

CONTENTS

HOW TO TEACH WITH TECH

- 3-4 **MUST READ:** Grabbing Their Interest and Holding It: Innovative Uses of Technology
- 5-6 **MUST READ:** From IPODS to Smartboards: 10 Types of Technology Every Teacher Should Know How to Use
- 7 **MUST READ:** 5 Must-Have Technological Tools to Increase Your ESL Productivity
- 8-9 **MUST READ:** The Tricked Out Classroom: 10 Things Every ESL Teacher Wants
- 10 **MUST READ:** Overhead Projector: Too Techno or Best Presentation Tool Ever Invented?
- 11-12 **SMARTPHONES & APPS:** Managing Your Classroom with the Swipe of Your Finger: Best Free Teacher Apps for the iPad
- 13-14 **SMARTPHONES & APPS:** The 9 Best Mobile Apps for Your ESL Students
- 15 **SMARTPHONES & APPS:** Why You Should Use Cell Phones in Class: 8 Activities For Putting Phones to Positive Use in the ESL Classroom
- 16 **SMARTPHONES & APPS:** Back to School Dilemma: Technological Gadgets in the ESL Classroom?
- 17 **SMARTPHONES & APPS:** What You Can Do with a Cell Phone: 7 Great ESL Activities
- 18-19 **COMPUTERS & INTERNET:** Beyond Facebook: How to Use Social Networking Productively in Your ESL Classroom
- 20 **COMPUTERS & INTERNET:** Creating a Class Website: How and Why
- 21 **COMPUTERS & INTERNET:** Everything You Need to Know About Virtual Fieldtrips
- 22 **COMPUTERS & INTERNET:** The 9 Best Online Resources for ESL Pronunciation Practice
- 23 **COMPUTERS & INTERNET:** Back to School Tech Tips for ESL Teachers: Use Online Resources
- 24 **COMPUTERS & INTERNET:** 9 Best Tips to Give ESL Students for Professional Business Email
- 25-26 **COMPUTERS & INTERNET:** Why Use The Internet In TEFL/ TESOL?
- 27 **COMPUTERS & INTERNET:** How to Teach the Millennial Generation (And Get Them off of Facebook)
- 28 **COMPUTERS & INTERNET:** What You Can Do With The Internet: 6 Creative Online ESL Activities
- 29-30 **COMPUTERS & INTERNET:** Top 10 Teacher Software Programs You Should Be Using On a Daily Basis
- 31 **TV & VIDEO:** HOW TO: Teaching With Videos and Media
- 32 **TV & VIDEO:** The Movie-Novel Connection: Practical Tips for Using Movies in Class
- 33 **TV & VIDEO:** What Good Is a Video Game in the ESL Classroom?
- 34-35 **TV & VIDEO:** Beyond Naptime: Incorporate Movies in the Classroom and Keep them Riveted
- 36-37 **TV & VIDEO:** English Video Lessons: Winning Strategies for the ESL Class
- 38 **TV & VIDEO:** And the Oscar Goes to... How to Use Movies and TV for Listening Exercises
- 39 **TV & VIDEO:** 10 Keys to Effective ESL Listening Lessons with Video
- 40 **TV & VIDEO:** The Best Shows/Movies for a Children's ESL Video Lesson

Grabbing and Holding Interest: Innovative Uses of Technology

I admit it: I've taught in classrooms where the Smart board sat to one side while I wrote everything out on the whiteboard - not because I don't know how to use a smart board but because none of my lessons were set up for its use.

Other times I've gone into writing classes with great ideas about how I was going to incorporate computers that term only to find the classroom was not computer assisted.

Teachers have to go with the resources they have and incorporate them as they will fit in the curriculum. If the teacher is lucky enough of to have a smart board or computer-assisted classroom, this does not mean those tools should dominate the class nor should they be pushed into a corner. Rather available technology tools should be utilized as aids to the curriculum, not the curriculum itself.

10 WAYS TO INCORPORATE TECHNOLOGY AND HOLD STUDENT INTEREST

1 WORD PROCESSING

Many classes are equipped with a bank of desktop computers. Take advantage of this by spending the first part of class discussing a composition topic then the second part of the class session drafting the essay on a word processing program. If it's possible for separating these two parts of the class by seating pattern, such as meeting in the center of the room for discussion and then moving out to the computers for essay drafting, that really assists in the class session going smoothly as the different parts of the process are kept separate.

If there are not enough computers for all students, they can pair up and engage in collaborative writing or peer review. In addition, one member of a paired group is inevitably stronger in computer skills and can assist the other partner.

2 INTERNET RESEARCH

After students have typed their essays first drafts, have them do some research for the second drafts. Have them find out what some of the leading scholars (and they don't write on answers.com) say on the topic of capital punishment, for example.

Give a short lecture on credible material on the internet: I usually begin with the question "Who can put up a webpage on the Internet? Who can post on Wikipedia?" It's surprising the number of adults who believe something posted on the internet must be true and reliable.

Discuss ways to find materials from credible sources: university websites or government websites vs. homepages of unknown individuals and Wikipedia.

Also show some simple tricks of internet searches, such as the use of 'and,' as in "capital punishment and California" to narrow a search because it will only bring up those items with both capital punishment and California mentioned, 'or' to broaden the search, as in 'death penalty or capital punishment', this search will bring up items that mention either 'death penalty' or 'capital punishment,' terms which are used synonymously in the United States.

3 USE OF YOUTUBE'S RESOURCES

YouTube has an amazing amount of visual and audio material to contextualize your lectures. For example, instead of trying to explain Woody Allen movies to students when doing a reading on Allen, the teacher can pull up a clip from "Manhattan" or "Annie Hall," which shows much more in five minutes what a Woody Allen movie is than any 30 minute lecture I could give about New York, culture clash between ethnic and mainstream Americans, and the neuroses from living in big cities, etc.

4 USE OF SMART BOARD

A smart board is an interactive whiteboard and a pretty amazing device. It can be written on (with a finger or stylus, not a dry erase marker) and the information can then be saved to a file. The instructor can demonstrate computer applications with an attached PC. Other uses are geography/map skills lessons with the built-in map application smart boards have. Finally, different software for creating stories can be used for students to write and illustrate their own stories together.

5 TEXT MESSAGE EACH OTHER

Most of the time we're trying to get students to not text message each other in class, of course. But there can be some value to this form of communication. Have students text message each other on the class discussion or lecture. This involves having to take the academic English of the course content and translate it into text message English, a task that requires some cognitive and linguistic skill. Then have students "translate" each other's text message into Standard English.

6 POWERPOINT

Most teachers have standard lectures they give over and over: I routinely give the same lecture on sentence structure with little variation semester to semester as rules on sentence structure do not change or change very slowly. Such lectures can be put on Powerpoint with visuals, - this both engages the learner more and saves resources in not having to make class sets of the same handout each term.

Another use is to give a college lecture with Powerpoint on an "academic" topic you know well, such as diabetes or the causes and effects of WWII. Then have students create their own Powerpoint lectures on top-

ics they have expertise in to give to the class. This taps into all language skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. They can work in teams if desired and research their topics as needed.

7 POST ON BLOGS

Set up a blog on the class website. Students can blog about what they're reading or discussing in class. Require students to make a certain number of relevant posts per day or week on the blog in standard academic English.

8 USE OF FACEBOOK/ SOCIAL NETWORKING

For group work students are doing, such as peer review or a project they are completing, they can take out Facebook accounts if they don't have them already, "friend" each other, and carry on a dialogue about their work.

9 CHAT ROOMS

Chat rooms can work as off campus "office hours." I typically tell students I'll be available for one hour a week in the class chatroom if they have any questions or want to discuss the class. Sometimes a small group of students turn up, and this can lead to some lively discussion on class issues.

10 WRITING SITES

Introduce students to writer's sites like Writer's Digest sponsored Fanstory.com, where for a small fee they can log on to read and review other writers' work, post their own, and enter contests. Belonging to a writing community helps enormously with the identity as a writer.

NOT ALL OF THESE SUGGESTIONS WILL NECESSARILY PROVE USEFUL TO EACH TEACHER'S SPECIFIC SITUATION, BUT THAT IS FINE.

The point is to take the technology available and incorporate it into your course content in a way that suits your individual class.

10 Types of Technology Every Teacher Should Know How to Use

THERE IS A TENDENCY TO THINK OF THE CLASSROOM AS REMOVED FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD AND ISOLATED FROM CHANGE.

To some extent, this is true - many of us are in classrooms that Socrates himself almost might have taught in, the most developed "technology" being the whiteboard or perhaps an overhead projector. Even so, there are several reasons to keep current with technology: your students can use it, and in most things, the teacher should know at least as much as their students: the real possibility that you might someday be assigned a "smart" classroom, and many resources for continued learning, such as "podcasts," come in the form of contemporary technology. In fact there are 10 pieces of technology every teacher should know how to use.

10 PIECES OF TECHNOLOGY EVERY TEACHER SHOULD KNOW

1 A SMART PHONE

a phone equipped with other devices, such as a camera and internet connection, it has been joked that you can do everything on a smart phone but place phone calls. However, a smart phone does prove useful for classrooms: a teacher I once knew, for example, took pictures of each student in her class, the student holding a large card with his or her name, so that she had a visual record of her students' faces and names associated with them to refer to.

Examples: Apple iPhone (apple.com/iphone/), Samsung Galaxy Phone (samsung.com/us/topic/our-galaxy-smartphones).

2 AN IPOD

Originally a device for storing electronic music, iPods are now a tool for storing other audio material, such as lectures, and are therefore good for teachers' professional development. There are numerous "Podcasts" that can be found online on latest teaching

information on topics such as English as a Second Language and technology. Teachers can also record their own podcasts, post them, and ask students to listen as homework. iPods are also relatively inexpensive and easy to use.

Link: Apple iPod Product page (apple.com/ipod/)

3 A SMARTBOARD

A smartboard is an interactive white board many classrooms come equipped with now. Rather than ignore it and use the traditional white or chalkboard, as some teachers do, why not learn how to use a smartboard to enhance your instruction? Writing and erasing, for example, can be accomplished with both fingers and smartboard pens. Gone is the frustration when the whiteboard pens go missing or don't work: teachers can simply use their fingers or another object. Also eliminated is the smell or dust associated with dry erase pens and chalk. In addition, smartboards function something like a traditional computer screens: clicking on items on the board, such as notebook icons, will open them. Also lesson software can be loaded, setting up "true" and "false" responses for students to click on, for example.

Link: Interactive Smartboards (smart-tech.com/smartboard)

4 A LAPTOP

Laptops are effective in the classroom, making it possible, for example, to project a clip from YouTube to demonstrate a cultural concept such as what The Tonight Show is. Laptops are also good for teachers out-of-class work, like recording and scoring grades. Finally, many students are assigned their own laptops in classrooms now, on which they can complete, print out, and store their work as well as learn effective methods of completing web searches. This basic education in technology is important for many underprivileged students who otherwise have little access to it, and for whom learning technology, along with learning English, is critical for

advancing in society.

5 WEBSITE DESIGN TECHNOLOGY

Understanding how to set up a simple website is important for teachers. It can be as simple as a blog, but there should be places to post updates and class and school news as well as assignments coming due and discussion boards for students to post and answer questions. Ideally, there should also be a place to post assignments so that students who don't know or who forgot the assignment can refer to the website. Having students print out and bring their own assignment directions, rather than making multiple copies, also conserves paper and saves money for the school.

6 POWERPOINT

Powerpoint remains a critical way to impart important information to students because of its visual and interactive nature. The slides provide more information than the teacher can give by lecturing: showing pictures of Anne Frank's hiding place and her family, for example, is more powerful than just discussing them. In addition, it is possible to print out a set of lecture guides with each presentation for students to take notes on, so this provides a kind of scaffolding that traditional lectures do not.

7 THUMBDRIVE

Besides just learning the technology, students and teachers should learn some of the basics in responsible handling of computer information, such as storing materials to a thumbdrive, a small electronic storage device that can be kept on a keychain. Asking students to purchase a thumbdrive should be part of every class in which technology is used.

8 A DVD AND CD PLAYER

DVD and CD players remain staples of technology for teaching. Many ESL books come equipped with CDs for listening practice and DVDs for present-

ing concepts, so access to both a CD and DVD player is desirable.

can enhance the educational process greatly.

9 AN OVERHEAD PROJECTOR

Understanding how an overhead projector works remains important even today because many texts — including the one I am using this term — comes with pages to be used on overheads. In addition, many schools have not made the conversion yet to “smart” classrooms, and overhead projects are the extent of their technology. However, overheads are especially useful for demonstrating to students how to fill out a form, for example, or a page on a notebook. Instead of attempting to copy from the book the sentences with blanks on the board, the teacher can simply make an overhead and fill it out on the projector. This saves time, improves accuracy, and reduces confusion for students with learning difficulties, in particular, whose confusion connecting with what is on the board with what is in their book is reduced if what is on the overhead is the same as their books.

10 E-READERS

E-readers, electronic devices for downloading and reading electronic books, are the coming technology in purchasing and reading books. Their advantages are their portability: an e-reader can store thousands of texts and save space and back pain caused by traditional books filling shelves and backpacks. E-books are also often cheaper: a friend of mine, for example, just downloaded the complete works of Shakespeare—free, because it’s out of copyright. Many e-readers today also come with devices to mark and highlight electronic text, which is not as damaging as marking a print copy. All teachers and students should consider getting one of these devices.

Examples: Kindle Fire HD (amazon.com/Kindle-Fire-HD/dp/B0083P-WAPW), Nook HD (barnesandnoble.com/p/nook-hd-barnes-noble/1110060426), iPad Mini (apple.com/ipad-mini/overview/).

TECHNOLOGY WILL NEVER TAKE THE PLACE OF A TEACHER NOR WILL IT COVER FOR POOR TEACHING.

However, technology, used in the correct place and at the correct time,

5 Must-Have Technological Tools to Increase Productivity

NOT FEELING VERY PRODUCTIVE LATELY?

In this article, we'll provide you with some specific technological tools that will help take your ESL productivity to the next level!

INCREASE YOUR 'ESL PRODUCTIVITY' WITH THESE TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS

1 EVERNOTE

Evernote (evernote.com/) is an excellent application for ESL teachers. It can be downloaded for free to a great variety of devices, including iPhone, iPad, Blackberry, Android phones and Mac or Windows computers. This handy little software allows you write notes, capture Web pages and even record voice notes in a matter of seconds so if you're ever suddenly inspired by a great idea all you have to do is make a quick note either on your computer or phone and store it for later. Here's how you can specifically use Evernote to improve your productivity:

- Organize your notes with tags – For example, if you start gathering URLs of websites that feature Christmas lesson plans, tag them as “Christmas”, and you'll be able to access all of your notes for that theme with only a click.
- Plan for an absence – Evernote lets you email notes or share an entire notebook with a substitute teacher.
- Take photos. Snap a pic of your bulletin board for specific month or celebration and save it for next year! The same goes for whiteboards. If you happen to have a very productive mind-mapping session, take a photo and use it later to make a worksheet out of it (and then publish it on BusyTeacher.org!).

- Keep all of your worksheets organized. Keep all your handouts, test papers and other lesson materials clearly organized and on hand.

And these are just a few of the things you can do with Evernote! Synchronize your devices and have the same notes available on your phone and desktop!

2 REMEMBER THE MILK

Get rid of the useless piles of 'to do' lists once and for all! Remember the Milk (rememberthemilk.com/) is a website that allows you to organize all of your tasks and send yourself alerts for things that must be done on a particular day. In our article, Top 5 Productivity Tips for ESL Teachers (busyteacher.org/5501-top-5-productivity-tips-for-esl-teachers.html), we recommended that you schedule one afternoon or evening a week to plan the following week's lessons. If you need to schedule in some additional tasks, like shopping for supplies, making copies, or planning a teacher meeting, simply add them all to Remember the Milk, set your alerts, and relax – you won't forget another important task again!

3 FRESHBOOKS

Freshbooks (freshbooks.com/) takes the guesswork out of personal accounting. This tool allows you keep your financial records safe and at your fingertips, and absolutely free of charge (for a basic account). Also, this is the best billing tool for ESL teachers who need to send invoices to their students. Freshbooks keeps a record of all of your invoices and expenses. It's intuitive and easy to use – who said bookkeeping is a struggle?

4 GOOGLE DOCS

Google Docs (docs.google.com) is the ideal tool for teachers who share or work from different computers on a regular basis. USB drives are easy to use, but the truth of the matter

is that they tend to break, and what's more, they may carry nasty viruses from computer to computer. If you constantly work from different computers, Google Docs is the solution for you. You may access your files from any computer, anywhere, but you also have the option to share documents with other teachers. Wouldn't it be great for all of the ESL teachers at your school to share lesson plans via Google Docs?

5 MOZY

Even the least technologically savvy teachers understand the importance of backing up files, right? There's no bigger nightmare than realizing that your hard drive has just been fried by a virus, and you've lost years of worksheets and tests in a matter of seconds. Backing up files in external drives or CDs is time-consuming and tedious. Plus, these devices don't last forever, and this is a task you need to schedule on a regular basis for it to be effective. Mozy (mozy.com/home) takes care of it all. For only \$5.99 a month, you can have all of your files safely stored in an online environment – automatically. How will you spend your newly acquired free time?

TECHNOLOGY HAS ITS ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES. LIKE ANYTHING IN LIFE, IT CAN BE MISUSED, AND IN SOME CASES, IT MAY EVEN DEMAND MORE OF OUR TIME.

But here, we've presented tools that will only make your life much easier. Use them wisely and be the most 'ESL-productive' you have ever been!

The Tricked Out Classroom: 10 Things Every ESL Teacher Wants

NO CLASSROOM IS PERFECT. IF WE TRY, WE COULD PROBABLY LIST HUNDREDS OF IMPROVEMENTS WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN OUR CLASSROOMS. UNFORTUNATELY, BUDGETS ARE OFTEN OUR BIGGEST ENEMIES WHEN IT COMES TO CLASSROOM UPDATES. STILL, IT NEVER HURTS TO ASK YOUR ADMINISTRATION FOR IMPROVEMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE.

And on the rare occasion that the administration has money to offer for classroom improvement, it helps to be ready with a list of ideas. What would you want for your ideal classroom? Here are some things other teachers have longed for, from the most practical to the ones that will take a little more convincing to get.

10 THINGS YOU NEED FOR YOUR DREAM CLASSROOM

1 STORAGE

What does a teacher have if she doesn't have stuff? Collecting teaching materials, props and supplies year after year makes every school year a little easier, but it also, ultimately, leads to a need for lots of storage space. Closets, cupboards, shelves full of crates, and filing cabinets are all useful storage resources for the classroom. Plus, most take little to no installation and do not require much financial investment. The next time your school has a few extra dollars to spend on classrooms, increasing the storage in your room might be a no brainer!

2 A PLACE TO READ

What teacher does not want his students to read more? Creating a reading lounge in the classroom might be just the motivation your students need to crack open a good book. To create a cozy and inviting atmosphere, position some couches, beanbag chairs, and soft area rugs near shelves holding your classroom library. Allow students to add to the li-

brary or borrow from it at their leisure. During free periods, students will flock to the most comfortable place in the classroom, and will find themselves reading the best books you, their teacher, have to offer! If you take the time to ask, you may find that there are always people ready to donate couches. Try placing an ad online or simply ask parents to spread the word around their neighborhoods.

3 COMPUTER LAB

In today's high tech world, computers are essential. Teachers who are lucky enough to have computers in the classroom often wish for more – enough computers so each student in class has one they can use. Once the computers are in place, it is time to add printers, scanners, and multimedia resources for students to use as they practice their listening and speaking. While we are dreaming, why not include a method to video chat with a sister class in the U.S. whose students are of comparable age to your class? Getting these resources may take some convincing, but the administration will be impressed when you show them how many resources your students will have at their fingertips when they each have a computer in the classroom.

4 VOLUNTEERS

Would any teacher turn down volunteers at any time? In elementary grades, not only can volunteers prepare craft projects and help with classroom activities like snack, volunteers in the ESL classroom are a great asset during reading time or as conversation partners. Though volunteers do not cost anything, they can be difficult to recruit. Put the word out. Try a classroom exchange. Invite parents to schedule volunteer days. The more people who are invested in your students' educations, the more success they will see.

5 WI-FI

Do you wish you could bring the

convenience of technology into your classroom without the expense of a personal computer lab? Classroom Wi-Fi can give your students access to technology through their personal devices. Though welcoming iPads, smart phones, tablet computers and the like into your classroom does have some disadvantages, the resources they make available to your students far outweigh the disadvantages for most teachers. Getting classroom Wi-Fi may not take much. Often an antenna booster will do the trick even through the thickest of cement walls.

6 BATHROOMS

How much time do your students lose every time they need to excuse themselves? Having your own bathrooms can give you a closer look into how your students are spending their time and might keep some kids from using hall passes as licenses to text lists of friends. If you do not already have bathrooms in your classroom, your administration may be reluctant to consider them. Still, it never hurts to ask, especially when you can outline all the ways those bathrooms will benefit your students.

7 A KITCHEN

Though some classes may have snacks or other food in class daily, ESL teachers probably have food related lessons every couple of weeks or even less. On those days, a classroom kitchen can be invaluable. What does every teacher need? A refrigerator, a microwave, hot plates, and a sink should all be on the list, in addition to assorted kitchen gadgets. Students will find the classroom kitchen useful when studying food units or talking about culture in relation to food. (And of course there is always popcorn to make on movie days!) You can create your own pseudo kitchen with a dorm fridge and inexpensive microwave. Getting the plumbing and sink installed may be more of a challenge.

8 A CLASS WEBSITE

Though technically not in the classroom, a website designed just for your class can offer many perks. Not only can you list testing dates and homework assignments, you can use your website for more unique activities. These might include student blogs, interactive activities and resources for students, and creating student podcasts. Getting your students to use the language that they know is extremely important, and having the class manage a website might be a more interesting activity than the traditional classroom fare. You will need a website administrator unless you have advanced computer skills, and you should be sure to keep your website up to date. As for financial investments, the annual fee for a hosting a website is usually rather small.

9 A PLACE OUTSIDE

Whether a garden, courtyard, or some simple picnic tables, many teachers wish they could give their students a comfortable and natural outdoor setting as part of language class. These areas can be used for independent study time, but they also come in handy when studying units on weather, nature, plants or sports. If you are lucky enough to have an outside study area next to your classroom, don't forget to ask for a door leading from the classroom to your outside space and plenty of windows to enjoy the view. If an outdoor area is not in the blueprints, look into "adopting" a piece of the school's property to use with your class at designated times.

10 AN INTERACTIVE WHITEBOARD

If you have ever wished you could project your computer screen onto the wall of your classroom, you have wished for an interactive whiteboard. By using a stylus or the pressure of your finger, you can make presentations and web pages accessible to your entire class rather than just the few who can see your computer screen. Edit your presentations directly on the board and watch your students fix their attention on this high tech classroom addition! An interactive whiteboard will require a significant financial investment and is probably a decision several people in

leadership will have to consider.

IN SOME WAYS, OUR CLASSROOMS ARE LIKE OUR HOMES.

We spend a large percentage of our times there and invest much of our hearts in the education of our students. When we can, we like to make improvements to our classrooms to encourage comfort and learning for our students. If you are lucky, you already have multiple items on this list in your classroom, but if not think about which of these or other improvements would mean the most to you. Then you will be ready for any opportunity when there are a few extra dollars in the classroom improvement budget. Remember, it never hurts to ask!

Overhead Projector: Too Techno or the Best Presentation Tool?

LET'S FACE IT. SOME ESL TEACHERS ARE NOT TOO BIG ON TECHNOLOGY.

They prefer tried and tested methods, like worksheets, flashcards, and games. They're willing to spend hours designing, coloring, and assembling a board game, but are reluctant to spend half an hour on a Power Point presentation. The issue of the use of technology in the classroom has been the subject of debate for decades now. Needless to say, technology should never be used for technology's sake, but the implementation of certain tools may be highly effective in an ESL setting. And overhead projectors are just one of the tools we have at our disposal.

Is the use of multimedia projectors really necessary? Aren't they more suited to a business setting? These are valid questions. However, there are situations in which the use of overhead projectors may be highly effective in driving home the ESL component you wish to teach.

WHEN ARE OVERHEAD PRESENTATION PROJECTORS RECOMMENDED AND WHEN ARE THEY SIMPLY TOO MUCH?

Presentation projectors are ideal in large classrooms of over 20 students. For smaller groups, they may not only be unnecessary, but also even ineffective. They are also not recommended for groups of very small children, as their attention spans are shorter and they are more kinesthetic learners -- however, very short presentations are ok for the littlest ones, and teens and adults should be able to handle longer ones.

WHAT CAN YOU TEACH THROUGH OVERHEAD PRESENTATION PROJECTORS?

You can teach anything you like, but make sure the use of the overhead projector is justified. Ask yourself: Is this the best way to teach this particular set of vocabulary or grammar point? If you consider it carefully and decide this will be your tool of choice, then by all means use it!

HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF LESSONS THAT MAY BE GREATLY ENHANCED THROUGH AN OVERHEAD PRESENTATION:

- Teaching vocabulary with sound: Design a Power Point presentation with animals and include the sounds they make.
- Comparisons: Have slides filled with things for students to compare, like

prices, lengths, sizes. This may work with either Power Point presentations or overhead transparencies. For example, design a slide with a family composed of 5 or 6 members, all with varying heights, and each with their name underneath. Have students compare family members and name the tallest, shortest, etc.

- Predictions: Use a set of slides where you show a sequence of events. As you pause at each slide, have students predict what will happen next, then show them the slide that follows so they can see if they were right. For example, have four slides that show a girl washing her hands, sitting down for lunch, having dessert, then, brushing her teeth. As you pause at each slide, students have to guess what will come next. Great for practicing future with "will"!
- City tour: Show your students slides with photos of different locations and points of interest in any important English-speaking city. Also, photo presentations are great for holidays, sports, professions or anything that you want to teach with real life photos.

These types of presentations may be used for introducing completely new vocabulary or grammar, practice and drilling, review, or even oral tests.

THE PROS AND CONS OF THESE OHP LESSONS:

CONS:

Preparing Power Point presentations with sound, or even basic Power Point slides is something that not all teachers know how to do, or are even willing to do, as it may be time-consuming. You may not know how to record your voice in MP3 format or have the equipment to do so.

PROS:

- One of the main advantages is portability: it's a lot easier to have a series of slides in a pen drive, than boxes of flashcards or posters. Also, keep in mind most of these materials suffer wear and tear, especially with kids, while Power Point presentations and overhead transparencies will always be preserved.
- Another advantage is versatility. You can have presentations with graph-

ics, charts, full color photos, sound and visual effects: if you're creative when it comes to the use of visual aids and overhead transparencies, there's no limit to what you can do. Your presentations need not only be simple presentations of vocabulary, you can also use them for games or any type of activity.

- Lastly, these presentation slides or overhead transparencies can be shared among several teachers, and you can even share the burden of preparing the materials. Those who are more experienced with Power Point, for example, may design the slides with sound or MP3 files, while others work on classic overhead transparencies.

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN USING MULTIMEDIA PROJECTORS:

- The learning goal must be set before you decide to use the overhead projector. In other words, you first set the goal of teaching professions, then, decide you want to use a Power Point presentation to do it, not vice versa. The overhead projector should be just one of the many tools you have at your disposal.
- Although it's great to expose students to new technology, remember your job is to teach English, not technology.
- Always have a back up plan in case the portable overhead projector doesn't work or is suddenly unavailable. Never have an entire lesson rely solely on any type of technology. Always have printed copies of your Power Point presentation, or an activity that will easily replace it.
- Don't use only overhead transparencies or presentations as your main means of introducing language elements. Once the novelty wears off, students will grow bored of always having to sit through a presentation.

FINALLY, TO ANSWER THE QUESTION POSED IN THE TITLE, IT'S SAFE TO ASSUME THAT IT'S NOT ONE OR THE OTHER.

The overhead projector is a great tool, and a highly effective one if used properly, but it is by no means an absolute necessity in the ESL classroom -- it's not an obligation, but just another tool out of the many you may employ. If you happen to be tech-savvy or enjoy working with Power Point, then by all means use it!

Managing Your Classroom with the Swipe of Your Finger

TECHNOLOGY IS ALL AROUND US. IN THE EVER-EXPANDING DIGITAL AGE, WE ARE INUNDATED WITH TOOLS, WEBSITES, AND DEVICES.

While it can seem overwhelming, especially when we are used to a traditional way of learning and teaching, technology has made many aspects of a teacher's job easier. Soon we will get to a day where we can't remember how we ever taught without a computer!

The latest and greatest technology in the classroom is the iPad. The slim, sleek, shiny tool is not only good for slinging disgruntled birds across the screen, but also for making our jobs as teachers easier. Here's a summary of some of the FREE apps that I can't live without:

TRY THESE BEST FREE TEACHER APPS FOR YOUR IPAD

1 TEACHER KIT

Main goals of app: Classroom management, attendance, grades.
Link: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/teacherkit/id389584618?mt=8>

This app has been a lifesaver in my personal classroom. On the first day of class, I create my classes and set up my personalized student fields. I ask questions about things like their birthday, what they plan to study after our program, hobbies, favorite writing topics, etc. Anything I would put on a first-day information sheet, I put in this app. You can customize these fields to any relevant categories pertaining to your students. This greatly helps me familiarize myself with my students and their personalities.

You can then pass the iPad around during the first class to have students fill in their information. After they enter their information, they can use the built-in camera to take a photo, and now you have an icon for each of your students with their photo. It's a wonderful way to remember names! Alternatively, if you have younger students

or don't quite trust your students handling your iPad, you can create files from DropBox and then import them into TeacherKit.

For daily use, you can use it to take attendance and record tardies. It's as simple as tapping on their photo to record if they're present, absent or tardy. Attendance now takes less than 1 minute to record!

TeacherKit also has a simplistic grade book feature. Although I use a different website to enter and store all my grades, this grade book is easier to walk around the classroom with and check in homework.

Lastly, you can also send out group e-mails with just the push of a button to everyone in your class without having to log into your e-mail. No more excuses for not knowing what the homework is!

2 SHOWME

Main goals: Presentation tool.
Link: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/showme-interactive-whiteboard/id445066279?mt=8>

ShowMe is an app that acts like a digital recorded whiteboard. In this app, teachers and students alike can record themselves talking while drawing on a whiteboard. Users can upload pictures or start with a blank whiteboard to use writing or demonstrate a lesson. The tools are very easy to use and it's simple to record.

This app is great for doing mini-tutorials to help students further understand something or a short presentation to have students watch before coming to class so they know what to expect of the day's lesson. Teachers have also had students use this app to create their own presentations and share them with their classmates. Additionally, there are thousands of presentations created by other users that students can watch if they want to see more information about a specific topic. There's an entire ESL category

filled with tutorials on topics ranging from how to write a summary to prepositions.

I've used this app for students to make their own presentations in my speaking class. Having more time to prepare and rerecord if necessary made them more confident in their speaking. It was also good for me to have a recording that I could play multiple times to help address pronunciation issues.

3 EDMODO

Main Benefits: Quizzes, social community building, classroom organization. Link: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/edmodo/id378352300?mt=8>

This is not just an app, but also a full website that non-iPad users can use. Edmodo is meant to be an academic version of Facebook: students create profiles and they can write on each others' walls as well as the class' wall.

The quiz feature enables you to create quizzes with five different question types: True/False, Multiple Choice, Matching Fill in the Blank, and Short Answer. For all question types (excluding short answer) Edmodo will grade them automatically and give you a question by question analysis of how many students got it correct or incorrect, giving you an instant visual indication of the difficulty of any given question. Short answer questions are also easy to grade, and for all questions, you can give comments on students' answers to help them understand why a question was right or wrong. I often create quizzes and assign them to students as homework to get ready for a big in-class test.

The grade book is fairly limited on Edmodo, and while you can add grades in manually, the primary function is to store grades from quizzes you make on the app.

The library feature allows you to store documents, links to websites, and any other file you would like to keep orga-

nized for your class. Store readings, homework documents, and review sheets all in one place so your students are without excuse when they lose that valuable paper you told them to hold on to.

The community feel of Edmodo is also great. Students can post on each other's walls and then comment, just like Facebook. This can create interesting dialogues and help them to experience authentic social network communication without the risks and dangers of real Facebook.

There are also many other features including polls, calendar, link with Google Docs, and many others. It is absolutely indispensable in my classroom!

4 SIGN UP

Main Objectives: creating sign-up lists or appointment times. Link: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/sign-up-sheet/id461457411?mt=8>

A very simplistic, but useful app Sign-up which is basically a digital sign-up sheet. This is ideal if you're signing up for presentation days, appointment times to meet with you, or even parent/teacher conferences.

Previously, when I wanted my students to meet with me, I would pass around a paper with set times written on it. Inevitably, the paper would come back with two names in one sign-up slot, or additional times added to it by creative students. With Sign Up, I simply customize my date and time slots, write my specific instructions to the students, and pass the iPad around to my students. Only one student can enter his/her name in a given slot, so it avoids any double-booking problems.

Additional features include various templates including: appointment times, a generic sign-up sheet, potluck (where you can customize which food items you want people to bring), or a schedule by day (good for signing students up for presentations on specific days). With Sign Up, you also have the option of sending an e-mail to remind students of they signed up for.

Now, I don't have to worry about losing a piece of paper that was filled out

incorrectly! It's all kept right in one place.

5 EVERNOTE

Main Objectives: organization, sharing information. Link: <https://itunes.apple.com/cus/app/evernote/id281796108?mt=8>

EverNote is a notebook that you can use to type notes, link webpages, jot down ideas, store photos, streamline various e-mails or tweets, or pretty much store anything you encounter digitally. You can then link your notebook with other people to share your ideas or keep them to yourself but access them from any device or computer.

In my classroom, I mostly use it for storing pictures, related web pages or news stories that I encounter, and taking pictures of my whiteboard after a day's class. Snapping a photo of my whiteboard and then storing it in my notebook allows my students to access it if they were absent or if they need to go back and see if they made a mistake while taking notes.

I've also used it to share notebooks with other teachers. I can keep track of lesson ideas and reflections and then use these to collaborate with my colleagues. Other teachers I know allow students to use it when they're working on research projects together. Overall, it's a great way to streamline your own digital life and then make certain parts accessible to others you want to share information with.

WHILE SOLELY RELYING ON TECHNOLOGY SHOULD NEVER BE USED IN PLACE OF A PROPERLY-PLANNED LESSON, USING TECHNOLOGY EFFECTIVELY CAN GREATLY ENHANCE STUDENT LEARNING OR EASE TEACHER ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES.

Having all of these management apps on one tiny device rather than four binders full of paper will help make your job easier and allow you to focus on teaching!

The 9 Best Mobile Apps for Your ESL Students

IF YOU HAVEN'T WITNESSED THE EXPLOSION OF SMARTPHONE POPULARITY, YOU HAVE BEEN LIVING UNDER A ROCK.

Thousands upon thousands of applications are available from Apple's App Store, Android Market or Blackberry App World, and the number of downloads are astounding: millions are downloaded – every month. There are apps for everything you can imagine from productivity apps to apps to help you manage your finances. And, of course, there are language-learning apps. Now, as ESL teachers, should we capitalize on the Smartphone phenomenon and recommend language-learning apps for our students? Check out the list below and reach your own conclusions.

THE HARD FACTS ABOUT MOBILE LANGUAGE LEARNING APPS

- Smartphone ownership is on the rise all over the world. In the US alone, half of American adults own a Smartphone (source: pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Smartphone-Update-2012/Findings.aspx).
- Fifty percent of US mobile subscribers download apps (source: comscore.com/Insights/Press_Releases/2012/7/comScore_Reports_May_2012_U.S._Mobile_Subscriber_Market_Share).
- Millions of apps are downloaded every month – all over the world (source: xyo.net/app-downloads-reports).

ADVANTAGES OF RECOMMENDING LANGUAGE LEARNING APPS TO STUDENTS

- Convenience – The mobility of these devices provides students with the chance to study/review any day, any time, without the need to remember to bring their

books or class materials.

- Efficiency – Most apps are tremendously user-friendly and well-organized into topics. This means students don't waste any time looking for what they want to practice.
- Engagement – Language learning apps are the ideal tool to engage learners who are very tech-minded and naturally enjoy using gadgets.

So, if you have students who are tech-savvy and love trying out new apps, here are some that are the perfect complement to their ESL classes:

THE 9 BEST ESL MOBILE APPS FOR YOUR STUDENTS

1 BUSUU

(busuu.com/enc/mobile) This language-learning app features more than 3,000 words and expressions and covers a wide range of topics through comprehensive vocabulary sections and interactive tests. Levels include beginner to advanced, and it is available for download on iPhone and Android (20 units are free and remaining content is available upon purchase).

2 SPEAKINGPAL ENGLISH TUTOR

(speakingpal.com/products) A very entertaining and highly-interactive app, it features a series of mini-lessons of approximately 5 minutes, so students have no excuses when it comes to making the most of idle time. The student interacts with the app through speech recognition software that recreates a real video call. It's available for download on iPhone or Android for free.

3 VOXY

(voxy.com) This is a tremen-

dously popular app, particularly in the Spanish-speaking market. It features news and stories on a variety of topics, and provides games for language practice, plus short quizzes to test comprehension. It can be downloaded for free on iPhone and Android.

4 MYWORDBOOK

(learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en) This app was developed by the British Council in conjunction with Cambridge University Press and offers a wonderful, engaging way to learn new words through sets of interactive flashcards.

Additional vocabulary packs may be downloaded from Cambridge dictionaries. Available for free on iPhone and Android.

5 CONVERSATION ENGLISH

(<https://itunes.apple.com/mx/app/conversation-english/id296284263?mt=8>) This app features 20 lessons, each with a video dialogue. The app gives learners the option to read the conversation and then answer questions and complete a variety of exercises. It's a great app for those who wish to practice more conversational English. It's available for download on iTunes.

6 ENGLISH GRAMMAR IN USE TESTS

(cambridgemobileapps.com/grammar/egut.html) Developed by Cambridge University Press and based on the successful Grammar in Use series, this app allows students to practice English grammar as a series of "tests" that are more akin to games. It's not free, but it's one of the best apps for students who want some grammar practice on the go.

There is also a complete series of apps based on the Grammar in Use books available for iPhone: cambridgemobileapps.com/grammar.html.

7 IELTS MASTER VOCABULARY GUIDE

(bit.ly/YL1krW) This is the perfect app for students who want to take the Cambridge IELTS examination. It is the perfect complement to the book and helps students prepare for the test by providing plenty of vocabulary practice. It's available for download on iTunes as well as its other versions for TOEIC, TOEFL, etc.

8 CAMBRIDGE ADVANCED LEARNERS' DICTIONARY

(cambridgemobileapps.com/dictionaries/aldict.html) There is a large variety of dictionary apps available, most of them more affordable than this one (lots are even free!), but this dictionary is certainly more affordable than its print version. Definitely worth the price.

9 OXFORD DELUXE DICTIONARY AND THESAURUS OF ENGLISH

(<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/oxford-deluxe-ode-ote-powered/id307233030?mt=8>) It is probably one of the most expensive apps available for English learners, but there are none more comprehensive than this one. This app basically contains the complete Oxford Dictionary, plus the thesaurus, with the added audio feature. It's ideal for students who have the money to spend and don't want to carry a big, bulky dictionary around.

THESE ARE BUT A FEW OF THE HUNDREDS OF APPS AVAILABLE FOR MOBILE LEARNING.

If you have tried any and would like to recommend them, please tell us about them in the

8 Activities For Putting Phones to Positive Use in the Classroom

WHEN THE TYPICAL TEACHER SEES HER STUDENTS USING CELL PHONES IN CLASS, HER RESPONSE IS TO PUT IT AWAY, TAKE IT AWAY OR THROUGH SOME OTHER MEANS REMOVE THE PHONE FROM THE CLASSROOM.

Today's phones, though, have many features your students can use to their advantage when learning English, and allowing them in the classroom may just help your students learn. Here are some activities you might want to try in class that will also convince you cell phones really can be put to positive use in class.

TRY THESE 8 CELL PHONE ACTIVITIES IN YOUR CLASSROOM

1 PASS THE PICTURE

Since most of today's cell phones include a camera feature, phones can be a terrific way to help your students learn new vocabulary. Set a precedent in your class that students can bring in cell phone pictures of objects they see outside the classroom, objects that they do not now possess English vocabulary to describe. Pass the picture around the class and see if anyone can give their fellow student an answer to his vocabulary conundrum, or give the answer yourself if no one else has a ready answer!

2 PICTURE SCAVENGER HUNT

On the flip side, you can give your students a set of words that corresponds with a unit you are studying in class and send them out on a picture scavenger hunt. This will work particularly well with very concrete sets of vocabulary, words that your students would use and see examples of on a daily basis. Send groups out with vocabulary lists and camera phones and see how many they can find before returning to class at the assigned time.

3 NO-SEE

For second language learners, visual clues are very important when it comes to communicating. Unfortunately, real life language situations do not always give ESL students ideal situations for communicating in English, for example, language exchanged over the phone. Cell phone conversations can give your students a chance to practice conversational skills without visual input to aid comprehension. Though they may be challenging, they will ultimately be beneficial to your students and their language studies.

4 VOICEMAIL CHALLENGE

Even more challenging to your students' listening skills is listening to a recorded message via voicemail. They will have the same challenges that come from lack of visual input, but they will additionally have the distortions that come from a digital recording. Be creative and send your students regular voice messages. Use a group message to your class to assign homework or give information that they will need for class the next day. The group message will save you from having to repeat the same message twenty times and your students will still reap the benefits that come with the voicemail challenge.

5 TEXT-A-SUMMARY

In reading class, cell phones can play a valuable part as well. The next time you want your students to write a summary of something they have read, have them text it to you or your website. Because many phones have a strict and very low limit on the number of characters one text can contain, it will force your students to be concise and avoid trivial and useless words in their summaries.

6 WRITING INSPIRATION

In writing, use cell phones as inspiration for writing assignments. Have students take pictures of people or scenes they see outside the class-

room for inspiration when they write inside the classroom. They may want to take pictures of interesting buildings, beautiful scenery or interesting people. For a real challenge, have students exchange phones and pictures and be inspired by their classmates' photos.

7 ACT'N'SNAP

Or have your students reenact a piece of literature they read in class in play format. As groups of students perform in front of the class, the rest of the students use their phones to take pictures. After everyone has performed and taken at least one picture, have your students use one of their pictures to write about what was happening in the selection at that point.

8 RESEARCH ASSISTANT

If you ever find yourself frustrated because you do not have enough internet resources for your classroom, allowing your students to use their phones for internet access in class can alleviate that problem. Your students can then use the reference sources available online as well as do research right in class. Since they are using their phones, you will not need wifi or computers in your classroom.

AS WE COMPLETE OUR TRANSITION INTO THE INFORMATION AGE, CLASSROOMS ARE BOUND TO FEEL THE EFFECTS, BUT TEACHERS CAN PUT THESE CHANGES TO POSITIVE USE ON A DAILY BASIS.

By allowing and encouraging cell phones in the ESL classroom, you will have a unique bank of resources at your fingertips, and your students', ready to move them toward language fluency in English.

Back to School Dilemma: Technological Gadgets in Classroom?

If you teach a student over 10, chances are they have a cell phone. At the very least. Some may show up to class with an assortment of gadgets, including iPods, PSPs, or Blackberries just to name a few. So, how should you handle this? Issue a complete ban on any gadget or use them to your advantage?

First comes acceptance. Like it or not, iPhones, iPods, iPads and the like, are here to stay. And if they don't stay, they will be easily replaced by other "i" products. Backpacks and bags even come with special compartments that are specifically designed for such devices. It wouldn't be unheard of for an adult learner to bring a laptop to class. Schools are wired with WiFi. It's so easy to take these gadgets everywhere we go – why not bring them into the ESL classroom?

Next, comes the question: should you completely ban them from your ESL classroom? Some schools have a policy regarding the use of technological devices within school grounds. Check your school's policy. If they are not allowed, communicate this to your students. They must understand that it is school policy and that if they insist on bringing technological devices to school, they may be confiscated. In this case, the responsibility lies with your students.

But what if your ESL school has no such policy? You may choose to ban electronic devices from your classroom anyway, and if you do, this is a rule you must be prepared to enforce. But you might be more successful with your students if, instead of banning electronic devices, you teach them some good gadget etiquette.

HOW TO TEACH STUDENTS GADGET ETIQUETTE

1

Ask your students what could possibly be the most annoying thing about any electronic gadget. Most would agree it's the ringing, the interruption that may

cause you to lose your train of thought during class, whether it's your phone or another's that is ringing. It's safe to say that most students would agree to turn off their phones during class. Remind adult learners who for some particular reason may need to be reached urgently, like doctors or parents, that they may put their phones on "vibrate" instead.

2

Remind students of their language learning goals and how important it is for them to immerse themselves in an English-speaking environment. How could they possibly listen to you in one language and respond to text messages in another? Kindly ask them if it would be too hard to hold the text messaging until class is over.

3

Remind students that the school can't be held accountable for electronic devices that may disappear from the premises. Ask younger students if they are willing to take the risk of losing their brand new PSP or Nintendo DS. With a little nudging, they might agree that the risk is not worth it.

4

Determine if you will allow some electronic devices and not others - for example, cell phones will be allowed but not gaming devices. Also, you may limit to what capacity they may use each device, for example, they may use them to take notes, record role plays, or videotape a skit, but not to play games, text friends or chat. This may depend on the size of the class: smaller classes are easier to monitor, while for larger groups this may be too hard to control.

5

Teach by example. If they see you checking your messages while they are busy completing a worksheet or reading task, you won't get your point across. See? You're hooked too! Teach them, instead how much fun you can have with very low tech like a ball, a blindfold,

or a box of odds and ends.

IF YOU CAN'T BEAT 'EM JOIN 'EM

Now, what if you were to use these very same devices in the classroom to aid your students in achieving their learning goals? What if you could turn these gadgets into tools instead of distractions? Many teachers argue that by using electronic gadgets in the classroom they have better chances of reaching students, particularly teens, who tend to be self-conscious, shy and uncommunicative. Here are some ways in which you can make your students' electronic gadgets your allies instead of adversaries:

BUSINESS E-MAIL

Why have students write email with paper and pen? They send email in electronic format. Why not do it in English? Have your business English students or adult learners send each other e-mails during class.

PAPER-FREE ACTIVITIES

Remember that the less paper we use, the better it is for the environment. Dictate some questions for homework, but tell them they can use their electronic notepads. Encourage the use of iPads or laptops for note-taking or writing tasks, if possible and if you have small groups of teens or adult learners.

RECORD IT!

Cell phones with cameras are great tools for an ESL classroom. Film a role play between two students, and have a critiquing session afterwards. Do you or your students remember everything they said during a role play? Record it in audio and play it back. Have students record an audio file of you reading a short text, and give them comprehension questions to answer for homework.

SHOULD YOU BAN ELECTRONIC DEVICES FROM THE CLASSROOM OR USE THEM TO YOUR ADVANTAGE?

That depends on school policy, student ages, and class size. Sometimes, the decision is yours. The potential is there if you choose to exploit it.

What You Can Do with a Cell Phone: 7 Great ESL Activities

IN THE ESL CLASSROOM, DO YOU CONSIDER THE CELL PHONE YOUR FRIEND OR FOE? YES, IT'S A HUGE DISTRACTION FOR TEENS AND ADULTS, AND THE USE OF CELL PHONES IN THE ESL CLASSROOM SHOULD BE MANAGED APPROPRIATELY.

But here lies the key. IF managed appropriately, the cell phone could be a wonderful, powerful tool in the classroom, particularly if you have adult learners. And to prove this, here are some great things you can do with a cell phone in class:

7 GREAT ESL ACTIVITIES THAT INVOLVE CELL PHONES

1 NUMBER CRUNCHING

This is a very useful way to practice saying very large, 6 or 7 digit numbers— no need for you to have to write them all down on the board. Ask students to use the “calculator” function in their phones. Give a student two numbers to add – 354,455 plus 21,998. Students add the numbers and must say the result correctly in English.

It's also useful when you practice shopping situations, and they must calculate percentages and say them in English. If you have Business English students ask them for more complicated calculations like taxes or the bottom line in a Profit and Loss statement.

2 ONE-SIDED CONVERSATION

Take your cell phone and pretend you are talking to someone. Students will hear only your side of the conversation. When you're done talking ask students to guess who you were talking to and what the conversation was about. This is something you can really target to your students' needs: you can have all types of business scenarios like complaints, delays,

deadlines, etc.

3 MATCHING CONVERSATION

Say you are teaching your students the four seasons. Use your phone and pretend to talk to someone about the weather. Have four different conversations. Students have to match the conversation to the right season. For example: “Oh yes! Just lovely!..... I'm enjoying this weather so much... Went out for a walk. You know, after spending so many months indoors, it was so nice to enjoy the fresh air... Have you seen how many flowers are blooming?.....” Students would have to guess you were talking about spring.

You can also match type of holidays, professions, sports, etc. -- just remember that you can't give away any of the key words. Students must guess from other clues.

4 TAKE A SNAPSHOT!

This is a wonderful activity for ESL learners who are either in an English-speaking country or are traveling to one. Many ESL students don't feel confident enough in an English-speaking setting. So, provide them with a great tool. Show them just how useful their cell phone camera can be.

Play this fun game. Take pictures with your own phone of important intersections in town. Ask students if they can identify them. They must name the exact intersection and if possible famous landmarks that are nearby. Show students that they can do exactly the same when they are in a foreign location and take pictures of key streets and locations.

5 PLAYBACK

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could play back everything students say to show them the mistakes they've made? With a cell phone you can! Use your phone to record a student speaking about a topic or a role play between two students. Then, play the

recording and see if students can correct their own mistakes. Play back a second time for you to show them the mistakes they didn't catch.

6 MY FAVORITE THINGS

What are the chances of getting your students to bring some of their favorite items to class? If they are small enough, that's no problem, but what if you want to talk about their favorite clothes, shoes, or even a room in their house. This problem is easily solved with a cell phone camera. Ask students to take a picture of their favorite room in the house. They must bring it to class, share it with the group, describe it and say why it is their favorite.

7 HOW FAR HAVE YOU PROGRESSED?

Film your students with your cell phone. They may be participating in a role play or discussion. Save this video till the last day of class. You may ask them to have a similar role play or ask the very same discussion topic. Ask them if they can tell the difference and see how much they've advanced!

Please note that for the One-sided Conversation and Matching Conversation, you may choose to use a toy phone, and it will get the job done just as well as a real phone. Also, these activities don't include tasks that involve texting or emailing you, for example, but those are also great options.

IT HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO COMPLETELY BAN CELL PHONES IN THE ESL CLASSROOM, ESPECIALLY IN ESL SCHOOLS.

Can we ask students to turn them off during class? Absolutely! Can we ask them not to bring them to class? It is very likely that our request will be met with reluctance. So, why not use this tool instead of fighting it? Your students will certainly be more motivated!

How to Use Social Networking Productively in Classroom

WE'VE ALL EXPERIENCED IT IN THE CLASSROOM: YOU TURN YOUR BACK TO WRITE ON THE BOARD. WHEN YOU TURN BACK, YOU FIND THE MAJORITY OF THE CLASS HAS WHIPPED OUT THEIR LAPTOPS, SMART PHONES, AND IPADS AND IS BUSY TYPING AWAY, OBLIVIOUS TO YOU OR THEIR CLASSMATES, IN SOME KIND OF ELECTRONICS-INDUCED DAZE.

You try instituting rules such as "Turn off your electronics and keep them off during class," with the result that now students text under their desks, with the apparent logic that since their hands can't see what you're doing, you can't see what their hands are doing. Sometimes you'll go up to a student, when he is supposed to be working independently on class work, who is typing away at his laptop, and ask what he's doing. He'll say with a straight face, "The assignment," while his computer screen shows his Facebook profile.

So it appears that in trying to beat students in the electronics war, we may lose. But can we join them? Can we in some way productively incorporate the social media that is so much a part of our students' lives that they can't leave it outside the class for a few hours a day into the curriculum?

But first, what if this is not your class? What if your class is not tech-savvy? I've begun from the premise that the millennial generation is, as a group, knowledgeable about technology, but in some ways electronics and technology has widened the gap between the haves and have-nots: I've also had immigrant students in my class who can't afford an internet connect and therefore don't have email addresses, which seems to me also problematic for a student today. What can be done in this case? What are ways to address both the needs of the technology "have" and "have nots" in our classes while keeping the focus on language learning?

TO BEGIN

1 Pay a visit to the school library, or "learning resource center," as it is often called these days, highlighting its changing role as not just a source for books. Almost all libraries have a computer room and free internet connections for students. And there are free websites, like Gmail, where students can set up an email account.

2 Have students email each other. They can trade email addresses (preferably with classmates of different language backgrounds) and check in with each other periodically, especially when they have missed class. This is a way of keeping up with class and also practicing their written English.

3 In another visit to the library, practice sending different kinds of emails: a copy to a friend, to multiple friends, with an attachment, and so forth. Even proficient users of email will do things like sending an email without an important attachment, or copying the person or people (which can be relationship-breaking). Teach to students to get in the habit of reviewing their email for these concerns before pressing "send."

4 Teach some of the language of email/text: LOL, IMHO, etc. This language is prolific on the internet now and students should have a basic understanding of these terms. Have students complete assignments using some of this language. Have them "translate" an email in Standard English to email English, or vice versa. Have students email each other and include at least one of these terms per email. Give a quiz on the terms.

5 Teach some of the basics of email/computer maintenance, such as cleaning your mailbox on daily basis and either storing or deleting messages. Teach students how to set up email filters. Talk to students about antivirus software and keeping computers at the appropriate temperature.

6 Set up a class email newsletter and send out important information on a regular basis. Students can add to it.

MORE ADVANCED WORK

1 Many instructors maintain a class website. Put students in charge of this project. They can then set up their own profiles on the site, which can function like a class "Facebook": students can periodically update their pages, adding information about their lives and studies. Have students comments on each other's statuses.

2 Set up a class blog. Have students blog about a book you are reading or other assignments. To keep the discussion going, the teacher can periodically comment on the blog and require students to also comment at certain intervals. The topic can change according to what is happening in class and what students are studying.

3 Teach email/internet courtesy and conventions: like NOT TYPING IN ALL CAPS (shouting) and including a topic in the subject line. Discuss different kinds of email appropriate for different situations (emailing a friend about a date on Saturday versus a potential employer about a job). Give

assignments of composing these different emails.

4

Teach some basic research skills. One of my favorite examples to offer on the pitfalls of web searches is that if you Google the word “Holocaust,” you will get millions of hits, and many of them will be websites set up by hate groups whose mission is Holocaust denial, rather than any legitimate research on the topic. Teach students how to narrow searches (e.g., “Holocaust research” rather than just “Holocaust” or “Holocaust and the United States,” to narrow the focus to the U.S. role) and how to evaluate sites for legitimacy (a university website vs. an unidentified person’s homepage). Have students complete a small research project on a topic of their choice.

TECHNOLOGY, ELECTRONICS, THE INTERNET, AND SOCIAL NETWORKING ARE A PART OF OUR STUDENTS’ LIVES, FOR BETTER OR WORSE.

Indeed, they are now very much part of the larger culture, and students should be proficient in them. These are some of the uses of technology and social media in the classroom that, rather than being waste of time, can be incorporated in the curriculum and used to enhance students’ English learning.

Creating a Class Website: How and Why

MAYBE YOU HAVE BEEN THINKING ABOUT HOW AWESOME IT WOULD BE TO HAVE A CLASS WEBSITE OF YOUR VERY OWN.

Maybe you have never even considered making one but luckily, it is not hard at all and would probably be an excellent addition to your teaching portfolio since it is a great way to demonstrate your technical abilities.

HOWTO: CREATING A CLASS WEBSITE

1 HOW TO MAKE A SITE?

There are many ways to create a class website but for now, let us just look at Google sites (<https://sites.google.com>). With Google sites, you can create your own website for free and Google even has a template for classrooms that looks great, is easy to customize, and includes sections like 'Word of the Week' which is a great idea whether you are making a class website or not because it emphasizes the importance of vocabulary development. Rather than starting from scratch and having to learn computer programming, you can use the template to get started and there are easy instructions to help you set everything up just the way you want. There are also Google pages to answer any questions you might have or if you get stuck on something. There is a learning curve, as with most new things, but you will get the hang of it. If you are committed to seeing the site through to completion, a little perseverance is all you need although if your school has a computer technician, you could always ask for assistance too.

2 WHY CREATE CLASS WEBSITE?

Depending on the country where you live and teach, students will have varying degrees of technological skills and access to technology but in many places, computers and the internet are part of daily life and a class website can give you a space to communicate with students and others outside

regular class times. A class website is a great place to post announcements about schedule changes, homework assignments, and special activities. You can embed a Google calendar in your site for parents, students, and administrators to reference. Using a class website in this way actually increases the amount of time you can spend teaching material in your class since you will not have to devote nearly as much time to housekeeping items.

ESL teachers from native English speaking countries teaching abroad often have little communication with parents but a very basic introduction page and 'contact me' form could go a long way towards establishing a connection with parents. If you are fortunate enough to speak the same language as your students or work with a native speaker of the local language, you have the added benefit of being able to include content in that language which would make the site more accessible to parents.

With a class website, students will not be able to say they forgot what the homework was or lost their worksheet because you can post both the directions and the necessary files all in one easily accessible place. Additionally, students will know far in advance when upcoming tests are and can prepare themselves accordingly. Students who are too shy to approach you with questions in class might take advantage of this means of communication and you do not even have to hand out your personal email address and risk cluttering your inbox.

Finally, administrators will appreciate that you have taken the initiative by reaching out to both your students and their parents in this way. The website is also an excellent way to document what you and your students have been doing throughout the term so it reflects well on you as the instructor. Additionally, including discussion pages or student of the week sections can help foster a sense of community

which would, in turn, improve cooperation in the classroom.

In countries like China where Google sites are inaccessible without the use of a VPN, Google sites might not be the best choice but there are other services available.

In countries where students have limited computer access, class websites would not be recommended however a bulletin board in your classroom or in the hallway could serve some of the same functions.

WHILE NOT EVERY TEACHER WILL BE IN A POSITION TO USE CLASS WEBSITES, IT IS SOMETHING THAT YOU MIGHT WANT TO CONSIDER FOR CURRENT OR FUTURE CLASSES AND NOW WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO START EXPLORING YOUR OPTIONS.

Everything You Need to Know About Virtual Fieldtrips

With budget cuts in education happening all the time, teachers need to be even more creative these days, and virtual fieldtrips, along with the use of other technology based resources, are one way to get students engaged in class and enjoying the benefits of a fieldtrip without even having to leave the classroom.

While most traditional fieldtrips are related to subjects such as science and history, there are plenty of ways you can use them in your ESL classroom, too. Read on to learn about the setup needed for virtual fieldtrips as well as some ESL fieldtrip ideas.

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT VIRTUAL FIELDTRIPS

1 THE SETUP

In order to get the most out of the fieldtrip, you will need to have class in a computer lab, where students can work on computers individually, in pairs, or in small groups, or have a projector connected to a computer in your classroom. For lower level English language learners, the latter is the best option especially for the first fieldtrip since students often struggle when trying to navigate all English websites. With more advanced students, a simple Webquest could be used to structure the activity so that students could work more independently. How you set up the fieldtrip depends a lot on what you want to accomplish and how much time you would like to spend on the activity as well as what resources are available to you at your school.

2 FIELDTRIP IDEAS

Google Earth is a great resource because you can 'walk' around many places that appear almost 3D. For example, my whole neighborhood in the United States has been photographed from the street so I am able to 'walk' around my neighborhood

and show students just how rural my house is while talking about cultural differences or the difference between living in the city and living in the countryside. It is possible to record tours using Google Earth so that nothing is left to chance or you can leave it open to see what students would like to explore either in class or at home. Be sure that wherever you are taking your students has been photographed from the street and not simply from above. If you need ideas of where to go or want students to focus on a specific topic such as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Google also has a gallery of collections available at <http://maps.google.com/intl/en/help/maps/streetview/gallery.html>. Using these galleries could save you a lot of time trying to think of and find interesting places to go. You could also divide the class into groups and have them prepare speeches about various destinations like the United States, Poland, Russia, Thailand, and Italy which are all available galleries or find interior views and elicit descriptions of buildings, views, or even rooms of famous buildings as a class! There are a lot of possibilities for fieldtrips with Google Earth alone but there are more sites out there too.

3 MUSEUMS

Many museums have online galleries and even tours available for free online. Given the hassle of transportation and finding chaperones, it is astounding that virtual fieldtrips of these destinations have not become more common. With a virtual field trip, students can have an experience similar to visiting the actual museum and the assignments can be the same too. Students can explore individually and perhaps write a description of a painting or exhibit or be led through the museum as a class and discuss their favorite parts of the tour afterwards. Once you have committed to a destination, decide if you want students to focus on developing their listening, writing, or speaking skills. For listening, have students complete a work-

sheet of comprehension questions based on what is said during the tour. For writing, ask students to compose a description of something in particular or a journal entry about the experience. For speaking, give students a discussion topic before the tour so that they can pay attention to relevant information and then facilitate the discussion after the tour has finished. As you can see, there are many options but it is best to focus on just one or two so that students are not completely overwhelmed!

4 OTHER

Important historical locations, NASA, some zoos, and other places have webcams or tours available online too. There are so many virtual fieldtrips available and many websites, such as <http://ldshomeschoolinginca.org/vft.html>, have organized quite a number of them in one place. Some are definitely better than others so take your time choosing a site especially if you plan to use it for a lesson or more. You could also use just a short five or ten minute fieldtrip to introduce a topic that will be the center of a discussion, debate, role play, or other task later on.

REMEMBER THAT VIRTUAL FIELDTRIPS LIKE TRADITIONAL FIELDTRIPS NEED TO BE CHOSEN AND PLANNED CAREFULLY TO ENSURE THEY ARE APPROPRIATE FOR THE LANGUAGE ABILITY LEVEL AND AGE OF YOUR STUDENTS.

Despite the amount of work they require to put together initially, you will be able to use the same fieldtrips year after year so it is definitely worth the effort and students will enjoy the unique approach you are taking towards teaching them English!

The 9 Best Online Resources for ESL Pronunciation Practice

AS ESL TEACHERS, WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR COACHING OUR STUDENTS TOWARDS BETTER AND IMPROVED PRONUNCIATION.

But it is also our responsibility to coach them in better ways to study and practice on their own. Here are some online resources that every ESL student – and teacher – should access for reference and continued pronunciation practice.

TRY THESE 9 ONLINE RESOURCES FOR ESL PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE

1 OKANAGAN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

This Canadian college offers a comprehensive practice guide (international.ouc.bc.ca/pronunciation/) to English pronunciation, divided into 13 units. Each unit focuses on a particular sound or set of sounds and is packed with activities to help students practice them including video, audio and dictation. Students have the option to record their voice in a conversation. Of particular use to teachers are the workbooks available for each unit – available in MP3 audio, too!

2 UNIVERSITY OF IOWA – PHONETICS FLASH ANIMATION PROJECT

The University of Iowa offers an amazing flash interactive guide (uiowa.edu/~acadtech/phonetics/english/frameset.html) to American English pronunciation. It is a complete guide to phonetics, presented in a clear, concise manner that even ESL students should be able to grasp. A series of buttons help students navigate the different aspects of vowel and consonant sounds, which are demonstrated with animation with sound and video.

3 SOUNDS OF ENGLISH

The website (soundsofenglish.org/pronunciation/index.htm) provides a great guide to how to pronounce different sounds in English. The sounds are presented in contrasting pairs (like heat and hit) -- click on each and you have access to a description of how each sound is produced, plus video and audio files for each. And there's a bonus for ESL teachers – a “Tips for Teachers” section with some fabulous ideas for pronunciation activities.

org/pronunciation/index.htm) provides a great guide to how to pronounce different sounds in English. The sounds are presented in contrasting pairs (like heat and hit) -- click on each and you have access to a description of how each sound is produced, plus video and audio files for each. And there's a bonus for ESL teachers – a “Tips for Teachers” section with some fabulous ideas for pronunciation activities.

4 ESL STATION

San Jose City College has an excellent ESL department, which in addition to its regular course, provides an online lab called ESL Station. It offers interactive pronunciation activities (eslstation.net/quia-pron-activities.htm) that include Syllables and Stress Patterns, Stress Patterns in Words and Rhythmic Patterns. It also has a very complete pronunciation guide (eslstation.net/Pronunciation/index.htm) with listening exercises and quizzes.

5 MANYTHINGS.ORG

ManyThings.org has an American English Pronunciation Practice page specifically designed for ESL students. It offers great minimal pair practice with Flash and MP3 audio. The site also features “Listen and Repeat” videos that are really useful for students to practice pronunciation at home.

6 SPOKENSKILLS

SpokenSkills (spokenskills.com/index.cfm?type=15&content=studentactivities) is a site that has tons of resources for the ESL student and teacher, but in terms of pronunciation practice, be sure to check out the exercises for vowel and consonant sounds. For each sound, there are lists of practice phrases that students can hear. They may also record their own voice and repeat the process till they are satisfied with the results. There are also intonation exercises and minimal pairs for practice.

7 LEARNER'S DICTIONARY

Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary has Perfect Pronunciation practice exercises (learnersdictionary.com/pronex/pronex.htm), including 15 sessions in all, each featuring a different set of sounds and five exercises for each. Students first listen to a set of words with the same sound, then listen again and repeat each one. Finally, there's a quiz to test a student's ability to recognize different sounds. There are also exercises for syllable stress and those labeled as sentence practice, review everything learned during the session.

8 WORDS AND PICTURES

And just when you thought there weren't any resources for young learners to practice pronunciation with, here comes the BBC with their Words and Pictures site (bbc.co.uk/schools/word-sandpictures/index.shtml). Through a variety of fun, interactive games, little ones can practice consonant and vowel sounds, as well as CVC words. Probably the best way to introduce young ESL learners to phonemes.

9 SOUND-O-MATIC

Also great for young learners, the Sound-O-Matic (eslgame.com/activities/sound-o-matic/) lets them choose different vowel-consonant combinations like –as, –an, –ap, –at, etc. and explore the different words than can be made with these combinations.

EVERY YEAR, THE INTERNET GETS BIGGER AND BETTER IN TERMS OF VIDEO AND AUDIO QUALITY, AND INTERACTIVE SOFTWARE BECOMES INCREASINGLY MORE SOPHISTICATED.

This can only mean good news for ESL teachers as we have access to more resources and not just simple lists or exercises to copy. We have access to technology that can put ESL students in the driver's seat and really take charge of their self-study time.

Back to School Tech Tips for ESL Teachers: Use Online Resources

Not exactly tech-savvy are you? But you have to admit that starting a new school year can be overwhelming, particularly for new teachers. Luckily for us, the World Wide Web offers ways in which we can share the load and support each other, tools that can certainly make things easier. There is also an astounding amount of information and resources for ESL teachers, and not just in the form of worksheets and printables for download.

Even the ESL teachers who are most reluctant to use the newest online tools should take advantage of the vast amount of resources available to them, and here are but a few of the things you can do online to start the new school year off on the right foot.

BACK TO SCHOOL TECH TIPS FOR SMART ESL TEACHERS

1 USE TWITTER

Twitter can be an invaluable tool for those interested in building a network of like-minded professionals. For ESL teachers, in particular, it provides an excellent way to trade secrets, exchange tips, or simply share the trials and joys of teaching.

If you haven't got an account yet, it's very easy to create one here: <https://twitter.com/>. Once you have your account set up, all you have to do is start following other ESL teachers or ESL publications, organizations and websites. It's as easy as typing "ESL" in the "Who To Follow" search box. You'll have thousands of suggestions to choose from. And don't forget to add [busyteacher_org](https://twitter.com/busyteacher_org) to follow us on Twitter!

Also, [TwitterforTeachers.com](https://twitter.com/teachersforteachers) has an excellent database of ESL teachers you can follow – remember to add your name to the list so that others can find you.

2 CREATE YOUR OWN WEBSITE

Creating a website used to be a monu-

mental task, but not anymore! There are sites like [Wix.com](https://www.wix.com) and [Weebly.com](https://www.weebly.com) that allow you to create your own free websites and guide you every step of the way – no need to know anything about programming, no need to hire expensive web designers. But why create your own website? Your custom made website can be an invaluable link between the classroom and home. In your class website you can:

- Post schedules and calendars
- Share pictures of your special projects
- Keep parents informed on what you're doing in class
- Give your students extra homework or reading materials
- Post videos or songs for extra, fun practice
- And the list goes on...

If you think a class website will only give you more work to do, that may not necessarily be the case. Once you have your website up and running, you may only have to update it once or twice a week. You can always choose how much of your time you'll dedicate to it, but chances are you'll get hooked!

This is a great way to get parents interested in what their kids are learning, but it also shows them exactly what they have been doing in class. Remember that before you post photos of your students on the Internet, it's best to get a signed authorization from their parents.

3 DOWNLOAD READY-MADE MATERIALS

Creating your own worksheets, flashcards and posters can be time consuming and exhausting. Why create yet another worksheet on the present perfect when hundreds of ESL teachers have done so before you. Make use of the online resources available to you and download the materials you need. Here at [BusyTeacher.org](https://www.busyteacher.org), we've got worksheets, flashcards, puzzle creators and more! Once you know where you can get everything you need, it'll always be there at your fingertips!

But don't just stop at downloads. Use all of the tools available to you that can

help you get things done easier and faster. [Scholastic Book Wizard](https://www.scholastic.com/bookwizard/) ([scholastic.com/bookwizard/](https://www.scholastic.com/bookwizard/)) helps you choose the right book for you class. [Scholastic's Classroom Setup Tool](https://www.scholastic.com/tools/class_setup/) ([teacher.scholastic.com/tools/class_setup/](https://www.scholastic.com/tools/class_setup/)) takes the guesswork out of organizing your class for more effective lessons.

4 READ ESL BLOGS

ESL blogs may offer worksheets to download or just simple, good advice. There are different types of ESL blogs, but most have one thing in common: any ESL teacher will find something useful in them, perhaps a pearl of wisdom, or a really great video to watch. Blogs are also great places to leave comments and connect with the blogger, who in this case, is an ESL teacher, just like you! [OnlineDegrees.org](https://www.onlinedegrees.org) has published a great list of [Top 25 ESL Blogs for Teachers and Students](https://www.onlinedegrees.org/top-25-esl-blogs-for-teachers-and-students/) ([onlinedegrees.org/top-25-esl-blogs-for-teachers-and-students/](https://www.onlinedegrees.org/top-25-esl-blogs-for-teachers-and-students/)).

5 INVEST IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

You may have already gotten your degree, but this does not mean you have nothing left to learn. There are plenty of ways in which you can further your education, from a Master's degree to technology courses.

- [Walden University](https://www.walden.edu) offers online degrees like the Master of Science in Education and the Bachelor's degree in Instructional Design and Technology.
- Want to finally get your TESOL certification? [TESOL.org](https://www.tesol.org) offers a directory of degree and certificate programs, while [TESOLonline](https://www.tesolonline.com) offers classroom-based or online courses in 20 international locations.

SO, DON'T BE TECH-SHY AND TRY SOME OF THESE RESOURCES AND TOOLS. REMEMBER THAT THE NEWEST INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES CAN ONLY MAKE OUR LIVES EASIER.

9 Best Tips to Give ESL Students for Professional Business Email

How do your students' email writing skills stack up? At this day and age, ESL students who are not learning good, professional email writing skills will be at a serious disadvantage in comparison to those who already possess them. In business in particular, professional email communication is absolutely crucial.

Of course, we're responsible for teaching the correct grammar and vocabulary, but effective email writing is so much more than that. It is just as important to teach students how to be respectful and set the right tone. Here are 9 tips that will help your students write effective, professional emails - every time!

HOW TO HELP YOUR STUDENTS WRITE EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL EMAILS

1 MAKE THAT SUBJECT LINE CLEAR

The subject line indicates what the email is about, and so it gives the recipient a certain idea of what to expect. The subject line is crucial because it often determines whether the email will be read or sent directly to the trash.

Students must understand that the subject line should be clear, descriptive and rarely include a complete sentence - unless it is absolutely necessary. A good rule of thumb is to keep it to no more than 50 characters. Also, it's good to convey how personal and timely your message is. Here are some examples of effective subject lines you can give your students:

- Your requested information
- Preliminary schedule for the conference
- Agenda for next week's meeting

2 ATTACH DOCUMENTS THAT ARE RELEVANT

A lot of people are wary of attachments. They may take time to open, may contain a virus, or may require a program your recipient does not have. Students should only include attachments that

they deem to be absolutely necessary and relevant to the email. It's advisable for them to include some reference to the attached document within the main body of text ("Please find attached ...", "you'll find the report attached").

3 DON'T CC EVERYBODY

This is a common mistake with those who are inexperienced at sending professional emails. When you send an email to someone, it is not absolutely necessary to 'cc' (send a copy to) your boss or other members of the team every time. Students must learn to judge if it is necessary to send a copy of the email to someone else in addition to the main recipient.

4 CLEARLY STATE YOUR PURPOSE

Students should learn to state the purpose of their email early on ("I'm writing to let you know that ..."). This gives a clear indication to the recipient whether it is something urgent that requires immediate attention or something that can wait. Any personal messages, holiday greetings or best wishes should be mentioned at the end of the email after business has been taken care of.

5 KEEP IT SHORT AND EASY TO READ

People are busy and often have inboxes flooded with emails. Students must understand that writing an email is not like writing a letter. Sentences should be shorter, just like paragraphs – ideally no more than five lines. If the email is turning out to be too long and complicated, it's a good indication they should call this person instead.

6 USE SIMPLE LANGUAGE

This is not the time for students to show off their literary skills and all of the fancy words they've learned in ESL class. Although we teach students to use phrasal verbs in spoken English and more literary terms in written English (consider the use of "put off" vs. "postpone" or "put up with" vs. "tolerate"),

they should stick to the simpler phrasal verbs in emails – unless it is a very formal one. In general, it is better to use simpler language to go with the shorter sentences and avoid words like "henceforth", "acknowledge receipt of" or "in the event of".

7 DON'T SHOUT

Students, particularly those who are young and inexperienced are often unaware of the fact that writing in capital letters IS LIKE SHOUTING in email language. Tell students that the best way to emphasize a date or hour, or any particular piece of information is by making it bold.

8 USE ABBREVIATIONS SPARINGLY

The subject of abbreviations is not as simple as it may seem – students must often use their own judgment as to which they should use. There are some that are used very often in Business English, like ASAP or FYI, but these are of standard use. Make sure students learn to differentiate business abbreviations from those that are more informal, like those used in text messages or SMS. Moreover, they must be sure recipients will be able to understand the abbreviation. When in doubt, it's better to spell it out. They should also be used sparingly – just a couple per email. An email filled with abbreviations may just be too hard to decipher.

9 CLOSE THE EMAIL WITH COMPLETE CONTACT INFO

In addition to the usual closing (Regards, Sincerely, etc.) encourage students to add a more complete email signature that includes phone, email or other relevant contact info. It will give their emails a more professional touch.

IT'S HARD ENOUGH FOR ESL STUDENTS TO LEARN THE PROPER GRAMMAR, VOCABULARY AND ALL AROUND SOLID WRITING SKILLS. BY PROVIDING THEM WITH THESE TIPS, YOU'LL BE MAKING THINGS A LITTLE EASIER. THEY'LL THANK YOU FOR IT!

Why Use The Internet In TEFL/TESOL?

In the pre-Internet world most dialogue in the classroom was between the teacher and the student, but with the advent of the Net we now have a choice of writing and communicating to a wider audience. There is no one unified method of instruction, but some of the more popular choices are the World Wide Web, E-mail, language learning sites and virtual classrooms.

The Internet differs in fundamental aspects from traditional conversational speech and from writing as a medium of computer-mediated communication, as it has a lack of simultaneous feedback, which is so critical to successful conversation. However new innovative uses of screen capture software are making effective inroads into this deficiency.

Should Standard English be the approved medium when we have this exciting new possibility of truly creative language writing? Or should we let blogging run its interactive course, as it is indeed revolutionary in allowing publication of personal reactions, which would otherwise have no audience?

The Internet has no borders, but in the teaching process we must use it as an empowering tool, to methodically direct students to targets effectively according to students' proficiency levels and language abilities.

THE INTERNET – A 24/7 RESOURCE

The Internet provides students with opportunities for exposure to natural and authentic language use, not only during but also outside the class. There is a wealth of information and unlimited resources that teachers can use in getting students to make worksheets for class, or in homework assignments. This makes learning English part of students' daily lives providing functional communicative experiences and an ongoing process. However exposure is not enough to

facilitate language acquisition and students need to be involved in meaningful tasks that integrate proper usage of computers and the Net e.g. WebQuests. The Internet has become a vital part of life and learning how to use it is an essential skill.

Through usage for learning English, students also develop basic information technology skills simultaneously e.g. word processing, Web-browsing, E-mail etc. and increase their competence in the highly competitive global marketplace. As the Internet offers a variety of topics it is appealing and can satisfy a diverse audience. The information available is current and frequently updated therefore providing a 'living' text. Using the Internet is fun as websites are full of animation, colors, sounds, pictures, interactive forms and digital video clips.

The Internet as a medium is highly motivating, thereby enhancing student autonomy and allowing them the opportunity to manage their own learning.

It is intrinsic, trendy and fascinating as realistically our technological society is still in its Internet infancy despite the apparent speed of advancement.

HOW CAN THIS RESOURCE BE UTILIZED FROM THE ESL PERSPECTIVE?

Many students are computer illiterate even in their own language and the 'older generation' especially display technophobia, or are genuinely frightened of 'surfing' in English. The teacher does not have to be an IT expert to employ modern technology, but should commence with identifying the different uses of computers by students, review the different parts of the computer and keyboard, familiarize them with some basic computer and word processing terms/definitions, netiquette and then proceed to the exploration and practice of some basic computer operations. This makes the tasks meaningful and not merely computer study in isolation.

The Internet is not always accessible in the educational setting due to the country or teaching institution's financial situation. However the resourceful teacher can adapt lessons for the traditional classroom, if no computers are available and assign computer practice activities for homework, if appropriate.

It is important to remember that the primary goal is not to teach computers but a 4 skills course (reading, writing, listening and speaking) utilizing the Internet. Therefore pair work and group participation activities remain essential for collaboration, unlike the computer class where there is little or no interaction with classmates. By helping each other the students often duplicate this social skill in other learning activities.

We can begin with the online sources to do vocabulary and grammar exercises, then use the sites to complete tasks, then become creative and as student skills increase the teacher can design lessons accordingly.

The Internet gives students the opportunity to build knowledge together by expressing themselves in print and then assessing, evaluating, comparing and reflecting on their own views and those of others. They have the opportunity to talk with many people at the same time and not wait their turn, as in the conventional oral group classroom setting. Communication with native speakers allows learners to practice specific skills such as negotiating, persuading, clarifying meaning, requesting information, and engaging in true-life, authentic discussion.

By exchanging e-mails with other students from different parts of the world through 'keypals', there is meaningful communication with native speakers in real situations, improving writing skills, and allowing learners to participate in the culture of the target language, which additionally can enable them to learn how cultural back-

ground influences one's own view of the world. It should be explained to students that having a keypal is their responsibility and they should answer/originate e-mail outside class, thus increasing autonomy.

Some further examples of using the Internet for ESL/TEFL/TESOL include:

- Business English – exploiting authentic materials, providing vocabulary practice, writing e-mails emphasizing tone, structures and layout, scanning practice, research resource for presentations using current and relevant information, commercial websites and Internet terminology.
- Youtube videos – improve listening skills and vocabulary.
- Distance learning courses – for students and teachers alike.
- E-mailing students pre-lesson with material/texts to be used in the classroom.
- Creating a publication together – newsletter, magazine etc.
- Checking designed ESL sites/authentic material.
- Teachers can find photocopiable worksheets/lesson plans/flashcards/games etc.
- Setting up self-access centres (SACs) depending on equipment and facilities, financing, student benefits.
- Customized learning programmes for vocabulary word lists, learning in chunks.
- Free Skype conversations.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES?

- Internet use helps learners to gain input in the language learning process.
- This form of communication provides more equality of opportunity for self-expression and indeed more chances to interact in the written form. This increases confidence to experiment in the second language.
- It is the greatest source of information not in book form -- can be used as an encyclopedia and can have real worth in promoting higher thinking skills. Students focus less on rote learning and basic understanding and employ logical skills for searching and then evaluate and judge the usefulness of gleaned information to put their

work together.

- Some studies indicate that such ESL learners produce more written sentences when compared to the oral group situation in the classroom environment. It is also useful not only for the quantity but also the quality of language as learners have a greater variety of speech discourse and use more complex language.
- The Internet changes the interaction between learners and teachers as students can optimize their computer 'talking' time. Furthermore, it changes teacher and students' roles over content and discussion making learning more student-centered with the choice in topics raised and the student becoming involved in decision – making. The students construct their own knowledge and the teacher becomes a facilitator in the process.
- The Internet has unlimited supplemental language resources such as reading texts, pronunciation exercises etc. which students can access to improve technically in the language. Games with learning components are also fun activities, which the teacher can also create.
- Students can use authentic sites created by native speakers, rather than EFL learning type designed ones.
- The Internet is a platform for experiencing and presenting creative works such as essays, poetry and stories and for providing supplemental language activities in specific areas of language learning. Web pages and projects can be published or e-mailed to other students thus creating interest and motivation even outside the class.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES/ DISADVANTAGES

Communication with other non-native speakers may affect reading skills defectively and student control of input lacks the normal continuity and coherence normally modeled by the teacher. However this can be balanced by introducing native speakers into the tasks and effective teacher feedback.

A multitude of materials can be accessed and integration of the mate-

rials into the second language may create difficulties, unless the teacher has specific goals for using the technology.

There are delays and time wastages, which are inevitable due to training, familiarization, computer hardware/software problems etc. But the teacher must not neglect the communicative teaching approach, which must always be the priority in the lesson. For example the teacher can check student e-mails are error free before the correspondence is transmitted, thus incorporating listening and speaking skills into the exercises.

Student monitoring/evaluation, plagiarism, inappropriate sites etc. need to have appropriate policies and planning in place to pre-empt foreseeable problems. The teacher must also be familiar with technological changes by undergoing CPD to ensure the Internet remains a fun and rewarding language experience, for all concerned.

CONCLUSION

The Internet is a highly versatile resource, provided it is used properly and with discretion. In the future human interaction will be enhanced as sound/video techniques such as voice recognition devices and webcams become more accessible and popular. Speaking is very different from writing, even if it is synchronous. On-line communication restructures class dynamics in a positive and effective manner, but it should be a teaching aid rather than a methodology. We can rest assured that we will always need great teachers.

How to Teach the Millennial Generation (& Get Them off of Facebook)

The Millennial Generation, or Generation Y, is that generation born 1980-2000. They have never known a world without computers, so they are sometimes also called the “Net Generation” and “digital natives.” Speaking generally of the generation rather than of every individual within it, some of the positive aspects of its members are that they tend to be global in outlook and accepting of differences.

However, they are also used to *instant gratification*, *multitasking*, and can present some challenges to classroom instruction, such as *inattentiveness and overuse of technological devices*. Given that a major component of teaching is connecting with learners, what are some methods that teachers can use to connect with the millennial generation and keep their interest?

HOW TO TEACH GENERATION Y

1 ALTER THE LECTURE FORMAT

The lecture does not have to be dispensed with completely, and sometimes it is a necessary, efficient, and even powerful method to relate information. But the lecture alone only reaches a select number of students. Instead of just lecturing, **make the lecture interactive**. Ask students questions or offer examples, and make use of Powerpoint, which students are accustomed to, to support the lecture in the class. It is easy to load slides and text into Powerpoint to create a lecture on the Holocaust, for example. Or give students an outline of the lecture for them to fill in to keep them involved. Finally, **make the lecture as short as possible**, just enough time to relate the necessary information before moving into a different mode of instruction. The lecture can be a powerful learning tool but should be used judiciously.

2 INCORPORATE VISUALS

Incorporating visuals will also aid a lecture. **Learners respond more to a presentation if it is contextualized**. For

example, when explaining verb tense, a handout graphically displaying the different tenses is helpful. Or a quick search on YouTube before class can yield some impressive results. For example, if the presentation is about urban decay and pollution, pictures of a major landfill can spark a discussion. Reproductions of famous paintings, such as those by Picasso, can also serve as a starting place for discussion and writing. Finally, having students bring in their own visuals to represent something the class has just read and explain the connection also works well.

3 INCORPORATE GROUP WORK

Group work can also be highly successful with Generation Y because they have worked in groups all of their lives. After a brief lecture on a topic such as global warming, move students into groups and have them discuss it and come up with causes and possible solutions. Every member of the group should have a role within that group, such as the researcher to review the text or writer to take notes. There should also be a leader to keep everyone on task.

It is also effective to **vary the group structure within a class period, going from whole class to small group to pair work instruction**.

4 TEACH BY DISCOVERY

Another alternative to the lecture format is to teach by discovery. Instead of telling students the information, have them **discover it themselves**.

If students have just read a short story, for example, have them work together to determine the major message or theme of the story, or present them with a dilemma, and have them come up with the solution. Or when introducing a new reading, present students with a series of vocabulary words related to the reading and have them determine what the words have in common and group them accordingly. This will have the additional affect of preparing students for the reading's topic and vocabulary.

5 INCORPORATE TECHNOLOGY

—clips, IPODs, blogs, and video games.

Students are used to technological devices, so incorporate them in class instruction. This can be as simple as having students type, research, and illustrate their own papers as part of class. Or make use of YouTube's resources: for example, when teaching an article on the alleged “*Stupidity Epidemic*” in the U.S., include a clip from YouTube of Jay Leno's “*Jaywalking*,” in which he walks the street and asks passersby seemingly easy questions (and doesn't always get the correct answer): “*What color is the White House?*”

When students are reading a novel, set up a class blog and have students blog about it so that it is an interactive rather than the more traditional and personal journal. If students are text-messaging each other all the time, make that a class assignment. Having students translate text messages into standard or formal English can raise awareness on register differences. Or design a lecture in podcast format, post it on a class website, and have students download and listen to it at home. Some instructors have also used simulations and videogames effectively in their classes. Other instructors have exploited the use of Digital Gaming, interactive games in which students work online, assume a role, and work toward some common goal. Other instructors use social networking sites where students can collaborate on projects. These sites are of particular help to more introverted individuals, who are more likely than extraverts to locate their authentic “selves” in cyberspace.

HOLDING THE ATTENTION OF GENERATION Y IS NOT EASY AS THEY ARE USED TO HAVING INFORMATION COME AT THEM FROM VARIOUS SOURCES.

But with careful planning and being flexible, turning Generation Y from passive learners text messaging their friends in the back of the room into active learners is possible.

What You Can Do With The Internet: 6 Creative Online Activities

When we look at the ESL business and the major breakthroughs that have taken place, one of the biggest would be the photocopier, which has allowed teachers to simply and easily provide student with a worksheet in a matter of seconds. The other significant breakthrough is the Internet.

For over a decade, teachers have been using the Internet as a resource for lesson plans, searching for jobs and to communicate with other teachers and to find out background information on potential locations and employers around the world. The Internet is also currently in the potential position where it poses a threat to many ESL positions, given the rising interest in teaching live over the internet using applications such as Skype.

However, it is the students who are the ones that can benefit the most from the Internet, and it is the teachers who should be harnessing this invaluable resource and incorporating it into their class. The Internet is a great tool that entertains students, while providing subtly educating them requiring them to use a mixture of the four skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking.

HOW YOU CAN USE THE INTERNET IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 GAIN INVALUABLE RESEARCH SKILLS THROUGH UNFAMILIAR TOPICS

One of the major skills that are required throughout life, and especially at university, is researching a topic that is relatively unknown. The Internet is a great place to look to obtain background information and formulate a picture of the background of a topic that is relatively unknown to a student. I like to assign my students a topic, such as 'volcanos', and give my students the task to find out the different types of volcanos that exist, and to explain some of the similarities and differences between the different types. This activity provides students with the ability to practice a number of skills that is involved in the research process, while at the same time giving them useful reading and speaking practice. To create an interactive element to the exercise, stu-

dents can form pairs or groups in order to discuss the information that they come across, and then present their findings to the rest of the class.

2 INTERNET TREASURE HUNT

This is a great activity that can be adapted for students of all ages and abilities. Create a worksheet with a series of questions for students to research and find the answers. Students can work individually or in groups in a race to see who can successfully navigate the Internet to find the answers to the questions.

3 PRESENTATION ASSIGNMENTS

As an increasing number of students are beginning to attend foreign universities, the need to present information in a variety of forms other than essays is becoming more and more widespread. Dossiers are a common form of presentation styles of assignments at universities throughout the world. I like to assign my students with a country to research and find out certain information, preferably a country that is not too familiar to the student. I generally ask my students to find out information about a country, such as population, religion, food, system of politics, environmental issues and current news items, and present the information in the form of a dossier. Rather than focus on the structures of writing, a dossier looks at the student's ability to research information, focusing on the ability to summarise and dissect a large sum of information. Students also enjoy collecting the information and presenting the information in a colourful and creative way.

4 NEWS TASKS

I am a big believer that students should know what is happening in the outside world, and one of the best way for the students to practice their English and find out what is happening in the outside world is to make use of the Internet and take a deeper look at the news happening around the world. I like my students to bring in an item of news once a week and to discuss it with the rest of the class, adding their own opinions and possible solutions to the situation. This activity can potentially turn into a class-

room discussion or debate, and gives the students control over the material used in class.

5 EMAIL BUDDIES

While Facebook and Twitter may initially appear to be a distraction to the learning process, teachers can easily harness the popularity of social networking and use it to their advantage. I like to encourage my students to find what we used to call a pen pal, and write on a regular basis. An email buddy gives students the chance to personalise the structures and grammar used in class and put it to practice on a personal level with someone that they can grow close too and become friends with. They can develop this relationship over a period of time and report back to the class over time and talk about the ups and downs that happen in their email buddy's life.

6 SURVEYS

Ah yes, the age old school activity where we used to go to our local shopping centre and ask members of the public various questions, which the answers we will correlate at a later stage. Well, as technology has advanced, students can conduct their surveys on the Internet. I like to give my students a topic and then get them to conduct an online survey. The survey could be about any topic at all, and students could conduct the survey with their friends using social networking websites such as Facebook. Surveys are great for students to analyse responses and provide a short writing that allows the students describe the findings. This is an important skill that students will need later on when undertaking task 1 of the writing component of IELTS.

SO, THERE YOU HAVE IT. IN ADDITION TO CHECKING WHETHER YOU HAVE BEEN PAID, BITCHING ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL ANONYMOUSLY ON THE FORUMS, OR EVEN FINDING A GIRLFRIEND, THE INTERNET CAN TURN YOUR CLASS INTO ESL GOLD THAT INSPIRES YOUR STUDENTS.

By dragging your students away from the traditional classroom and into the computer room, they're learning a number of important skills that are essential when learning English, all under the guise of entertainment.

Top 10 Teacher Software Programs You Should Be Using Daily

HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED HOW MUCH TIME AND EFFORT WE PUT INTO ALL OF THE THINGS WE DO FOR OUR ESL STUDENTS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM?

It's safe to say we spend more time planning lessons, preparing for class, correcting and grading, than actually teaching. Of course, you put a lot of care into each worksheet you design, but if it's taking you hours at this day and age when we have so many resources and tools at our fingertips, then you're not using your time wisely. It's true: there are some teachers out there who are still reluctant to go the technological route, but once you see how much easier your work is, how much time you save, you'll never go back to pen and paper again.

Here are our top 10 teacher software picks, all of which are guaranteed to make your job easier and which you should be using on a daily basis:

1 GRADEKEEPER

(gradekeeper.com/index.htm)

We all know how tedious it can be to keep track of scores, attendance, and all of the other information that is relevant to students' progress. If you've been thinking about investing in some assessment software, Gradekeeper will not disappoint you. This teaching software records grades and scores, keeps track of assignments, and even sends progress reports via email. With individual licenses available for \$20, there's no reason not to try it.

2 QUIZFABER

(www.lucagalli.net/) This is a free teacher software that allows you to create a great variety of quizzes in HTML format, but no previous knowledge of HTML or javascript programming is necessary. It creates true or false, multiple choice, and matching quizzes, just to name a few, that you may publish on the Internet or send via email with just a few clicks.

3 VOCABMAKER

(<http://vocabmaker.com/>) This is one AWESOME vocabulary software for making printable worksheets! For a one-year membership fee of \$22.99 you can make an astounding variety of printable worksheets and puzzles, like matching exercises, word search, fill in the blanks, crossword puzzles, or even bingo cards, among countless others.

4 LESSON PLAN MAKER

Need some help organizing your thoughts and putting together a great lesson? MakeWorksheets.com has the answer for you. Besides their great teacher software for making all types of puzzles and worksheets, they also provide members (one-year membership for \$29.99) with a handy little lesson plan maker that will help you plan a lesson from your own custom lesson plan format, but there are also several templates to choose from.

5 WHAT2LEARN

(www.what2learn.com/) Every ESL teacher knows kids love games. What if you need a series of short computer games to act as time fillers between activities, or to give your students a break from the more serious type of work? And what if you could give your students a game specially designed by you that they can play at home? Look no further than What2Learn! From their website you can make your own fun interactive game with vocabulary or questions chosen by you, which include options like hangman, word search or multiple choice questions. After you make the game, you obtain a code and a URL you can send to your students. All in a matter of minutes! All for free!

6 BOOKSEARCH

(www.theabsolute.net/sware/index.html#booksearch) No matter how much technology we use, we still need to cling to our beloved books. Book-search is a software that allows you

to search and find all types of books, even if they are rare or out of print. A great way to save money, as this free-ware lets you compare prices before you make your purchase.

7 BINGO CARD PRINTER

(www.bingocardprinter.com/)

What would we do without custom made bingo cards? With Bingo Card Printer, you can make your own Bingo cards and choose the size, font, color scheme, or what they say. No need to waste your time with glue and cardboard anymore. In minutes, you'll have the bingo cards you need ready to be printed. You can download a trial version of this great software for teachers for free.

8 PICASA

(picasa.google.com/) Picasa is a free software developed by Google, an essential image editing tool that will allow you to edit the pictures you have stored in your PC so you may then use them on worksheets, coloring pages, games, flashcards, and all types of activities. You can also create albums to be shared with your students.

9 TESTCOMMANDER

(http://download.cnet.com/Test-Commander/3000-2051_4-10160449.html) This teacher software is an invaluable tool for creating professional-looking online or printed tests. You can publish tests online, and they're automatically graded, with the test results sent directly to you. Or create tests that you will administer on paper and print them out. Also, you can send your test database to others. AND it's available for free download. Pretty amazing, huh?

10 HILITEXT

(www.fanix.com/hilitext.html) This tool will make your Internet research so much easier as it highlights your keywords, thus allowing you to effectively and quickly scan a text for the information you need. It

saves time and there's no need to pore over a long text and make sure you're not missing anything: the key information will be highlighted for you and in plain sight.

Are Microsoft Word and Excel driving you up the wall? Can't figure out how to make PDF files? Did you stay up late to finish that custom made board game? Fortunately, there are people out there, many who happen to be teachers, who have thought about your needs. Some of these teaching software solutions take the guesswork out of designing professional looking worksheets, quizzes or tests. Others simply make your work easier and less time-consuming.

SO, WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH YOUR NEWFOUND FREE TIME?

Pick up that book you bought but never got around to reading? Start an ESL blog? Catch up with old school friends on Facebook? Sip a cold margarita by the pool? Well, the choice is yours, but be prepared to enjoy all of these things and more with your extra free time.

HOW TO:

Teaching With Videos and Media

THE INTERNET HAS BECOME AN ALMOST INVALUABLE MEANS OF COMMUNICATION TODAY. RATHER THAN CALLING ON THE TELEPHONE, ONE CAN SPEAK FACE-TO-FACE WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD. AS A RESULT, THE WORLD OF ONLINE TEACHING HAS ALSO BEEN OPENED UP TO PEOPLE.

China is one country which, at the moment, is struggling with its supply of English teachers. There are simply not enough out there in order to meet the demand which is needed. As a result, many schools are also offering online courses to people who will pay for them. This can give the freelance teacher especially a lot of flexibility. Of course, teaching via systems such as Skype is only one example of using media in your lessons. For many, telecommuting job like this is often much more convenient. One does not have to travel very far, yet they can still keep ahead of their schedule. Youtube and other such websites also offer free video hosting, and therefore can supply the students and teacher with an abundance of material with which to work. However, you need to be sure of how to properly integrate this into the class effectively.

HOW TO TEACH ENGLISH USING VIDEOS AND MEDIA

1 MUSIC

Music, by far, is one of the best ways of helping teach a language and get certain rules into the students' heads. Traditionally, teaching was done by rote learning. Nowadays, this method is seen by many as simply being somewhat rigid and old fashioned. In certain cases it does work, but there are much easier ways.

Finding a song which has simple tenses in it (in order to help the class absorb it easier) is pretty simple: Busy-Teacher.org has a section with 300+ of free song worksheets. In fact, this has frequently been proved to be a

better method by which students can understand how grammar works. If you have access to the Internet, then it might be possible to put Youtube on and click the song. If not, then try and see if it might be possible to bring your own laptop into the class or bring in some CDs. Make printouts of the lyrics, and hand them around to the students.

If the students happen to be studying for an examination which requires grammatical analysis, then it might be a good idea to test them. Play a few lines of a song, and quiz them on what tenses are being used in it. This can often produce some very good results.

2 SKYPE, ONLINE TEACHING, E-MAIL AND MORE

For those of us who are lucky enough to get a few private students, it can always be a great source of income. Sometimes, for whatever reason, we may not be present. Perhaps the teacher has to return home for family reasons. This doesn't mean that the student has to miss out on their lessons. Distance learning has become a more popular option for many people, and as stated before, there has been something of a revolution when it comes to the world of online teaching.

Using Skype can have its benefits. You can be anywhere in the world, as long as you have access to the Internet. This will undoubtedly benefit both parties. For the teacher, they can still continue to do some of their work and earn a bit of extra money. For the students, particularly if they have an exam coming up, they can get some extra help. Even if the teacher is absent, the student can send e-mails regarding any questions they have. Learning time does not necessarily have to be restricted to the classroom. Many students will even pay a bit extra to have some on-demand help should they need it.

3 LISTENING PRACTICE

Youtube, again, can be seen as a saviour to many teachers. Frequently in school, when learning a foreign language, we were all subjected to aural work. This required us to answer a set of questions based on what was heard playing on the tape. Even if you don't have official tapes or CDs to follow, there is no reason why listening practice can't be done. Find a simple video on Youtube, involving a conversation between two people, and test the class on it!

OVERALL, MEDIA AND THE INTERNET HAVE MORE OR LESS REVOLUTIONIZED TEACHING AND MADE IT MUCH EASIER.

Who knows what other kinds of developments might take place in the future which will help make learning language easier. As always, be sure to conduct your classes with a little bit of humour and fun in order to keep the students eager and engaged!

The Movie-Novel Connection: Practical Tips for Using Movies

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A GREAT ACCOMPANIMENT TO THE NOVEL (FULL LENGTH OR ABRIDGED) THAT YOU ARE READING IN CLASS? TRY THE MOVIE.

No, that's not instead of reading the book but along with reading it. Classroom novels that have also been made into movies offer a great resource for ESL teachers, and you can do a lot more with them than just watch the movie after finishing the book. Here are some practical ways you can use the movie before, during and after teaching the novel.

HOW TO TEACH USING MOVIES WITH NOVELS: PRACTICAL WAYS

1 BEFORE THEY READ

There are several activities you can do with film clips to prepare students for a novel.

- One of the easiest ways to use the movie is to introduce the characters. There are a couple of ways to do this. First, you can show the students the credits at the end of the movie. They can then use this list of characters (and the actors who play them) as a reference list while they scan the novel for those characters.
- Another way to introduce the characters is to show clips or still frames of the characters in the movie and have groups of students compile descriptions of these characters. These descriptions should go beyond mere physical detail and include guesses at the personality and intentions of the character based on what they can see.
- You can also introduce students to the setting of the book by previewing it in the movie. Pair students and have one watch a clip without sound. The other should ask their partner questions to determine details about the setting. Have them work together to describe the setting and the possible conflicts the characters may encounter.
- Another way to use the movie before your students read the novel is to give them a general idea of what they will be reading. Give your stu-

dents an opportunity to watch the film's trailer. You can also let them look at the movie poster if it is available and the book jacket. Can your students guess what the opening scene of the movie will be? Let them discuss it, and then play the opening scene so they can see how close they were.

- Plot can also be introduced through film. Play some clips at various points of the movie (don't spoil the end) and have groups of students discuss what they think may happen in the book. They can also make predictions about chapter titles.

2 WHILE THEY ARE READING

Use the film with your students while reading the book to aid in comprehension. There are many ways to do this.

- You can have students read a passage that is also presented in the film and compare and contrast the two.
- You can also give them specific dialogue from the book and ask them to describe the changes that the filmmakers made for the screenplay.
- Another way to use dialogue and film is to start with the students' native language. If subtitles are available in your students' first language, play a scene for them with those subtitles but without sound. Then have students write in English what they think the dialogue might be.
- Have students convert selections of reported speech in the book into the dialogue that might be used in the film. Then check by watching the film and see how close they were.
- Students can also compile time lines of major events in a chapter or a selection of the book. Then play the film clip for them (don't go longer than ten minutes) and ask them to determine if the sequence of events in the book and film are the same.
- You can check listening comprehension, too, by playing the audio without the video for certain scenes. Can your students name the scene in the book? Can they name the characters who are speaking?

3 AFTER THEY READ

There are several opportunities to use film as a review of a novel that students have completed.

- If students are familiar with movie commentary, you can allow them to write their own commentary for a given scene in the movie. Have them work in pairs and choose a favorite scene. They can then write their own commentary and either record it and share or perform it live for the class. This is sure to entertain while giving a little public speaking practice.
- Another performance possibility is to let students transcribe the dialogue for a given scene. They can then record a voice over for the scene and present it to the class with the video from the movie. It can be especially fun to see the actors on screen speaking with voices your students hear around them every day.
- You can review characters in the book by showing clips of significant scenes for a given character. Then have students discuss that character, whether they liked him or her, what that character did that was most significant and whether they would behave the same way if they were that character. This is also a great opportunity to practice the conditional tense with "If I had been ... I would have ..."
- Another writing activity could be to write a review of the film. This could be a short review intended for a local paper or a longer more analytical review for a national magazine. Make your expectations clear to your students and review vocabulary they might need to write about the film.

IN GENERAL, A MOVIE VERSION OF A NOVEL YOU READ AS A CLASS CAN BE A GREAT RESOURCE AT ANY POINT: BEFORE READING THE TEXT, WHILE READING IT AND AFTER YOUR CLASS HAS COMPLETED THE SELECTION. With a little planning and practice, you can make your class interesting and engaging, and entertain your students at the same time. So the next time you pick up a class novel, grab the DVD, pop some popcorn and roll 'em. Your students are sure to thank you.

What Good Is a Video Game in the ESL Classroom?

SINCE THE 1980'S WHEN VIDEO GAMES FIRST ENTERED YOUTH CULTURE, THINGS HAVE NOT BEEN THE SAME.

The simple equation of joystick plus imagination forever changed entertainment and how young people (and old) spend their free time. Though teachers may not be motivated to bring games from that era into the language classroom, games like Pong or Pitfall, today's games can be a benefit to language learning you may not want to turn down. In fact, using video games in the ESL classroom can promote language learning and fluency if you choose the right games and use them the right way.

Here are several reasons for you to bring video games into your classroom to help your students and their language learning.

WHY USE VIDEO GAMES IN THE ESL CLASSROOM?

1 LEARNING STYLES

Playing games is a great motivator for your students. For those who participate and show success in the classroom, video games can be used as a reward, but that is not all that they are good for. When students engage with a video game, they use a different set of learning skills than they do with traditional classroom learning. Video games often give visual as well as auditory feedback while still engaging the kinesthetic learner. Kinesthetic learners can often have a harder time with language learning since so much of language is verbal or visual. By engaging them with the material in the context of a game, these learners will connect with language in a new and different way and see successful learning as a result.

2 DISCUSSING STRATEGY

You can use games in the ESL classroom for conversation activities, too. A game such as Sim City can be

very useful in the ESL classroom if you require your students to work in groups as they play. Planning a strategy in groups will keep your students entertained and engaged and will also require them to talk to one another as they plan. If you are not familiar with the game Sim City, players create their own town, planning the layout of a city and all the support services that the city will need. The more strategic a player is when building the city, the more successful his city will be. When you use a game such as this in the ESL classroom, it can be a natural fit for group discussion practice. By assigning several students to design one city, they will have to discuss the strategy they will use for their city. Not only that, they will also have to problem solve when issues come up that the city planners must address. While they are doing all this group discussion, your students will be having fun and practicing their speaking and listening skills.

You can also extend this type of activity by asking each student to write a summary of his group's strategy for the project. You will want to have your students include what they contributed to the strategy and what they thought was good and bad about the plan as well as what they would change if they were planning independently.

3 CONTENT AREAS

Video games have become so popular with young people (and those not so young, too) that you can find games on just about any topic you are looking for. If you are an ESL teacher that is also teaching content areas, you may find that presenting the information in a video game rather than a traditional lecture or typical format, may make that information more accessible to your students. Additionally, using a video game to teach allows your students to learn at their own rate rather than forcing them to keep pace with other students that may need more or less time to learn the same material. You may want to use

free online games with your students or purchase other games that may be more intricately developed. You can find games that deal with math, geography, history and so many others. No matter what you choose, your students will benefit from learning subject matter in a fun and flexible way with the video games.

4 CONVERSATION

For some online group games, players use headsets to communicate with other players in live, online play. If your students are able to join a game like this, they will have to use their English skills in a real and practical environment. They will be required to listen to other players as well as use their speaking skills to interact with their teams. Another advantage to this type of communication is that these games attract players from all over the world. This means that though your students will be communicating in English, they will be challenged by real variances in accent and dialect. Not only that, international players will bring a completely new set of communication challenges. If your students plan to use their English skills for international communication, either in business, educational or other contexts, they will need to communicate with other nonnative speakers and be able to recognize their language patterns.

THOUGH VIDEO GAMES MAY NOT BE THE FIRST RESOURCE YOU TURN TO FOR YOUR ESL CLASSROOM, THERE ARE EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS THAT COME WITH THE GAMES, EVEN IN LANGUAGE LEARNING CLASSROOMS.

If you are looking to change up the ways your students use their language skills or are trying to connect with students who struggle with traditional teaching methods, try a video game and see the benefit that modern technology has to offer you and your students!

Beyond Naptime: Incorporate Movies and Keep them Riveted

ONCE OR TWICE A SEMESTER, TEACHERS WILL SOMETIMES GET THE IDEA OF “LET’S WATCH A MOVIE!”

Often the movie happens to be a personal favorite of the teacher. (I’m a big fan of “My Big Fat Greek Wedding.”) Movie days can be a break from the regular curriculum, and valuable learning can take place as movies use contextualized language and teach culture.

However, there is the danger of students nodding off or texting their friends rather than watching the movie. What are ways to prevent this?

Sometimes the movie itself is a problem. It isn’t necessarily easy to choose a movie that is engaging, appropriate, and in some way instructive. Following is a brief list of films I’ve had success with. Needless to say, the instructor should always preview the film to make sure it will be appropriate for her individual class:

FIVE ENGAGING FILMS FOR THE ESL CLASS

1 FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

Classic musical of Tevye the milkman and his family in a Jewish village in turn of the twentieth century Russia. Students relate to Tevye’s struggles and dreams.

2 WEST SIDE STORY

Musical retelling of the Romeo and Juliet story set in Manhattan between two warring gangs, The Crips and The Jets. Much of the story is still relevant after sixty years, such as the theme of trying to survive in a hostile urban environment.

3 MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING

Romantic comedy between the Greek American Toula and her WASP fiancée, Ian. Students respond readily to

the cultural conflict between the two families.

4 INVENTION OF LYING

In this Jennifer Gardner comedy, her character, Anna, lives in a fictional world with the main character, Mark — a world where lying hasn’t been invented yet. Mark works as a screen writer where “actors” just read aloud real-life stories. After Mark invents lying, the real complications ensue. Good for ethical and cultural discussions about when it would be appropriate to lie and when not.

5 ERIN BROCKOVICH

Julia Roberts plays Erin Brockovich, in a real-life story of a single mother who discovered PGE dumping waste materials in a town’s water supply and fought them in a landmark case. Students find the character inspirational.

TEN METHODS TO ENGAGE STUDENTS WITH A MOVIE

1 SET THE MOVIE UP

Introduce the movie a day before hand, as you would a reading, discussing its plot and characters and relate it to the curriculum. For example, when showing “Fiddler on the Roof,” I’ve explained the major conflicts in the movie related to the characters’ being cultural minorities, which mirrors many of the students’ situations. I also give out the lyrics to “If I Were a Rich Man,” which models the unreal conditional.

2 LIST OF QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

To keep students attuned to the movie, give them a series of questions to focus them. The questions should focus on both global aspects of the movie: “Where is the story set?” and more detailed aspects of it: “What is the name of the restaurant owned by

Toula’s family?” to really make sure students are paying attention.

3 NEW VOCABULARY TO WATCH FOR

Give students a list of less frequent words used in the movie. See if they can write a definition using the context.

4 WRITE A SUMMARY

Summarizing is an important academic skill, and somehow students understand more about what to summarize with a movie — just the highlights — than they do with a written text, perhaps because they are used to orally summarizing movies and events for friends in a way they don’t with written text. Have the students summarize as if for a friend who hasn’t seen the movie.

5 BE THE REVIEWER

After summarizing, discuss the difference between evaluating and summarizing, two skills students tend to confuse. Summarizing is telling what happened, evaluating is telling the reader your opinion of what happened. Reviewers evaluate -- they don’t summarize. Discuss what to evaluate in a movie: the acting, the sets, the script, and so forth. Have students form “panels” and each individual within the panel give their evaluation in the form of stars (1 star=bad, 5 stars=excellent.) Have the reviewers defend their number to each other.

After giving their oral review, have students write their reviews in paragraph form, starting with a topic sentence that gives their overall evaluation of the movie and then details to support it.

6 DISCUSS THE MOST LIKED OR MOST HATED MOVIE CHARACTER

Students select one character each they liked most (or least) and explain

why. This may be followed up also in written form. This is a good assignment for teaching paragraph structure for the descriptive paragraph. For example, students start with a topic sentence that names the topic, or the character, and then comments on that topic with why the character is loved or hated, which is the controlling idea: e.g., "Toula in 'My Big Fat Greek Wedding' is an independent woman." Following should be details that support that controlling idea: "She has the courage to change her life, going against her family traditions."

7 WRITE A MONOLOGUE FOR A MOVIE CHARACTER

After the more analytical assignments, students can then engage in some creative ones, such as writing a monologue for one of the characters. Explain what a monologue is: a one-way extended conversation in which the character is either addressing the audience, himself or herself, or some unseen or silent character.

I like to give students the assignment to have a character explaining to someone "Rule Number 1." If a character explains Rule 1: e.g., "Rule number 1, man, you don't go out with your best friend's ex," this shows the character's value system.

8 REWRITE THE DIALOGUE FOR A SCENE

Many beloved movies have dialogue we wish were different. Have students make the characters say what they'd like them to see.

9 REWRITE THE ENDING

What would happen to hero and heroine Tony and Maria if Tony didn't die at the end of West Side Story? Rewrite the ending and show us.

10 CHANGE THE SETTING: SET THE STORY IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES OR IN THE PAST

In many movies, the setting seems integral to the story — Gone with Wind, for example, is hard to imagine set anywhere but the Civil War South. Other stories have more universal appeal. Have students experiment by resetting a Sherlock Holmes movie

to contemporary United States for example.

MOVIE DAYS AREN'T JUST AN EXCUSE FOR THE TEACHER TO PLAY A FAVORITE FILM, GRADE PAPERS, OR TAKE A BREAK.

The can be a powerful language learning tool if engaging before, during, and after activities are given.

English Video Lessons: Winning Strategies for the ESL Class

Video lessons give ESL students a wealth of learning opportunities. Naturally, they're great for listening practice, but never underestimate their value when it comes to teaching vocabulary and grammar. However, to really tap into the potential of video lessons, these must be thoroughly prepared and activities must be targeted to your goals.

There are two layers to video lessons. One is related to your teaching goals. Will you show your students a video for listening, vocabulary or grammar practice? What is the language element you want them to learn? The second layer is the structure of the lesson itself. Even if you're sure you want to show a video to improve listening comprehension, it's not as simple as just pressing "play". Each video lesson must be accompanied by its own lesson plan, and the lesson plan must be targeted to meet your teaching goals. Each video lesson plan must include: pre-viewing activities, viewing activities, and post-viewing activities.

Here are some strategies for each type of activity:

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

The pre-viewing activities would be like the warm-up exercises that we usually have for other types of activities. There are several pre-viewing activities you could do, but try to use those that are aligned with your goals.

- If your goal is to teach vocabulary through a video, then in the pre-viewing activity you should introduce this new vocabulary, in context, in conversations, through a matching exercise, guess the meaning of the word activity, etc.
- If your goal is to work on listening comprehension, introduce the topic of the video, so your students will know what it's about and be better prepared to grasp

information. This introduction may be done in numerous ways, but the most usual is a series of warm up questions about the topic.

- If your goal is to practice grammar, then the pre-viewing activity should be a review of the tense or grammar point you want to practice. Some great activities for pre-viewing practice are games, fill in the blanks exercises, or any of the grammar worksheets you'll find at BusyTeacher.org.

VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Viewing activities consist of tasks that students must complete while watching the video, and these should also be targeted to your goals:

WHEN TEACHING VOCABULARY:

Activities should focus on helping students learn and retain the new words introduced in the pre-viewing activity. One great way to do this is to give students a worksheet with sentences with gaps that students must fill with the new words. Students watch the video and complete the sentence with the missing word. Students may also be asked to look for specific information. In this Winnie the Pooh and Halloween video worksheet (busyteacher.org/3629-winnie-the-pooh-and-halloween-video.html), young learners are required to identify the costumes each of the characters are wearing, and they can easily do this while viewing.

WHEN WORKING ON LISTENING COMPREHENSION:

Gap filling exercises also work great, but for this goal, gaps should be longer, and students should be required to fill them with information rather than just new words. Comprehension questions are always a great way to test listening comprehension. You may choose to give them a few questions to focus on before the video starts.

Also, you may choose to introduce

different levels of listening. Start by covering the TV or computer screen with some cardboard or cloth, and have students only listen to the video. Then, they answer some general comprehension questions about the gist of what they heard. Then, have them watch a second time, but this time listening and viewing, and ask them to complete a gap filling exercise. Finally, ask them to watch for a third time, but this time they have to raise their hands every time they hear the answer to a more specific question. You can introduce as many levels and as many viewings as you want, but make sure each level is more challenging than the previous.

WHEN PRACTICING GRAMMAR:

Because of their very nature (songs are usually short and often repeat phrases, words, and structures), music videos are the best for practicing grammar. We Are the Champions by Queen (busyteacher.org/2413-queen-we-are-the-champions-and-present-perfect.html) is a great song to use to practice the present perfect. Frank Sinatra's New York, New York (busyteacher.org/2735-new-york-new-york.html) shows students ways in which the future with going to and will can be contracted. The most common type of viewing activity with music videos is a gap-filling exercise, but you can get creative and try some others – see some good examples in this Eurovision song worksheet: busyteacher.org/2520-eurovision-2010-song-worksheet-satellite-by-lena.html.

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Post-viewing activities are a nice way to wrap-up the video lesson and a great opportunity to consolidate everything your students have learned in a production or performance activity.

WHEN FOCUSING ON VOCABULARY:

First you introduced some new words, then, your students saw how they were used in the video. Now is the

time for your students to use these new words themselves. Divide them into pairs, and ask them to write a conversation or report using this new vocabulary. If your goal was to teach vocabulary related to weather, and you showed a video of a TV weather report, ask your students to write the weather forecast for next weekend.

WHEN FOCUSING ON LISTENING COMPREHENSION:

Your goal was to improve your students' listening skills, so ask them to produce something that shows just how much they understood. This production may be anything from a picture, a PowerPoint presentation that summarizes the video, or a role play.

WHEN FOCUSING ON GRAMMAR:

If your goal was to offer some extra grammar practice, ask them your students to produce something that specifically requires them to use this grammar point. Let's say you showed them an interview in which an actor talks about his life to practice the past simple tense: your students can write a short biographical report on what they learned about his life.

THE BEST PART OF INCORPORATING VIDEO LESSONS INTO YOUR ESL CLASSROOM IS THE VAST AMOUNT OF MATERIAL AVAILABLE, FROM SHORT NEWS PIECES ON CNN.COM TO A FULL EPISODE OF A POPULAR TV SERIES, A MOVIE TRAILER OR A FULL-LENGTH FEATURE FILM ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS. JUST REMEMBER TO INCLUDE THE RIGHT PRE-VIEWING, VIEWING, AND POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES AND YOU'LL HIT YOUR TARGET EVERY TIME!

How to Use Movies and TV for Listening Exercises

WHO DOESN'T LOVE MOVIES AND TELEVISION? YOU CAN TAP INTO BOTH MOVIES AND TV FOR LISTENING EXERCISES THAT WILL EXCITE YOUR STUDENTS AND DELIVER ENTERTAINING AND EFFECTIVE OUTCOMES.

Do some detective work and find out what your students would really enjoy, and you might just find yourself in the position of a movie star, accepting all kinds of accolades from elated students!

HOW TO USE MOVIES AND TV FOR LISTENING EXERCISES

1 AWARDS SHOWS

If your students happen to be movie or TV fanatics, they might be very interested in doing some activities surrounding the Oscars, the Emmys, or any of the other numerous awards shows out there nowadays. You can organize lessons on current shows or utilize the internet to locate archives of particular years, stars, or movies. You may also weave in lessons that include the history of particular films, movie clips of favorite actors, or famous scenes or lines. You could also include modeling your own awards show after a particular one you watch. Utilize the awards show by looking for specific language points. Superlatives is an obvious one, as is the different presentations of thank you. These are also wonderful examples of scripted humor, emcee monologues, and formal speeches. Excite students by allowing them to plan, for example, an Oscar viewing party in which you choose the three awards the class would like to see and watch them being presented. Students can answer set comprehension questions, describe their favorite moments or lines, or even do imitations of some of the acceptance speeches. These listening exercises coupled with lead-in reading and speaking activities provide a whole language experience. There are a lot of ways to engage students by bringing in awards shows.

Gear up in advance, focus on delivery and vocabulary, and of course discuss what people were wearing!

2 TV VIEWING

Do you ever discuss popular TV shows with your class? Are they following a particular show in their language that could be a candidate for them to view in English? If you answered yes, it's a pretty safe bet that your students would be excited and motivated to do some studying by watching TV. It's easy to use the internet to find clips of popular TV shows, movie trailers, or TV show previews. You could try searching YouTube or Hulu to find what you need. When considering showing any amount of TV to your class, it is much easier to devise listening exercises based on short clips or previews than it is on whole episodes. TV shows offer real dialogue at an incredibly fast rate of speech. Don't overwhelm students by having them watch too long of a clip. You want to be sure to go over necessary new vocabulary beforehand, and include either some cloze listening exercises, comprehension questions, or an introduction to the theme of what they will view.

One very popular TV show that you could utilize is 'Friends'. Students in many countries are familiar with it, and if you take it in small enough increments you could do a lot with it. Sitcoms, in particular, offer a lot to the ESL Learner. Often, these shows are familiar, accessible, and provide life lessons as well as interesting dialogue and characters. Students can often relate to subject matter that is approached in sitcoms and the humor is pretty family-friendly for the most part. Idiomatic speech runs rampant in these shows, so if you have advanced-level learners, you could get their feet wet by allowing them to watch an entire 20 minute episode.

One other interesting option to consider is locating some bloopers from familiar TV shows. This is an effective

way for students to see a variety of mistakes being made and to attempt to comprehend what went wrong. TV can be a source of education and learning if you use it in the right way. Bring some TV viewing into your classroom, and students will have a lot to share after their listening experience.

3 DISNEY MOVIES

Disney movies can bring magic into your classroom in that you will have students undivided attention in a way like only Disney can do. Students big and small are fans of Disney's animated features as well as some of the other family-friendly options. Animated films are perfect for listening exercises in and out of the classroom. A true benefit of introducing Disney to students is that you can make good use of the movie's subtitles. For example, you could watch a few scenes only in English, stop the video and then jump into discussion or comprehension exercises. If students ran into trouble understanding a chunk of the scene or if they have multiple questions, one option is to go back and watch the scene with subtitles of their local language. This works well for uni-cultural classrooms, but if you have a multi-cultural situation you may just want to watch the movie in English with the English subtitles on. Utilizing the English subtitles can open up a new world for students who can then trust their listening because it is combined with reading. Disney movies are also wonderful to focus on idiomatic speech, life lessons, and also provide great vocabulary skill building.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO APPROACH TV AND MOVIES FOR LEVELS THAT CAN HANDLE IT AND FOR CLASSES THAT SHOW AN INTEREST.

You can approach these listening exercises with creativity or you can keep it to simple comprehension and discussion. However you go about it, students will enjoy listening to and watching TV and movies in English.

7 Keys to Effective ESL Listening Lessons with Video

OUT OF ALL OF THE LISTENING MATERIAL YOU CAN GIVE YOUR ESL STUDENTS, VIDEOS ARE THE MOST ENJOYABLE, AS THEY HAVE IMAGES THAT HELP STUDENTS GRASP MEANING.

But if the video is too hard, your ESL learners will tune out. If it's too easy, they will sit back, relax and simply enjoy the show. If you want to show your students videos that will effectively boost their listening, you'll need to consider a few things.

EFFECTIVE VIDEO LESSONS: 7 KEYS TO SUCCESS

1 AUTHENTIC OR MADE FOR ESL STUDENTS?

The first thing you'll need to consider is whether you'll show your class a video that was especially made for English teaching or authentic video, like movies, cartoons or TV shows. Each has its own set of advantages and disadvantages:

- Authentic material is usually far more interesting to students and also much more realistic. Actors speak at a normal pace, and this can be good or bad depending on your students' level. The video may be too hard to understand, but perfect for advanced students who need a challenge. The one obvious disadvantage is that this material does not come with worksheets or activity books. You have to design your own or get them elsewhere (lucky for you, there are plenty available at BusyTeacher.org!)
- Video made for ESL students comes ready to teach, with activities and exercises. It's also made to suit a particular level, with scenes that target a specific set of vocabulary or grammar, so there's no guesswork there. The main disadvantage is that this material often fails to engage learners – the acting is exaggerated and the situations seem contrived.

My general recommendation is to use

ESL videos for beginners and authentic material for more advanced learners, but try to show beginners authentic video once in a while, even if it's a short weather report or movie trailer.

2 WITH OR WITHOUT SOUND? OR PICTURE?

Any teacher who has shown a video to a class knows that it's not as simple as popping in the CD and pressing play. At least, effective video lessons shouldn't be this way. They need a little work. There are several ways in which you can show a video to maximize listening:

- Play video without sound, first. Then play it with sound. This way they can get the gist of what the action will be, what feelings will be aroused and be ready to listen to what will be said.
- Play video without picture, first. Students will be forced to really listen to figure out what's going on. Will they get it right? Play the video a second time with audio and picture to confirm.

3 WITH OR WITHOUT SUBTITLES?

This is another thing that may depend on your students' level. As a rule of thumb, more advanced students should not have the subtitles on. But this may depend on the video (authentic or made for ESL) and each particular group. In any case, if students watch a video with subtitles, they should be in English, and you should at some point be able to turn them off.

4 COMPLETE OR PAUSED?

Will you show the complete video through to the end, or pause in the middle to check for comprehension or do an activity? This again, depends on the group, but more so on the length of the video. Movies should definitely be paused at some strategic points, in fact, they may be watched over the course of several days. If you're also teaching a grammar point or reviewing vocabulary, you might want to pause

the video to review these concepts. Unless the video is very short (less than 5 minutes), I like to divide it into parts.

5 LENGTH? CONTENT? QUALITY?

This may seem like an obvious step, but teachers often make the mistake of trusting the CD or video file, and not checking it before class. This is especially important if you'll be using authentic video and not the kind prepared specifically for ESL students. Be especially careful with YouTube videos. How long is the video? Is there anything about the content that may not be appropriate for children? Is it good quality video or does it end abruptly for no apparent reason?

6 DO YOU HAVE EVERYTHING YOU NEED?

Leave it Murphy's Law. Anything that could go wrong will go wrong in your video lesson. Do you have all of the necessary accessories/power cords for the computer or DVD player? Are there batteries in the remote? Is your laptop battery fully charged? You may think these are minor details, but believe me, you don't want to lose precious minutes of your lesson or worst of all have students staring at the ceiling while you sort out your technical problems. If possible, arrive early to set everything up and make sure everything is working properly.

7 WHAT WILL THEY DO DURING THE VIDEO?

What type of worksheet will you give them? What will be the task? Listening for gist? Or answering comprehension questions? If you decide to use authentic video, you'll have to create one yourself.

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE A VIDEO'S ABILITY TO HELP IMPROVE LISTENING – AND ENTERTAIN IN THE PROCESS. IT'S A TREAT THAT STUDENTS OF ANY LEVEL WILL WELCOME!

The Best Shows/Movies for a Children's ESL Video Lesson

IF YOU WANT TO HELP YOUR STUDENTS IMPROVE THEIR LISTENING COMPREHENSION, NOTHING WORKS BETTER THAN VIDEOS.

But this begs the question: which movies/TV shows should we show them in class? Clearly this is not a case of "anything goes", particularly with young learners who often lack enough vocabulary to understand a full-length feature film in English. So, to eliminate the guesswork on your part, here is a list of the best videos to show your young learners - movies and shows that will not only entertain them, they will also help them hone those listening skills!

TRY THESE SHOWS & MOVIES FOR YOUR NEXT CHILDREN'S ESL VIDEO LESSON

1 SESAME STREET

The American children's TV series has produced solid, educational content for over 40 years. The series features short segments, videos, and songs targeted to very young children, content that is highly appropriate for young English learners of ages 3-5. The best part about the Sesame Street videos is that teachers can access them in multiple ways. SesameStreet.org has a Video page where you can access very short video segments that help children polish their counting skills, for example, or say the alphabet in English, among many others. Most of the videos are less than a minute long and are great fillers or ways to complete an activity. You can also watch the videos on Sesame Street's YouTube Channel (bit.ly/GIFMkl), or order the videos from Amazon.

2 DR. SEUSS

Dr. Seuss' books and silly rhymes have entertained children for decades. His work is also available on video, and though most of it is fantastical and features characters that are out of this world, the rhymes are great for pronunciation practice. Also, most stories have an important message you can

discuss with you class, - with this movie review worksheet (bit.ly/vLznKW), you can watch *The Lorax* with your class and discuss the effects of pollution and the importance of preserving our trees. Or watch this short excerpt about the *Sneetches* (bit.ly/gB5Bhp): it presents a very relevant discussion point regarding prejudice and discrimination.

3 CHARLIE BROWN

Charlie Brown is a boy that most children can easily relate to. He has a group of friends he likes to play baseball with, and has a dog - a very special one. Snoopy is not your typical canine buddy, but we would love to have a dog like him. This is why the Peanuts cartoons have fascinated children of all ages for decades. Several movies and TV specials have been made based on the Peanuts gang, the most popular and the best ones to watch with your ESL class being the holiday specials like *It's the Easter Beagle*, *Charlie Brown*, *It's the Great Pumpkin*, *Charlie Brown*, or *A Charlie Brown Christmas*.

4 YOUTUBE GEMS

YouTube has come a long way from being simply the video sharing site where we could watch people's home videos, jokes and silly gags. Thousands of videos with educational content are uploaded on a daily basis by ESL teachers and schools. A quick search should give you dozens of options to watch with your class. One noteworthy YouTube channel is DJCKidsMedia (bit.ly/XsGvPy). The children's book and DVD publisher has a YouTube channel filled with short, engaging videos that can teach your young learners to tell time, count to 10, or phonics for the letters of the alphabet. Be sure to check out this YouTube channel and others, but before you show your class any video on YouTube, make sure you see it first to check for any inappropriate content.

5 ANIMATED CLASSICS AND FEATURE FILMS

As far as animated or feature-length

children's films go, the sky's the limit. There is a large variety to choose from, but for the purposes of your ESL class, please remember the following. It's essential that you choose a movie, not only for the entertainment value, but one that is a good fit for your student's ages and levels. As these movies are longer, you may opt to show just one scene or a few, and not the entire film. If you choose any of the classics you may have the added advantage that your students will probably have already seen them in their native language, thus giving them better chances of following the plot and dialogue.

Some of the classics we recommend are:

- Charlie and the Chocolate Factory - BusyTeacher.org has this great worksheet for you to use (bit.ly/Y5xZm3).
- Toy Story 1, 2 or 3
- Puss in Boots
- Finding Nemo

TIPS FOR SHOWING VIDEOS TO YOUR CLASS:

Always have a lesson plan for a video lesson, or make sure the video fits into one. Never show a video "just because", - even if it is a 2-minute filler, it should still serve a purpose within your lesson goal, like review something they've been practicing, like the alphabet, for example. If you want to take an entire class hour for a video lesson, that's fine, just make sure you allow plenty of time for your students to complete a warm up (previewing activities), as well as viewing and post viewing activities.

ALWAYS REMEMBER: THIS IS NOT ABOUT YOU SIMPLY SHOWING A VIDEO TO YOUR CLASS.

This is about maximizing their learning opportunities and helping them hone their listening skills. If you manage to give them a special treat with a fun movie at the same time - so much the better!