets to test comprehension by asking students questions based on images or videos of races or lines. Students can also be prompted to write sentences about themselves such as "I am the first child in my family."

4 PRODUCE

To give students more speaking practice, you can provide them with a model dialogue or an interview activity. The model dialogue might focus on an image on the board where students take turns asking the position of various things and responding to questions. An interview activity could include questions such as "What's the first thing you do in the morning?" or "What's the first thing you do after school?" Your students' range of vocabulary will help determine what questions are appropriate. Try to include a variety of previously studied material as well as different ordinal numbers even though first is probably the most commonly used.

5 CHALLENGE

If your students are doing well, you can talk about the pattern of forming ordinal numbers. Make sure that students know that except for eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth, numbers ending with one, two, or three are irregular and should be said first, second, and third respectively. You should also look at all multiples of ten from twentieth through ninetieth because these are pronounced slightly differently from other ordinal numbers. As with cardinal numbers students may

confuse words such as thirteenth and thirtieth so these may require a round of Bingo of their own for extra practice.

ORDINAL NUMBERS SHOULD NOT PRESENT TOO MUCH OF A CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS.

Try to give students lots of fun practice activities in this lesson. There are not many occasions where ordinal numbers will come up in ESL classes except when talking about directions, for example "Turn left at the third corner." and other instructions - "First preheat the oven." where students will get lots of extra practice.

As Easy as OneTwoThree: 10 Ways to Practice Numbers

Using numbers in a foreign language is difficult for most second language speakers.

TRY THESE 10 WAYS TO PRACTICE NUMBERS IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 GO FISH

“Do you have any fours?” You may hear this question frequently if you allow your students to play Go Fish as part of their number practice. To make the game more challenging and give your students more numbers practice, use two decks of cards for around eight students for one game. Require that a player must have all eight matching cards before he can claim them for his own. Your students will laugh at how confusing the game can become with sets of cards passing back and forth between all the players!

2 TWENTY-FOUR

A deck of cards can entertain your students with more than Go Fish. Play the game Twenty-Four in groups between two and four players. Each round of a four-player game, each player lays one card down. (Two players lay two cards each. Three players rotate who lays down the extra card.) Each card has the number value on the card, with aces counting as one and face cards counting as ten. The players race to make a mathematical equation using the four numbers so the answer is twenty-four. When someone has an answer, he taps the table and shares it with his opponents.

3 BOLOGNA

Another card game that gives your students a chance to practice numbers in English is Bologna. To play, groups of four to six students divide a deck of cards between them. Starting with the first person, he places one or more cards into the center of the table and announces the quantity of two's that he is placing there, face down. The second player must announce how many three's she is putting in the center of the table, face down. Play continues around the circle with each player announcing a quantity of cards ordered from three to ace and then starting back at two. In reality, players may or may not lay down the quantity or denomination of cards they announce. The key to the game is bluffing and knowing

when others are doing the same. At any point during play, any player may call “Bologna!” if she thinks or knows another student is lying. If the player was lying and did not put down the cards she announced, she must take all the cards in the center. If that player was telling the truth, the player who called bologna must take the entire pile. Play continues until someone is out of cards and wins the game.

4 MAP IT

Review with your students all the personal information that contains numbers. Address, phone number, birthday and even email address often contain numbers. Have students work in groups of four or five to create a map of where their classmates live. Give your students some time to interact and collect the addresses of each of their classmates. Then, have groups of students make a map of the town and nearby area to show where each person lives.

5 MY TIMELINE

To challenge your students with longer numbers, have them create a timeline of the significant events of their lives. If you can, get a long roll of paper and encourage students to include photographs or illustrations of their significant events. To make sure your class is practicing numbers in English, have them write out the years rather than using numerals on their timelines.

6 WEATHER

Whether you realize it or not, tracking the weather is a great way for ESL students to use numbers. Take some time each day to access basic weather information – temperature, dew point, humidity and barometric pressure – and talk about it at the start of the school day. You may want your students to keep a record of the weather patterns.

7 CLASSROOM MARKETPLACE

With a classroom market place, your students can practice buying, selling and bargaining with numbers in English. Start by having each person imagine a product they might want to sell at the classroom marketplace. It is easier to make the items hypothetical, but you

may choose to have your students create actual items from art supplies you have in the classroom. Then, make copies of special classroom dollars and give each student ten dollars to spend in the market. Let your students haggle (explain this concept before opening the market and do not allow anyone to purchase anything without haggling) and then see what everyone ends up by the end of the activity.

8 MENTAL MATH

New math is not as new as it used to be, but challenging your students to do mental math problems will get them using numbers in English. Give your students a chance to do some simple mental math problems, and then let the real challenge begin. Using a spelling bee format, ask your students to do increasingly difficult mathematical equations without using paper. If a student gets one wrong, he sits down. The last one standing is the Mental Math champion!

9 CLASS SURVEYS

Class surveys are another way your ESL students can practice using numbers in English. As a class, make a list of demographic or statistical categories that might apply to your students. For example, how many students have dogs, how many have more than one sibling, how many have grandparents still living, etc. Brainstorm a large list, and then ask each student to choose five questions he will ask each of his classmates. Give your students time to interview one another, and then have each person write a sentence for each of his categories. For each question, the student must write a statement using words and not numerals to represent the answers.

10 NUMBERS IN PROVERBS

Many proverbs and idioms contain numbers. Alex Case compiled this list, which you can use in your ESL class. Challenge students to guess which number completes each phrase and then match that phrase to the correct definition.

THOUGH YOUR STUDENTS MAY NOT ENJOY MATH CLASS, THESE ACTIVITIES WILL BE A FUN WAY TO REVIEW NUMBERS IN YOUR ESL CLASS.

How to Teach Shapes

STUDENTS MAY NOT OFTEN USE SHAPES IN THEIR EVERYDAY CONVERSATION OR ENGLISH LESSONS BUT IT IS STILL WORTH TEACHING YOUR STUDENTS CERTAIN BASIC SHAPES ESPECIALLY IF YOU ARE GOING TO TELL THEM TO "CIRCLE THE CORRECT ANSWER." ON THEIR WORKSHEETS OR EXAMS.

Knowing basic shapes can also be useful when students try to explain objects that they do not know the word for because if they can describe something accurately enough, you will be able to give them the correct vocabulary word. This article provides some ideas and activities on teaching shapes to preschool and kindergarten kids and teenagers.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 WARM UP

Shapes are another topic for very beginners so it is worth spending time reviewing the previous lesson. If you choose to do the production activity suggested in this lesson, you may want to devote some time to reviewing numbers, description words and body parts as well. You can simply ask students to name the body part or number you are pointing to as a class or by volunteering. You can also review all this vocabulary using flashcards or by eliciting vocabulary from your students to see what they can remember. Warm up activities for beginning students may take up to ten minutes of your class time depending on how much material you feel the need to include. When it comes to vocabulary, repetition is the key.

2 INTRODUCE SHAPES

Drawings on the board or flashcards will be the easiest way to introduce shapes. You may choose to only teach square, rectangle, circle, and triangle but feel free to include other vocabulary such as star and diamond if appropriate. Use choral repetition for pronunciation practice and drill by pointing to the drawings on the board or using flashcards. If you are only using basic shapes and working with young learners, have them make the shapes using specific hand gestures

as they practice the words. This will help reinforce what the new words mean.

3 PRACTICE SHAPES

After practicing the vocabulary as a class, have students practice writing the words by labeling images on a worksheet or making sentences for each image. For example, if there is a picture of a circular clock, students can write "It's a circle." while if there is an image of a photograph, students can write "It's a rectangle." You can also continue practicing as a class by naming familiar objects or objects in the classroom and having students tell you what shape they are. Students should be encouraged to use full sentences when responding to these questions.

4 PRODUCE

At this stage in the lesson students should be able to produce their own material. You could have them write as many objects as they can think of for each shape, for instance. You could also conduct an activity which combines students' knowledge of shapes, numbers, descriptions and body parts. Assuming you have covered all of these topics, you can do this activity called Monsters. Have students work in pairs sitting back to back. First give students time to draw a monster on the top half of their worksheets. Student A will then describe his monster to his partner while Student B listens to the description and draws a monster based on the description he is given. Students will say sentences such as "He/She/It has one small nose. It's a circle." When Student A is finished describing his monster, students should switch roles. When both partners have described and drawn a monster, have students compare their drawings. It is amusing to see how different they are even if students were listening carefully.

5 REVIEW

If possible, it may be fun to get the class moving and working together. In the last minutes of class have students position themselves to cre-

ate the shape you call out. For example, if you say "Triangle." students should try to organize themselves into a triangle. It may be a bit of a challenge but depending on the class, may be quite enjoyable as well. It is good to conduct activities, such as this one, which require cooperation among your students.

SHAPES MAY NOT BE THE MOST IMPORTANT SECTION OF MATERIAL THAT STUDENTS STUDY AND THIS VOCABULARY IS UNLIKELY TO COME UP REPEATEDLY IN THE COURSE BUT TEACHING BASIC SHAPES IS STILL NECESSARY. LATER ON WHEN STUDENTS ARE TAUGHT THE ADJECTIVE FORM OF THESE WORDS, SUCH AS CIRCULAR AND TRIANGULAR, AT LEAST THEY WILL BE BUILDING UPON PREVIOUSLY LEARNED MATERIAL.

How to Teach Weather

TEACHING WEATHER VOCABULARY EARLY ON IN THE COURSE IS A GOOD IDEA BECAUSE IT IS SOMETHING THAT STUDENTS CAN PRACTICE REGULARLY.

During your daily warm ups, if you decide to ask students questions, you can always ask about the weather and the vocabulary comes in handy during other activities too.

TEACHING WEATHER: STEP BY STEP GUIDE

1 WARM UP

Start off with your usual warm up and try to get students talking about seasons. Ask students what season they like best and see if anyone can explain why. This could elicit much of the vocabulary you plan to practice during the lesson so if certain vocabulary words come up, write them on the board. You can also talk about different activities students like to do during particular seasons and why some of them, such as snowboarding, cannot be done year round.

2 INTRODUCE

Through your warm up activity, you may have been able to build a vocabulary list on the board which is good because it shows that some students are familiar with these words and will make the introduction easier. If you are unable to elicit any weather related vocabulary, you will have to spend more time on your introduction and practice sections. Once you have completed the warm up, introduce your weather related vocabulary using weather flashcards. Some basic words you may want to include are sunny, cloudy, raining, snowing, hot and cold. Drill these new words using choral repetition first and then call on students to say them individually.

3 PRACTICE

After students have had some practice pronouncing these words, conduct a short activity to give them some further practice. You can do this by giving each student a small version of one of the flashcards. Have students arrange their chairs in a circle and remove one chair. The student in

the middle can read his card and the students with the same card should remain seated while the other students have to change seats. This way, the word being said should always change and no one will have to sit still for long. When making these mini weather flashcards, it is important to use the same images that you used on the large flashcards if possible because consistency will help your students memorize the words and associate them with particular images.

4 INTRODUCE

Next ask students "How's the weather?" which automatically introduces the structure for the question of this lesson. When students reply "Sunny!" you can say "That's right! It's sunny." thus modeling the sentence structure you want them to practice. Use the flashcards to have students practice the model sentence using different words. If you want students to say "It's snowing." the snow flashcard should say snowing on it. You want to give students as much practice as possible with the form of the word they will need for the lesson.

5 PRACTICE

Students can use the same cards they had earlier or maybe switch with a partner for the next activity. Ask students to walk around the room asking "How's the weather?" and answering the question based on the card they have. Students should try to find someone to say each weather word listed on the worksheet and get signatures from the students they talk to.

6 PRODUCE

Now you are going to want students to produce some material on their own. You can have short writing activities where students talk about their favorite and least favorite weather. You can also ask them to say what they like to do when it's sunny, cloudy, or raining for instance. This will give students a bit of writing practice and at the end of the activity you can have volunteers read their responses to the class for more speaking practice.

7 REVIEW

For a review activity, try to include another recent topic, for instance, days of the week into your weather lesson plan. You can do this easily by creating an activity about weather forecasts. Students can work in pairs where each student has a weekly weather forecast with some blanks. Students have to talk to their partners about the weather on different days to successfully complete their weekly forecast. Students should take turns asking and answering questions. The structure of the question for this activity would be "How's the weather on Monday?" while the sentence structure could be "It's sunny." or "On Monday, it's sunny."

WEATHER IS DEFINITELY A TOPIC THAT ESL STUDENTS CAN TALK ABOUT OFTEN BECAUSE IT AFFECTS THEM ON A DAILY BASIS.

Give them plenty of opportunities to use weather related vocabulary throughout the course to keep these words fresh in their minds.

New Ideas for Teaching the Weather

ON OCTOBER 1, 1890, THE U.S. CONGRESS CREATED THE WEATHER BUREAU. IN 1970, ITS NAME WAS CHANGED TO THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE.

In honor of the organization that provides so much essential information to the U.S. on a daily basis, take some time out of your normal ESL activities to do some new activities with the weather.

HOW TO TEACH THE WEATHER: NEW IDEAS FOR YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 YOUR WEATHER UP NEXT

Studying the weather offers a unique opportunity for reading practice. By giving your students a copy of a weather map available in a national newspaper (like USA Today), they can get an idea of the weather in a large area. Before they can understand the map, though, you will need to review the different symbols that are used there. Depending on the age of your students, they may or may not be familiar with the terms warm front, cold front, high-pressure area and low-pressure area and the symbols which represent them on the map. Give your students some background on the words and the symbols, and then challenge their reading skills by asking information that they can only find on the weather map. You can also find national weather maps on weather.com and other web sites. You may want to have your students compare the data presented on maps from different sources and see if the data match. If not, why do they think there are discrepancies?

Your students can get some listening practice with the local weather as well. Either during the news broadcast or later on the channel's web site, play the weather segment for your students, and then ask some comprehension questions to see how much they understood. For lower level students you may want to keep your comprehension questions sim-

ple. What weather is expected? How should you dress for this weather? For more advanced students, ask more advanced questions. What are the expected high and low temperatures? What time is sunset? You should vary your questions based on the information that the newscaster presents.

2 SEVERE WEATHER

You hope that it is not too often, but there are times when severe weather threatens your location. Make sure your students understand what "severe weather" means, and then as a class brainstorm a list of the possible conditions that may be considered severe weather. Your list should include hurricanes, tropical storms, tornadoes, blizzards, hail, tsunami, freezing rain and strong winds. To go with your list of severe weather terms, have your students list what the effects of this type of weather can have on the area it hits. They should include dangers to people in the area as well as potential damages to surroundings.

Using the list of severe weather conditions you have compiled, have each student select one type of severe weather to research. She should gather information to include in a brochure on how to behave in that particular type of severe weather. Your students should write out the warning signs of their particular weather, what to do if that weather hits, how to prepare in advance for that weather, and which areas of the country are most likely to be affected and when. Then she should compile that information into a brochure. Copy each brochure and then send it home with each of your students. Encourage your students to talk with their families about severe weather conditions that they might experience and to make a family plan in case of an emergency. FEMA has a useful template available on their website (www.ready.gov/translations/_downloads/familyemergencyplan.pdf) that you may want to send home with each of your students to use with their families.

3 MORE THAN JUST LOCAL

Tracking weather does not have to be a local only activity. In today's world, communication is easier than ever, and the globe has never seemed smaller. Have your class take a global approach to the weather by tracking the conditions in another world city. You can choose your cities in a couple of different ways. One way is to have each student select a city from his native country and then do a daily check of the weather in that location. Another way to choose cities for your students would be to compile a large list of cities that they think might have interesting weather. If you put each city on a small slip of paper, have your students draw a city from the slips of paper, and that city will be his assignment for the remainder of the month.

Every day, for one month, each student should record the weather conditions of his city. You should require measurements on temperature, rainfall, wind and sky conditions. If you like, you can challenge your students for additional information like allergen levels, dew points or wind chill. When the month is up, have your students compile their information in some type of graph. Then, give each student an opportunity to share some of his information with the class.

While each student is tracking the weather for his individual city, your class should track the weather for the city in which you live. Again, at the end of the month tabulate the data. You can then have your students compare and contrast the weather in your city with the city they tracked throughout the month. Is there a city they would prefer to their own because of the weather?

STUDYING THE WEATHER CAN BE MORE THAN JUST SUNNY DAYS AND RAINY SONGS.

Take your weather studies to the next level this month in honor of the National Weather Service's birthday on October 1st with these not so typical weather activities!

5 Fun Games that Teach the Weather

Are you looking for a fresh way to teach your ESL students common weather words? Are you looking for a new way to review weather expressions and vocabulary?

HOW TO TEACH WEATHER: 5 FUN GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

1 PIN THE TAIL ON THE GLOBE

After introducing or reviewing a list of weather terms, post a world map on your classroom wall. Take a few moments to introduce your students to the terms equator and pole and discuss what types of weather the residents at each place (human or otherwise) experience year round. Then, depending on the time of year, discuss with your students what the weather may be like in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. Finally, review weather in specific areas like rain forests and deserts. Now it is time for fun. Give each student in turn a marker with either a pushpin or piece of tape or other adhesive. This is especially entertaining if you can take a picture of the student or have her draw a small self-portrait. Blindfold one student, give her three turns while she wears the blindfold, and then point her in the direction of the world map. The student should then place the marker somewhere on the world map. You can encourage her to aim for the type of weather she thinks she would enjoy. Then remove the blindfold and have your student describe the weather where she is on the map. Give each student a turn to place himself on the map while blindfolded and then tell the class about the weather at his location.

2 I'M GOING ON VACATION

Do you have a dream vacation? Most people can imagine where they would like to go whether it is skiing on a dramatic slope or sunning on a peaceful beach. Give your students some practice with weather words by getting them thinking about their dream vacation. Have your class sit in a circle and ask a volunteer to start. The person who takes the first turn will also take the last turn in the game. With each turn taker, the person should first describe in about two sentences the type of weather he would like on his vacation, and then tell the rest of the class where he will go on that vaca-

tion. For example, "I like sunny skies and warm ocean water. I'm going on vacation to Hawaii." The second person, whoever is sitting to the left of the person that just went, will describe her dream vacation weather, and then tell the class where she is going on vacation. Then she must also repeat where the first student is going on vacation. The third student then tells the class about his dream vacation weather and then where he will go. He also says where student number two will go and then where student number one will go. Continue in this manner until you make it all the way around the circle to the first student who must say, in the correct order, where each of his classmates will take his dream vacation. Feel free to prompt students throughout the game if they are stumped, but do not be surprised if the students do it on their own. If you have the map on the wall from the previous game, you could also let your students put their markers on the globe where they said they would like to vacation after the game is finished.

3 TWENTY QUESTIONS

Here is a game that reviews not only weather words but also question asking. Have one student choose a location he would like to visit. You can supply a list of possibilities or just let him choose at random. The rest of the class takes turns asking questions about the destination trying to determine where the person chose. Encourage your students to use questions about the weather at the beginning to narrow down the possibilities. If the class cannot guess after twenty questions, the student answering the questions wins. If they are able to guess before using all twenty questions, the class wins. Give each student a chance to be the question answerer. If you have a particularly large class, you may want to break your students into small groups to play the game.

4 CLOTHING RELAY

This game requires more preparation than the others and a small financial investment, but you can use the props anytime you teach about weather. Start by getting a collection of clothes that are appropriate for all weather conditions, bathing suits, hats, scarves, shorts, raincoats, sunglasses, etc. You can ask for donations from parents, friends or pur-

chase some second hand items at a thrift store. Put them all into a large bin and place them at the front of the class. Then divide your class into two teams and have each team choose a volunteer to stand up front with the collection of clothing. The rest of the class should line up at the back of the room in teams. For each round, you will announce a weather condition and one person from each team should run up to the front of the room. They must then run up to the person on their team who is standing by the clothing and choose an item that is appropriate for that type of weather. The runner must then place the item on the other student without the other student's assistance. The first person to choose an appropriate item of clothing for his teammate and put in on the teammate appropriately scores a point for the team. Continue until everyone has had a turn or until you have used all your weather words. The team with the most points wins.

5 CLOTHING STACKER

This is another game you can play with the collection of all weather clothing. Again, divide your class into two teams. You should also divide the clothing into two equal piles. Again, have one person volunteer to wear the clothing, but this time the opposite team will dress him or her in all the clothing from their pile. That person then returns to his own team and stands at the front of the room. The others are in line at the back of the room. Begin a relay race in which one person at a time runs up to the dressed member of their team, removes a piece of clothing, and announces to you or another judge what type of weather in which that item can be worn. After getting an okay from the judge, he runs back to the rest of the team with the item. Then the next person takes a turn. Continue until the person up front has been stripped of all his weather clothing. The first team to finish wins the game.

WHEN IT COMES TO TEACHING WEATHER, DO NOT BE A DRIP. PUT SOME FUN AND EXCITEMENT INTO YOUR CLASS AND DO A WEATHER LESSON BASED ON GAMES. It will energize your students and challenge them to think on their feet, and weather will become an instinctive part of their vocabulary.

How To Teach Days Of The Week

DAYS OF THE WEEK ARE GENERALLY TAUGHT VERY EARLY ON IN ESL COURSES SO IT IS IMPORTANT TO INCORPORATE RECENTLY STUDIED MATERIAL INTO YOUR LESSONS WITHOUT OVERWHELMING YOUR STUDENTS.

For this example, it is assumed that students have studied ordinal numbers (1st-10th), subjects (math, science, art, music, etc), and the simple present tense.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 WARM UP

Use the start of class as a review of the previous lesson. Students will feel more confident in a class if you start out with material they have already covered and it will also prepare them to use that same material later on in the lesson.

2 INTRODUCE – DAYS OF THE WEEK (VOCABULARY)

Write the words Sunday through Saturday on the board one at a time demonstrating pronunciation and drilling as you go. Practice the days of the week in order using choral repetition and then challenge your students by pointing to words out of order to test their pronunciation as a class and individually.

3 INTRODUCE – DAYS OF THE WEEK (COMPREHENSION)

Tell students “Today is ~” using whatever the day of the week is. Tell them that they go to school on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday or that they study English on Monday and Wednesday. Use several very basic examples to give students an idea of what these words might mean. Ask students for the meaning and translation of each word. It should be easy once they get started.

4 PRACTICE – DAYS OF THE WEEK

Do an activity that gives students lots of practice with the days of the week. A card game such as Go Fish with days of the week cards would be appropriate to play in groups of three to four. If using the game Go Fish simplify the dialogue so that a student only has to look at the person he is asking for a card and say the day of the week while the student being asking for a card has to say only the day of the week as they hand over the card or “Go Fish.”

5 PRACTICE - REVIEW

In order to get students warmed up for the next step where they combine their new vocabulary with previously learned material, conduct a review activity. A good game to practice listening, reading, and pronunciation requires only a set of flashcards for each group of students. Ideally groups should be three to five students. Since there are only seven days of the week, perhaps combine days of the week with a review of ordinal numbers, for example 1st-10th, and a list of subjects they study at school. Once each group has a set of cards, ask them to spread the cards, face up, on their desks. Explain the activity and begin. You will say a word aloud and the first person to repeat the word correctly and slap the corresponding card gets to keep that card. Repeat until all the cards have been gathered. Whoever has the most cards in the class should read aloud all the cards he collected. Repeat one or two more times depending on your students' enthusiasm.

6 PRODUCTION – COMBO

At this point have the students do a pair activity. For example if you create a worksheet with a school schedule (a grid that has Monday to Friday along the top, the numbers one to seven or eight depending on your school along the left, and subjects

filled in for each day and number) do the following. Teach students this structure:

- A: *Do you study subject ordinal number period on day of the week?*

- B: *Yes, I do! or No, I don't.*

Have two worksheets prepared with different school schedules where only ten or fifteen classes during the week are the same. Ask students to work together (by taking turns using the model dialogue) to determine which ten or fifteen classes they have together.

7 REVIEW

Do a final class activity at the end of class to recheck comprehension. Ask your students true or false questions about their school schedule. For instance if the class studies English on Mondays and Wednesdays, say “You study English on Tuesday. True or False?” or “You go to school on Sunday. True or False?”

ASKING STUDENTS QUESTIONS ABOUT THEIR SCHEDULE USING THE SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE IS THE MOST BASIC WAY TO USE DAYS OF THE WEEK AT THIS EARLY STAGE.

Days of the week will come up time and time again during their English studies. When your students begin studying other tenses questions using days of the week as a time reference is common. “What did you do on Sunday?” or “What will you do on Friday?” type questions will continually review their day of the week vocabulary.

How to Teach Question Structures

Teachers often give students plenty of time to practice answering questions without dedicating sufficient practice time to asking them. For example, Crisscross is a very simple warm up activity where students answer questions such as “How’s the weather?” but after nearly a year of doing this activity, students may struggle to come up with the correct question for the answer “It’s sunny!” Students can become accustomed to hearing key words in questions, in this case weather, and answering correctly without paying any attention to the question’s structure.

Here are some ideas to help students focus on this more.

SO, HOW DO I TEACH QUESTION STRUCTURES?

1 INTRODUCE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS TOGETHER

During the introduction of new materials, you can ask the target question when trying to elicit vocabulary. This way, students will hear it while they are focusing on the structure of the answer and after practicing the target answer you can go back and do some pronunciation practice with the question too. Question and answer structures are normally introduced together because for example “How’s the weather?” and “It’s ~.” are a pair and learning one without the other is not very beneficial.

2 PRACTICE THEM TOGETHER, TOO

Practice activities should also include both structures. For speaking practice this is easy because interview activities and model dialogues will certainly include both. Written exercises usually make students focus on answering the questions and not on the questions themselves. For structures where students have to compose their own responses such as “What’s your favorite

sport?” it makes sense that students would be more concerned with what they should say in response. On quizzes, exams, and in real life however, students are going to need to be able to ask as well as answer questions so include some activities that draw attention to a question’s word order. You can do this by adding a section of answers where students have to write the question for each answer. If this is too challenging you can have students match questions with answers or, better yet, fill in blanks within the question. These exercises will help students practice question structures more extensively.

3 PRODUCTION STAGE

During production exercises, questions are usually provided so that students have some guidelines or organization for their activities. Model dialogues and role-plays can be adapted to give students more practice forming questions. You can also play Fruit Basket by asking the student in the middle to say a question and having everyone who would answer “Yes” change seats. Example questions might be “Do you like blue? Have you eaten sushi? Are you a student?” This can be used for many different question structures and levels. You could play Fruit Basket as a review activity at the end of the first lesson using the answer structure and as a warm up in the next lesson using the question structure. Students may struggle at first but the more familiar they are with asking questions the easier it will be for them to learn new ones.

4 FOCUS ON QUESTION WORDS

Make questions part of general review material and activities before exams or quizzes by dedicating a section to them. If you have a study guide for students, make sure that students write their answers to questions as well as complete the questions. This will make them more aware of often

overlooked words in questions. For “How’s the weather?” students may be tempted to say something similar to “What weather?” as the target question because many questions in beginning and intermediate English lessons start with what and because they recognize the word weather as the word that links it to the answer. When creating blanks in the questions, leave in words such as weather and focus more on who, what, where, when, why, and how as well as words such as your in questions like “What’s your favorite sport?” When conducting review games, you can include a section where students have to give the question for the answer provided. This may be the most challenging section of the game so awarding extra points for correct answers may be appropriate.

WHILE MANY CLASSES CONCENTRATE ON HAVING STUDENTS ANSWER QUESTIONS, REAL LIFE DOES NOT WORK THIS WAY.

Students are going to have to be able to both ask and answer questions when given the opportunity to speak English outside the classroom so teachers need to devote plenty of time to question related activities. Once your lesson plans start including more of these, students will have better success remembering and using questions.

How To Teach Time: Telling Time Activities And Games

Telling time can be tricky for some students so it is important that they have a very strong grasp on numbers before trying to proceed with this lesson. Depending on the age of your students, they may struggle because they have not learned to tell time in their native language so teaching general references to time such as 'in the morning' and 'at night' would be more beneficial.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 WARM UP

Get your students in a numbers frame of mind by doing some pronunciation practice. Only the numbers one through fifty-nine are going to be used but review zero through one hundred anyway. A game or two of bingo would be good practice. Give students a five by five grid with the center square filled in. Ask them to write any numbers zero through one hundred in the remaining squares, say random numbers (starting with the one already filled in) and play until a few students have gotten bingo.

2 INTRODUCE – TIME: HOURS

Draw a clock face on the board to demonstrate. Start by showing times such as 7:00 and 11:00 and writing them on the board next to clock faces. Check to ensure that your students understand that the short hand indicates the hour and should be both said and written first. Have students repeat "One o'clock, two o'clock..." after you. Ask students to come to the board to both write and draw times you give them. For example, say "Rachel, it is 9 o'clock." The student should write 9:00 and draw a clock face indicating that time.

3 INTRODUCE – TIME: MINUTES

Move on to minutes. Show that there are sixty minutes in an hour and that the long hand indicates minutes which should be said and written after the hour. Now demonstrate times such as 8:10 and 3:42 just as you did for hours in the previous step. Ask students "What time

is it?" after drawing new clock faces on the board. Ask a student "What time is it?" while pointing to the clock in your classroom. See if there are any volunteers to draw clock faces on the board and ask the class what time it is. Make sure your students understand that "It's 8:10 o'clock." is incorrect.

4 PRACTICE – TIME

Have a worksheet prepared with a section containing clocks showing various times. Ask the students to complete this section independently and check the answers as a class. If students are struggling, more practice may be necessary. In the second section ask students to draw in the hands of the clock and then ask their partners "What time is it?"

5 INTRODUCE – TIME: VOCABULARY

Once your students have a basic grasp on numbers and telling time, introduce time related vocabulary such as those listed below:

- a quarter past
- It's a quarter past 4.
- half past
- It's half past 9.
- a quarter to
- It's a quarter to 12.
- AM
- It's 7:50 AM.
- PM
- It's 11:20 PM.
- noon
- midnight

Your textbook will determine what exact vocabulary you need to cover. Practice pronunciation of all the new words and ask students to tell you the time shown on the board in two different ways. For example "It's 7:15. It's a quarter past 7." Extensive drilling and practice activities are necessary at this stage.

6 PRACTICE – TIME

Continuing the worksheet used above, students can match sentences

with clock faces or even with images. For example "It's 9:30 AM" might match up with an image of a student at school while "It's midnight" would go with an image of a person sleeping.

7 PRODUCTION – TIME

Teach your students the model dialogue below:

- A: Excuse me. What time is it?
- B: It's 9:30.
- A: Thank you.
- B: Your welcome.

Have students practice this dialogue in pairs using clock faces drawn on the board or printed on their worksheets. Students should take turns being A and B. After five to ten minutes of practice ask for students to demonstrate the conversation to the class in order to ensure that students are correctly saying the time that corresponds with each image.

8 REVIEW

To end the class use another short activity to review what has been covered in class. Ask students to tell you the time shown on the board, translate phrases, and ask for the time to ensure that students are comfortable using all the new material and review anything that gives them difficulty both before the class ends and at the beginning of the next lesson. To build upon this lesson, the following lessons may be based around the structures "What time do you ~?" and "I ~ at 7:30" which practices both time and the simple present quite extensively.

General references to time such as at night, in the morning, and on Sunday come up quite often in ESL classes while specific times such as 9:35 do not.

BE AWARE OF THE FACT THAT STUDENTS WILL NEED PRACTICE TELLING TIME THROUGHOUT THE COURSE OF THEIR STUDIES SO DURING WARM UP ACTIVITIES OR ON WORKSHEETS TRY TO INCLUDE SPECIFIC TIMES REGULARLY.

What Time Do You Have?

Telling Time Activities

ONE OF THE MOST BASIC LESSONS YOU WILL APPROACH IS TELLING TIME. IT IS SUCH A KEY ELEMENT FOR BEGINNERS WHO MAY JUST BE LEARNING NUMBERS AND LEARNING HOW TO NAVIGATE BASIC CONCEPTS IN ENGLISH.

I find that the more hands-on you can be with telling time, the faster the students will master it. These activities will give you a collection of tools to approach telling time for adults and children.

TELLING TIME ACTIVITIES

1 INTRODUCTION

A fun way to introduce telling time is to simply ask students, "What time is it?" You'll be amazed at all the glazed looks you may get and the unique attempts to answer correctly! It is good to let them try and some of them may already know the basics. You can then tell them what time it is and then jump right in. There are a lot of details and variables to telling time correctly. You need to teach vocabulary which include: o'clock, a.m., p.m., quarter after, quarter till compared to :45, 6:30 compared to half past 6.

To practice all of the above the best way to start out is with a blank clock drawn on the board with no numbers. Have the students help you fill it in. Go through which numbers are after the hour and which are before, and how those are expressed.

Then draw the two hands and explain that one hand is for hours and one is for minutes. You can do a lot of practice just with drawing different times on the board. What could be a drill can be made a lot more amusing by getting students up to the board to draw in the hands for different times. You can also create handouts that they can then use for pair activities or homework.

2 WHAT TIME DO YOU...?

One of the best ways to practice telling time is to associate time with things you do at that time of day. You can do it with worksheets, cards, or even on the board. Explain morning, afternoon, and evening and what the cutoffs are for each. Here are some points to explain:

- 7a.m. until 11:55 am is morning time.
- 12:00 or noon (also lunchtime) until 5:30p.m. is the afternoon.
- After 5:30 p.m. (or when it becomes dark) until 12:00 midnight is the evening or night time.
- Midnight until 6a.m. is early morning.

These provide good guidelines to then lead into the questions

*What time do you _____ ?
and When do you _____ ?*

Assigning activities to times of day as well as a specific time will ensure that they understand the entire concept of time. There are lots of ways to practice this like simple question and answer. For example: What time do you brush your teeth/wake up/eat dinner/have English class? Have students come up with their own ideas and take the opportunity to teach and use new vocabulary.

3 WALL CLOCKS

Being able to use real clocks that the students can manipulate will make for hours of enjoyment and good solid review. It's a good idea to have at least three to four wall clocks for this purpose. You can make good use of them in several ways. Young learners especially love manipulating the clocks, playing teacher and doing Q and A with the clocks. Adults also enjoy the hands-on activities using the clocks and it really does make the lessons very memorable. You can have students play a variety of games and adapt them for difficulty. You could have a student mark a time on

the clock and not show anyone. The group then has to ask questions to deduct what time is on the clock. Or you could have them do races — shout out a time and see who can put the accurate time on the clock the fastest. Really your options are endless when you have a few old wall clocks at your disposal.

4 HOW MANY WAYS CAN I SAY...?

There are lots of variable ways to ask and answer questions regarding time. Give them lots of options and provide lots of examples. Some of those are:

*What time do you have?
What time does ----- start / finish?
What time is it?
Do you know the time?
Do you know what time it is?
What time do you... (do something — wake up, go to sleep, etc.)
When is the movie / class / concert / etc.?*

MAKE TELLING TIME STIMULATING AND MEMORABLE AND STUDENTS WILL WALK AWAY FEELING REALLY ACCOMPLISHED. THIS LESSON IS ALSO ONE WHICH ENABLES THEM TO THEN GO OUT INTO THE WORLD AND USE A NEW SKILL.

It's good to encourage them to practice it with their friends or even ask strangers what time it is. It is empowering for the students and you can generate many different ways to reuse these activities time and time again.

How To Teach Directions

DIRECTIONS CAN BE CHALLENGING TO TEACH HOWEVER ITS PRACTICAL USES ARE READILY UNDERSTOOD BY STUDENTS AND THERE ARE MANY FUN ACTIVITIES YOU CAN INCORPORATE INTO YOUR LESSONS TO MAKE THEM MORE ENJOYABLE.

Typically the first directions lesson would follow lessons introducing vocabulary such as post office, police station, school, bank, playground, park, library, etc. since these will be used extensively in directions lessons.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 WARM UP - DIRECTIONS

Get your students interested in learning how to give directions. On the board draw a rough map of the neighborhood, just a few streets and the school will do. Ask "Where is the school?" Have a student come to the board and point it out. Then ask where a few other landmarks are and have students draw and label them on your map.

2 INTRODUCE - DIRECTIONS VOCABULARY

Introduce the words 'right' and 'left'. Try to elicit the meaning or translation of these words from the students and write them on the board with arrows demonstrating each direction. Once their meanings have been made clear to the class, demonstrate proper pronunciation. It may be fun to teach your students this little trick to remember right and left: if you hold your arms out in front of you, flex your wrists up and extend just your thumb and index fingers on both hands, the left hand will have a capital L for left.

3 PRACTICE

Ask students to do some choral repetition. Call on students to model pronunciation in order to check their progress on the individual level and do some quick comprehension tests. Ask a student to "Turn right" or "Turn left" with a demonstration and after a few individual checks feel free to have the whole class join in making sure they are listening to the words right and left and not just turning from side

to side by occasionally instructing them to "Turn left, turn left" or "Turn right, turn right" which should end up with everyone facing the back of the classroom. Anyone who isn't facing the correct direction needs to focus on the words more closely.

4 INTRODUCE - DIRECTIONS PHRASES

Introduce the following phrases:

-Turn right/left (at the 1st/2nd/3rd corner).

-Go straight.

-You'll see it on the right/left.

-It's across from (the school, the park, the post office)

-It's next to (the police station, the playground, the library)

Explain the meaning of each phrase and lead some pronunciation practice exercises.

5 PRACTICE

Mark your imaginary present location on a rough map like the one from Step 1 and ask your students "How do I get to the ~?" Call on one student to give just the first section of directions, then another student for the second section, and then another until you've reached your destination. Repeat until your students feel comfortable enough with the new phrases to give a whole set of directions on their own. Next, mark a beginning position on the map and give a set of directions. Ask students "Where am I?" to see if they were able to follow along with you and repeat. If necessary, go back to review anything that seems difficult for the students.

6 PRACTICE - DIRECTIONS

After demonstrating the dialogue, ask the students to work in pairs to practice giving directions. The model dialogue should resemble this:

A: Excuse me. How do I get to the ~?

B: Turn left. Turn right at the 3rd corner. You'll see it on your left.

A: Thank you!

B: You're welcome.

Ask for volunteers to demonstrate their conversations to the class. Overacting is always encouraged. Any difficulties during a demonstration can indicate which areas may need further review. See if classmates can correct errors if they occur.

7 PRODUCTION - DIRECTIONS

For further practice, if appropriate for your students and school, create a maze of desks in your classroom and have students give directions to a blindfolded classmate. Having teams race is generally discouraged in this situation as it may lead to injuries. Generally having friends guide each other through the maze has the most successful results. As an alternative, direction themed board games or worksheets will also provide the necessary practice and would be more appropriate for larger classes.

8 REVIEW - DIRECTIONS

Ask for translations or demonstrations of all associated vocabulary and phrases as well as directions from one place to another. Encourage students to ask questions if something is unclear. Start the next few classes off with direction related warm up activities to help students retain all this new vocabulary.

WHEN TEACHING DIRECTIONS, IT IS INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT TO CHOOSE ONE STRUCTURE AND STICK TO IT SO THAT YOUR STUDENTS DO NOT BECOME UNNECESSARILY CONFUSED.

The examples above use the structure 'Turn right/left at the 1st/2nd/3rd corner' but you may choose to teach 'Turn right/left onto Smith Street.' or 'Go three blocks and turn right/left.' or 'Take the 1st/2nd/3rd right/left after the school.'

The Keys to Teaching Your Students to Give Directions

GETTING FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER IS NOT ALWAYS EASY. VERY RARELY CAN A PERSON TRAVEL ON A STRAIGHT PATH FROM ONE POINT TO ANOTHER, SO IT IS IMPORTANT FOR ESL STUDENTS TO LEARN HOW TO GIVE DIRECTIONS.

In this activity your students will gain the tools they need to successfully direct someone from point A to point B and maybe enjoy the scenery along the way.

HOW TO TEACH DIRECTIONS IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 WHERE WOULD YOU GO?

Most international students take special pride when talking about their home countries. Ask your students to suggest some points of interest to a visitor to their home countries. Make sure your students know the grammatical structure for giving advice. "If you go to [my home country], you should see [point of interest]." Students can suggest locations tied to sports, history or entertainment. Encourage your students to give whatever details they can about the locations.

To further the idea of visiting a new place, provide some travel brochures for your students to look at. You can find these types of brochures at rest stops along the highway or at visitor centers for cities. Give your students time to look through the brochures and think about what they would say about one point of interest in their country. Have your students make some notes on information they would give to visitors using the brochures as an example.

2 HOW WOULD YOU GET THERE?

Once your students are thinking about interesting places to visit, start a conversation about the different modes of travel. As a class, brainstorm as many different modes of travel as possible. Note that this activity will likely leave your students in need of specific vo-

cabulary, so you may want to allow dictionaries during the discussion. Make the list as detailed as possible. Do not forget less popular modes of travel including burrow, submarine, roller skates, dune buggy and any others you can think of. To elicit these travel modes from your students, you may want to mention settings in which those types of travel would be most appropriate, the Grand Canyon for example. After you have exhausted your list, pair your students and have each person tell the other what means of transportation he would use to get to that point of interest in his home country. Encourage your students that a one-word answer is not enough. Before you take the plane overseas, what mode would you use to get to the airport? After the plane landed what mode of transportation would you use?

3 CAN YOU GIVE ME DIRECTIONS?

Finally, have your students give specific directions from your classroom to their place of residence. Before starting the directions, compile a list of vocabulary words that are necessary when giving directions. Include right, left, go straight, turn and stop. Then have each student write out very detailed and specific directions how to get from your classroom to the place that he lives. It should be so specific as to include instructions like, "Stand up from the desk. Turn right and walk around the desks to the classroom door. Turn the doorknob..." Pair your students together and let them read each other's directions. If a student has questions or is unclear about the directions, the writer should clarify or revise his directions.

As a final project, have each student write directions from your classroom to the school library, cafeteria or other location nearby. Again, have your students write the directions, but this time they should not write the final destination on the paper. The final sentence in each set of directions should be, "You have arrived." Then collect and redistribute the papers to your class. Take

some time and allow each student to follow the directions on the paper exactly. When each student has finished following the directions, have him write down his location on the bottom of the paper and then return to the classroom. The writer of the directions should then look to see if the person following his directions ended up in the correct location. If all goes well, the intended destination will be the actual destination.

4 DID I HEAR YOU CORRECTLY?

If you are feeling especially adventurous and your students are willing to accompany you, you can make a game out of giving directions. Once again, pair your students together. Have one student stand at one end of a playing field or the classroom (though a larger area is better in which to play). The other member of the pair should stand at the other end of the location with a blindfold on. Once all the teams are ready, you should place an item somewhere in the playing area between the team members, just be sure it is not too close to any one player. Each seeing player should then shout directions to his teammate across the field leading that person to the item you left for them. The first player should remain stationary throughout the game. The first player to reach the item and his direction-giving partner are the winners. You can then repeat the game with the players' roles reversed. This time move the object to a new location. This activity will challenge your students' ability to both give and understand directions.

WHAT WOULD WE DO IF WE HAD TO FIGURE OUT ON OUR OWN HOW TO GET FROM PLACE A TO PLACE B? MOST PEOPLE WOULD PROBABLY STAY IN ONE LOCATION FOR THEIR ENTIRE LIVES.

Empower your students to give and follow directions by teaching them the necessary vocabulary and then giving them practice with directions. You never know where they may end up if you don't.

5 Fabulous Ways to Use Total Physical Response in Classroom

TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE (TPR) IS A METHOD THAT WAS DEVELOPED BY JAMES ASHER IN THE LATE 1960S, WITH THE GOAL OF HELPING STUDENTS ACQUIRE A SECOND LANGUAGE.

The main assumption is that a second language can be learned in the same way as the first – through the same natural processes. So, TPR tries to mimic these processes by requiring students to respond to commands, which in turn require physical movements. Naturally, this method was embraced by ESL teachers back then, but it is still quite popular today, particularly when teaching children or beginners.

THE ADVANTAGES:

ESL activities with TPR are tremendous fun for students, even for grown ups once they become less self-conscious. But it is precisely because children are less self-conscious about moving their bodies around the classroom, that these activities are excellent ways to get young learners up and about. Although they require more out of teachers, physically-speaking, they require less preparation. Finally, activities with TPR are great for kinesthetic learners who need more action or hands on activities. But does it work? Can we really maximize student learning through TPR? Try some of these TPR activities and see for yourself!

1 SIMON SAYS (WITH A SPIN!)

Clearly, it's a classic among TPR activities, one that is more commonly used to teach the parts of the body. But why not go beyond the simple, "Simon says touch your nose" and try more complex commands? Say you are teaching your students how to give directions. Clear up a space in the classroom, one your students can easily maneuver around. Your commands could be directions: "Simon says turn right, Simon says go straight ahead." Create a mini neighborhood! Place a flashcard or picture

on each of your students' desks: a bank, a pharmacy, a shopping center, etc. Arrange the desks so they create "streets". Students take turns giving each other directions to and from locations in their neighborhood.

2 CHARADES

Another classic game, this one is best suited to action verbs and sports. For example, to teach sports you must first introduce each with flashcards, act out each of the sports yourself, and have students say each out loud with you. Then you divide the class into two teams. Each student must take a flashcard, picture or card with a sport written on it, and pantomime the movements involved in playing the sport so that his or her teammates can guess what it is. Encourage them to be silly or exaggerate if they have to. Teammates have to answer in complete sentences: you are playing basketball.

3 SONGS

Young ESL learners love to sing songs, but if you add movement or miming, they'll enjoy them so much more. It is, in fact, difficult for most children to sing songs while sitting absolutely still. Singing and moving comes naturally to them. So, why not take advantage of this and incorporate lots of songs with movement? Here are some great songs you can use or adapt to suit your needs:

- Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush (www.esl-kids.com/songs/mulberrybush.html) – Use the original song and have your students mime the washing of clothes, ironing, etc., or replace these actions with personal hygiene (brush our teeth, wash our hands, comb our hair, etc.)
- Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes – A classic song used to teach kids the parts of the body.
- Wheels on the Bus (www.esl-kids.com/songs/wheelsonthebus.html) – The wheels on the bus go round and round and so should your students - go round the classroom! Have them line up and go around

the classroom in a single or double file, or arrange their seats so that they resemble a bus.

And these are but a few. ESL Kids has plenty for you to choose from.

4 A STROLL AROUND THE CLASSROOM

This activity is great for kids and adult students. You'll need several objects or props/realia - as many as you'd like to use. First, you pantomime a series of actions while you say the phrases. Then you say the phrases and ask a student to pantomime the actions. You can try this with several students and use different objects. Finally, they should do it on their own and walk around the classroom interacting with objects. Try something like this:

1. You open your bag.
2. You look inside.
3. You take out a pencil case.
4. You open it.
5. You close it.
6. You put it in the bag.
7. You look at your book.
8. You open it.
9. You close it.
10. You touch your ear.
11. You find your pencil!

5 MIME ROLE PLAYS

These are also a lot of fun for adult students! Give each student a role to act out but tell one of them that they've lost their voice. Tell this student what situation he or she has to act out, but don't tell the other student what it is. For example:

Student A – You need to find a pharmacy and you ask someone for directions. You have lost your voice, and you can't say a word.

Student B – You will be stopped in the street by someone who needs directions, but this person can't speak, so you must interpret their gestures to find out where they need to go.

SO, GET YOUR STUDENTS OUT OF THEIR SEATS AND GET MOVING! THEY'LL ENJOY THE CHANGE OF PACE, BUT ABOVE ALL, THEY WILL LEARN PLENTY.

You'll Love these Games for Teaching Anatomy Vocabulary

ALMOST EVERY TEACHER OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE HAS TAUGHT A UNIT ON ANATOMY AT ONE POINT OR ANOTHER.

Perhaps this is because it is one of the most tangible sets of vocabulary a nonnative speaker can learn. Perhaps it is because our bodies are such an important part of what makes us uniquely ourselves. Perhaps it is for some other reason. Regardless of the motivation behind the theme, anatomical lessons naturally find themselves in the ESL classroom. Once you have given your students some basics on the parts of the body, try one or more of the following games to review what they have learned!

TRY THESE ESL GAMES FOR TEACHING ANATOMY VOCABULARY IN YOUR CLASSROOM

1 IN THE CLASSROOM

"Simon says touch your head. Simon says touch your toes. Touch your ears".

Whether or not you are good at following directions, **Simon Says is a simple game that you can use to review the vocabulary of the body.** Having your students go through the motion of moving and identifying parts of the body is a great review for vocabulary that you have introduced in an earlier lesson. You can match the difficulty of the game to the skill level of your student – speaking more or less quickly, using more or less complicated vocabulary. Your students, too, will have a great time as you make the game harder and harder to eliminate players. Give the last one standing a prize, or just let him be Simon for the next round!

If you are feeling particularly adventurous, you may decide to play a game of *Twister Scare*. To play, either use a Twister mat or create a similar layout of colors on your classroom floor using craft foam, carpet squares or construction paper. (Heads up – you

will want to make sure all the desks are moved from the area in which you will be playing.) **Then ask your class to brainstorm a list of common words for parts of the body.** Write each of these body parts on a small slip of paper and put into a bag or hat. For each turn, pull one body part from the pool and either choose a color or use a spinner or die to determine the color that will be the goal for that body part.

Keep playing for as long as you can or until your students have had enough!

2 IN THE GYM

If you have a bag of old clothes that you use in your ESL class, that can also be repurposed for a review of anatomical vocabulary. They make for a great *relay* race when teams have to identify the parts of the body that the clothes and accessories are worn on.

To play, divide your class into two teams and have each team choose a model who will eventually wear all of the clothes. For each turn, have one player from each team stand on either side of you as you pull an item out of the bag. The first person to identify which part of the body the piece is worn on wins the piece and should run to her model and put the piece of clothing on that person. When you get to the last piece of clothing in the bag, the team with more items on their model is the winner!

3 OUTSIDE

If your students are getting sleepy in their seats, this anatomy game is sure to wake them up. Take your class to a large playing area, outside or a gym work well. In this game, you will call out pairs of body parts like *"Ear to Elbow"* (the name of the game). Students must then rush to find a partner, and one of them must put his ear to the other's elbow. If anyone is unable to find a partner or does not match the body parts correctly, he is eliminated. Give another pairing and

each person must find a new partner.

You may choose to make calls such as *head to knee*, *hand to foot*, *hip to hip*, *shoulder to back* or any other combination you can think of. The last pair standing wins a prize.

4 IN SMALL GROUPS

Do you want to play a game of body parts with your students but get them to think outside the box?

Try the classic game of *Operation* in which students must remove "punny" body parts from an electric surgical patient. Students will draw cards asking them to remove such items as the funny bone, the breadbox, the Adam's apple and butterflies in the stomach. If they touch the sides of the opening for each piece, a buzzer will sound and that person loses his turn.

You can use this game as a jumping off point to talk about idioms or expressions that have to do with parts of the body. **Challenge your students to do some research and compile a list of all the expressions using body parts that they can find.** You can make this a game in itself by grouping students and giving them a set amount of time to come up with their lists.

JUST BECAUSE LESSONS ON ANATOMY HAPPEN SO FREQUENTLY IN ESL CLASSES DOES NOT MEAN THAT YOU CANNOT HAVE FUN WHILE YOU GIVE THEM.

These games provide a fun review of what your students have learned and may also teach them a thing or two. So try one with your class and get in some laughs as you do your body parts review!

How to Teach Prepositions of Time

PREPOSITIONS OF TIME, LIKE PREPOSITIONS OF PLACE, CAN BE CHALLENGING FOR STUDENTS WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY RECOGNIZING WHEN TO USE CERTAIN WORDS.

These little words are so important when speaking English because the difference between “He’ll go to Italy in March.” and “He’ll go to Italy at March.” is the difference between an intermediate and an advanced student. While English learners will not notice how incorrect their sentences sound, it is so apparent to native speakers who most likely do not even know the rules for when to use these words.

SO, HOW DO I TEACH PREPOSITIONS OF TIME?

1 WARM UP

The warm up should focus on time. Students should get some practice telling the time and also talking about months and dates so that they are reminded of all this vocabulary before introducing the new topic. You can bring out the clock you used when teaching your students time or just draw clock faces on the board to give them some quick practice. You can also get the month vocabulary cards out and play a quick round or two of Go Fish. Whatever activities you did when introducing these topics can be repeated as long as your students found them enjoyable the first time around.

2 INTRODUCE PREPOSITIONS OF PLACE

Next introduce the words at, in, and on which should be the focus of this lesson. Your students have probably already used these words when talking about prepositions of place so there should not be any need for pronunciation practice. Write three sentences on the board and ask students which word correctly completes each sentence. This should give you an idea of how much your students already know about using these words. Briefly

talk about how at is used when talking about precise times such as “3:00 PM”, in is used when talking about months, years, or other long periods of time for example “in July”, and on is used for sentences with days or dates like “on Tuesday” or “on March 6th”. It is all well and good to discuss these points however in addition to thinking about these rules students will need practice using prepositions of time in sentences.

3 PRACTICE PREPOSITIONS OF TIME

Have students complete a worksheet to practice using prepositions of time. Perhaps in the first section students circle the correct word to complete the sentence and are given only two choices. In the second section have students fill in the blank. The third section could just have a list of phrases such as November, my birthday, and 7:15 PM that they have to choose the correct preposition for. This type of worksheet will help students by building up their confidence with an easy section at the beginning and then challenging them with a lot of phrases at the end.

4 PRACTICE MORE

Now that students have spent some time focusing on prepositions of time, remind them that these prepositions have other uses too. You will need three very short passages for this section. In the first passage delete at whenever it occurs without creating blanks and then tell students how many times at occurs in the text. Students can then insert the word wherever they think it has been deleted. Complete this activity for in and on as well. Students can complete this activity individually, in groups, or as a class. Review the answers as a class and then talk about when these words are used as prepositions of time and when they are used as something else.

5 PRODUCE

You can easily play Fruit Basket in this lesson to give students the chance to make their own sentences. Have students arrange their chairs in a circle and then remove one so a student has to stand in the middle. The standing student should make a sentence, for instance, “My birthday is in July.” and all the students that have birthdays in July must change seats leaving a different student in the middle. If students have difficulty coming up with sentences, you can say one so that the game continues and does not come to a complete standstill for an extended period of time. Sentences such as “I start school at ~” should get everyone moving.

6 REVIEW

At the beginning of the next lesson, you can have students complete a few sentences using prepositions of time to briefly review the material. If students understand everything well, you can move on to the next topic, incorporate prepositions of time whenever possible, and have a solid review of this material before an exam.

SOMETIMES IT’S THE LITTLE WORDS THAT REALLY TRIP STUDENTS UP. BE SURE TO COMPLETE PLENTY OF PRACTICE ACTIVITIES TO ENSURE THAT STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THE APPROPRIATE USE OF EACH OF THESE WORDS.

How To Teach Prepositions Of Place

Prepositions of place are an important part of the English language and will enable students to create more complex sentences. The meanings of basic prepositions and prepositional phrases are incredibly easy to demonstrate in a classroom and students can often guess their meanings.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 WARM UP – PREPOSITIONS

Use this opportunity to review vocabulary you plan on using in this lesson. In this example words including book, desk, chair, clock, pencil, and teacher would be good to review. Crisscross is an excellent game to start the class with. Have all the students stand. Ask questions like “What is this?” while holding up a pen or pointing to an object. Have students volunteer to answer by raising their hands. Choose a student and if he answers correctly he may sit down. Repeat until all students are seated. In large classes the volunteer can choose either his row or column of students to sit. Usually no more than about ten questions are asked. The exercise should take approximately five minutes.

2 INTRODUCE – PREPOSITIONS PRONUNCIATION

Write the target vocabulary on the board. The words below are a good set to begin with:

- in
- in front of
- on
- behind
- under
- above
- between
- next to

The vocabulary you introduce may depend on the textbook being used. Demonstrate the pronunciation of each word one at a time having students repeat it after you. If certain students appear not to be participating, call on them individually to pronounce the word for the class. You may want to start a chain where the first student

says the first vocabulary word, the next student says the second, and the third student says the third, etc until all students have had the opportunity to say at least one word aloud. In a small class feel free to repeat this exercise several times and encourage them to speed up with each cycle while still maintaining proper pronunciation. Drilling is important however it is often boring for students so adding in some fun elements can encourage them to participate.

3 INTRODUCE – PREPOSITIONS MEANING

Try to have the students come up with the meaning or translation of each word. Use example sentences such as “I am in front of the board. Now I am in front of the desk. Now I am in front of Jane.” and change your position in the classroom accordingly. Use as many example sentences as you can think of for each preposition trying to get the students to guess its meaning before writing it on the board and moving onto the next one. Drill pronunciation and translation before continuing.

4 PRACTICE

To test comprehension, do a short exercise. Tell students to put their hands on their desks, above their desk, behind their backs or to put their books in their desks, under their desks, etc. Perhaps a few students would like to give it a try so why not have them give a few instructions as well. A simple worksheet where students match prepositions with pictures would be good practice as well.

5 INTRODUCE – PREPOSITIONS Q & A

Ask students questions such as “Where is my/your/the book/pen/desk/clock?” Demonstrate the pronunciation of the question and answer. The model dialogue for this lesson should resemble the structure below:

- A: *Where is (my/your/Sam's/the) (noun)?*

- B: *It's (preposition) the (noun).*

6 PRACTICE

Ask your students to practice the model dialogue in pairs for about five minutes taking turns being A and B. Next ask for volunteers to demonstrate their conversations and encourage them to be creative instead of being limited to the vocabulary you've already used in the lesson. Correct any errors with clear explanations and demonstrations before moving on.

7 PRODUCTION

Ask students to write five sentences using prepositions or use a game for further practice of prepositional phrases and sentence construction. An exercise like Jumbled (where students work in groups to arrange a set of words into five to ten sentences in a race against other groups) or Scrambled (where students have a worksheet with sentences written out of order that they must rearrange) would be great practice.

8 REVIEW

As a class review the exercise from the previous step. Students can volunteer to read one of their written sentences aloud, groups can take turns reading one of their sentences from Jumbled, or students can read their un-Scrambled sentences aloud. Whatever exercise you've done, this is a key stage in catching mistakes. Often other students can assist their peers in making corrections but if not you may need to review certain problem areas.

PREPOSITIONS ARE EASILY REVIEWED THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL YEAR BY BEING ADDED TO RANDOM EXERCISES.

For instance, typically prepositions would be covered before moving onto the past or future tenses. Adding prepositions to sentences used in practicing those new tenses should be an easy review for your students and keep them aware of the use of prepositions throughout their studies.

7 Super Activities for Teaching Prepositions of Location

UNDER, OVER, NEAR, FAR, TO, AT, IN, ON...ENGLISH PREPOSITIONS OF LOCATION MAY BE THE FODDER FOR BAD POETRY, BUT MORE LIKELY THEY ARE A KEY COMPONENT OF YOUR BEGINNING STUDENTS' ENGLISH CURRICULUM.

These prepositions can be a challenge for English language students. Some prepositions do not translate from one language to another, and even when they do they are often not used in the same context.

The more practice you give your class with these information packed words the easier it will be for your students to use them easily in conversation. These 7 simple activities, most requiring little to no preparation, can give your students the practice they need to be in the know when it comes to prepositions of location.

HOW TO TEACH PREPOSITIONS OF LOCATION: TRY THESE 7 SUPER EASY ACTIVITIES

1 LOOK AROUND

Have pairs of students take turns saying where items in the classroom are without saying the object itself. For example, a student could say, "This object is over the door." The second student guesses which item his partner is describing. "Is it the clock?" If the student gets the answer right, they switch roles. This is also a good way to review vocabulary of classroom objects.

2 QUESTIONABLE QUESTIONS

To practice prepositions of location in question form, have pairs of students work together in an activity similar to the previous one. This time, though, the first student asks a question about a classroom item using a preposition of location that does not describe the object's correct location. "Is the clock under the trash can?" The second

student then answers the question. "No, the clock is over the door."

3 WHERE IS IT?

Have students bring an unusual item to class or provide one yourself. Then let students take turns hiding the object in the classroom while the other students hide their eyes. Once the student is back in his seat, his classmates ask questions using prepositions of location to try to locate the item. The person who hid the object answers their questions until someone guesses correctly. The person who guesses correctly gets to hide the item for the next round.

4 DRAW IT

This pair activity requires one student to give directions to another student while he draws a picture. Give one student a simple picture, which she will have her partner draw. She can look at the picture, but her partner can only listen to her directions as he draws. Encourage your students to use prepositions of location as they give their partners instructions. Then have students switch roles with another picture.

5 A MESSY ROOM

Show your students a picture of a messy bedroom. Ask them what is wrong with the picture and where the person's items should be. For example, if clothes are on the floor your students would say, "The clothes should be IN the closet."

6 GETTING AROUND TOWN

Have groups of three or four students work together to create a map of a fictional town. The map should include typical buildings like a school, library, police station, grocery store and homes. Have students discuss where each of the buildings should be located on the map using prepositions of location. Once the maps are finished, have each group present theirs to the class. Their classmates

can then ask them why they put each building where they did. For example, "Why is the school next to the library?" The group who made the map should answer their classmates' questions.

7 EGG HUNT

Have an egg hunt in your classroom — no matter what time of year it is. Hide several plastic eggs around your classroom (you can put something inside them or leave them empty). On your word, students start looking for the eggs around the classroom. When someone finds an egg, he announces it to the class. He should then tell the class where he found it. "I found an egg. It was under the teacher's chair."

THESE ACTIVITIES ARE SIMPLE ONES YOU CAN USE ANY TIME YOU WANT TO REVIEW PREPOSITIONS OF LOCATION WITH YOUR STUDENTS.

Though perfect for beginning level students who are just learning these prepositions, they are also useful for more advanced students who need a review or for filling a few minutes at the end of class.

7 Super Easy Activities for Teaching Prepositions of Time

TIME FLIES WHEN YOU'RE HAVING FUN, AND YOUR STUDENTS ARE SURE TO HAVE A GOOD TIME WITH THESE FUN FILLED ACTIVITIES THAT TEACH PREPOSITIONS OF TIME!

TRY THESE 7 SUPER EASY ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING PREPOSITIONS OF TIME

1 IN, ON OR AT

Put random times on slips of paper including years, months, specific dates and times. Each student takes a turn drawing one of the times. He must then tell the class what he was doing at that time and must choose the correct preposition of time to express himself. Examples: I was vacationing in June. I was studying on Sunday. I was eating lunch at noon.

2 CHECK YOUR CALENDAR

Have students fill out a calendar with either real or fictional events in their lives. Then, have pairs discuss what they will be doing and at what times. Students should choose the appropriate preposition of time for each event during their discussion times.

3 WHAT CAME FIRST?

Bring some smiles to the classroom when students use the Sunday comics to practice the phrases “before that” and “after that”. Pairs of students should choose one comic strip and create a dialogue describing the events in the pictures. They should use “before that” and “after that” as many times as possible in the dialogue. After about ten minutes, have students present their dialogues to the class.

4 WHAT TIME?

Set up a Family Feud style relay to practice using the phrases “in the

morning, in the afternoon, in the evening, and at night.” Divide your class into two teams, and have one person from each team come to the front of the room to stand on either side of a desk or table. Ask a question about an activity most people do every day. For example, “What time do most people eat breakfast?” Students should race to slap the table, and the first person who gets her hand down answers with one of the following: in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening or at night. If a person gives the correct answer, she scores a point for her team. If she gives an incorrect answer, she loses a point for her team. After everyone in the class has had a turn, tally the scores to see who wins.

5 ROLL THE DICE

If you have a game store near you, get some blank dice to use with this fun preposition of time activity. On one six sided die, write for, while, and during on two sides each. On the other die, write six different activities (draw a picture if you don't have enough room to write it out). Have a student roll both dice and then compose a sentence which uses both the preposition and the event correctly.

6 ROLL AGAIN

Using standard six sided dice, have students take turns rolling two dice two times. These two rolls represent two times of the day. After her roll, each student must create a sentence expressing the duration of an event using those two times. She should use the prepositions from and to to express the duration of an activity she did or will do. For example, a student might roll an 8 and a 4. She would then say, “I will be at school from 8 to 4.” You can also have students use until and till when creating their sentences.

7 WRITE ON

Have students put their knowledge of prepositions of time together with a little creativity as they write their

own pieces of fiction. Encourage students to write simple fictional stories in ten sentences using a preposition of time in each sentence. Once their stories are written, students should cut the sentences apart and shuffle them. Then have students exchange stories with a partner and put their partner's events in the correct sequence.

Turn Right, Go Left: Practicing Prepositions of Place

PREPOSITIONS OF PLACE IS ONE OF THOSE TOPICS THAT CAN REALLY OPEN UP A NEW WORLD TO LEARNERS.

It is also a topic with lots of details and possibilities for practice and implementation. Below are some strategies for practicing prepositions of place focusing on location.

HOW TO PRACTICE PREPOSITIONS OF PLACE

1 USE MAPS

To introduce uses for prepositions of place, it is essential to show students the many functions it has in their daily lives. One way to do that is to present students with an overview of a map of their city or town. You can introduce compass directions, prepositions for giving directions as well as prepositions of place and movement. Maps are practical resource to first discuss locations, distances and placements. Then later students can put maps into action. Another topic that can arise out of using maps is landmarks. Students generally know the landmarks of their city, and it can be great fun to utilize those landmarks for direction-giving activities. There are so many possibilities with maps. You can give students the map of one neighborhood and have them practice going to and from one of the popular landmarks. You can have them fill in maps with local landmarks, street names, and popular places like hotels, grocery stores, libraries, etc. Once they have the maps filled in, they can then begin asking for and giving directions. This is a terrific review of all the terminology for prepositions of place and movement! Here is a list that you could include for students to reference:

Movement:

Go straight/move forward
Turn right or left
On the highway
Exit to the left
Go through the light

Place:

On the corner

at the light/stop sign/train tracks

Across from

Next to

Behind/in front of

2 CREATE AN OBSTACLE COURSE

If you have a fairly spacious classroom and you take care to make sure this activity stays safe, then by all means go ahead and create an obstacle course. First pinpoint a point A and a point B. Point A is where students will begin and point B is where students want to end. Take a few chairs and spread them out so the path from point A to B is obstructed. Then put a blindfold on one student, who will be turned around a few times. Have another student direct the first student from point A to point B through the obstacle course. You can vary the obstacle course for each different student or you can make it a team event. This is an enjoyable activity that is safe provided students take their time and listen to the directions. It is also a worthwhile activity to debrief afterwards to discuss the importance of understanding directions, navigating difficulties, and asking the right questions.

3 DIRECTIONS FROM MEMORY

Close your eyes and think about the route that you follow to get from your home to your office. Could you tell someone every step of that drive or walk? This activity is a lot of fun simply because giving directions purely by memory really isn't that easy. One way to make it even more engaging is if students who live close to each other can work together to try to get every step in movement absolutely correct. You could also have the students try to trip each other up, or find the gaps in the directions. Another variation on this one could be, for example, from the classroom to the bathroom or from the parking lot to the classroom. You can dream up many ways to have students give directions from memory. An

extension of this could be an assignment to draw a map along with the written directions from school to home or home to work.

4 GPS AND GOOGLE MAPS

In this technological world, perhaps many of your students are using a GPS system to get around (and to get lost). If they are not familiar with a GPS and you have access to one on your phone or otherwise, introducing the device to students could be very enlightening. Take out the city maps you provided them with earlier and punch in an address close to the classroom. Have students follow where the GPS tells them to go on their map to find out if it is accurate. You could come up with several ways to provide the class with examples, and have students experiment with the GPS.

You could also introduce Google Maps or Map Quest. This is a handy resource that students could use in their daily lives. It also gives them the capability to look at a map while simultaneously getting written directions. You can do activities with your local city or have some fun choosing famous landmarks throughout the world and locating them on a map. You can also introduce them to the other features of the maps (like search nearby or street view) and open up a whole new world to them. The possibilities with these technological tools are endless, and they could generate entertaining and informative ways for students to explore their area and the world around them!

WHEN IT COMES TO GETTING AROUND AND FUNCTIONING OUT IN THE WORLD WITH LIMITED LANGUAGE, GIVING AND FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS CAN BE A KEY PIECE FOR STUDENTS TO GAIN SOME INDEPENDENCE AND CONFIDENCE.

Take these ideas and make them as hands-on and relevant as you can for students immediate circumstances, and they'll navigate themselves right into self-reliance.

Yes We Can Write! Putting Pen to Paper for Beginners

Writing can often get overlooked in the beginner ESL classroom. This may be because students are focused on their speaking and listening skills first, and their reading and writing skills second.

There comes a time in every beginner class to test the waters with writing to see where your students' writing skills are, and to help them to enhance those skills. Solid writing skills will help your students increase their understanding of the language, and learn how to express themselves in new ways.

GETTING BEGINNERS TO PICK UP THE PEN AND WRITE

1 START OUT SLOW

You will have different levels of capabilities and some students may not even have a basic grasp how to spell simple words. Often beginners have such limited vocabulary, writing can feel very intimidating and so they will need a lot of guidance. Don't worry too much at the very beginning about grammar, spelling or punctuation. Let it go for now. You will have plenty of time to get into those details. Just get them to write something down the first few times.

2 REVIEW SIMPLE SENTENCE STRUCTURES

You will want to begin by reviewing simple sentence structures that the students can model and practice. Point out the punctuation rules, and review some of the grammatical points you have been working on and incorporate them into a writing activity. Present tense and Present Continuous are good ones to get students writing. Review the grammar and the differences.

Subject + Verb + Object = I like ice cream. He is a teacher. John is happy.

Subject + Verb to be + -ing = The girl is dancing. The boy is singing. We are learning.

There is a lot you can have students

write about that use just these two main beginner grammar points.

3 USE VISUAL CUES

Using either pictures or real life objects can greatly help students get the pen moving. If they have something that they can look at for reference as they are working out what they want to say, you will get better results. Here is just one type of lesson that can be adapted:

Use pictures from a magazine and have each student pick one. Use a combination of portraits, street scenes, home scenes, and people doing activities, or anything that has some action to it. First, have them write five sentences about the picture on a loose piece of paper. I find it best to give them some direction, such as: write five sentences about what is happening in the picture. Write five sentences describing the picture. Write five sentences using adjectives/action verbs/present tense. You can come up with your own ideas that fit the students' level. Have a few students share what they wrote and either write it up on the board for them or have them write it up there. You can go through and make some gentle corrections as you have another student read aloud what is written on the board. Always collect short writing activities so that you can make all the necessary corrections.

4 PROGRESSIVELY GIVE MORE DIFFICULT WRITING EXERCISES

Don't expect creative masterpieces at the beginning, and be open to assisting students express themselves. In general, they will need help with vocabulary, spelling, and expression. Students will use very basic language, but may also want to experiment with some surprisingly advanced concepts. Let them first explain what they are trying to say and be their dictionary for a time. As time progresses, give them writing activities that are coupled with grammar points, so that they can gain a better understanding. A few tips on

where to progress are:

- Show students how to combine two simple sentences with and, or, or but, and how to punctuate.
- Explain adjective order and show them how to utilize several new adjectives in writing.
- Show students how to incorporate more than one tense into a paragraph. For example: I like running. When I run I feel happy and healthy. When I am running I like to feel the sun. Next year I think I would like to run in a marathon.
- Introduce future tense and have them write on any number of topics. Things like: what is your goal for the coming year? What dreams do you have for your future? What career will you have in 5 years?

5 INTRODUCE THE DICTIONARY AND THESAURUS

As students continue on their journey of putting pen to paper, it is a wonderful idea to give them resources to improve their work on their own. First introduce the dictionary, and make sure that you have a few good copies for them to use while in class. Many students already utilize electronic dictionaries, but getting them to use a hard-copy can greatly help them increase their vocabulary. Thesauruses are also great resources and can eliminate the frustration of limited (and pretty boring) word usage. You can incorporate activities with both books into writing activities and give students homework that will get them comfortable consulting the books while they are writing.

TEACHING BEGINNER STUDENTS TO PUT PEN TO PAPER WILL PROVE TO BE A GREAT CONFIDENCE BUILDER FOR MANY OF THEM, AND A WAY FOR YOU FIND OUT WHICH STUDENTS MAY HAVE LARGER ISSUES WITH LITERACY.

When you are crafting your activities and asking your students to put themselves out there remember that it can be challenging for native speakers to sit down and write. It takes a lot of courage, but both the teacher and the students will see great rewards!

Wish You Were Here: Beginning Level Writing Made Simple

FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE, PRACTICAL AND REAL LIFE SKILLS ARE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT.

We teachers strive to bring realia into the classroom, give them experience speaking in real life situations and reading English text written for native speakers. These are valuable experiences for our classes, but we may find that writing, for beginning level students, is more abstract or has little real life applications. The good news is beginning level writing does not have to be disconnected from reality. By walking through the following steps for writing a postcard, your students will have a chance to practice their beginning level writing skills in a practical situation.

HOW TO TEACH A POSTCARD WRITING LESSON TO BEGINNER LEVEL STUDENTS

1 START THINKING

Get your students thinking about experiences they may have had getting postcards. Write the following questions on the board and put students into groups of three or four to discuss the answers.

- Did someone ever send you a post card?
- Who sent it to you?
- Why did they send it?
- How did it make you feel?

2 SHOW AND TELL

Bring in some examples of real postcards for your students to look at before writing their own. Encourage your students to note what type of information the postcards contain. Do they see any similarities among the notes? Do they notice conventions used for addressing the postcards?

3 GET READY

Once your students are thinking about postcards and have seen

some examples, tell them that they are going to write their own postcard, in English, and that you will walk them through each step of the process. The first step is to think about words that can be used when describing vacations. Make a list on the board that your students can reference later. Encourage them to think about words that might describe the weather, the location, the food they might eat or activities they might choose to do on vacation.

4 CHOOSE YOUR DESTINATION

Now your students will choose their imaginary vacation destination. It can be a place they have been, a place they want to visit, or a place that exists only in their imaginations. Give each person a sheet of poster board, card stock or other thick paper. A half sheet of standard sized paper works well. Then, have your students draw a picture on the card of the place they want to visit. This is the front, or the picture portion, of their postcard.

5 ADDRESS THE CARD

You will need to model the rest of the steps in writing a postcard for your students. The first step is to turn the card over and write the address on the card. You may want to encourage your students to select someone who attends your school as the recipient of their postcard. Then use the school address, and show your students how to write it on the right side of your model. After writing the address, have students start their message with "Dear _____" on the left side of the card.

6 WRITE YOUR MESSAGE

You can give your students a simple, seven sentence formula for writing their postcard message. Modeling for your students, write one short sentence in the blank space on each of the following topics: where you are, what it is like, what you are doing,

where you are staying, what you already did on your vacation, something interesting about the place or what you have done. For example, your message might read, "We are at the Jersey shore. The skies are always blue. We are spending lots of time on the beach. Our hotel is very close to the water. We went to a craft show yesterday. The people in New Jersey have been very friendly." Postcards traditionally close their message with the sentiment, "Wish you were here." Have your students write that phrase and then close with "Sincerely, _____".

7 DISPLAY YOUR CARDS

If you like, punch a hole in the top of your students' postcards and thread some string or yard through the hole. You can now hang the postcard from the ceiling in your classroom and students will be able to see each side!

IF YOUR STUDENTS CAN WRITE SIX SIMPLE SENTENCES, THEY HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO WRITE SOMETHING WE SEE IN EVERYDAY LIFE.

When they do, they will have confidence in the language that they are learning, and you might just get to see some of their creativity come out, too. So make school a little more like vacation and write some postcards this summer!

5 Easy Listening Games for ESL Beginners

ESL BEGINNERS MAY NOT BE ABLE TO SAY A WHOLE LOT, AFTER ALL THEIR VOCABULARY AND GRAMMAR ARE RATHER LIMITED. BUT IN ORDER TO START SPEAKING, THEY HAVE TO START LISTENING.

And not just listening to the correct pronunciation, intonation and stress. I mean really listening. Listening for meaning. Listening for context. Listening for real comprehension.

You may think there isn't a whole lot beginners can comprehend, but you'll be surprised. Try playing these simple listening games. They may be easy, but for students who are just starting out in their English learning journey, they can be highly effective ways to train in the basic skills they will use on a daily basis in the near future!

HOW TO HELP ESL BEGINNERS IMPROVE THEIR LISTENING SKILLS: 5 EASY GAMES

1 LISTEN FOR IT!

One of the most essential listening skills your students should develop involves listening for key information, which often includes numbers, facts, hours, dates or other essential info. To help them train for this skill, first give them some context: You will listen to a man asking for information at the train station. Then, before they listen, give them something they will have to find out: What time does the train to Boston leave? Now here comes the "game" aspect of it. You can:

Divide the class into teams and have a team member raise their hand/ring a bell as soon as they hear the answer. Then, you do the same with another short audio track. You ask a question and play the audio - the team that answers first gets a point. And the team with the most points at the end wins.

Have each student participate individually, but make sure everyone participates, not the same students over and over again.

2 UNMUSICAL CHAIRS

This easy listening game works great with young learners. Arrange chairs as if to play musical chairs. Students will walk around them, but in this case they won't be listening to a song. They will listen to a conversation. As always, give them the context and ask them a question: What is Tom's favorite food? Students walk around the chairs as you play the audio and the student/s who hear the answer to the question sit/s down. Pause the audio. Those who are seated answer the question, and if it's correct they will remain seated. If several students sit down at the same time, that's fine, but ask them to whisper the answer in your ear to make sure they all heard the answer from the audio.

Ask another question (whose answer will come up next in the audio). The students who were left standing now walk around the chairs till they hear the answer. Go on asking questions and giving students the opportunity to secure a seat. The last student left standing, like the usual game of musical chairs is left out of the next round. A chair is removed from the circle and so it continues until you have one chair and two students competing to answer the final question.

It's convenient to have the script of the audio so it's easier for you to ask the questions. Also, bear in mind you will play longer with a longer audio, but you can also play with several short ones. The game will go much faster if several students sit down (have the answer) at the same time, but only those who got it right should remain seated.

3 WHICH ONE IS IT?

Something that is particularly difficult for ESL students is listening to the subtle differences between words that have a different, but similar spelling. These are words like leave/live, fill/feel, tree/three, fit/feet, etc. So here's a great game you can play. Have a set of cards printed out with these troublesome words. Divide the class into two

teams. Students take turns. You place the two cards on the desk in front of them: live and leave. Say one of the words out loud: live. If the student chooses the right card, the team gets 2 points. Now, if the student is unsure, he/she may choose to request "an example", i.e. the word used in a sentence: I live a few blocks from here. If the student chooses the right card in this case, the team gets 1 point.

4 WORD OF MOUTH

Here's another game you can play with the same easily confused words from above. Divide students into two teams. Whisper a word to a student, who must then whisper it to the student next to him/her, and so it goes until the last student in line has to say the word out loud. If he/she pronounces it correctly, the team gets a point.

A variation of this would be not to whisper to the first student but show him/her the word written down on a piece of paper.

5 STEP BY STEP

Another important listening skill students must develop is learning to understand step by step instructions. Try this fun listening game, which also helps them practice asking for and giving directions. You'll need a "city map": you can use a real map, or better yet create one with your students' desks, so they have actual "streets" to walk on. Start at any give point, say the "bank", and have a students ask for directions to another location. Tell them how to get there. The student must trace his/her finger along the route you indicated, or walk all the way there. Students who manage to reach their destination/don't get lost win points!

FROM THESE EXAMPLES YOU CAN SEE THAT'S IT NOT DIFFICULT TO MAKE LISTENING PRACTICE INTO A GAME, ONE THAT IS NOT ONLY FUN, BUT ALSO GIVES YOUR ESL STUDENTS THE LISTENING SKILLS THEY NEED TO SUCCEED.

The Right Stuff: 3 Brilliant Beginner Listening Activities

ENGAGING BEGINNER LEVEL STUDENTS WITH USEFUL LISTENING EXERCISES IS CRUCIAL TO THEIR SUCCESS AS LEARNERS AND CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT.

Listening tends to be an extreme area of challenge for these students and it is necessary to bring in brilliant, bright listening activities to build confidence and stimulate conversation.

For any listening exercise it is essential that the directions and the aims are clearly defined. The exercises should always contain communication tasks so that learners are actively listening and also using their listening skills to speak up. Some options might be to have listeners obtain facts, find the main idea, follow directions, or display general understanding in order to respond or craft questions.

TRY THESE 3 BRILLIANT LISTENING ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR BEGINNER STUDENTS

1 CHINESE WHISPERS OR TELEPHONE

Chinese Whispers, otherwise known as Telephone is a popular and easily adaptable game that can lead to a lot of fun listening and speaking. The game consists of one phrase or line being whispered from student to student until the end when they discover if they were able to replicate it accurately. The bigger the line of people the whisper must go through the more humorous and numerous the errors will be. The rules of the game are simple, but you could always add more guidelines if you want to make play more challenging. First, students must whisper the phrase or sentence to each other. Second, it is a good idea to have a list of the phrases, sentences or sayings that you want students to practice. You could write them on cards or on folded pieces of paper. You want to make sure that only the person who begins has access to the card. Often with beginners, the teacher should be the originator of the sentence that will go around. It not only takes the pres-

sure off student number one, but it ensures that the sentence is read correctly at least once. However, once the class has played a few rounds, it's wise to challenge the first student to decipher the message on the card and then whisper it to the next person. The whispering is an interesting element because students are not used to talking so quietly and it takes more effort to announce when whispering. It's not just a listening exercise, but one that focuses on speaking and the miscommunication that can so often occur during communications. Students of all ages and levels really get a kick out of the game Telephone.

2 STORY-TELLING

Storytelling, even in a very simple form demonstrates natural language, and on-the-spot comprehension. Start out by explaining that you are going to tell a brief story about something that happened in your life the previous week. For example: "I went to Prague this weekend. I met some friends and had a great time." It is then the students job to think of questions to gain more detail about your experience. They should refer back to the board for question structures, and utilize Wh-questions like who, what, where and when. After they have exhausted all the options of questioning, tell them your story utilizing all the answers to the questions that they asked you. This shows them not only how to tell a story, but what details to include, and how to listen and ask for specific details.

If you want to add more detail to this activity, you could put students in pairs and have each partner talk briefly about something that happened to him/her last week. The second member of the pair listens and asks follow up questions trying to form a question for each of the six Wh- information question words. The first member answers the follow-up questions, elaborating on the story as initially told. Members of the pair switch roles so each person has a chance to tell a story and answer questions.

This activity can be adapted for different grammar points, and is especially good for practicing beginning tenses. Students could talk about their daily routine, explain their family, outline a future goal or challenge, or explain a sequence. This activity can be as short or as detailed as you desire, and students can put their own spin on the stories as well as the questions.

3 INTERVIEWS

Putting students into pairs to do short, simple interviews on a variety of topics is a wonderful way to get them acquainted while they are speaking and listening intently. For beginners interviews should focus on question creation, tense work, and familiar vocabulary. Because beginners often rely heavily upon using exactly the structures that are detailed out for them, interviews challenge them to combine everything they are learning into one conversation. Any chance to work on different types of questions and how to create them will be an invaluable resource for students at this level. You can organize interviews by giving groups of words that they must then create into questions and ask their partner. For example family/weekend would lead to questions about what the family did this weekend, perhaps utilizing some question types written out on the board. You could also do interviews that are more free-form, where you give the students a topic like hobbies. They would then ask each other 5 to 7 questions on that topic. With any interview, you want to be sure that each half of the pair takes turns asking the questions. You will also want to be sure to build in time for each set of pairs to debrief or paraphrase what they discussed to the larger group.

LISTENING EXERCISES FOR BEGINNERS ARE CENTRAL TO THEIR LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND EACH AND EVERY CLASS SHOULD INCORPORATE MANY DIFFERENT EXERCISES FOCUSED ON LISTENING.

Keep students involved, motivated, and listening to one another for stellar results!

How to Teach Present Simple to Complete Beginners

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

HOW TO PROCEED

1 INTRODUCTION

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

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

2 PRE-TEACH PRONOUNS

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

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

3 ELICITING NAMES

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

chael. I'm Michael'

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

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

4 PRACTICE TIME

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

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

5 REVIEW ON THE BOARD

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

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

6 EXPLAINING JOBS

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

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

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

7 DESCRIBING WHERE YOU LIVE

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

8 INTRODUCE HOBBIES

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

How to Teach the Verb "To Be" to Beginners

THE VERB "TO BE" IS THE FIRST VERB STUDENTS LEARN IN THEIR ENGLISH STUDIES.

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

HOW TO PROCEED

1 WARM UP

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

2 INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

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

3 INTRODUCE "TO BE"

Show students how to make sentences such as "*I am happy. You are happy. Jenny is happy.*" Ensure that students understand how the subject and forms of the verb are paired. You can practice this before introducing the full sentence structure you would like students to learn. Call on students to make sentences choosing a subject, verb, and adjective from columns on the board.

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

4 PRACTICE SIMPLE

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

5 PRACTICE COMPLEX

Students can then complete an activity such as **Battleship for further practice. You can adapt this classic game for use in the classroom.** While it can be time consuming to explain, especially to beginners, your students will enjoy playing and it can be used to practice a wide variety of topics. To play Battleship students should work in pairs using a worksheet. For this class, the grids on the worksheet might have *I, You, He, She, Jenny, Ms. Smith* in the first column and *happy, fun, from Korea, sad, silly, from America* in the first row. Students then practice sentences such as "*I am silly.*" to try to locate and sink all of their opponents ships first.

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

For a third class, introduce the question that goes along with this target structure and have students play using the same worksheet but by making questions such as "*Is Ms. Smith*

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

6 REVIEW

As a general review activity you can divide students into groups and **play Hangman** with sentences or words from their textbook. It is perhaps not appropriate to play the original game in your classroom so you can just adapt it so that no one actually hangs. One adaptation is to simply have a very large fish where when students guess incorrectly, a little fish gets closer and closer to being eaten. This is not very accurate as you can either draw the game out or end it whenever you choose.

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

ONCE YOUR STUDENTS ARE QUITE CONFIDENT WITH MAKING THE SENTENCES PRACTICED IN THIS LESSON, YOU SHOULD INCLUDE THE PLURAL WE, YOU, THEY AS WELL. AS THE FIRST VERB THEY STUDY, "TO BE" IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR YOUR STUDENTS AND IT IS ESSENTIAL TO GET THEM TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE FORM OF THE VERB IS AFFECTED BY THE SUBJECT OF THE SENTENCE.

How to Teach the Past Simple Tense – Verb to Be

“TO BE OR NOT TO BE?” IS THE QUESTION PONDERED BY THE MELANCHOLY HAMLET. ON THE OTHER HAND, AN ESL TEACHER MIGHT ASK: HOW DO I TEACH THE SIMPLE PAST OF THE VERB TO BE, WITHOUT NEEDLESSLY CONFUSING MY STUDENTS?

It's all rather simple. Follow a step by step process, and don't move on to next step until you're sure your students have mastered the one you're currently on.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF THE VERB TO BE – FIRST PERSON SINGULAR

Begin by asking your students, “Where am I?” They should answer, “You're in class/at school.” Introduce the past simple of the verb to be like this:

T: Yesterday at this time, I was at home.

Go around the class, and have students take turns saying where they were the previous day in the first person singular.

2 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF THE VERB TO BE – THIRD PERSON SINGULAR

Go around the class and say where each student was, giving examples in the third person singular: Sarah was at home. John was at the gym. Bobby was at a friend's house. Etc...Students continue by saying where some of their family members were: My mom was at home. My dad was at work. My sister was at the park.

3 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF THE VERB TO BE – SECOND PERSON SINGULAR

Go around the class and now make statements in the second person singular, addressing each student: Sarah, you were at home. John, you were at the gym. Each student points to one classmate and says where he or she

was.

4 DO THE SAME FOR THE PLURAL PERSONS

Get all of those who were at home together and say, “We were at home.” Do the same for “you (pl.)” and “they”: John and Tom, you were at the gym. Bobby and his cousin were at a friend's house. They were there till 6 pm. Give as many examples as needed to make sure students grasp the conjugation.

5 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF THE VERB TO BE – NEGATIVE FORMS

Say, “Yesterday at this time, I was at home. I wasn't at school.” Give more examples alternating between affirmative and negative statements: Sarah, you were at home. You weren't at the gym. John was at the gym. He wasn't at school. And so on with all persons, singular and plural. Then have students do the same, always alternating between affirmative and negative statements.

6 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF THE VERB TO BE – INTERROGATIVE FORMS

Model questions like this:

T: Where were you at 10 o'clock last night?

S: I was at home.

T: Ask me!

S: Where were you at 10 o'clock last night?

Continue with more questions from students. Encourage them to ask what time, where, when, why, etc. First, they ask you (second person singular, then they ask classmates, then they ask a classmate about another classmate (Where was Sheila last night?), and so on. Make sure they ask questions in all persons, both singular and plural. If they are unsure as to how to ask a question, model it for them first.

7 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF THE VERB TO BE – SHORT ANSWERS

Ask yes or no questions and teach students to give short answers:

T: Were you at school last night?

S: Yes, I was./No, I wasn't.

If time allows, ask them to provide more complete answers.

T: Were you at school last night? S: Yes, I was./No, I wasn't. I was at home.

8 PROVIDE LOTS OF EXTENDED PRACTICE

Try giving your students this worksheet to review what they've learned. And here's another with several exercises, one of which asks students to complete affirmative, and negative sentences, as well as write questions.

FOR PRACTICAL PURPOSES, THE EXAMPLES ABOVE ALL COVER LOCATION (AT HOME/AT SCHOOL). BUT YOU MAY ALSO PRACTICE THE SIMPLE PAST OF THE VERB TO BE WITH FEELINGS (I WAS HAPPY/SAD), THE WEATHER (YESTERDAY WAS SUNNY/HOT/WINDY), OR OPINIONS (THE MOVIE WAS GOOD/BAD/GREAT), JUST TO NAME A FEW OPTIONS.