

# HOW TO TEACH ELEMENTARY & PRE-INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS

## LIKE A PRO

29 TOP SECRETS EVERY TEACHER OF ELEMENTARY & PRE-INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS SHOULD KNOW

HOW TO  
ELICIT AND  
TEACH VOCABULARY  
HOW TO TEACH  
ADJECTIVES,  
NOUNS,  
BASIC VERB TENSES,  
HOW TO CORRECT  
MISTAKES,

AND MUCH,  
MUCH  
MORE

EVERYTHING  
YOU NEED TO KNOW  
TO TEACH ELEMENTARY &  
PRE-INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS



STRAIGHTFORWARD STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS, CLEARLY AND SIMPLY EXPLAINED

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# How to Alleviate Confusion About HOW MUCH & HOW MANY

TEACHING COUNTABLE AND UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS IS A GRAMMAR POINT THAT BEGINNERS WILL LEARN EARLY ON AND IT CAN TAKE MULTIPLE ACTIVITIES TO SOLIDIFY THE CORRECT USAGE.

I have taught this topic hundreds of times and each time I learn something about how I could do it better. Here are 3 strategies to alleviate confusion about using How Much and How Many.

## MAKING IT CLEAR: HOW MUCH OR HOW MANY

### 1 CONSTANTLY REITERATE COUNTABLE/UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS LESSON

Once you have introduced what countable and uncountable nouns are, you will need to constantly refer back to your explanation. Countable nouns are things with quantities that you see with your eyes.

They can be counted easily. Uncountable nouns are things that are more general and cannot be counted. Great examples for each are

**Countable:** markers, pens, apples, hats, or anything you can point to in the classroom, pick up and count—countable nouns usually have an “S” at the end.

**Uncountable:** Water (my favorite example). How can you count water? Rice - Can you count each piece of rice? Time - another favorite - because you cannot clearly see it to measure it.

When students come across the How Much or How Many question and it baffles them, refer back to these examples. “Is it like water or bananas?” What sounds right to you, “How

much shoes or How many shoes?” them why it one way and not another.

### 2 USE FOOD AND SHOPPING AS YOUR MAIN PRACTICE TOPIC

The best way to teach and to reinforce the How Much/How Many grammar point is to use food. Everyone loves food and the food lessons bring with them lots of new vocabulary. You can do any range of activities from shopping in the grocery store, to taking stock of what’s in the kitchen, to creating recipes.

Because the students will naturally have to incorporate how much or how many into questions and answers, food is the way to go.

Another way to do this is with shopping or restaurant role plays that introduces ‘how much is it’ and ‘how many do we want/need’. There are innumerable food and shopping lesson ideas that can be dispersed into your lessons to practice how much or how many.

### 3 GIVE CONCRETE EXAMPLES

One of the problems with practicing How Much and How Many is that it often feels so forced or unnatural. Utilizing classroom objects, pictures and everyday situations can help you get around that and expose students to naturally using much and many. You don’t always have to force it with this point because we use much and many so often. We use it in telling stories, “There were many people at the mall.” We use it to talk about our time “I have too much homework tonight. I can’t go to the movies.” We use it to talk about money, “How much is the bill?”

Look for ways that the students can draw their own conclusions and use error correction as a way to remind

TEACHING THE GRAMMAR POINT OF HOW MUCH OR HOW MANY IS ONE OF THOSE POINTS THAT COMES UP AGAIN AND AGAIN.

Just keep giving great explanations and providing opportunities to refresh and practice! Soon students will begin using it without so much trouble.

# How to Teach Adverbs of Frequency

**ADVERBS MAY NOT BE THE FIRST TOPIC YOU COVER IN YOUR ESL CLASS, BUT THEY ARE SURE TO COME UP SOONER OR LATER.**

Once your students understand the basics of how this part of speech works, it's time to look at adverbs with more specific uses, for example adverbs of frequency. This unit takes your students through 7 separate activities all focusing on adverbs of frequency. They can be used together, or you can use each activity independent of the rest.

And here is the best news for the busy teacher reading this page. There is almost no preparation needed for the entire unit!

## HOW TO TEACH ADVERBS OF FREQUENCY

### 1 BRAINSTORM

With your class, brainstorm a list of adjectives of frequency. They will probably be familiar with at least some, so take this as an opportunity to introduce some less common ones to them. Your list should include the following: always, usually, frequently, often, commonly, sometimes, occasionally, rarely, seldom, hardly ever, never.

### 2 QUESTION YOUR CLASSMATES

Once your students are familiar with these basic adverbs of frequency, have them work together in groups of three or four to come up with some activities they think members of the class do either regularly or rarely. After a few minutes, students should choose some of the activities they have been discussing and write five questions. These questions will be geared toward the entire class, and they should question how often members of the class do certain activities within the span of one week. Your students might come up with questions like the following: How often do you brush your teeth in one week? How often do you eat spaghetti in one week? How often do you see your parents in one week?

As they discuss and then write these questions, your students will be practicing questions which will be answered using adverbs of frequency. Make sure that no two groups have the same questions as you circulate throughout the room.

### 3 PREDICTIONS

Once each group has their questions written, have those group members make predictions about how often the class as a whole does those activities, first as a number of times and then with an adverb of frequency. Students should first work independently as they make their predictions. The group members can then discuss their predictions and then write one set of sentences using adverbs of frequency that the entire group agrees upon.

Eventually, each group should have a list of five sentences something like the following: The members of our class frequently brush their teeth. The members of our class rarely see their parents.

### 4 SURVEYS

Now your students will have a chance to survey their classmates. Have them type up a survey (more on using surveys in your ESL classroom) containing the questions from all the groups in your class, or do it yourself, and then make copies for all of your students. Take a few minutes to let everyone answer the questions, and then have original groups work together to tabulate the results for their questions.

To make the logistics of this easier, keep each group's questions in order on the page, and then have students tear their surveys into the appropriate sections before turning them in.

### 5 GRAPH IT

At this point, each group should have a numerical answer to the questions they wrote at the beginning of the process. It is now time to convert those numeric answers to a visual. Ideally, your students can plot the answers on

a number line posted at the front of your classroom. It should look something like a timeline, but instead of times and dates, your students will plot the events they asked about.

The location of these events will be based on the frequency with which they happen. For example, since international students probably don't see their parents very often, "see your parents" may be plotted at zero. On the other hand, "use a dictionary" may be up very high on the number line.

If you do not want to use a number line with your class, you can also represent the information from the survey in a bar graph or pie chart and still be able to do the following activities.

### 6 OBSERVATIONS

Make some observations for your students regarding the events on the number line using adverbs of frequency. Give examples like, "Our class frequently uses an English dictionary." Then, have students work in pairs to make similar observations based on the number line.

Have each pair of students write ten observations, each sentence using a different adverb of frequency.

### 7 DEBRIEF

Finally, give the original groups a chance to debrief the results of their survey. Were their predictions correct? Were their expectations similar to the actual results? Or did they really miss the mark with any of their guesses? Have students share with the class any information that surprised them.

**WHETHER YOU RARELY TALK ABOUT ADVERBS OF FREQUENCY OR THEY COME UP IN CLASS FREQUENTLY, YOUR STUDENTS WILL HAVE FUN MAKING PREDICTIONS ABOUT THEIR CLASSMATES!**

In addition, they may learn some things about their friends that they hadn't already known as they use adverbs of frequency in speaking and writing.

# How to Teach Degrees of Comparison

## TEACHING DEGREES OF COMPARISON WILL TAKE SEVERAL LESSONS.

Your students should have a good grasp of comparison related vocabulary such as tall, short, big, small, fast, slow, etc and initially, your lessons should revolve around only about ten or twelve of these. If students perform well using the set of words you have chosen, you can add more vocabulary later.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 WARM UP – REVIEW

It has probably been a while since your students have thought about the vocabulary you plan to use for this lesson so it is important to review their meaning and pronunciation. You can do this by conducting a warm up activity such as crisscross or by asking for volunteers to give you the definitions of words, spell words on the board, or use words in a sentence. At the end of this activity there should be two columns of words on the board. With the sample vocabulary above, the columns would look like this.

tall      short

big      small

fast      slow

The two columns should have enough space between them for you to write their comparative and superlative forms.

### 2 INTRODUCE – COMPARATIVE

Introduce comparative structures to your students without explaining them first. Play a short true or false trivia game saying sentences like “Russia is bigger than England.” Use hand gestures to suggest the meaning of each new word and try to have a student translate the sentence before asking whether it is true or false. Use the comparative form of each vocabulary word in a trivia question and write it down

next to the word as you go. At the end of the game, underline the –er ending of each comparative form and explain the comparative structure. Your students already have most of it figured out at this point so after some pronunciation practice or drilling, let them give it a try.

### 3 PRACTICE/PRODUCTION – COMPARATIVE

Worksheets can help your students practice but a more enjoyable way to practice degrees of comparison is to play a card game. Students should play in groups of three to five. You can make decks of between thirty and fifty cards where each card has an animal, for instance, and statistics for that animal such as height, speed, etc. There are many games you can play with a deck such as this one. Have students shuffle and deal all the cards. Explain that the student whose turn it is should choose a category such as height, he and the student sitting to his left should each play a card, and the student whose animal is taller should say “The ~ is taller than the ~.” or more simply “My animal is taller than yours.” That student now gets to keep both cards and the student with the most cards at the end of the game, is the winner.

### 4 INTRODUCE – SUPERLATIVE

Usually the following class would focus on superlative forms. They can be introduced in much the same way you introduced the comparative structure. Emphasize the –est ending and conduct some choral repetition as pronunciation practice. Continue to use the same set of vocabulary.

### 5 PRACTICE – SUPERLATIVE

Practice activities such as worksheets or card games would be appropriate for the superlative form too. Worksheets could include fill in the blank, matching, and write your own sentences sections. The card game above could be adapted to practice superlative. Students could all put

down a card after the category is announced, the student with the highest number in that category would make a sentence and keep the cards, and the winner would be the student with the most cards at the end of the game. You could also change the game entirely or use one card game in the first superlative class and change it for the second class if students are really enjoying them.

### 6 PRODUCTION – COMBINE!

After doing some short practice activities of both comparative and superlative forms that have already been covered, introduce one or two vocabulary words that use more and most to create their comparative and superlative forms. Make sure all the vocabulary words as well as their comparative and superlative forms are written on the board before conducting a combination exercise. A board game of boxes leading from start to finish would be ideal for groups of three or four. A turn would consist of a student rolling a die, moving her piece, and creating a sentence based on the image in the square she landed on. This game should use both the comparative and superlative forms of each vocabulary word. The first student to reach the last square wins.

### 7 REVIEW

The card game and board game require your students to do a lot of speaking so they have practiced extensively by the time they have finished. A short quiz will check your students’ understanding of the degrees of comparison and determine if further review is necessary. Degrees of comparison are often easy to introduce and fun for students to practice. Since students already understand the meaning of the vocabulary they are using in these lessons, it is much easier for them to grasp than other structures where new vocabulary is introduced. Including comparative or superlative forms in later activities will help keep them fresh in your students’ minds.

# How to Teach Comparatives and Superlatives

“COMPARISONS ARE ODIUS” SAYS THE OLD PROVERB, BUT IN AN ESL CLASS THEY ARE ALSO VERY NECESSARY. AND AS THERE IS NOT SET RULE FOR ALL ADJECTIVES, WE MUST MAKE SURE STUDENTS LEARN EVERYTHING THEY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES.

COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES ARE READY. ARE YOU?

## 1 INTRODUCE THE COMPARATIVE/SUPERLATIVE FORMS FOR 1 SYLLABLE ADJECTIVES

Show your students an illustration of people of different heights, or ask three students to stand up. Introduce the comparative of one syllable adjectives. T: Juan is tall, but Mario is taller than Juan. Juan is shorter than Mario. Make sure students understand that for these adjectives the comparative is formed by adding -er. Students compare their heights.

Point to the three students who are standing and introduce the superlative. T: Mario is taller than Juan, but Sam is taller than Mario. Sam is the tallest of the three. Make sure students understand that the superlative is formed by adding -est. Students say who is the tallest and who is the shortest in the class.

## 2 INTRODUCE THE COMPARATIVE/SUPERLATIVE FORMS FOR 1 SYLLABLE ADJECTIVES ENDING IN “E”

Show your students pictures of different types of furniture. Introduce the comparative. T: This brown sofa is nice. But the red one is nicer than the brown one. It's also wider than the brown one. Make sure students understand that the comparative is formed by adding an r. Students compare the other pieces of furniture. Point to three different sofas and introduce the superlative. T: The red sofa is nicer than the brown one, but the blue one is the nicest of the three. Make sure students understand that the superlative is formed by adding -st. Students say which pieces of furniture they think are the nicest, or the widest.

## 3 INTRODUCE THE COMPARATIVE/SUPERLATIVE FORMS FOR ONE SYLLABLE ADJECTIVES ENDING IN CONSONANT-VOWEL-CONSONANT

Show your students picture or photos of different seasons and weather conditions. Introduce the comparative. T: The weather in May can be hot, but the weather in June is hotter than in May. October is a wet month, but November is wetter than October. Make sure students understand that the comparative is formed by making the last consonant double and adding -er. Students compare the weather in different cities and countries with the aid of a weather chart. Encourage them to use other one syllable adjectives.

Point to the weather charts and introduce the superlative:

T: November is the wettest month of the year. July is the hottest. Make sure students understand that the superlative is formed by making the last consonant double and adding -est. Students say which months are the hottest, the wettest, the coolest, the warmest, etc. in your city and others.

## 4 INTRODUCE THE COMPARATIVE/SUPERLATIVE FORMS FOR 2 SYLLABLE ADJECTIVES ENDING IN “Y”

Discuss feelings to introduce the comparative. T: I am happy when I visit a friend, but I'm happier when it's her birthday. Make sure students understand that the comparative is formed by replacing the “y” with an “i” and adding -er. Students compare their feelings in a variety of situations. Encourage them to use everything they've learned so far about comparisons.

Introduce the superlative. T: I am happy when I'm on vacation, but I'm the happiest when travel to a new place. Make sure students understand that the superlative is formed by replacing the “y” with an “i” and adding -est. Students say when they are the happiest, the sorriest, the saddest, etc.

## 5 INTRODUCE THE COMPARATIVE/SUPERLATIVE FORMS FOR 2 OR MORE SYLLABLE ADJECTIVES

Show students pictures of popular vacation destinations and famous cities. Introduce the comparative. T: Berlin is a beautiful city, but Paris is more beautiful than Berlin. Make sure students understand that the comparative is formed by using “more” plus the adjective. Students compare cities and countries trying to use long adjectives.

Introduce the superlative:

T: Paris is a very beautiful city, but in my opinion Rome is the most beautiful city in the world. Make sure students understand that the superlative is formed by using “the most” plus the adjective. Students say which they believe are the most beautiful, the most expensive, and the most interesting cities in the world.

## 6 INTRODUCE THE COMPARATIVE/SUPERLATIVE FORMS OF IRREGULAR ADJECTIVES

Continue with the comparison of cities and countries. T: The traffic in London is bad, but the traffic in Rome is worse. The traffic in London is better than the traffic in Rome. Make sure students understand that “good” and “bad” are irregular adjectives and their comparatives are “better” and “worse”. Students make more comparisons. Introduce the superlative:

T: They say the traffic in Rome is the worst in the world. But it's the best place to visit in Italy. Make sure students understand that “the best” and “the worst” are the superlative forms of “good” and “bad”. Students say which they believe are the best sights to visit around the world, and which have the worst problems.

REMEMBER THAT IF STUDENTS ARE UNSURE ABOUT THE COMPARATIVE OR SUPERLATIVE FORM OF SOME ADJECTIVES, THE BEST WAY TO HELP THEM OVERCOME THIS DOUBT IS BY OFFERING LOTS AND LOTS OF PRACTICE.

# 4 Excellent Activities for Using Comparatives and Superlatives

**BIGGER, BRIGHTER, BETTER, BEST: COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE ADJECTIVES ARE ALL AROUND US IN ENGLISH.**

We use these adjectives to compare items, express preferences and give value judgments. Once your students have a strong grasp on adjectives, and this should happen in beginning level ESL classes, you can move their knowledge to the next level by tackling the harder world of comparatives and superlatives.

## THE STRUCTURE

The structure of comparative and superlative adjectives in English is quite simple. When comparing two items, also known as comparative adjectives, add *-er* to the adjective to express superiority. This holds true for any adjectives that are one or two syllables. For three syllable adjectives, use “more” to express the comparison.

**She is smarter (than him). She is more beautiful (than him).**

To show that one item is the superlative, that is the greatest within a set group, add *-est* to an adjective of one or two syllables and use “most” for adjectives of three or more syllables. Also, use “the” in the comparison since the item’s superiority makes it a specific noun.

**It is the longest book (that we have read). It is the most complicated formula (that we will learn).**

Be aware that many languages do not have the equivalent of the English superlative, so do not be surprised if your students show some confusion with the concept. Simply explain the idea in a way that makes sense to you and answer any questions that your students may have on the subject. Be patient and use teachable moments as they come along.

**TRY THESE ACTIVITIES FOR USING COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES**

## 1 LOOK AROUND YOU RACE

Start with a simple activity right where you are by having students compare the people in your classroom. Put students in groups of four and then set a time limit of about five minutes. On your signal, each group should write as many comparative and superlative statements about the people in the room as they can. At the end of the time period, have one group share their sentences. If another group has the same sentence as the first group, both groups should cross that statement off their list. Continue until all groups have read all of their statements and any duplicates are eliminated. The group with the most statements remaining wins.

## 2 THESE ARE THE PEOPLE IN YOUR FAMILY

Give your students 10 adjectives that can be used to describe people. You may want to include adjectives like old, young, tall, fat, happy, funny, etc. Then challenge them to write a sentence using the superlative form of each adjective. The sentence should be about a person in their family. Once the sentences are completed, each person should write a list of the family members who appeared in their sentences. Pairs of students should then exchange lists of people but keep their sentences to themselves. Each person should ask questions about their partner’s family and try to match each person to their superlative adjective. For example, a person might ask, “Is Su-Jan the oldest person in your family?” The other person should answer with a yes or an explanation. “No, Su-Jan is only four years old.” Give your groups ten to fifteen minutes to ask each other questions, and then see who in your class figured out the most family member qualities!

## 3 HOME STYLE INTERVIEW

If your ESL class consists of students who have travelled overseas to study English, they probably have a strong opinion on how life in the U.S., U.K or Australia is different from that of their home country. Have students interview one another, you can do this

in front of the class if you like, and ask about how life is different here than it was at home. Encourage students to use the comparative and superlative as much as possible during their interview. For example, a student might say “People here are busier, but life at home is slower.” If you like, have each person follow the activity by writing a paragraph about his own experience living overseas or that of his partner.

## 4 THE “MOST” STUDENTS

Do you remember your high school year book and the list of the “most” students in the back?

The best smile. The most artistic. The smartest. The most likely to succeed

If you do have one of these from your school years, bring it in for your students to see. Then hold your own classroom vote for the “most” students in your class. Give your students a list of “most” statements about their classmates. You could use any of the standard mosts as well as some ESL specific qualities like the following.

**The person with the least accent. The person who is the most adventurous eater. The person who uses the dictionary most.**

Then have your students cast a secret ballot for the “most” students in your classroom and collect their responses! After you tally the answers, make sure each person in your class wins a “most” award. You may need to give the same title to more than one student to do so. In class, present the awards in a humorous ceremony. If you like, give students ribbons, pins or gag gifts which coordinate with their category. You can even post the winners on a bulletin board for your class to enjoy. Comparatives and superlatives are simple English structures that give students and teachers lots of room for creativity and humor in the ESL classroom.

**WHEN YOU TEACH OR REVIEW COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES, MAKE IT FUN FOR YOUR STUDENTS.**

# How to Teach Present Simple

**WHEN TEACHING THE PRESENT SIMPLE THE ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO MAKE SURE YOUR STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THAT IT'S USED TO DESCRIBE ROUTINES, HABITS, DAILY ACTIVITIES, AND GENERAL TRUTHS.**

Also important is the contrast between the Present Simple and the Present Progressive.

This series of steps will guide you towards teaching the Present Simple and covers function, conjugation, and form.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE AN ACTION

Pick up a newspaper and pretend to read it. Ask your students what you're doing. They'll say, "You're reading a newspaper."

T: "What newspaper am I reading?"  
S: "You're reading *The New York Times*."

### 2 INTRODUCE PRESENT SIMPLE - FIRST PERSON SINGULAR

Tell your students, "I read *The New York Times* every day." Make a list of the things you do every day as a routine:

*I have breakfast at 7.*  
*I go to work at 9.*  
*I have lunch at 12.*  
*I go home at 5.*  
*I watch TV before dinner.*

Make sure your students understand that you do this on a daily or weekly basis - these are habitual actions. Go around the class and have students tell you what they do everyday or what some of their habits are. They should give more examples in the first person singular.

### 3 INTRODUCE PRESENT SIMPLE - SECOND PERSON SINGULAR

Say: "I read *The New York Times*. Sarah, you read *USA Today*". Go around the class giving examples like, "I go to work at 9. You go to school." Face each of your students and state a general truth:

T: "John, you live in Queens."

John (to teacher): "You live in Queens, too."

T: "Sally, you have a dog."

Sally (to teacher): "You have a cat".

Split your students up into pairs and have them give each other statements in the second person singular.

### 4 INTRODUCE PRESENT SIMPLE - THIRD PERSON SINGULAR

Say: "I read *The New York Times*. Sarah reads *USA Today*". Make sure students notice that you've added the s for the third person singular. Give more examples with other students, and introduce the irregular verbs: *John goes to work at 8. Sally has lunch at 1*. Students provide more examples from the information previously shared by their classmates.

### 5 DO THE SAME FOR THE PLURAL PERSONS

Ask who lives in Queens and ask them to stand up. Then point to yourself and those standing and say: "We live in Queens." Ask who lives in the Bronx and ask them to stand up. Address those who are standing and say: "You live in the Bronx". Point to your group and say, "We live in Queens". Ask who lives in Manhattan and point to that group and say: "They live in Manhattan."

### 6 INTRODUCE PRESENT SIMPLE - NEGATIVE

Make a statement in the affirmative, then make one in negative with don't.

T: I live in Queens, I don't live in the Bronx.

Ask students to do the same presenting first an affirmative, then a negative. Practice all persons except the third person singular.

### 7 INTRODUCE PRESENT SIMPLE - NEGATIVE (THIRD PERSON SINGULAR)

Make a statement about a student, then make one in negative form using doesn't.

T: Alex reads *The New York Times*. He doesn't read *USA Today*.

Ask students to do the same by using the information previously shared by their classmates.

### 8 INTRODUCE PRESENT SIMPLE - QUESTIONS

Make a statement about yourself. Then ask a student a question to introduce do.

T: *I walk to school. John, do you walk to school?*

Walk around the classroom asking students questions and teaching them to answer, "Yes, I do" or "No, I don't". Do the same for all persons except third person singular.

### 9 INTRODUCE PRESENT SIMPLE - QUESTIONS (THIRD PERSON SINGULAR)

Contrast students' habits. Make a statement about one, then ask about another student:

T: *John walks to school. Does Sarah walk to school?*

Walk around the classroom asking questions with does, and teach students to answer "Yes, he does" "No, he doesn't".

### 10 EXPAND AND PRACTICE: PRESENT SIMPLE EXERCISES.

Practice all persons and forms. Ask open-ended questions. Introduce more verbs.

*Where do you live?*  
*Where does she work?*  
*How many languages do you speak?*

Now's also a great time consolidate everything that they've learned about the Present Simple.

**OBVIOUSLY, YOU DON'T HAVE TO FOLLOW ALL OF THESE STEPS IN ONE SINGLE LESSON. YOU CAN SPREAD THEM OVER THE COURSE OF A WEEK TO MAKE SURE YOUR STUDENTS HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO PRACTICE THE PRESENT SIMPLE EXERCISES IN ALL ITS FORMS.**



# 7 Simple Activities for Teaching the Simple Present

## TRY THESE 7 SIMPLE ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING THE SIMPLE PRESENT

### 1 DAILY ROUTINE

Have your students talk to one another about their daily routines. What do they do in the morning? What do they do in the afternoon? Evening?

Have them write out a schedule for the day to collect their ideas before talking about them with a classmate.

### 2 CULTURAL NORMS

Give your students a chance to share some of their culture as your class studies the simple present. Have them finish this sentence: People in my country... This is also a good chance to introduce some adverbs like 'usually', 'typically' or 'often'.

You can also practice negative sentences or negative adverbs (never, rarely, infrequently) with this activity.

### 3 CLASSMATE INTERVIEWS

Your students can get to know each other while they practice using the present tense. Have pairs of students ask questions about the hobbies and interests of their partner. Then, have each person introduce their partner to the rest of the class.

This is a good time to practice using questions in the present tense.

### 4 ESP (EXTRAORDINARY SENSORY PERCEPTIONS)

Sensory observations are always stated in the simple present. Have your students observe their surroundings in your classroom or at home. If possible, students should note their surroundings in regards to all five senses: sight, hearing, feel, touch and taste.

### 5 WHERE AM I?

Let your students use their imaginations as they practice the simple present. Students picture a place that they would like to visit, and they write five sensory statements as if they were at that place. Then, have your other students guess where their classmate is. They should ask questions following this pattern: Are you \_\_\_\_\_? Their questions should also be in the simple present.

Now is a good time to review the different uses of at/on/in when used to describe locations.

### 6 BINGO

Brainstorm a list of get to know you questions with your class. Include questions such as these: Do you like to cook? Do you speak Spanish? Do you drive a car? Write the questions on the board, and give each student a five by five grid.

The center square is free... students should randomly put a question in each of the other squares.

On your signal, students mingle asking each classmate one question and then moving on to another. If someone answers 'yes' to a question in the grid, he writes his name in the square. The first person with five squares in a row

wins.

### 7 WEEKEND PARTY

What do your students do on the weekend? Find out by asking everyone to share his or her favorite weekend activities with the class.

If you like, have students write a paragraph about their ideal weekend.

# How to Teach Past Simple – Regular/Irregular Verbs

**WE'RE OFTEN TOLD WE SHOULD PUT THE PAST BEHIND US, NOT DWELL IN THE PAST, ETC. HOWEVER, ESL STUDENTS MUST DO JUST THAT: TO LEARN THE SIMPLE PAST TENSE.**

As they learn that regular verbs simply need an –ed suffix, they jump for joy. 'This is not so hard!', they think. Then we hit them with the endless lists of irregular verbs to study, and their enthusiasm deflates like a balloon before your very eyes. Don't add to the confusion.

Follow these steps to teach the past simple and keep your students right on track:

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF REGULAR VERBS

Give an example in Present Simple: I talk to my sister everyday. Lead in to past simple: Yesterday, I talked to her. Write this on the board. Give more examples with regular verbs and write each verb in its past form on the board.

T: I visited her. We watched TV. She cooked lunch. We listened to music.

Make sure students understand that the past form is the same for all persons. Give as many examples with regular verbs as needed.

### 2 PRACTICE PAST SIMPLE OF REGULAR VERBS

Go around the class and make statements in present simple, which students must change to past simple:

T: I sometimes walk in the park.  
S: You walked in the park yesterday.

Now's a good time to practice the different pronunciations of the –ed past form. Try this worksheet where students are required to group verbs according to their pronunciation.

### 3 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF IRREGULAR VERBS

Give an example in present simple: I have lunch at 12 every day. Lead in to past simple: Yesterday I had lunch at 12. Write this on the board. Give more examples with irregular verbs and write each verb in its past form on the board.

T: Yesterday I spoke to a friend. We went to the movies. We saw Eclipse. My friend ate popcorn. I drank soda.

Make sure students understand that the past form is the same for all persons.

Give as many examples with irregular verbs as needed.

### 4 PRACTICE THE PAST SIMPLE OF IRREGULAR VERBS

Go around the class and make statements in present simple, which students must change to past simple:

T: I usually drink orange juice for breakfast.  
S: Yesterday you drank orange juice.

To help your students study these verbs, give them this worksheet. For extended practice, try this one.

### 5 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE – NEGATIVE FORMS

Say, 'Yesterday I talked to John. I didn't talk to Sarah.' Give more examples alternating between affirmative and negative statements:

Sarah had lunch at 12. She didn't have lunch at one. You went to the gym yesterday. You didn't go to the movies.

And so on with all persons, singular and plural. Write the negative form on the board. Then have students do the same, always alternating between affirmative and negative statements.

### 6 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE – INTERROGATIVE

## FORMS

Model questions with did:

T: Did you come to school yesterday?  
S: Yes./No.  
T: Ask me!  
S: Did you come to school yesterday?

Continue with more questions from students. Model questions with what time, where, when, why, etc. Write examples on the board. First, they ask you, then they ask classmates, then they ask a classmate about another classmate (What did Bobby do 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 - SHORT ANSWERS

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

T: Did you come to school yesterday?  
S: Yes, I did./No, I didn't.

Students ask classmates yes or no questions, and classmates reply with short answers.

### 8 PROVIDE EXTENDED PRACTICE

Tell students that the best way to learn which verbs are regular and irregular, and remember the past form of irregular verbs is through lots of practice and not necessarily memorization. You'll find hundreds of Past Simple worksheets at [BusyTeacher.org](http://BusyTeacher.org) that will help them do just that.

Keep in mind that there are endless options for practice. Ask them to write about their last vacation for homework. Have them give a presentation on what people did 100 years ago. **BUT NO MATTER WHAT YOU CHOOSE TO DO, JUST MAKE SURE YOUR STUDENTS PRACTICE THE PAST SIMPLE IN CONTEXT, AND NOT BY MEMORIZING LISTS OF VERBS. IT'S THE BEST WAY TO LEARN!**

# Seven Simple Activities for Teaching the Simple Past

## TRY THESE 7 SIMPLE ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING THE SIMPLE PAST

### 1 CHARADE SERIES

In an activity similar to charades, have your students describe the steps in a process after their classmate acts it out. Have one student pantomime an activity like brushing his teeth or writing and mailing a letter.

Once the charade is over, have your students describe each step in the process using the simple past.

### 2 DEAR DIARY

Writing about their day is a good way for your students to practice the written form of the simple past. Have students write about what they did yesterday paying particular attention to transitions of time (next, then, after that, finally, etc.).

### 3 ACCURATE ENDINGS

Don't skip pronunciation when you are working on the simple past. Though regular verbs will take the -ed ending to show they occurred in the past, -ed will not be pronounced the same for every word. Brainstorm a list of regular verbs and then have your students sort them into two groups. The past pronunciation of one group sounds like [d] and the other like [t].

Challenge your students to articulate the rule which determines which pronunciation to use.

### 4 PREPARATIONS

Have groups of students talk about a significant accomplishment in their lives. After sharing the accomplishment, ask each person to describe what she did leading up to the event. For example, if she graduated college, she studied, took the appropriate classes and filled out her school's paperwork.

### 5 DOUBLE DUTY REVIEW

How much do your students remember from class yesterday? Find out by asking them to tell you what you did in class yesterday using the simple past.

If the majority of your class travelled overseas to study English, have them share what they did before they came to the U.S.

### 6 GOOD AND BAD DAYS

As a class, brainstorm what makes a day great, and then make another list for what makes a day bad. Have pairs of students ask each other questions and give answers about a day in the past. For example, one student might ask, "Did you spill your coffee yesterday?" The other would answer, "No, I didn't spill my coffee yesterday."

This is a great way to practice questions and negative use of the simple past.

### 7 GET OUT AND ABOUT

Get your students out of the classroom to freshen up your grammar lessons. Take a short walk outside your school, and have students take notes on what they observe.

When you come back to the classroom, have your students share what they experienced on the walk using the simple past.

# Where Did He Go? How to Teach Question-Making in Past Tense

LEARNING PAST TENSE STRUCTURES IS IMPORTANT FOR STUDENTS, AND BEING ABLE TO CREATE QUESTIONS IN THE PAST TENSE IS JUST AS IMPORTANT.

Since past tense is often taught very early on, question-making can be particularly confusing. There are several ways to relieve the confusion and provide students with plenty of leeway for errors.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 YES/NO QUESTIONS FIRST

The first thing to approach is the use of helping verbs (HV). You need to explain when to use 'did' and when to use 'was/were'. Was/were is the past tense of the verb to be. It is used to talk about states of being, emotions, and senses. Did is used in conjunction with an action verb. The helping verb 'did' isn't used in the statement, only in the question and the short answer. The question word or helping verb always goes at the beginning of the question.

Statement: *I loved him.*

Question: *Did you love him?*

Explanation: There is no helping verb and there is action: Use did

Statement: *Mario was happy.*

Question: *Was Mario happy?*

Explanation: Reverse the statement to put the HV in the front

Statement: *James went out.*

Question: *Did James go out?*

Explanation: There is no helping verb and there is action: Use did

Statement: *They were in trouble.*

Question: *Were they in trouble?*

Explanation: Reverse the statement to put the HV in the front

### 2 INFORMATION QUESTIONS

Using question words like *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *how* and *why* will elicit a long answer. These are used to draw out information, not simply a *yes* or a *no*. They also combine with 'did' or the verb 'to be' for questions. Using the same examples from above, draw some parallels. Again, if you have the helping verb was/were in a sentence, it will appear in the information question. When there is action and no helping verb in the statement, you need did in the question. **A great way to get students thinking about information questions is alter the statements and then have them determine which question word to use, and the word order for the question.** Here are some examples:

Statement: *I loved him for ten years.*

Question: *How long did you love him?*

Statement: *Mario was happy in Mexico*

Question: *Where was Mario happy?*

Statement: *James went out early this morning.*

Question: *When did James go out?*

Statement: *They were in trouble because they were naughty.*

Question: *Why were they in trouble?*

### 3 ACTIVITIES

You'll want to incorporate a variety of activities to practice question making in past tense.

One useful way to practice past tense verbs along with question creation is any form of **memory games**. You can utilize pictures or word cards and have the students draw cards until they match. They then have to create questions and sentences using both the verb forms.

Another activity to practice question making in past tense is to do some form of activity based on memories. Have students interview one another or do a mingling activity that produces lots of questioning. One way to do this is to simply give the students a theme. For example: *childhood friends*, *vacations*, *past birthday celebrations*.

Anything that will get them talking about past experiences. You could even put one student in the "hot seat." This is when students fire questions at the hot seat student until they can't think of any more questions. It's a wonderful way to get students asking and answering questions at a fast pace!

No matter what practice activity you choose for creating questions, you will inevitably have the students practicing past tense verbs, time markers and the difference between past and present tenses.

**A SOLID INTRODUCTION TO CREATING PAST TENSE QUESTIONS FOLLOWED BY VARIED PRACTICE ACTIVITIES WILL HAVE YOUR STUDENTS LOOKING BACK WITH EASE.**

Provide topics that are relevant to the class age group, level, and hobbies, and you can't go wrong.

# 7 Easy Lessons for Teaching the Present Progressive

## TRY THESE 7 EASY LESSONS FOR TEACHING THE PRESENT PROGRESSIVE

### 1 CHARADE CALL OUT

Charades can be used for many activities in the ESL classroom. For your lesson on the present progressive, have a student act out an activity (such as brushing teeth, washing dishes or getting money from the ATM) and have the rest of the class call out what he is doing using the present progressive.

### 2 SORRY, I CAN'T

What can't your students do now because they are doing something else? Have each of your students write five statements about what they cannot do because they are currently doing something else. For example, one student might say, 'I can't study German now. I am studying English instead'.

You might want to review the differences between the simple present and the present progressive for this activity.

### 3 LOOK AROUND

What is happening all around you and your students? Have your class make observations about the world around them using the present progressive.

You might want your students to look around the classroom or out the window and describe what the people there are doing.

### 4 A PICTURE'S WORTH

Build a collection of interesting pictures to use with your class. (Advertisements are a good source, as are picture books, and [worth1000.com](http://worth1000.com) is sure to provide some interesting material.)

When it is time to practice the present progressive, give groups of students the pictures and have them describe what is happening in each one.

### 5 PICTURE PERFECT

Using an action packed magazine photo, have one student describe the picture to a partner. That partner draws what the speaker is describing (using the present progressive). The speaker should be careful to choose the present progressive whenever possible. Once the pair is finished, they compare pictures and (most likely) get a laugh out of the difference!

Have students change roles with a second picture.

### 6 A LETTER HOME

What are your students doing as they pursue their English studies? What do they do in class? What do they do for fun?

Have your students write a letter to someone at home describing their life as an ESL student.

### 7 WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

As a class, brainstorm all the different

places your students visit throughout the week. Be sure to include places like the gym, the grocery store, a car, and other locations in which they may only spend a few minutes. Then have pairs of students work together using that list of places. The first student tells the second where he is (e.g. 'You are at the gym') and the second student says what he is doing there (e.g. 'I am lifting weights').

This is also a good opportunity to review prepositions of location.

# How to Teach the Present Continuous Tense

**WHEN TEACHING THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS TENSE, ONE THING USUALLY COMES TO MIND. THIS TENSE IS TAUGHT FOR THE FIRST TIME TO STUDENTS WHO ARE COMPLETE BEGINNERS, AND WHO HAVE HAD EXPOSURE TO A SMALL QUANTITY OF VERBS AND VOCABULARY, SO THE EXAMPLES YOU MAY GIVE, OR THE PRACTICE ITSELF, IS RATHER LIMITED.**

They have, however, already learned the verb to be, which should be of tremendous help in teaching this tense.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS WITH AN ACTION

The present continuous tense is used to describe actions that are taking place at the time of speaking. So, the easiest way to introduce this tense is to carry out actions. Take a pen or pencil and start writing on the board. Say: *I am writing.*

Sit down and pick up a book. Say: *I am reading.*

Start walking around the classroom. Say: *I am walking.*

And so on with as many verbs as you'd like, but use verbs they already know, or introduce new verbs, but only a few at a time.

Go on with other persons. Remember they already know the simple present of the verb to be. Keep walking around the classroom and ask a student to join you. Say: *Juan is walking. I am walking. We are walking.*

Show students that the present continuous is formed with the present of the verb to be + the present participle of the main verb (verb in -ing form).

Show as many actions as necessary, and use illustrations, photos, even videos. Have students tell you what each person or group of people are doing. Try some present continuous cards for a fun game. Use a worksheet where students have to write **what the people in the photos are doing.**

Eventually, get them to practice the contracted forms (*I'm, he's, we're*).

### 2 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS – NEGATIVE FORMS

Pick up a book and say: *I am reading a book... I'm not reading a newspaper.* Give more examples alternating between affirmative and negative statements: *Sarah, you're looking at me. You're not looking at Juan. Juan is listening to me. He's not listening to Sarah.*

And so on with all persons, singular and plural. Then have students do the same, always alternating between affirmative and negative statements.

### 3 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS – INTERROGATIVE FORMS

First, model yes or no questions, then, questions with *what, where, which*, etc.:

- T: *Are you listening to me?*
- S: *Yes!*
- T: *Ask me!*
- S: *Are you listening to me?*
- T: *What are you doing?*
- S: *I'm looking at you.*
- T: *Ask Juan!*
- S: *What are you doing?*

Continue with more questions from students. Encourage them to ask different types of questions in different singular and plural persons. If they

are unsure as to how to ask a question, model it for them first.

### 4 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS – SHORT ANSWERS

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

- T: *Are you reading a book?*
- S: *Yes, I am./No, I'm not.*

Ask students to ask each other yes or no questions in present continuous, and have them practice replying with short answers.

### 5 EXTENDED PRACTICE AND OTHER USES OF THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS

Be sure to provide plenty of exercises for extra practice, above all, because beginners need to not only practice this tense, but also acquire more vocabulary and verbs to do so effectively.

At BusyTeacher.org there are dozens of Present Continuous worksheets to choose from. You may also choose to introduce other uses of the present continuous, as in future arrangements.

**And if they've already learned the Present Simple, now's a good time to contrast both present tenses.**

**VIRGIL ONCE SAID, "ENDURE THE PRESENT, AND WATCH FOR BETTER THINGS" AND THIS DEFINITELY APPLIES TO BEGINNER ESL STUDENTS.**

Although they may be impatient to learn more, and feel frustrated by their lack of vocabulary, they must take things one step at a time, and soon enough they'll be speaking English more confidently. It is your job to guide them on this path.

# 7 Simple Activities for Teaching the Simple Future

## TRY THESE 7 SIMPLE ACTIVITIES TO TEACH THE SIMPLE FUTURE

### 1 DREAMS OF SOMEDAY

Whether your students are planners or prefer to fly by the seat of their pants, writing a five year plan can be beneficial in many ways. Explain the concept to your class and then give them time to think about where they will be in five years and how they will get there.

Finally, have your students share their plans with the class.

### 2 SITUATIONAL STRUGGLES

Brainstorm with your class situations in which making a decision might be difficult. Then, have students choose one situation and write a paragraph detailing how they will handle the situation.

### 3 HOMECOMING

If your students are studying English in a country they don't call home, it may be quite a long time till they are able to return to their friends and families.

Have each person in your class list at least ten things they will do when they finally return to their home country.

### 4 A FLUENT FUTURE

Your students are studying English for

a reason. Have pairs of students ask their partners what they will do once they are fluent in English.

Then, have each person share his partners answer with the rest of the class.

### 5 A CAMPING TRIP

Have your students ever been camping? Have groups of four or five brainstorm what they will need to prepare for a camping trip. Then have students discuss what role they will play in preparation for the trip using the simple future.

For example, one person might say, 'I will collect the fire wood'.

### 6 WORLD TOUR

If your class comes from all around the world, have each person plan a trip to a city in his home country for the whole class.

Each person should take three to five minutes to share with the class what they will do on the trip.

### 7 STORY STOPPERS

You can use simple fairytales to help your students practice using the simple future. Tell them a traditional story (try Jack and the Bean Stalk, Goldilocks and the Three Bears or The Three Little Pigs) but stop before the resolution to the problem. Have your students predict what will happen at the end of the story.

You can also use this technique with any literature you may be reading in class.

# Get Your Students to Stop Translating and Start Thinking in English

**“HOW DO YOU SAY, ‘QUE TENGAS UN BUEN FIN DE SEMANA’ IN ENGLISH? HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOUR STUDENTS ASKED YOU TO TRANSLATE SOMETHING FROM OR INTO THEIR NATIVE LANGUAGE?”**

How often do you have students who translate things in their heads before answering you? By contrast, how often do you have students who provide a natural-sounding reply, spontaneously and automatically, without even blinking an eye? Chances are most of your students still translate in their heads – at least some of the time. Our goal as teachers is to guide students towards increasingly thinking in English and drop the crutch of translation. But we all know this is precisely one of the hardest things to achieve. So how do we do that? How can we effectively get our ESL students to think in English?

**WHY IT'S SO IMPORTANT FOR ESL STUDENTS TO STOP TRANSLATING AND START THINKING IN ENGLISH**

Consider their main goal. They want to learn to speak English, not become translators. There's no point in them speaking their native language in their heads while they're trying to learn another. It's counterproductive. The constant comparison of one language to another hinders naturally flowing speech. Experienced interpreters are real pros at this, but your students are not. Some things are simply too hard to translate. This creates a situation where the student is desperately trying to remember how to say the one word they have in their minds in English, while they should be trying to recall a recent lesson instead. Now, that we've established the importance of getting students to think in English for the duration of the class, let's see ways to help them achieve this ever-elusive state.

**HOW TO GET YOUR STUDENTS TO STOP TRANSLATING AND START THINKING IN ENGLISH**

## 1 USE AN ENGLISH-ENGLISH DICTIONARY

If you teach ESL by only speaking English in class, then you often supply definitions or explanations of words in English. Ask students to use Eng-Eng dictionaries, and it will contribute to your efforts.

## 2 MIME FEELINGS AND ACTIONS

When you teach feelings like “sad”, “happy”, “scared”, etc. it's a lot simpler to translate them. But it's so much more fun to act them out – for you and your class! The same goes for actions like opening closing things, walking, running, etc.

## 3 TEACH LANGUAGE IN CONTEXT

A student writes a word on the board, points to it and asks what it means. Most of the time we have no idea where they got it, which leads us to ask questions about the context. After all, there are plenty of words that have different meanings in different contexts. This is precisely why language must be taught in context. For example, would you teach the Past Simple by presenting a list of verbs and their past forms? What if there are verbs they don't understand? Your best course of action is to introduce the context first. Tell students what you do every day, and then tell them what you did yesterday. This eliminates any need for translation.

## 4 INTRODUCE SET PHRASES AS SET PHRASES

Has a student ever asked you to translate the meaning of “You're welcome”? In most languages a literal translation is ridiculous, but providing a similar phrase in the students' native language is not necessary, either. When students ask for translation simply say a set phrase is a set phrase. Make sure they understand it's a reply to “Thank you”. They will probably figure out the equivalent in their language, but with some expressions an equivalent is hard to come by – think of proverbs or idiomatic expressions. The goal is for them to understand the meaning of the phrase and when it's used.

## 5 USE VISUAL AIDS

Like miming, visual aids such as

flashcards, illustrations, posters and even video are great ways to avoid translation.

## 6 USE OPPOSITES OR SYNONYMS

Use words they already know in lead in questions: Are you happy to see your friend? You're glad to see him. Check out these other great ways to teach vocabulary. No translation needed at all!

## 7 TEACH LANGUAGE IN GROUPS

The need for translation will be eliminated if you teach words in groups that make sense, for example, “eat” and “drink” with a list of food items.

## 8 PRETEND YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND

If students try to say things in their own language, simply say you don't understand. Try to lead them to say what they want to say in English. This is by far my favorite strategy. If a student speaks to me in Spanish, I love to say, “Yo no hablar español” with a thick English accent (besides being absolutely fluent in Spanish, I'm also a good actress). Because it's funny, it predisposes students better than a reprimand!

**THERE IS STILL MUCH DEBATE AS TO WHETHER AN ESL CLASS SHOULD BE ENGLISH ONLY OR INCLUDE SOME ELEMENTS OF THE NATIVE LANGUAGE.**

I have personally had excellent results speaking only English in my classrooms. There have been very few occasions in which I had to explain something to a student in Spanish, but those were very special cases or students with some type of learning difficulty. When I teach Japanese students, I can't use their native language at all. I can't speak a single word in Japanese, but that doesn't impact the lesson negatively, in fact, it is very helpful, as students are not tempted to use their native tongue.



# How to Elicit Vocabulary: Top 6 Techniques

## ELICITING VOCABULARY IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF TEACHING ESL.

When introducing new vocabulary, students might be able to provide the word as well as a simple definition. The vocabulary may be new to the class, but individual students often have varying degrees of exposure to English. They can make it easier for their peers to grasp new concepts or ideas especially if they can give an accurate translation. When eliciting old vocabulary, it is simply better for students to try to recall the appropriate word than for you to provide it. Requiring student participation throughout your lessons also keeps students more engaged, gives them more practice opportunities, and reduces your overall talking time.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 MIMING

Miming is a common method of eliciting vocabulary. You can say “The elephant was very...” with outstretched arms and your students should say “Big!” If your students guess other words first, such as long or tall, simply shake your head or gesture for them to continue guessing words while exaggerating your hint. It is a lot like Charades and it requires much more effort on your students’ part than you completing the sentence. It also serves the purpose of checking to see what they know or can remember from previous lessons.

### 2 DRAWING

Drawings can also jog a student’s memory. In the example above, you may want to have a picture (flashcard) in order to describe the difference between other words students suggested. For example, long describes the distance from the tip of the elephant’s

trunk to the end of his tail, while tall describes the distance between the ground and the top of the elephant when what you are looking for is an overall description. Indicating what descriptive word you are looking for on the image can help students understand what word you are trying to elicit from them. Drawings can also be a way of engaging students who have strong artistic abilities. It is not always appropriate to spend time having students draw on the board, however if you can prepare for your lesson or get groups organized while a few students come to the board and draw images that you plan to use in your lesson, it can be a good way of getting certain students involved. You can then use their drawings to elicit vocabulary.

### 3 LISTS

Often when introducing a new topic, such as directions, there will be a lot of new vocabulary too. For a directions lesson you will want to review places so simply ask your students to name places and make a list on the board. You can start them off by listing one or two and students should be able to list quite a number of related vocabulary words such as post office, school, park, and any other place related words you have taught them. This should only take a few minutes but if there are specific words that you need on the board for the purposes of your lesson you can say “What about zoo?” and write ‘zoo’ on the board. You could also give hints to lead your students to say certain words. In about five minutes you and your students will have compiled a fairly comprehensive list of words they know which you plan to use in the lesson and they can refer to for the rest of class.

### 4 SYNONYMS

Using synonyms is a good way to maintain students’ vocabulary. It is

common for students to use the word fast much more often than the word quick so it may be appropriate to say “The cheetah is fast. What is another word for fast?” Eliciting synonyms will help students recall words that they use less frequently.

### 5 ANTONYMS

Another way of eliciting certain types of vocabulary is to give the opposite word of the word you are searching for. You can say “He’s not sad, he’s...” and your students should say “Happy!” Combining this with miming will give your students a really solid hint.

### 6 HINTS

If students have difficulty producing the word you are looking for, assuming it is an old vocabulary word and not a new one, giving them the first letter or syllable may assist them further.

## OVERALL IT IS BETTER FOR STUDENTS TO PRODUCE MATERIAL THAN FOR YOU TO GIVE IT TO THEM.

It will keep them more engaged in your lessons because they will never know when you may ask them something and it will help them maintain a broader set of vocabulary.

# 8 Great Ways to Elicit Vocabulary from ESL Students

## DON'T YOU FEEL THAT SOMETIMES GETTING YOUR STUDENTS TO SAY WHAT YOU NEED THEM TO SAY IS LIKE PULLING TEETH?

This is often the case when we elicit vocabulary – that is, when we try to get them to say certain words instead of providing them for them. Here are some strategies that will make it a little less like teeth-pulling and a little more like conversation.

## WHEN SHOULD WE ELICIT VOCABULARY?

Eliciting vocabulary and introducing vocabulary is not the same thing. You introduce vocabulary when it's completely new, and you may use some of the techniques outlined below to help you present it, but you will be the one providing the new word.

On the other hand, we elicit vocabulary when we want the student to come up with the word on their own, either because they may already be familiar with it, or it is something you have previously taught, and you want them to remember. In this case, the student provides the word you seek.

## 8 GREAT WAYS TO ELICIT VOCABULARY

### 1 OPPOSITES

There are words with very clear opposites, which is why they are so useful when we want to draw out a word from a student. But try to avoid the direct question, "What is the opposite of...?" Use context instead:

T: Are you usually awake at 3 am?

S: No, I'm asleep.

### 2 SYNONYMS

Use synonyms to elicit vocabulary, but similar to the case above try to avoid asking, "What is the synonym of...?" Try an activity like paraphrasing. You make a statement and the student must paraphrase it by using a synonym:

T: I can type quickly.

S: You mean you can type fast.

### 3 DEFINITIONS

Definitions are a very easy way to elicit vocabulary, especially when it is taught in context and in batches. Say you are practicing words related to office supplies. You provide the definitions and students supply the right words:

T: I'm going to the stationary store to buy some supplies. I need one of those things you use to cut paper. What is that called?

S1: A pair of scissors!

T: That's right! And I need one of those things you use to draw a straight line or measure them.

S2: A ruler!

T: Yes! I also need that device we use to fasten papers together with staples.

S3: A stapler!

Use a dictionary to get the definitions if it's too hard to come up with them on your own.

### 4 SCALES

There are some words that are best understood in a scale. Here's one example:

cold – cool – warm – hot

Draw a scale and omit the words you want to elicit from students.

<- cold ----- hot ->

Ask students:

T: What do we say about the weather when it's not so hot, but nice and pleasant?

S: It's warm.

T: What do we say about the weather when we have to wear a sweater but it's not that cold?

S: It's cool.

This also works great with adverbs of frequency:

never – seldom – sometimes – usually – often – always

In this case, establish the frequency by asking the student questions:

T: How often do you go to the movies?

S: Once a year

T: So you can't say you "never" go to the movies.

S: No, not "never". I seldom go to the movies.

### 5 "I'M DRAWING A BLANK..."

Another great way to elicit vocabulary in natural-sounding conversation is to pretend that there's something you can't remember: Remember that for Halloween you talked about the costumes you wanted to wear? What was that monster you told me about? The one that turns into a wolf when there's a full moon?

You can have great fun with this and elicit as many words as you want during any class.

### 6 VISUAL CLUES

This is clearly the best strategy for visual learners and young learners in general. Simply point out something in an illustration or flashcard to elicit the vocabulary from your students: So, Sarah went shopping, and we can see here she bought lots of things. What did she buy?

## 7 WORD CLUSTERS

Word clusters or mind maps are the ideal graphic organizer to elicit vocabulary from students. You start by placing a general topic in the center of the cluster and students add words that relate to that topic.

## 8 "DO YOU REMEMBER?"

Elicit vocabulary and test your students' memory. Listen to or read a dialogue and ask detailed questions later: What did the boy want for Christmas? What did he get?

Students are often quick to grasp new words and will remember them for some time.

**AND THAT IS THE PROBLEM – FOR SOME TIME. IF THEY ARE NOT GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO USE THE WORDS THEY'VE LEARNED, REST ASSURED, THEY WILL FORGET THEM. IF STUDENTS ARE NOT USING ALL OF THE VOCABULARY THEY'VE LEARNED, TRY TO FIND WAYS TO DRAW THEM OUT FROM THEM AND USE THEM IN CONTEXTS THAT WILL HELP THEM REMEMBER THEM. THEY WON'T BE AT A LOSS FOR WORDS AGAIN.**

# 5 Best Ways to Introduce New Vocabulary

## NEW VOCABULARY IS ONE OF THE BASIC BUILDING BLOCKS IN YOUR STUDENTS' LEARNING.

But have you ever put much thought into how you introduce new words? Learning long laundry lists of words can be very tedious for students. On the other hand, introducing words in students' native language and then translating them into English or vice versa is not very effective, either. You have to start training them to think in English right from the start. Needless to say, the language you are teaching should be spoken at all times, even if students are absolute beginners.

So, how do you introduce new vocabulary without resorting to translation or long lists of words? Here's your answer!

## HOW TO INTRODUCE NEW WORDS

### 1 POINTING

Pointing is probably the technique of choice when teaching real beginners. The teacher shows students illustrations or flashcards and points to the items they wish to teach. You can also use posters, Power Point presentations, or different types of computer software where illustrations are presented in electronic format. Google Images is a real life-saver! Pointing works best with nouns which include food, clothes, animals, professions, sports, classroom objects, office supplies, etc. but also colors, actions, and any adjective that can be clearly illustrated (like facial expressions, for example to teach feelings). The main advantage of pointing is that words may be introduced in blocks, and you may easily and effectively introduce several in one lesson. Works well with visual students.

### 2 SUBSTITUTION

This technique can be used with students of all levels and works best with concepts and ideas that can't be easily seen or touched, like abstracts,

or anything that is not a real object. There are different ways to use substitution:

- **Synonyms** – You substitute one word students are familiar with for another new one. *When you call someone, do you sometimes have to wait? You have to hold. Do trains usually run on time? They are on schedule.*
- **Antonyms** – You substitute one word they are familiar with for its opposite. *Is a Ferrari a cheap car?(No) It's an expensive car.*

Substitution works very well with phrasal verbs, which usually have a one-word equivalent: Do you put off going to the dentist? You postpone seeing your dentist.

However, you should be careful when using words that are not exact synonyms or antonyms. Remember to imply that the connotation may be different in some cases.

### 3 NAMING

This technique is similar to substitution, but in this case, you set a scene or situation and then substitute it with a new word or phrase, thus effectively naming the scene.

- *Do you usually eat pancakes, eggs, and bacon for breakfast? (No) So, you have a light breakfast.*
- *The hotel accepted too many reservations. The hotel is overbooked.*
- *The steak I ordered last night was not cooked enough. It was undercooked/rare/bloody.*

### 4 MIMING AND TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE

This technique works great with kinesthetic learners, namely those who learn best by moving their bodies. Most teachers believe that miming

works best with children, particularly when it comes to exaggerating emotions and facial expressions, but adults may also enjoy miming.

Most teachers are also aware of the advantages of Total Physical Response in the ESL classroom. TPR works well with parts of the body (I'm touching my nose! Touch your nose!), actions (I'm walking to the door), and the imperative mood or commands (Sit down! Stand up!)

The main advantage in miming and TPR is that you can get students physically engaged in the lesson. It gets them out of their seats and shakes things up. So make sure you maximize opportunities to get them moving!

### 5 REALIA

The use of realia, or real-life objects in the ESL classroom can make a huge difference in student learning. It engages them and motivates them to learn. It's fun and sets a more natural learning environment. Some realia you may use to introduce new vocabulary includes:

- Maps
- Tea sets, dishes, and utensils
- Clothes
- Toy planes, trains, cars, animals, furniture, etc.
- Family photos
- Holiday items (pumpkin, Easter eggs, Halloween or Christmas decorations)
- Plastic fruits and vegetables

## THERE ARE LOTS OF WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN EFFECTIVELY INTRODUCE NEW VOCABULARY AND NOT HAVE TO RESORT TO TRANSLATION.

Make sure you introduce new words in context and give students plenty of chances to practice.

# 7 Terrific Ways to Introduce New Vocabulary

## TRY THESE 7 BEST WAYS TO INTRODUCE NEW VOCABULARY

### 1 PICTURE IT

Use pictures of new vocabulary words to introduce them to your students. You may choose to use flash cards, magazine images, online pictures, picture dictionaries or photographs when helping your students picture new words.

### 2 KEEP IT REAL

Using real objects to introduce new vocabulary will aid your students in remembering the new words. It will also give your kinesthetic learners a chance to make a physical connection with a lexical concept.

Show your class an object, say the word, write it on the board, and then pass the object around and have each of your students say the word out loud.

### 3 TELL IT LIKE IT IS

Before introducing a new vocabulary word, describe the scene which in which it would be used. Then, rephrase the scene using the new vocabulary word. For example, 'I ate too much food. I overate'.

This will help build connections between English words and teach synonyms without even trying!

### 4 SING IT LOUD

Make up original songs to introduce

new vocabulary. It will not only aid certain learning types, but it will also bring an element of fun into your classroom.

Simply use a simple, familiar tune (Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, The Wheels on the Bus, Happy Birthday, etc.) and make up your own lyrics using the vocabulary you are teaching your students.

### 5 INTRODUCE COUPLES

Try teaching pairs of words at one time. Antonyms are the perfect material for this type of vocabulary instruction.

You can also pair synonyms, homonyms or any other sets of words that have some connection.

### 6 GET PHYSICAL

Use Total Physical Response, the ESL technique that links a physical movement to English words.

Illustrate new words through action as you introduce the word to your students, and then have them repeat the words and the actions that go along with them.

### 7 THE ROOT OF THE ISSUE

Teaching word roots as you introduce new vocabulary has many benefits for your ESL students.

It gives them tools for understanding new vocabulary they have yet to encounter, helps them see the relationships between words, and can even help them make links between their native language and English.

# 4 Fresh Ways to Introduce New Vocabulary

ARE YOU TIRED OF READING LISTS OF VOCABULARY WORDS AND THEIR DEFINITIONS TO YOUR CLASS? DO YOU WANT A MORE INTERESTING WAY TO PRESENT NEW VOCABULARY? TRY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING TECHNIQUES TO MAKE NEW VOCABULARY MORE FUN FOR BOTH TEACHERS AND LEARNERS.

## HOW TO INTRODUCE NEW VOCABULARY

### 1 WORD ROOTS

Teaching word roots can help your students learn not only current vocabulary but future vocabulary as well. When students understand the meanings of the building blocks, unfamiliar words can be dissected into familiar elements. You can sometimes find lists of word roots and their meanings in dictionaries or do a search for them online. Word roots can be divided into two categories. You can teach roots that supply content meaning like ant- (against such as antonym, antithesis), -phobia (fear of such as xenophobia, triskaidekaphobia), or mal- (bad such as malnutrition, malcontent). You can also teach word roots that give information as to the grammatical function of the word like -ly (adv. such as slowly, gracefully), -tion (n. such as administration, frustration), -or (n. person, such as professor, councilor) and -ful (adj. such as wonderful, beautiful). Along with educating your students on word roots, you may want to review the concept of prefix (a unit of meaning added to the beginning of a word that changes the meaning or grammatical function) and suffix (a unit of meaning added to the end of the word that changes the meaning or function).

As a teacher, you should also be aware that some languages contain infixes (a unit of meaning added to the middle of a word that changes the meaning or function)

though English does not use infixes.

### 2 WORDS IN CONTEXT

Another way to introduce new vocabulary is to give your students sentences or a short paragraph using the new vocabulary words. Then see if they can guess the part of speech and the meaning of the word based on the context. This is a strategy that even native speakers use unknowingly when encountering new words. You can also use the following technique to teach the skill of inference. Give students a paragraph that uses one word multiple times. When preparing the handout for them, replace that word with a symbol or XXXX or some other representation. Without the actual word, and without help from a dictionary, students will have to infer the meaning of the missing word. This is an important skill to learn in any language. Stress to your students that if they can learn to infer meaning they will be learning language more like a native speaker and will be more comfortable the next time they encounter unfamiliar vocabulary.

### 3 MATCHING TO DEFINITIONS

After giving them some context and familiarity with the words, present the definitions. Give your students a blank crossword puzzle with the definitions as the clues. This is the first time your students will see definitions for the words they are learning. Your students will probably be able to match most of them to the correct definitions if you have already presented the word roots and the words in context.

The advantage to using a crossword puzzle over a simple list of definitions is the added information about the correct answers. If students are unable to determine some of the correct matches for the supplied definitions,

a crossword puzzle gives them additional clues: how many letters are in the target word and, after filling in some other answers, what some of the letters in the answer are. This will decrease anxiety and increase students' sense of accomplishment and linguistic independence.

### 4 MATCH TO SYNONYMS AND ANTONYMS

Finally, provide your students with a random list of synonyms and antonyms for the vocabulary words. This activity is best saved for last because you want your students to develop an understanding of each word's meaning rather than just matching it to a word they already know. (For more information on this see how the brain acquires language.) Teaching synonyms and antonyms also gives your students further vocabulary development and an idea of the relationships between words.

### VOCABULARY LEARNING CAN BE FUN.

If you just use a little imagination and your students exercise their gray matter, students can do far more than just memorize a list of words and their definitions. Try one of these activities the next time you have a vocabulary unit to teach and it's sure to please both you and your students.

# Teaching Vocabulary – 10 Fabulous Ways to Teach New Words

## DID YOU KNOW THAT A STUDENT NEEDS TO ENCOUNTER A NEW WORD 10 TO 16 TIMES TO EFFECTIVELY “LEARN” IT ACCORDING TO RECENT RESEARCH?

Considering the number of new words students have to learn per course, this means us teachers have our work cut out for us. We all know that although it is important for students to use correct grammar and structures, words are the main carriers of meaning. This means that the more words students are able to handle accurately, the better their chances of understanding English and making themselves understood. To effectively acquire new vocabulary, students must go through four essential stages:

- first, they notice a new word with help,
- secondly, they recognize the word at first with help,
- then later on their own,
- and lastly, they are able to both recognize and produce the word.

It is essential that you, as the teacher, make use of activities that target each of these stages - more often than not, we make the mistake of merely introducing new vocabulary, and we don't give students the opportunity to put these new words to use. So, here are 10 great ways to teach English vocabulary, outlined for each of the stages of vocabulary acquisition:

## 1 NOTICING AND UNDERSTANDING NEW WORDS

1. **Introducing nouns, things, objects, animals, etc.** Visual elements work best with concrete nouns, but try to go beyond flashcards and illustrations. Try to use real objects whenever possible, or even sounds, smells, and tastes. Appeal to all of your students' senses!
2. **Introducing adjectives.** Opposites, like “big” and “small”, “long” and “short”, are usually illustrated with pictures, but here's another case where realia will help you teach new adjectives: the use of real life objects is wonderful for words like “soft” and “rough”, adjectives that may take precious minutes of class time to explain. For more advanced adjectives, like “stunning”, “gorgeous”, “spectac-

ular”, “huge”, or “immense”, bring in photos of famous sights from around the world like the Louvre, Egyptian pyramids, the Eiffel Tower, etc., then use these new adjectives to describe these places in ways that clearly illustrate their meaning.

3. **Introducing abstracts.** There are things you simply cannot teach with a flashcard. What works best in these cases are synonyms, definitions, substitutions, or simply placing students within a given context. Consider this simple example: To teach the difference between “early” and “late”, remind students what time class begins, then state that those who arrive before this time are “early” while those that arrive after this time are “late”.

## 2 RECOGNIZING NEW WORDS

4. **Bingo.** Bingo is one of the most versatile games employed by ESL teachers. For younger learners, make bingo cards with illustrations, and call out each word. For those who can read, do the opposite, make the cards with words, then draw the flashcards from a bag. For teens or adult learners, you can make cards with the definition and call out the words, or vice versa.

5. **Matching.** Another type of exercise with countless possibilities. Students may be required to match opposites, synonyms, or a word with its definition, as well as a picture to a word.

6. **Fill in the blanks (with options).** Hand out a piece of written text (anything from a description, song, letter, to even a short story) with blank spaces that must be filled in from a list of words. You can adapt this to longer texts, and also have longer word lists.

## 3 PRODUCING VOCABULARY

7. **Descriptions.** From a newspaper photo of a recent event to a personal account of a recent trip, there are countless things students can describe while putting new vocabulary to good use. This goes for both oral and written descriptions. You may give them some guidance, like indicating that they have to use at least five adjectives in their description, or five words related to sports,

weather, etc. to no guidance at all.

8. **Fill in the blanks (no options).** Supply students with a piece of written text with blank spaces that have to be filled in with any word that fits. You may give them indications for each space, like “noun”, “adjective” or “adverb”, if they're advanced students. You can then read several out loud to compare the different words used to fill in each blank.

9. **Mind maps or brainstorming.** Tell students they need to think of words they can use to describe the weather. Write “weather” at the center of a blackboard or whiteboard and circle it. Write every word supplied by students as “rays” that shoot out this circle. They should reply with previously taught words, like “chilly”, “scorching”, or “mild”. You may even have sub-circles shooting off to the side for winter, summer, etc. words. This works great for vocabulary review lessons.

10. **Guess what I'm thinking.** Students take turns describing something, like a place: “I'm thinking of a place that is so huge it takes visitors hours to see all of it. It has stunning works of art. It is a breathtaking building, very old, but with a modern glass pyramid in the front.” Students choose to be as obvious or as cryptic as they like. Even little ones can do this with simple descriptions: “It's an animal. It has a very long neck and big brown spots.” Or simply state a series of words: “Africa, black and white, stripes”.

It's better to teach vocabulary in context, in other words, teach highly descriptive adjectives when the lesson is about travel. Or clothes and accessories when you're talking about shopping. Never teach a list of words just because, or students won't have a chance to practice this new vocabulary. **ON A FINAL NOTE, REMEMBER TO CATER TO DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES OR MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES.** Use songs and music, real life objects, or puzzles, but the more you mix the better. Remember the difference between recognizing and producing words: to practice recognition the words have to be supplied by YOU, then students use them to fill in blanks or match them. For students to effectively and accurately produce vocabulary, they have to spontaneously recall the words.

# 7 Infallible Tricks to Help ESL Students Remember New Vocabulary

**AS WE STRIVE TO HELP STUDENTS IMPROVE ENGLISH FLUENCY, WORDS ARE ONE OF THE BASIC BUILDING BLOCKS.**

They are the principal carriers of meaning in speech and without them, students simply can't communicate. Introducing vocabulary to ESL students is usually not a problem. We try to elicit vocabulary as much as we can. Still, despite our best efforts, students don't remember as many words as we'd like them to. Lots of new words are understood when introduced, but then disappear into oblivion. How can we help students remember (and use) more words? Try these tricks.

**HELP YOUR ESL STUDENTS REMEMBER NEW VOCABULARY**

## 1 ALWAYS TEACH VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

You've probably heard this again and again (especially from me!) but it can't be emphasized enough. The first step in helping students remember vocabulary is teaching it in context. This means you should never provide a list of isolated, and least of all unrelated words, for them to learn. Words should be introduced within the context of a story, everyday situation, sport, activity or any context your students are familiar with. Try this: We often teach words related to weather with pictures of clouds, rain, sun, etc... and that's perfectly fine, but try this instead. Print out the Weather Channel's 10-day forecast. Talk about what the weather will be like today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. Will there be any thunderstorms in the next 10 days? When that storm hits you can be sure your students will remember the word "thunderstorm".

## 2 USE THE RIGHT TIMING FOR REPETITION

There are plenty of scientific studies and papers on vocabulary teaching and learning, but let me summarize the results. Most studies agree that it

is essential to repeat or practice a new set of words immediately after being exposed to them. And then repetition should follow at progressively longer intervals. So, to ensure that students will remember the words you teach them, they must use them again – and again. Try this: Use new words immediately after they are introduced (introduction followed by practice). Use them again one hour later (quick review at the end of class). Use them again one day later (review the words they learned the previous day). Use them one week later (general review of words learned in the previous week). Use them one month later (review/preparation for a test)

## 3 USE PICTURES AND VISUALS WHENEVER YOU CAN

When we speak, words are gone with the wind – they disappear in a matter of seconds. Students may understand them, but their minds are quickly filled with other thoughts. Our brains, however, are wired to process visual information differently – it sticks, whether we are visual learners or not. Try this: Whenever possible use flashcards, pictures, or posters when introducing new words. Use the same visuals, or different ones, to test students' memory of the words previously taught.

## 4 MAKE THE WORDS MEMORABLE

By definition, "memorable" event or occasion is easily remembered. By the same token, you can make new words more "memorable" by using techniques that engage students and get their attention. Try this: Introduce vocabulary related to feelings by making exaggerated faces. It will make your students laugh, and chances are they'll remember them more. The same thing will happen if you draw funny pictures on the board or use realia. These types of experiences are memorable for students, which makes the vocabulary you use easier to remember as well.

## 5 USE WORD CLUSTERS OR WEBS

Organize words into word clusters, and it'll help students create associations between words. For each set of new words, create the first cluster together, then for future clusters have students recreate them on their own. Try this: Let's suppose you have taught animals in different lessons throughout the year. Write the word "animals" at the center of your cluster and let students branch out from there by supplying different types of animals, like farm, jungle, domestic animals. Students then continue by naming the different animals in each category.

## 6 USE WORDS IN PHRASES OR COLLOCATIONS

When practicing new words, make sure students not only remember the "word" itself but its proper collocation or usual verb-noun combination. Try this: When teaching Business English, don't just teach words like "appointment", "contract" or "meeting", teach phrases like "make an appointment", "sign a contract" or "cancel a meeting".

## 7 PRACTICE OUT LOUD

Quite often we give students vocabulary exercises to complete, and while this is important to help them practice writing the new words, studies also show that practicing words out loud is more effective in improving retention than practicing them silently. Apparently, the ear is an important ally when it comes to remembering vocabulary. Try this: Games are a great way to practice vocabulary out loud. Play this Clothing Memory Game but make sure students make sentences with the words. Or try a game like Guess the Sport.

Most students have no trouble comprehending new vocabulary: the problem is getting them to remember to use these new words.

**ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS GIVE THEM THE OPPORTUNITIES TO PUT WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED TO PRACTICE.**



# How to Teach the Imperative Form

**IN YOUR CLASSES, YOU HAVE PROBABLY USED THE IMPERATIVE FORM WHEN GIVING DIRECTIONS TO YOUR STUDENTS SO THEY WILL BE FAMILIAR WITH AT LEAST ONE OF ITS USES. THIS LESSON WILL MAKE STUDENTS MORE AWARE OF THE IMPERATIVE FORM AND GIVE THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRACTICE USING IT.**

## TEACHING THE IMPERATIVE

### 1 WARM UP

It has probably been a long time since your students played Simon Says so give them a review of body parts while practicing the imperative form by playing this game. Rather than have only one person give instructions, have students stand in a circle and take turns being Simon. This way when you give your introduction, students will have already had some practice using the imperative structure.

### 2 INTRODUCE

Introduce the imperative form using both positive and negative examples. "Please, stand up." would be a positive form that students should be familiar with from class while the negative "Don't text in class" is hopefully not needed very often. Elicit other imperative sentences from your students and write down further examples of your own.

Explain that this structure is used when giving directions and orders and give students some speaking practice by having them read the sentences you have written on the board aloud.

### 3 PRACTICE

Have students match images with sen-

tences. The images should depict either scenarios or actions where use of an imperative sentence would be appropriate. A good example would be to match the universal "no smoking" sign with the sentence "Don't smoke."

You can also have students complete a fill in the blank exercise where the missing words are listed for them to choose from. Check the answers as a class and review why certain choices were correct by asking questions about the images or sentences.

### 4 DISCUSS

Students have already been given many examples and completed a worksheet so they should have a good idea of when to use the imperative. At this point, talk about being polite while still giving orders and lead by example using please when giving instructions to your students. Discuss situations where use of the imperative form would be appropriate.

Shouting for someone to "Stop!" if he is about to cross the street when a car is coming would be fine. On the other hand, if someone is simply making lots of noise or distracting you, shouting "Stop!" would be considered impolite.

Tell students that directions in the form of a recipe or an instructional manual would also commonly use the imperative form.

### 5 PRACTICE

Prepare passages which include several imperative sentences and write the individual sentences on strips of paper. These can be conversations, sets of instructions, or recipes. A conversation could start off like this "Be quiet! I think I hear something. Come here. I heard it again! Listen carefully." Have students work in groups. Each group should be given the strips of pa-

per to complete one passage and work together to place sentences in the correct order.

Since each group has a different passage, it may be fun to have students share them with the class when the activity has been completed.

### 6 PRODUCE

Directions lessons will give students lots of practice using the imperative. At this time, instead of practicing giving directions, focus on cooking vocabulary and recipes instead. Have students write recipes for their favorite dishes using the imperative form.

They can practice reading the instructions as well but it may be necessary to make corrections before asking students to read their recipes aloud. In order to challenge students, you may have to specify how many sentences are required to complete this activity.

Giving students an example on the board, will help them immensely. Encourage students to ask you questions as you move around the class monitoring their progress.

### 7 REVIEW

Ask for volunteers to give you imperative sentences. Once a student has volunteered, he can sit down while the rest of the class thinks of sentences.

Continue this activity until all the students are seated or the bell rings and do not accept duplicate sentences.

**THE IMPERATIVE FORM IS SOMETHING STUDENTS WILL HAVE A LOT OF PRACTICE WITH ESPECIALLY WHEN STUDYING DIRECTIONS. ENSURING THAT STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THIS STRUCTURE NOW WILL MAKE FUTURE CLASSES MUCH EASIER FOR BOTH YOU AND THEM.**

# 8 Interactive Classroom Activities for Using the Imperative

**DO THIS! DON'T DO THAT! EAT THIS, NOT THAT. STAND UP. SIT DOWN. FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT! THE IMPERATIVE IS ALL AROUND US, AND AS NATIVE SPEAKERS WE MAY NOT EVEN REALIZE WE ARE HEARING OR USING THE IMPERATIVE.**

The imperative is probably best considered a mood rather than a tense in English, since it does not signal when any given action is performed. But even though it is not a tense in the traditional sense of the word for ESL students, understanding the imperative is important. They will encounter the imperative in English when giving or receiving instructions, commands or calls to action. When giving or receiving advice, your students will also need to use and/or understand the imperative. Here are some fun ways you can bring the imperative into your classroom that are creative, too. Have fun with the mood and you will find that your students and you will be in a good one.

**TRY THESE 8 INTERACTIVE CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES FOR USING THE IMPERATIVE**

## 1 READ RECIPES

Recipes are a great example of the imperative mood in authentic English text. The step-by-step directions for creating a culinary masterpiece, or at least lunch, are written in the imperative. In the case with recipes, the writer is giving a set of instructions to the reader with the hope that the reader will be able to reproduce the same results in his or her kitchen. Start your imperative cooking lesson by giving your students some recipes to look over. You will want to match the complexity and content of the recipe to your students' language level. Copies from cookbooks or printouts online are great, but do not overlook simple instructions that come with a food product, like cooking directions on how to make

pasta or rice. Point out to your students that the instructions in the recipe use the imperative mood and that the verbs take the second person present conjugation on a sample recipe. Then have your students find examples of imperative verbs in their own recipes. You may want to make a list of all the verbs your students find and review their definitions, especially cooking specific verbs, as a class.

## 2 FOLLOW RECIPES

If you have the classroom resources, or your students have adequate resources at home, give them a recipe to follow. If possible, have the ingredients for a no-cook recipe on hand, and have your students follow the directions in class. My-recipes.com has tons of great ideas for no-cook recipes from the very simple to the very complex! Either individually or with a partner, have your students follow the directions for the culinary delight. (Be aware of any allergies your students may have and plan accordingly.) If your students follow their directions correctly, they should end up with something that looks very similar to the finished product shown in the recipe, and it should taste good, too. Celebrate your students' accomplishments by having a social time and sharing each group's creation!

## 3 WRITE YOUR OWN

Now that your students have followed directions given to them in the imperative, have them write their own imperative instructions for making a favorite food. Ask your students to write instructions for an item that they know how to cook. It might be a dish from their native culture or something local and more familiar to everyone in class. Even small children can do this activity though they may not actually know how to cook. Their instructions will be charming and even funny and might be worth posting on a bulletin board in class.

## 4 DO YOUR OWN COOKING DEMO

Besides written recipes, many cooking demonstrations use the imperative to communicate with their viewers how to make a particular dish. There are hundreds of cooking demos available on YouTube, so choose one that your students may like and show it to the class. Point out that as the actor/chef makes the recipe, he or she is giving instructions with the imperative mood to the viewer. Watch the video again and challenge your students to make note of any imperative verbs the chef uses. Follow by having your students do their own cooking demo in front of the class. You can request a serious tone and perhaps even ask your students to bring the food in and make the dish in class. Alternately, you may want your students to take a lighthearted approach and demonstrate how to make a fictional dish with real or fictional ingredients they might find in the classroom. Either way, your students will be putting the imperative to good use as they speak in front of your class. For fun, end your lesson with one or more videos of the famous Muppet the Swedish Chef. His comical kitchen exploits will elicit laughter no matter what native language your students speak!

## 5 DO WHAT SIMON SAYS

Your students have other options when it comes to following directions and practicing the imperative. For beginning students or just for a change of pace, play a game of Simon Says. Start by leading yourself, but once your students have a feel for the game let them take turns being Simon. They will get the chance to practice using the imperative and the rest of the class will get to practice following the directions Simon gives.

## 6 BUILD SOMETHING

Another great option for following direc-

tions is putting together a model. Kits are great, containing complete sets of instructions and materials, but they can be expensive. As an alternative, try supplying your class with a collection of building blocks and give them a set of directions for building various items. You can find thousands of directions on Lets Build It Again. Have your students choose the item they would like to build or just make a few sets of directions available in class and let them get to their constructions. Your students will have fun with their building block creations, and they will not even realize they are practicing the imperative in the process!

## CLASSROOM, THINK ABOUT WHAT INTERESTS YOUR STUDENTS.

Once you have found that, look online for instructions or directions or make some yourself for an activity related to that interest. Your students will have fun engaging in the activities and you will get the satisfaction of a lesson well taught.

## 7 TELL ME HOW

Your students will also need to use and understand the imperative mood when giving advice. Give your class a chance to share about something they are good at and give advice to classmates who might be trying that activity for the first time. Give each person five minutes in front of the class to explain how to do something that they know how to do. It may be something recreational like skateboarding or something professional like examining a specimen under a microscope or even something silly like how to become a superhero. Ask each person to give advice to a person who may just be starting out learning the activity. What should he do? What should he not do? Allow your students to ask questions after each presentation.

## 8 GIVE ADVICE

Advice giving can be creative, too. Role play a call in radio show where the host gives advice to the caller. To set the scene, show your students a small clip from the television show Frasier. Then recreate the scene in your classroom. Instead of showing the whole clip, you could show part of the television clip where the caller presents his problem, and then pause the video. Ask your students to offer advice using the imperative. Take several answers from your students before playing the rest of the clip and seeing what Frasier actually says.

THE NEXT TIME YOU BRING THE IMPERATIVE INTO YOUR

# 10 Creative Spelling Teaching Ideas

**SPELLING CAN OFTEN COME ACROSS AS A CHALLENGE TO MANY PEOPLE, BOTH ADULTS AND CHILDREN. WITH THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, IT IS CAN BE DOUBLY EXCRUCIATING TO LEARN.**

Teachers of English need to be sure that their spelling is immaculate, as it can often reflect badly on you if your spelling is not up to scratch. Even if you have difficulty (a lot of people suffer with mild to severe forms of dyslexia), a good idea would be to have a dictionary close by. This will allow you to be sure, especially if a student asks a question. Techniques of spelling are taught differently, depending on the age of the students and of course their current level of language. You need to be creative in your style in order to grab and keep the students' attention.

## HOW TO TEACH SPELLING

### 1 THE ABC SONG

Everyone has learned this in school. It is probably one of the most simple and effective ways of teaching in rhyme. This is particularly effective with children. When it comes to languages where the Roman alphabet is used, they will have their own versions of this song. Sometimes they are similar, sometimes the letters are pronounced completely differently. It is important for you as the teacher to give the English pronunciation and make sure that the students apply it correctly. This activity is generally for beginners, and afterwards it will serve as a practical basis for learning to spell words, both simple and complex.

### 2 HANG MAN

Most of us have played Hang Man at some point in our lives. The teacher will usually start with a blank board, and draw out "gaps" for where the letters of a specific word go. Get one of the students to stand at the top of the class and ask them to think of a word. The students will then ask the student what letters are in the word. If it is correct, then the letter will be put in one of the gaps. If not, then the man slowed gets "hanged", first with the drawing of the noose, the head and all the limbs. This can be incredibly effective for students to see how a certain word

is spelled out as it is slowly revealed to them!

### 3 PERSONAL DICTIONARIES

Whether you have a class of children or adults, a good idea is to use a personal dictionary. Have them divide it into different sections for each letter at the beginning of the course. Any word the students are unfamiliar with or have difficulty spelling can be put into this dictionary. It is a great way of building up a quick reference, especially for words that constantly crop up.

### 4 USING SCRABBLE SQUARES

This isn't so much Scrabble - it is using the scrabble squares. A variety of different games can be made from this. An idea would be to get an article and jot down the unfamiliar vocabulary. As an activity for afterwards, play a game involving these. Get the students to spell out a word with their cubes and go around and check them. Write up the words as they originally appear on the board, and with those that are spelled incorrectly, ask the students what is wrong with them and why they are incorrect. This will allow the student to correct their own mistakes, which can help them to be more cautious in the future.

### 5 SPELLING RULES

English is notoriously difficult when it comes to spelling. Therefore, there is a variety of different rules which are associated with it. Here in an example: "I" before "e" except after "c". An example can be seen in the words "receive" and "conceive". However, due to the nature of English, there are exceptions, such as in "science". To help students get their heads around this, write down all the rules and get them to write it down in their personal dictionaries.

### 6 FOCUS ON EXCEPTIONS

This ties in with the last point. It is a good idea to focus on the exceptions, such as words like "science". Have the students write these down in their dictionaries. As a language learner myself, I found compiling my own list of words I found difficult to be incredibly helpful. Now as a teacher, I find it to be just as

useful for students.

### 7 REGULAR SPELLING TESTS

Most people who attended school in an English speaking country has been subjected to the painful thought of spelling tests. Usually they are held on a certain day of the week. The students are given a list of words to learn for the week, and then tested on them usually at the end of class. Offer rewards for those who get everything right! This will further motivate the students to learn.

### 8 WORD OF THE DAY

Having a specific word, particularly one that has difficult or unusual spelling, during every class will expose the students to new spelling structures. Not only will this allow for much more familiarity with strange words, but a discussion can be brought up from it. Often it will work as a great filler if you happen to have some time left at the end of class!

### 9 "BOWLING"

As a quick test of the student's spelling ability, have everyone stand up. Throw various words at random students and see if they are able to spell them. If not, they have to remain standing. Often this will motivate them to learn the words correctly, as nobody wants to be left standing on their own.

### 10 SPELLING BEE

In certain countries, Spelling Bees are quite popular with younger people. Often they can be a great incentive for people to learn. Hosting a mini spelling bee in the class is often a great way of motivating younger learners, especially if there is a reward involved. It can be a lot of fun. Get your students to try and organize the competition themselves, organizing who will be the judges, the participants etc.

All of these methods come with the purpose of helping students to become familiar with new words. We cannot stress the importance of building up a personal dictionary enough. Having a quick reference is often a life saver and, over time, the students are gradually going to need it less and less.

# Teaching Emotions in Your ESL Classroom

**EVERYBODY FEELS. TODAY I FEEL HAPPY. TODAY I FEEL SAD. TODAY I FEEL FRUSTRATED. FOR YOUNG STUDENTS, THOUGH, EMOTIONS CAN BE DIFFICULT TO TEACH BECAUSE THEY ARE SO INTANGIBLE.**

Bring emotions to a tactile level for your students with these concrete activities, and you'll all feel better at the end of the day.

## HOW TO TEACH EMOTIONS IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

### 1 START THINKING ABOUT FEELING

The first step in teaching about emotions is to engage your students. If you have younger students, picture books are a great way to do this. Some good ones to try are *Today I Feel Silly*: and *Other Moods That Make My Day* by Jamie Lee Curtis or *I Feel Orange Today* by Patricia Godwin. After reading these or other books that your class likes, encourage your students to share how they are feeling today. Make sure they know that any answer is a good one - the key is to be honest. Also, remember that younger children may not be as attuned to their feelings as more mature students can be, so keep from forcing an answer if all they can say is that they feel fine.

Another way to engage your students at the beginning of an emotional lesson is to sing some songs about feelings. "If You're Happy and You Know It Clap Your Hands" is a great way to engage young children. The rhythm of the verses also helps with sentence intonation and pacing for students who struggle with their fluency. You could also sing "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf" or any other songs they might know and love that mention any kind of emotion.

### 2 TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

Now that your class is thinking

about emotions, it's time to start some more structured work. Give a second use to old magazines by cutting out pictures of faces displaying different emotions. The bigger the face, the easier it will be for your students to see the emotion. Show one picture at a time during circle time or during a class discussion, and ask your students how they think that person is feeling. Ask them why they think the person is feeling that way. What are the clues they take from the person's facial expression? Then have a little fun and ask your students to mimic the face from the picture to show that same emotion. Even better than magazine photos, take some candid pictures of your students prior to teaching on this topic and use the faces they make for the same activity. Kids will love seeing themselves larger than life in front of the class and will feel a deep connection to the lesson when you involve their personal photos.

Today I feel board. That's not to say I feel bored. Maybe I feel happy, confused, concerned, elated, hysterical, nervous or loved. Our emotions change from day to day, so give your students a venue through which to share their emotions. Choose a selection of simple cartoon faces and print them out on full sheets of paper. (If you are nice to the art teacher at your school, he or she may draw you some original ones.) You can then post them on a bulletin board with a label under the picture naming that emotion. Then give each of your students a name tag with a push pin and ask them to place their name next to or under the emotion they are feeling today. (Be careful not to hang the faces too high for your students to reach.) This will give them some reading practice, but an even more beneficial activity is to ask your students to share why they feel a particular way on the day of the discussion. This promotes discussion and also gives your students an appropriate place and time to share special news. You can keep this bulletin board up all year if you choose to do

so, and you can add more descriptive emotions as the year progresses thereby increasing your students' vocabulary.

### 3 WRITE IT OUT

Remember those pictures of faces you used in your class discussion? Now it's time to use them for a little writing practice. You will want to choose your writing activity based on the ages of your students. For younger students, give them one of the pictures you discussed earlier. Have them spend some time thinking about the emotion that person is feeling. Then ask them about a time they felt that same emotion. You can allow some time for class sharing or break your class into smaller groups so everyone can share their personal story. Then get in your writing practice by having students write about that time they had that particular emotions. This is especially good for younger children since it is easiest for them to share from their personal experiences. If your students are more mature, you can make the writing practice a little more challenging and a little more creative. Have them think beyond what the person in the picture is feeling and challenge them to think why the person feels that way. What could that person's story be? When your students write, have them do some creative writing telling the story of the person in the picture. Encourage them to use detailed descriptions and strong verbs in their creative writing.

Emotions are something people experience every day. These activities are only the beginning of what you can do with your class when teaching emotions.

**EITHER WAY, WHEN YOU TEACH ABOUT EMOTIONS, YOUR STUDENTS ARE SURE TO FEEL EXCITED, EAGER, THRILLED, ANIMATED, ENERGIZED, FULL OF LIFE, ABSORBED.**

# Hello, Hello: New Ways to Teach Old Greetings

**YOU SEE YOUR STUDENTS IN THE MORNING, AND YOU NATURALLY GREET THEM, "GOOD MORNING. HOW ARE YOU?" HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU HEARD THAT SAME OLD RESPONSE, "FINE, THANK YOU. AND YOU?" HOWEVER, HOW MANY NATIVE SPEAKERS DO YOU KNOW THAT RESPOND THAT WAY?**

Why not challenge your students to veer off the traditional dialogue path and into authentic conversation. Here are some suggestions on how to do just that.

## HOW TO TEACH GREETINGS IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

### 1 GIVE OTHER OPTIONS

Brainstorming is a great class level activity. The energy in the room is often palpable, and students feed off the ideas and energy of their classmates. Start your lessons on greetings by brainstorming a list of possible responses to the traditional, "How are you?" Students will likely offer the traditional responses very quickly, but push past those to responses that are more unusual. Fine. Go away. Terrible, how are you? What do you want? Why do you ask? Do you really want to know? These and many other non-standard responses are things that native speakers say every day.

Keep a running list posted in your classroom, and allow your students to add other responses as they think of them or as they do a little research with the following activities.

Variety comes not only in responses, but also in the initiation of the conversation. Expand your classroom display to show both. Simply designate one area of the display for initiations and another for responses.

As your students brainstorm and do re-

search to expand each list, they will naturally find phrases to add to the other.

### 2 DO A LITTLE RESEARCH

Make discovering alternate greetings an ongoing event for your students. If they are listening for the greetings that people use every day, they will certainly expand their dialogue options. Movies are a great resource for ESL students. There are plenty of scenes when one character meets another. You can take several clips from one movie like *You've Got Mail*, or take one scene from each of several movies.

Also, encourage your students to share dialogue from favorite movies whether they play the scenes for your class or simply relay the dialogue. You can also find film resources on YouTube videos and television shows or interviews.

E-mail and text messaging are another way for your students to find authentic greetings from native speakers. Though both e-mail and texting are written forms, the language used in them is more reflective of spoken English. By challenging your students to examine samples of these forms, they will get reading practice while doing research for speaking thus addressing two language aspects at the same time.

If you can, supply your class with some e-mails and text messages for them to examine or ask them to bring in some of their own.

### 3 A BLACK TIE EVENT

Though informal speech is what speakers use in most situations, it is not universally appropriate. There are times, like in a job interview or a business meeting, that using formal speech is the correct choice. This is

a simple way to make sure your students have the opportunity to practice their formal as well as informal speech while in class.

Grab a few old neckties and hang them up near the door of your classroom. If students want to be spoken to formally on a given day, they take a tie as they enter the room and wear it during class. Any other student who speaks with the tie-wearer should address him or her with formal speech. Now all of your students will have to determine which greetings are appropriate for casual settings and which are appropriate for formal settings.

You can also take some class time to address that question and list several circumstances what situations fall into each category.

**IT IS EASY FOR TRADITIONAL DIALOGUES TO SOUND ARTIFICIAL AND STAGNANT, BUT MOST OF THE TIME THEY ARE THE FIRST CHOICE FOR OUR STUDENTS. ENCOURAGE YOUR STUDENTS TO GO BEYOND THESE TRADITIONAL DIALOGUES AND USE MORE FREQUENTLY HEARD PHRASES.**

If they do, they are more likely to sound like fluent speakers of English and not uncomfortable students of the language.

# 5 Non-Verbal Ways to Do Error Correction

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

If you correct them too much, you might make them feel discouraged and compromise their fluency for the sake of accuracy. If you correct them too little, they'll continue making the same mistakes. Achieving the right balance is a daunting task, although not an impossible one. And when doing on the spot correcting, do you simply supply the right answer? Although it is certainly an option, you should sometimes give your students the chance to correct themselves.

There are several verbal strategies you may use, like asking them to repeat what they've just said, or repeating the sentence yourself but pausing to let the student fill in the "blank" correctly.

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

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 USE A GRAMMAR FLAG

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

### 2 USE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Students are sometimes self-conscious enough without having to endure constant corrections. So, how can you effectively correct them and not stomp on their confidence in the process? When a student makes a mistake, like saying a verb in the past tense incorrectly, use an exaggerated

facial expression to signal the mistake. Give them an open-mouthed, wide-eyed stare. Or arch an eyebrow. The more "theatrical" the facial expression is, the funnier it'll be.

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

### 3 USE GESTURES

Another very effective way to show students they've made a mistake is through gestures, some of which may be specific to the kind of mistake. Teachers typically gesture backwards with their hands or point to the back to show students they haven't used the verb in the past.

Students often use the wrong pronouns - it's quite common to hear a student say, "She went to the movies with your boyfriend." To which you simply reply by pointing to yourself with a look of shock or surprise.

You may also implement a gesture to indicate that students should repeat something, or say it again, and if they repeat the mistake, you can raise a finger to show them where in the sentence the mistake is, though they have to figure out what they are doing wrong.

### 4 USE VISUAL REMINDERS

Very often students forget the final "-s" in the simple present, third person singular. You may have a big S stuck on a wall that you can point to on such occasions, or point to something that will trigger the right response, like the picture of an S-shaped snake. Visual reminders are also great for vocabulary-related mistakes.

A student may say "childs" instead of "children". You point to a picture of a group of children to indicate that something is wrong - the student has to fig-

ure out he or she used the wrong plural.

### 5 USE FINGER COUNTING

How can you correct mistakes in word order in a non-verbal way? Finger counting is simply perfect for this! Say a student used the wrong word order to ask a question: "You are a teacher?" Ask the student to repeat the question and then show him or her how you count the words on your fingers.

Show the student how the first two fingers are in the wrong order, so that the student understands the question should start with "Are you..."

You can get as creative as you like with your facial expressions, gestures, and visual reminders. Remember here that the ultimate goal is to help students learn from their mistakes, and if you simply supply the right answer, they may not fully internalize it.

**SOME TEACHERS HAVE EVEN BEEN KNOWN TO HUM WELL-KNOWN SONGS TO TRIGGER THE CORRECT RESPONSE, LIKE DEPECHE MODE'S "PEOPLE ARE PEOPLE" WHEN STUDENTS MAKE THE CLASSIC MISTAKE, "PEOPLE IS".**

# How to Drill: Drilling Activities for Your English Classroom

**AFTER INTRODUCING NEW VOCABULARY WORDS, GRAMMAR POINTS, OR SENTENCE STRUCTURES, YOU HAVE TO DRILL THEM WITH YOUR CLASS.**

There are many ways to drill new material. Using a variety of drilling methods in your classes will help make this portion of the lesson more interesting and keep students focused.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 CHORAL REPETITION

Choral repetition is a commonly used method of drilling. Students simply have to repeat words or phrases after you. This is a good method because it means that students are given excellent model pronunciation immediately before they are asked to respond. Going through vocabulary this way many times in a single lesson will be boring for your students and they will be less inclined to perform well. Break up the monotony by changing the speed or volume you use and have students change their responses accordingly.

Using this method, students are not called on individually to pronounce words therefore you will need to check individual pronunciation and comprehension separately. Integrating these checks into your drill activities will keep students alert because they will never know when you may call on them.

### 2 DRILLING WITH FLASHCARDS

Drilling using flashcards can be useful as well. In the introduction, show students both the image and word sides of each flashcard. When you start drilling words for the first time, show students the word side of the flashcard so they can practice reading and pronouncing it.

Later on, rather than show students the word you want them to pronounce, show them the image. This will help check their comprehension of the material. With flashcards, you can also challenge your students when they become more familiar with certain vocabulary by flipping through the cards at a faster rate.

### 3 COMPREHENSION

Asking for volunteers or calling on students to give you a synonym, antonym, or translation of a new vocabulary word will check individual comprehension. It is always nice to ask for volunteers as opposed to calling on students individually but generally a volunteer will be more confident in his answer so this will not properly show whether or not the class understands the material.

When you find it necessary to single out particular students who are not participating in drill activities, calling on them for answers is an easy method of focusing their attention on the lesson. Doing comprehension checks is also a good way to break up the drill activities a bit.

### 4 DRILLING IN PAIRS

As material becomes more familiar, you may want to conduct short pair activities where a student's comprehension is tested by his partner. To do this with a vocabulary list for instance, have student A read the translation of each word in random order while the student B says the word in English. Student A can then place a checkmark next to all the words student B got correct and then the students can switch roles.

With this method students can check each other and have visual proof of how well they performed afterwards

which they can refer to when practicing material on their own or preparing for exams. Conducting an activity such as this on a regular basis will help students review vocabulary often and should not take more than five minutes even with fifteen to twenty vocabulary words.

It may still be necessary to practice using choral repetition before performing pair activities so that students are reminded of the proper pronunciation of the vocabulary.

### 5 GAMES

Breaking your classroom up into sections where each section says one portion of a new structure is another way of drilling material. In small classes you can conduct some drilling activities in a circle. The more variation there is to an activity, the more students have to pay attention but it is best to start off with the simplest, easiest variation of a game and build on it as opposed to trying to explain a complex activity from the very beginning.

Challenging students but not overwhelming them is important in maintaining their attention and participation.

**DRILLING IS GENERALLY NOT THE MOST FUN PART OF TEACHING OR LEARNING ENGLISH BUT IT IS AN ESSENTIAL STEP WHEN LEARNING NEW MATERIAL. VARYING YOUR APPROACH CAN MAKE IT MORE ENJOYABLE AND ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE MORE FULLY.**



# How to Correct Mistakes

THROUGHOUT THEIR STUDIES, STUDENTS WILL MAKE LOTS OF MISTAKES. IT IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE LEARNING PROCESS. IF THEY ARE NOT MAKING MISTAKES THEN THEY ARE NOT BEING GIVEN DIFFICULT ENOUGH TOPICS AND STRUCTURES TO WORK WITH. YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE MATERIAL THAT IS CHALLENGING BUT MANAGEABLE FOR YOUR CLASS AND CORRECT MISTAKES IN POSITIVE WAYS. SINGLING OUT STUDENTS WHO MAKE ERRORS WILL MAKE STUDENTS FEEL SELF CONSCIOUS AND SHY SO SOME TACT WHEN CORRECTING MISTAKES IS IMPORTANT.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 PRACTICE

When introducing new vocabulary, emphasize correct pronunciation and during the drilling exercises have students practice using choral repetition. This means students are not immediately singled out to pronounce new and unfamiliar words and they can become accustomed to the sound of the words together. The next step is generally to call on students or have students volunteer to pronounce words or phrases. It is an important step to check pronunciation on an individual basis however it means that a student is being singled out to perform independently in front of the entire class.

Correcting mistakes at this level is the most challenging but you can use the same process to correct errors in any situation.

### 2 SELF-CORRECTION

The best way to correct mistakes is to have students correct themselves. Ideally a student will realize a mistake has been made and fix it automatically but that is not always the case. If a student answers a question incorrectly you can gently prompt them to revisit their answer.

One of the ways to do this is to repeat what the student said placing emphasis on the incorrect portion, for instance "I have play baseball." and saying it in a questioning way. At this point the student has an opportunity to think about and revise his initial response.

You may have your own method of prompting students with a facial expression or phrase which they associate with being incorrect but avoid saying words such as wrong, incorrect, or no in response to mistakes. They are negative and will have ill effects on your students' confidence in the classroom.

### 3 PEER CORRECTION

When a student is unable to self correct, peer correction might be appropriate. If a student raises his hand while you are waiting for a student to self correct, you may want to call on that student for the correct answer or, after waiting a short time for a student to self correct, you could ask the whole class the same question and encourage a choral response. Especially with challenging questions, this is a good method because then it is unknown who in the class has the right answer and who does not. Just repeat and emphasize the correct answer by writing it on the board and explaining why it is correct.

This is a good method of correcting mistakes because it shifts focus away from the student that provided the original incorrect answer.

### 4 PROVIDING THE ANSWER: LAST RESORT

Sometimes individual students as well as entire classes have no idea what the answer to your question is. If providing hints and examples does not lead them to the correct answer, you will have to provide it. Generally this is a last resort and means that a lot of review activities may be in order but keeping a positive attitude and explaining the answer good-naturedly will do a lot to keep your

students positive about learning English.

Asking similar questions in a simpler form will build student confidence again so that the lesson can continue smoothly.

AT EVERY STAGE OF AN ACTIVITY, PRAISE SHOULD BE GIVEN. IF A STUDENT VOLUNTEERS TO ANSWER A QUESTION, YOU CAN THANK HIM IMMEDIATELY FOR VOLUNTEERING WHICH WILL BOOST HIS SELF CONFIDENCE. AT THAT POINT IF THE STUDENT PROVIDES AN INCORRECT ANSWER YOU CAN CORRECT IN AN ENCOURAGING WAY BY SAYING "ALMOST." IF THE STUDENT GIVES THE CORRECT ANSWER, BE SURE TO SAY "GOOD JOB!" OR "EXCELLENT WORK!" AS LONG AS YOU ARE POSITIVE IN YOUR METHOD OF CORRECTING ERRORS, REASSURE YOUR STUDENTS THAT THEY ARE DOING WELL, AND DO NOT GET UPSET WITH THEM FOR MAKING MISTAKES, THEY WILL CONTINUE TO VOLUNTEER AND TRY THEIR BEST BECAUSE MAKING MISTAKES IS OK. THAT IS HOW LEARNING SHOULD BE. IF STUDENTS NEVER TAKE RISKS, THEY WILL NOT IMPROVE.