

# MANAGE YOUR CLASSROOM

## LIKE A PRO

**BUSY TEACHER'S TOP 25 CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT SECRETS**



 SIMPLE INSTRUCTIONS TO KEEP YOUR CLASSROOM UNDER CONTROL

# CONTENTS

- 3 [Are You Boring Your Students?:](#) How to Turn a Snore Fest into a Barrel of Fun!
- 4-5 [TOP 10:](#) Top 10 Tips to Deal With Indiscipline in the Classroom
- 6 [When Things Go Awry:](#) Problem-Solving on Your Feet
- 7 [When Things Go Wrong:](#) How to Turn a Disaster ESL Lesson into a Triumph
- 8-9 [Aren't All ESL Students Well-Mannered?:](#) Classroom Management for the Adult (and Not So Adult) ESL Student
- 10 [I Can't Hear Myself Think in Here:](#) Managing the Very Large Class
- 11 [How To Teach Large Groups:](#) The More The Merrier?
- 12 [Where is Everyone?:](#) Managing the Very Small Classroom
- 13 [Excuse Me, Teacher, Can I Go to the Bathroom:](#) Managing Interruptions
- 14-15 [TOP 10:](#) TOP 10 Survival Tactics Every Teacher Should Know
- 16 [HOWTO:](#) 8 Simple Tips to Encourage Student Participation During Group Discussions
- 1T [HOWTO:](#) 4 Types of Problem Students and Strategies to Manage Them
- 18 [Are We Having Fun Yet?:](#) Addressing the "Entertain Me" Attitude
- 19 [HOWTO:](#) How to Correct Mistakes
- 20 [HOWTO:](#) How To Provide Quality Feedback In The ESL Classroom
- 21 [HOWTO:](#) How to Teach Using Gestures and Mime
- 22 [Keep 'Em Under Control:](#) How to Handle Disruptive (and Disrespectful) Students
- 23 [My Best Buds:](#) Encouraging Students to be Close, but not too Close, to their Peers
- 24-25 [R-E-S-P-E-C-T:](#) How to Build an Effective Classroom Environment in a Multilingual Classroom
- 26 [See it, Hear it, Do it:](#) ESL Activities to Teach to the Seven Different Learning Styles
- 27 [So How Many Grandmothers Do You Have?:](#) Fairly Addressing Dead Grandmothers, Sick Uncles, and Other "Family Emergencies"
- 28-29 [HOWTO:](#) Teacher, I'm Bored! Teacher I'm Lost - Teaching Multi-Level Classes
- 30 [HOWTO:](#) Teacher-Tested Ways To Keep A Class Interesting
- 31-32 [Therapy for the Dysfunctional Classroom:](#) Advising and Teaching Your Troubled Students
- 33 [HOWTO:](#) 7 Best Ways to End a Lesson
- 34 [BONUS:](#) Classroom Management Mantra [HI-RES PRINTABLE POSTER]

# Are You Boring Your Students?

## How to Turn a Snore Fest into a Barrel of Fun!

*You ask your ESL class a question, and you're met with a room full of blank stares. You call out a student's name, but getting an answer from him is like pulling teeth. You notice that someone in the back is actually dozing off (ouch!), and as you walk towards the back of the room, you catch another student texting a friend on their phone...* Finally, to add insult to injury, another student is watching a video on their iPod. If there were a sign over your classroom door, it would read "Entering Dullsville."

While the above description is clearly an exaggeration, every ESL teacher at some point in their teaching career has had to deal with unmotivated students, boring course material or quite honestly been bored themselves with what they have to teach. So, hop onto our express train and leave Dullsville for good!

**HOW TO** Turn a Snore Fest into a Barrel of Fun

### 1 DON'T LET YOURSELF GET SUCKED IN BY BOREDOM

When there is something that you don't like to teach, whether it's the Past Perfect, or Reported Speech, or any other grammar point you absolutely must cover, your students will most likely notice it, unless you do something about it and make the topic fun for the whole class. If you have taught something a million times, like the Past Simple, teach it differently every time! Use different flashcards, different exercises, different games, just make sure there is something different, that way it is less likely you will feel bored and by extension neither will your students.

### 2 PUT A CRAZY SPIN ON IT

Kids love it when you pull something crazy, but teens and adult learners also enjoy seeing things

that they wouldn't normally see in a classroom. Say you want to practice making predictions with "will". What if you were to suddenly put a crystal ball on the table and tell students what the future holds for them? Your crystal ball need not be made of crystal – a volleyball or even a balloon will do, and add to the zaniness. Crazy props are very effective in engaging students.

### 3 PUT ON THE THEATRICALS

While you're not required to go into full costume (after all you're teaching ESL, not putting on a Broadway show!) it does help tremendously to do voices, make faces, and show off your more theatrical side. Do accents and change voices when you read dialogues, or even use funny characters – give them your best Eliza Doolittle impersonation and show off your Cockney accent as your students do a shopping role play with you!

### 4 MAKE THEM MOVE!

The second you see your students settle in for a nap, make them stand up! Young learners can engage in an active TPR activity. But don't be afraid to get adults out of their seats, as well. Make them walk around the classroom for a role play, or simply get them to come to the whiteboard. You may need a bulldozer to get some teens out of their seats, so try with small actions first, like handing out worksheets, then gradually move on to a greater physical commitment. It is essential that you make your students get used to moving around the classroom from Day 1.

### 5 KEEP YOUR STUDENTS ON THEIR TOES

Get your students used to not knowing what you'll do next. Sit down for one activity, but then stand up or walk around the room for the next – walking from the front to the back is also the perfect way to let students know that the back of the room is not the place

to snooze. Raise your voice suddenly! Change pitch! Clap your hands to get their attention! Use gestures as much as you can, and use sounds to keep them alert. A quiet classroom where the teacher sits at her/his desk for the duration of the class is the perfect setting for a snore fest.

### 6 USE THEIR INTERESTS AND PREFERENCES

You wouldn't talk about President Obama's foreign policy with preschoolers, right? And with that kind of topic, you won't hold your teens' attention for long. But don't make the mistake of thinking that all adults like to talk about "adult" things! They come to ESL class to learn English, not for a history lesson. However, some adults may be interested in business topics or current events. So, make sure you find out what they are really interested in and what their preferences are. Do they want to learn English in a relaxed environment, or they want to talk business?

### 7 POLISH WHAT'S DULL TILL IT SHINES

Quite often the problem is not us or our students, but the rather dull coursebook. You will probably agree that there is no one pointing a gun to your head, saying that you have to follow the book and each activity as shown in the book, right? One of the best things you can do is adapt and change some of the activities, dialogues and exercises in the coursebook, or replace them with others that will get the job done, but not put your students to sleep in the process.

### NOW, YOU'RE OFFICIALLY LEAVING DULLSVILLE, AND THERE'S NO LOOKING BACK.

You're headed to a much better place, one that will provide the perfect learning environment for your students – and keep them engaged for the duration of the course.

# Top 10 Tips to Deal With Indiscipline in the Classroom

## IT HAPPENS TO EVERY TEACHER AT SOME POINT.

Sometimes it is with the first class. Other times a teacher gets a few good years under his or her belt before it hits. Sometimes it seems like it happens in class after class. The problem that all too often rears its ugly head is **lack of discipline**. Every teacher experiences it, and no teacher likes it. The good news is that **there are ways to handle indiscipline in the classroom**. Here are some tips to try with your students.

## HOW TO Deal with Indiscipline in the Classroom

### 1 SET EXPECTATIONS EARLY

Set expectations early in the year. The old adage that **a good teacher does not smile until after Christmas** may or may not be true, but it is **easier to lighten your leadership style as the year goes on rather than get stricter after being lenient**. If it is too late to start the year off with a firm hand, you can always make a new start – with either a new calendar year or a new month or a new unit. Make sure your class knows that you are wiping the slate and that your expectations of them will no longer be compromised!

### 2 MAKE RULES TOGETHER

Let kids be involved in making the rules. Before dictating a set of classroom rules, **ask your students how they would like their peers to behave**. Have them discuss what kind of an environment they would like to have in class.

By directing a class discussion, your students will define a set of rules that meet both their criteria and your own. Because they have set the expectations, they are more likely to follow the rules and to keep one another in check, freeing you to do things that are more important.

### 3 CONTACT PARENTS

Depending on where you teach and where your students come from, their parents may be an unexpected support when it comes to good behavior in the classroom. Often American parents will side with the child when it comes to conflicts in school, but if you teach students from other cultures, and it is very likely that you do, your students' parents will not automatically take their children's side of things. In fact in many cultures, parents will automatically side with the teacher against their own child if there is a discipline issue. That is not to say that you should take advantage of either your students or their parents, **just do not be afraid to approach your kids' parents if the situation necessitates it**. Be warned, though, you may not want the child to act as interpreter if one is necessary.

### 4 INVITE VOLUNTEERS

Depending on the age of your students, you may even choose to **ask parents into the classroom as volunteers for a day**. Children may behave better if their parents are in the classroom with them. Not only that, if your parents interact with each other, the stories of how a certain child may behave in class could get back to mom and dad through other channels ultimately saving you an awkward and unpleasant conversation!

### 5 INVITE ANOTHER TEACHER

Trading teachers could be helpful in your quest for a composed classroom. If your students have gotten used to the way you operate class and what behavior you may let slide, having a different teacher for one or more periods of the day may spur them to act a little more restrained. Not only can the atmosphere of class change, **your students will benefit from listening to another voice and another style of speech when another teacher stands in front of the class**.

### 6 WHY, OH WHY?

Think about the reason behind the rudeness. Is it possible that your ESL students may be acting up to make up for a self-perceived inadequacy in their language abilities? If there is even the slightest possibility that insecurity may be behind classroom misbehavior, try to look past it and **address the real issue**. Does your student need confidence? Does she need a feeling of success? Does he need to feel equal to his peers? By addressing the issue rather than the symptoms, you will have a healthier and better-behaved set of students.

### 7 QUICK LEARNER DETECTED

It is also possible that a misbehaving student is bored with class because he is a quick learner. Though it may seem counterintuitive, **putting that child in a leadership role may give him the extra challenge he needs to engage in the classroom activities**. He will not only not be bored - he will have some investment in making sure the other students in class behave.

### 8 ATTENTION SPAN

Remembering the attention span of children can also help you keep your calm when kids act up in class. As a rule, **estimate a child's attention span to be one minute for every year of his age**. That means a seven year old will max out on attention at seven minutes. Keep the pace moving in class without spending too much time sitting in one place. Let your kids move around, go outside or work independently to keep the (stir) crazy bugs from biting.

### 9 RESPOND, NOT REACT

It is extremely important for teachers to remember to respond and not react. There is a big difference between the two. A person who reacts acts impulsively and out of emotion. The person who responds, on the oth-

er hand, takes more time before acting and separates his or her emotions from the decisions he makes. It is a good rule to follow in all areas of life, but it is especially important to remember when your class is just plain getting on your nerves. **Do not let your emotions get the better of you but instead stay calm and make logical and intentional responses.**

## 10 DISCIPLINE IN PRIVATE

Still, moments will come and days will come when one or more of your students will misbehave. The best way to address the situation is quickly and with as little disruption as possible. Refrain from disciplining any child in front of the class. Choose instead to have those conversations in private. If you respect your students, they are more likely to respect you.

**ULTIMATELY, NO CLASSROOM IS PERFECT. YOUR KIDS WILL HAVE GOOD AND BAD DAYS, AND YOU WILL, TOO.**

Do your best to keep your cool when your students start getting out of control. Tomorrow will be a new day with limitless potential and it may just be the right day to get off to a new start!

# When Things Go Awry: Problem-Solving on Your Feet

*As teachers, we know possibly better than anyone else that when things go wrong, they can really go wrong.*

Being able to solve problems on your feet is one of the most valuable skills a teacher can have. There are so many variables as to what can go awry in a classroom that generally luck would have it, many things tend to go wrong at the same time. Face problems head on with these tips, and you will be able to handle the worst of classroom disasters!

**HOW TO:** Problem-Solving on Your Feet

## 1 STAY COOL

It may seem obvious, but when a situation goes wrong in the classroom, the number one element that will serve you best is to simply, **stay cool**. Sometimes this is easier said than done. Problems that arise in the classroom can be embarrassing, mentally taxing, and downright excruciating. If you stay calm though, it will only help you to see the picture in front of you clearly, and also discover what the solution is. For example, if an activity is not going according to plan and is failing the objectives you had set for it, if you were to get worked up, you may just add to the problem. With a clear head, look at what the students are doing, and then examine what you assigned them to do. If the two don't come close to matching, the next thing to do is to find the disconnect. Perhaps students weren't clear on their directives, or they took it upon themselves to change the activity once they got into it. Don't get upset with the class, but definitely intervene and rectify the situation.

## 2 USE HUMOR

Some classroom difficulties are easier to rectify than others. If you come across a particularly unsettling situation, like having technical difficulties, try to intersperse some humor. Perform any solution you can

think of to fix the problem while making fun of either yourself or the technical problem itself. It does wonders to lighten the mood, takes the pressure off, and gives you time to really assess the problem. Students are generally understanding when a technical or computer issue arises. Engage the class with a joke or funny story while you are working on fixing the issue. This way, the students' attention will remain on you, and it won't be an excuse for them to start side conversations, begin texting, or worse, become unruly or out of hand! Show them that you can handle the situation and if you can't fix the problem, all is not lost.

## 3 BE PREPARED

There are all kinds of problems that can happen when you are not prepared or when you are not prepared enough. If, for example, you are trying out a brand new activity and are uncertain as to how it will go, prepare yourself that it may not go as well as you hope and it may not take as long as you think it will. Try to troubleshoot new activities by noticing any gaps or things that may not be clear for students. Estimate the time to be less and if it goes longer, then you be prepared for that as well. If it falls short, falls flat, or is just plain bad you can try a couple of things.

If it falls short, you want to have enough planned so that you are not left struggling to fill the class time. Always have an arsenal of quick games or activities that you can whip up if something falls short. If your objective is lost to the students, and they don't jump in to the activity, you can try re-explaining it or asking what questions they have about what they should be doing. Give the activity a second chance to launch and see if there is anything that you can quickly tweak to make it more palatable.

If you need to abandon an activity, do it in a way that the students will respect. Either admit that it didn't go well and ask them for their feed-

back, or tell that you have other things planned for the day and that time is running low. You don't have to prepare yourself in advance for things to flop necessarily, but you do want to make sure to always well-equipped to deal with equipment failures, student distractions, or logistics gone wrong.

## 4 BE FLEXIBLE

If things don't go quite as you had planned, flexibility is a great trait to develop. Don't take it personally that your activity flopped or that students were particularly uncooperative. Allow yourself and the class to move forward without getting stuck in the bad juju of a situation that went wrong. It is really important to be their guiding light in all situations, but particularly during a storm. If you display flexibility and can switch gears it can be a remarkable example and learning moment for students.

## 5 ASK FOR HELP

There is no harm in asking a student or another teacher for help. Often with technical problems, your students may be just as savvy as you are, and you can enlist their help while you manage the class. If there are other teachers close by you could possibly send a student out to locate and bring back help. You will no doubt learn how to fix the problem, and never forget it. There is no harm in asking for or requesting help as long as it isn't a weekly occurrence.

## DON'T LET ONE GLITCH (OR SEVERAL) GET YOU DOWN.

Teachers are resourceful beings and we always find a way to rescue ourselves and our students from painful situations. Don't beat yourself up, and if all else fails, cut yourself a break, have a good laugh and trust that you pulled out the best possible solution in that particular scenario!

# When Things Go Wrong: How to Turn a Disaster ESL Lesson into a Triumph

*It happens to even the best teachers: a well thought out, carefully planned lesson goes horribly wrong and you are stuck in the middle of class with confused, frustrated, and disengaged learners.*

Students can react to material in different ways than you anticipated and new activities may take less time, be more challenging, or not work out quite the way you expected. **Never continue following a lesson plan that is failing.** This will only waste everyone's time and students will not get the most out of their lesson with you. It is hard to think of new ideas and come up with an alternate plan during a lesson but this is the best course of action.

**HOW TO** Turn A Disaster Lesson Into A Well-Deserved Victory

## WHAT WENT WRONG?

Identify what went wrong so that you will not repeat the mistake with another class. This will also help you determine if it is the lesson or activity itself or the particular students you are working with that led to this issue in the first place.

If students do not understand the material you are covering, rephrase your introduction with mini comprehension checks throughout. Ask students to explain to you what you are teaching and even translate it if necessary to ensure that everyone has a more thorough understanding of the lesson material.

If an activity did not work out the way you planned or finished earlier than expected, you can **stall a little by asking students to demonstrate their knowledge of the material** while you decide what to do next. These are two very common occurrences especially for new teachers who assume that students clearly understand material after just a short introduction and are

still learning about student behavior, lesson plans, and time management.

## 2 CHANGE COURSE

You are going to have to finish the class and maximize the class time you have with your learners so decide how to proceed. Often it takes only about five minutes to realize something is wrong, decide to change course, and transition into another activity. **The longer you have been teaching, the more backup activities you will have stored in your memory** so draw on your past experiences for inspiration.

Thinking on your feet in front of an audience, regardless of its size, is stressful but remain calm and remember that whatever you choose also has to require no real preparation and only the materials you have in your classroom. By keeping this in mind you will automatically focus on simpler exercises. Once you have thought of another activity you can relate to the topic you have been talking about, segue into it as if it were a planned part of the lesson. You can say something like *"OK, I think we have had enough of the board game for today, now I'd like you to ~."*

An activity that was finished too soon or was uninteresting to students has effectively been pushed aside with this brief sentence and the class can move forward.

## 3 END ON A HIGH NOTE

Finish the class with a short, fun activity that you know students enjoy. This can be a familiar **warm up** activity like ESL Shiritori or an exercise like Crisscross which can be adapted to any topic. Your lesson can then **end on a positive note** and this will be the most recent memory students have of your class when they walk out

your door for the day. **Students will forgive failed activities from time to time if you do not force them to suffer through them for long and come back strong after realizing your mistake.**

**BY TURNING A DISASTER LESSON AROUND, YOU ARE SAVING YOURSELF AND HELPING YOUR STUDENTS.**

This is a skill and as such requires a lot of time and experience to improve. One way to help you prepare for this unfortunate yet inevitable situation is to **plan an extra activity for each lesson** (this is where BusyTeacher.org is your best friend). This can be something short and should function as a review. It will be easier to transition if you already have a back up plan and you can simply expand on it or repeat it several times if you have more time than you expected. If you do not use the activity at the end of your class period, you can use it as a review in the next lesson. It is just that easy. Good luck!

# Aren't All ESL Students Well-Mannered? Classroom Management for the Adult (and Not So Adult) ESL Student

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

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

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

## CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

for the Adult ESL Student

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

If you are really bothered by use of cell phones and other electronics during class time, say so in the syllabus. If you'd really prefer students spend the majority of time speaking English

in class, rather than breaking into discussion groups in their primary languages, say that as well, and give a reason.

### 2 HAVE A PLAN

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

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

### 3 TRANSPARENCY IS THE KEY

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

### 4 HAVE A CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT PLAN, TOO

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

### 5 VARY GROUPING STRATEGIES

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

students into small groups for further practice. Usually once the activity has changed, the negative behavior disappears.

### 6 DISCUSS IT IN PRIVATE

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

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

### 7 BE POLITE BUT DIRECT

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

## 8 DON'T LET THEM CROSS THE LINE

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

For example, a number of years ago, an immigrant student who had acted a little odd all semester, enough so that most of the other students avoided him, was in my ESL class. One day, when apparently upset over his failing grade, he came into my office, shut the door, and asked, *“Do you love your husband?”* Startled, I replied simply that I did. He then asked, *“If you love your husband, why don't you love your students?”*

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

## 9 LAST RESORT

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

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

## RESPECTFUL GROUPS OF STUDENTS—NOT EVEN CLASSES OF ADULTS, NOT EVEN ESL STUDENTS.

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

**YES, CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IS A CHALLENGE, AND MOST CLASSES DO NOT MAGICALLY ORGANIZE THEMSELVES INTO ACTIVE AND**

# I Can't Hear Myself Think in Here: Managing the Very Large Class

*Much has been written in recent years about the value of small class for learning, and in general that may be true, that they are better learning environments because the teacher is able to give each student individual attention and cater to his or her learning needs.*

However, **the large classroom can still be a preference** for an adult ESL educator. Students can work in a variety of different groups if there are 50 students in class as opposed to 5, where the choice is severely limited. **There is an energy in a large class that a small class lacks:** imagine the response to your successful joke in a large class as opposed to a small.

But sometimes even a strong advocate for the large class has to acknowledge its drawbacks: in a class of 50 adult ESL students you could spend a considerable amount of time trying to get everyone's attention. In a group like that, students will be most likely getting up and leaving and returning at will, to go to the restroom or make phone calls. Wild? Yes, a little like a zoo, in fact.

**So what are some of the ways to avoid these obvious drawbacks while still capitalizing on the benefits of a large class?**

**HOW TO** Manage the Very Large Class

## 1 TRAFFIC CONTROL

**In the large class, simple "traffic control" is an issue the first days - ways of getting students in the class, into their seats, and out at the end with minimum disruption.** It is important to assign seating these first days and establish ways students may exit the class as necessary during it and at the end. Also important is to **establish when students may talk**—after raising a hand, for example.

These rules are necessary to avoid a stampede at the end of class or taking up the entire class period getting settled in seats or the deafening roar of too many students talking at once.

## 2 NORMS AND PROCEDURES

**What would a class be like if all 40 or 50 students' cell phones went off simultaneously?** If you want to find out, don't establish any norms or procedures with your large class! Otherwise, after the simple traffic management rules have been set up, you will want to establish some class norms. This is largely up to the individual teacher and her class. Some teachers are particularly bothered by electronic use during class but have no particular concern about student use of dictionaries, which other teachers object to, finding them an impediment rather than aid to learning. It's also possible to negotiate the class norms with your students, deciding together what reasonable policies are for the overall good of your class.

## 3 SMALL GROUPS

**Use of small groups can really be helpful in a large ESL class.** In a large class not put into groups but rather utilizing whole-group instruction, the teaching becomes largely teacher-fronted, with the teacher doing most of the talking, sometimes calling on a student to answer a question. In such a class, the individual student gets a chance to speaking once or twice during a session, if that.

If students are put into small groups and given a task - even something as simple as to describe a picture, for example - everyone will get a chance to engage in meaningful language use, while the teacher, now freed from the role of standing at the front of the class talking, can move from group to group, note students' performance, and make comments as necessary.

## 4 KNOW THY STUDENTS

**In this process of going from group to group, the teacher is also able to learn more about her students and their language ability because they are actually using language - they are not just a sea of faces.** She might even make notes next to student's names on her roll

sheet about their language use. And if she notices the majority of students have trouble with sentence stress, for example, she'll know what to focus on in coming lessons. And while the teacher might not get to know each student individually as she would in a small class, she certainly knows more about them as learners than the teacher who stands at the podium and will know within a few weeks where each student's strengths and weaknesses are.

## 5 MIX AND MATCH

**Knowing students' individual strengths, weaknesses, their level within your class** (there are always more advanced and less advanced learners in any given class) and their native languages presents interesting grouping opportunities for the teacher. It's usually best to arrange groups of different language backgrounds and mixed ability levels so that students must speak in English to communicate and so that the stronger students can help the weaker ones.

## 6 KEEP THEM BUSY

**Most classroom problems happen due to not enough to do** - and this is true for adults as well as children. If students are kept engaged in meaningful uses of language -- interpreting a road map, reading a job advertisement, discussing summer plans, and listening to a radio report on crime, for example -- they will have less time and motive for interruptions, such as taking that cell phone call, going to the restroom, and making jokes with their buddies in their first languages.

**MANAGING A LARGE CLASS IS DEFINITELY A CHALLENGE BUT ONE WELL WORTH IT BECAUSE OF THE ENERGY THAT CAN BE PRODUCED IN A CLASSROOM FULL OF STUDENTS EXCITED ABOUT LEARNING.**

Although the potential of disruption is higher than in a small class, with planning and engaging students in meaningful learning, disruption can be minimized and a well-run classroom achieved.

# How To Teach Large Groups: The More The Merrier?

*Depending on where you teach, you could face classes of 30 or 40 students.*

In some countries even larger classes are not uncommon. With only one teacher and maybe one assistant, teaching such a large group of students can be a challenge. Here are some strategies you can use in different stages of the lesson to **encourage everyone to participate** and make the most out of your time with students.

## HOW TO Teach Large Groups

### 1 ALWAYS WARM THEM UP FIRST

Plan activities that encourage students to volunteer answers, work together in teams, or in some other way participate in the lesson. The most important thing is to **get them thinking and speaking in English**.

If it is a particularly sluggish class, plan to have students out of their chairs and moving around the classroom. Fast paced activities will increase student talking time and engage more students in the exercise.

### 2 INTRODUCE WHILE ELICITING

Your introduction should not be a time for students to passively acknowledge information. This is a time for you to see what they already know related to the topic while giving them the necessary bits of information they will need to complete activities later on in class.

**Elicit** information such as vocabulary from students. You can call on students if you are asking them to recall something you have already covered but should rely on volunteers if you are fishing for something new. Students in classes this size are usually **at a couple different levels** depending on their interest in English so eliciting material is a great way to see what information students can provide

on specific topics.

### 3 FIRST PRACTICE AS A CLASS

The first practice activity should be done as a class so that students can get an idea of what the target material is and hear you model everything correctly. Further practice can often be done individually, in pairs, or in groups. **The main challenge while students are working on something is monitoring them.** It is impossible to listen to more than one conversation at a time so walk through the class during the practice time to ensure that students are doing the activity, answer questions, and correct the mistakes you are fortunate enough to catch.

After students have completed the activity is when you will have the opportunity to check their understanding of the material. Cover everything in the practice activity as a class and call on students who have not yet spoken. Quieter students may simply be shy but usually, students who do not volunteer do not feel confident about their answers and may need extra help.

### 4 PRODUCTION STAGE: ENCOURAGE PAIRWORK & GROUPWORK

Pairs and groups are good for production exercises unless you want students to do a writing activity, in which case you should consider having students work individually. It is important that students work with one another because they can help each other while you are busy assisting different groups whereas individuals have only their knowledge to draw on and thus are less likely to notice their own mistakes.

Just like with the practice activities above, be sure to have students present their material from this part of the lesson to the class. This gives you the chance to deliver individualized feedback and allows students to

hear some more examples. This is kind of late in the class for students to realize they have been practicing something incorrectly but it is better late than never and you can always **encourage students to ask questions** about anything they are uncertain about. Students are often hesitant to ask questions but by creating an open, friendly, and constructive learning environment, you will have gone a long way towards setting your students at ease.

### 5 REVISION IS FUN

Review activities are very similar to warm ups. Something fun and fast paced will help you **end class on a positive note while reinforcing** what you talked about during the lesson. Here you should definitely call on students who have not spoken up during the rest of the lesson to see if they are following along. This is another great time for you to assess how students are doing and think about what you might want to review at the beginning of the next lesson.

**WHILE LARGE GROUPS OF STUDENTS CAN MAKE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND DISCIPLINE ESPECIALLY CHALLENGING, YOU ARE ALSO ABLE TO DO A LOT OF FUN ACTIVITIES WITH SIZABLE CLASSES THAT ARE NOT APPROPRIATE FOR SMALLER CLASS SIZES.**

For example, Chinese Whispers is a fun team game that should be done with at least two or three teams with several members each. In a class with about ten to fifteen students, you would have to adapt the game to be a class exercise instead of a team one.

With practice, you will be able to manage even extremely large class sizes with ease.

# Where is Everyone? Managing the Very Small Classroom

*“How many students are in your class?” another teacher asked me at a faculty meeting recently.*

*“Six,” I replied. “Or, no, maybe seven — I’m getting another one on Monday.”*

*“Seven? That’s a dream! I could do so many things with seven students.”*

*“Yeah,” I said. “I know. We’ve already done them. I have no idea what we’re going to do tomorrow.”*

**While teaching a small class may seem ideal — students get a lot of individual attention, you can customize the curriculum and make a lot of progress -- the problem is the boredom factor.**

The class is so small that everyone gets to know everyone else very quickly. You can race through lessons in half the time you usually would, leaving nothing to do. Even entire units of study seem to require a fraction of the time. So what is there to do, when it seems you’ve already done everything?

**HOW TO** Teach Very Small Class

## 1 CUSTOMIZED LEARNING PLANS

In a very small class, there is opportunity for individual tutoring and learning plans. So at the beginning of the semester, after the initial diagnostic, the teacher can sit with each student individually and find out what he or she is interested in working on. The teacher might then find that Felix, for example, is a high intermediate student, as revealed by his diagnostic, and that he is comfortable with his reading and writing skills in English but wants to work on his pronunciation and conversational English. The teacher can then set up a plan to help Felix improve his spoken English skills by completing specific activities in and out of class, perhaps studying with one or two students who are working toward the same goals, while the rest of the students may be working on other material that focuses on their goals.

## 2 MOVIE FRIDAY

Devote one day a week — per-

haps Friday — to watching a movie.

Leading into the movie the rest of the week, students can prepare by doing activities related to the movie, such as learning related background information and vocabulary. In this way, students are completely prepared by the time Friday rolls around. They can then watch the movie and follow it up, on subsequent days, with discussion and written reviews.

## 3 NOVEL READING

Devote a month or two to reading a short novel such as Fitzgerald’s “The Great Gatsby” or Capote’s “Breakfast at Tiffany’s.” Activities should lead into it -- teaching students about Fitzgerald’s New York of the 1920’s, for example, to establish context. There are also activities to do during the novel, to monitor students’ progress, such as discussions, comprehension checks, and vocabulary learning. Finally, there are end-of-novel activities, to wrap things up and do a final assessment. Students can do a presentation, even, on aspects of the novel, such as what Prohibition was or different interpretations of the American Dream.

## 4 INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH AND REPORTS

We all have individual interests or passions that we’d like look into more — if we had the time. Some of the things I’d research if I had time are forensic linguistics, the history of the Russian empire, and the early history of humankind. Students also have similar passions, whether it is the Olympic sport of pole vaulting or wind turbine energy — two recent student research topics. The important thing is that the student be truly passionate about this, enough to spend significant time researching it and then presenting findings to her peers. If two or three students are interested in the same topic, they can team up, researching different aspects of the same topic. The teacher can act as a facilitator, giving students the major control of the project while focusing on offering support by giving mini-lessons on research skills, such as how to divide up the labor and in what order, how to find reliable sources,

how to synthesize findings, and so on.

## 5 PORTFOLIO WRITING

Writing, as all students know, takes a lot of time and work to make significant progress on. There is no magic writing pill that will substitute for this. So the small class, where time sometimes seems to hang heavy, is the ideal opportunity to work on writing. At the beginning of the term, the students can help brainstorm topics they’d like to write about or select from a list presented by the teacher. If there is student input on the topics, they are much more interested in them. Once the topics are decided upon, students can spend the term discussing and writing about them. Multiple drafts of each essay can be assigned, different drafts focusing on ideas, organization, and editing and proofreading. At the end of the term, each student will have a “portfolio” of his or her work and can see the progress from the first to final drafts. This amount of writing is usually not possible in a larger class because of the additional time needed to teach every step of the process and also to mark the papers.

## 6 FIELD TRIPS

Finally, there is a great opportunity for field trips with a small class. I’d balk at “riding herd” of thirty students in a public place, while with ten students, it is much less of a concern. And even in my city of Sacramento, California — not a tourist destination — there is still plenty to see: the capitol of the largest state in the U.S., Sutter’s Fort, where the West began, the railroad museum at what was terminus of the transcontinental railroad. I’ve even taken beginning ESL students to a local shopping mall and found that many had not been to one before. Field trips are a great opportunity for hands-on learning of language, culture, and history.

**SO THE NEXT TIME A STUDENT WALKS INTO YOUR VERY SMALL CLASS AND SAYS, “WHERE IS EVERYONE?” YOU CAN RESPOND, “WE’RE ALL HERE. AND WE’RE GOING TO HAVE A GREAT TIME!”**

# Excuse Me, Can I Go to the Bathroom: Managing Interruptions

You are probably familiar with the scenario: you at the front of the room, in the middle of lecturing on some important grammar point, when someone raises his hand. “Excuse me, Teacher?” You are annoyed but pause long enough to ask, “Yes?” “Can I go to the bathroom?”

There is scattered laughter. And the surprising thing is that this is not second grade, as you might be assuming, but rather a group of ESL adults. However, they may have had little previous formal schooling or come with widely divergent notions of what is appropriate classroom behavior. The other extreme of this situation is the student who pauses outside the door, waiting for the teacher to give permission to enter, when arriving late. Both of these behaviors are not quite appropriate for the situation, and in all likelihood the student in both cases just hasn't been taught appropriate classroom behavior, specifically when one may interrupt or intrude. The question then becomes **which behaviors are most important to teach for the classroom, how to teach students methods to politely interrupt, and for the teacher to manage the interruptions in her class.**

## HOW TO Manage Classroom Interruptions

### 1 SET THE TONE YOU WANT

**Every teacher is different, every classroom is different.** Some teachers are bothered by students getting up to go to the restroom during class, others are not so bothered by it but are driven crazy by cell phones going off. Put what you would like students to do regarding “emergencies” and use of electronics in your syllabus so the expectation is clear from the start.

### 2 ENFORCE THE EXPECTATIONS

**In the beginning, especially, expect there to be some challenging or misunderstanding of the expectations.** Students may not have fully understood your rules, or they are so used to lack of

rules in their other classrooms that they will continue to blithely receive calls during class or get up to leave during the lecture. Usually all that is required is for the teacher to remind the class in general of the expectations. Sometimes discussing the reason for the expectation also helps: so that we can concentrate on our studies, so that students can hear my lecture without confusion, and so forth.

### 3 ADDRESSING THE INDIVIDUAL INTERRUPTER

**Sometimes most of the interruptions come in the form of one student.** You have just begun to introduce a topic, and the first sentence isn't out of your mouth before her hand shoots up, and she begins talking — usually not on topic because she probably hasn't been listening.

**What to do about this kind of student?** When she interrupts you while you are teaching, you may tell her kindly that you aren't quite finished, and she may make her comment when you are finished. This rarely extinguishes the behavior on other occasions, however. It is usually helpful to meet with this student after class or during break to give additional attention because **often the behavior results from some insecurity in the student** — feeling older, or poorer, not as intelligent, etc., than the other students, and the feelings — whether or not they are a reality --- cause the interruptions and need to seek attention in this way. If the instructor shows some positive attention and individual support of the student, the interruptions may diminish.

### 4 ADDRESSING GROUP INTERRUPTIONS

**Sometimes the continual interruptions come from the same core group of students.** This is a little harder to handle as confronting one of the group will make him or her feel singled out and defensive, while if you try to meet with the whole group they may deny that they are acting as a group — which may in fact be true, and they may just be subconsciously patterning their

behavior off one another. When there is a core group of students engaging in undesirable behavior, it usually indicates an overall problem with class climate, and the best course of action is for the instructor to **address the class as a whole**, reviewing your policies and expectations.

## 5 DEALING WITH INSTITUTIONAL INTERRUPTIONS

**What if the interruptions are institutional in nature?** Sometimes they are: your class time seems to be the time when the guys with the leaf-blowers get under your windows, or the custodian decides to come in and fix the pencil sharpener with a drill, or the tech folks have to come in and check the computers' connectivity, etc. Even some colleagues are extremely social types and feel the apparent need to knock on your door for a quick chat or question while you are teaching. So what can we do in these instances?

Again, it's fairly easy when it's one person to simply say, “We're in class right now. Please fix that/clean that/talk to me later.”

Sometimes, however, students become interested in the interruption, what the technicians are doing to the computers, for example. Sometimes the student who interrupts your lecture brings up a valid, even if totally off topic, point, and it becomes a “teachable moment.” **So if you can't beat 'em, join 'em:** sometimes the interruption to the class becomes the class.

### INTERRUPTIONS ARE UBIQUITOUS IN THE CLASSROOM.

This is probably emblematic of how little regard our society has for the educational process: few people would interrupt a doctor when she's talking to discuss some other totally irrelevant point, or take a quick phone call, or barge in (or out) of an exam room unpermitted... However, we feel free somehow to do this with teachers and the classroom. But our students are given so little class time to begin with that teachers much jealously guard it against the continual interruptions.

# TOP 10 Survival Tactics Every Teacher Should Know

*Whether this is your first year teaching or you are a twenty-year veteran, some days just do not go as planned. When those times come, it is important to know that everyone has those kinds of days, and you just need to pick yourself up and continue.*

For the days that make you want to turn around and get back under the covers, look to these survival tactics for a push in the right direction.

**TOP 10** Survival Tactics Every Teacher (Including You) Should Know

## 1 TALK TO PEOPLE WHO KNOW

Those of us who teach in a language our students may or may not understand know that **teaching ESL is a challenge**. Even when other teachers offer sympathy, a hearty “How can you do that?” sometimes does more to discourage us from a daunting teaching task than to encourage us toward it.

When you find yourself getting down and out in the world of English as a second language, look to others who have had the same experience you have. **Talk with other ESL teachers**, and make use of chat rooms designated for others with similar teaching goals. When you look to people who know and who have been where you are now, you can find encouragement and motivation to keep at the most important job you know, yours.

## 2 I DON'T KNOW

**Sometimes, you have to say it.** After all, just because you are a native speaker does not mean you know the answer to every grammar question your students ask. When you just cannot put your finger on the explanation to a question one of your students has, admit it but promise to get back to him or her with an answer, and then do just that.

## 3 ASK

To get that answer you will probably have to ask someone who has experience and knowledge beyond your own. Do it. No teacher should be offended or annoyed by another who is trying to provide her students with an accurate answer. Simply look to those with more experience for the answer to your grammatical conundrum and pay attention to it. Then pass that answer along to your student who asked the question in the first place.

## 4 MAKE CONNECTIONS

No man is an island, and no teacher works in a vacuum. The sooner you can **foster and develop relationships with other teachers**, be they teachers at your school or others you meet in chat rooms or online, the sooner you will have a support network in place for those tougher than most days. Look to these relationships for encouragement and knowledge and even an idea or two when you are feeling down, and do the same for your fellow teachers on their less than ideal days.

## 5 DO NOT REINVENT THE WHEEL

There is no need to put yourself through personal torture to recreate what others have already done and done well. With this in mind, use the resources offered by BusyTeacher.org and other ESL web sites. You can find worksheets, online tools and teaching plans for countless subjects all from experienced and knowledgeable teachers. Use that expertise to alleviate some stress from yourself!

## 6 TRY, TRY AGAIN

Who says you cannot teach the same material on more than one day? Sometimes when we have the most frustrating moments as teachers, it is time to step back and figure out another way to approach the subject. When you use a different strategy to teach a

concept that may not have gone over as well as you had hoped the first time through, **your students will benefit from the change in teaching style and content** even in the concept behind it may not be new.

## 7 GET OUT AND ABOUT

**There is great benefit from watching experienced teachers at work.** Whenever you are presented with the opportunity, visit other classrooms and watch professionals at work. As a teacher, you should always be open to learning. Watching others with more experience in the field can be an encouragement and a resource for improving your own teaching skills. Do not be afraid to ask a fellow teacher if you can observe his class, but make sure you offer the same courtesy to anyone who may ask to observe your class.

## 8 IT'S OKAY TO SHOW THE MOVIE

The popular stigma is that teachers use movies and other non-traditional types of activities when they are trying to fill time, but that is not how ESL teachers should view these activities. Exposing your students to every facet of English is important and even essential. This means that listening activities (like movies) and speaking activities (like class discussion) are highly valuable for language learners. Where a native speaker may find those types of class activities disengaging, they will be the opposite for your students. After all, the goal of language learning is to speak the language. Getting all of your material from a book just does not cut it.

So do not let the stigma turn you away from communicative activities. They are far more valuable to your students than many other possibilities.

## 9 BRING IN A GUEST SPEAKER

Likewise, your students will benefit

greatly from what a guest speaker has to offer. Especially guests who are not accustomed to speaking with nonnative speakers can challenge your students in their listening skills. Different pronunciation, different stress and intonation and even accent all contribute to a nonnative speaker's comprehension. Exposing your students to a greater variety of speech patterns and tones will help further their language skills and make them better speakers of English.

## 10 TAKE AN HONEST LOOK AT YOURSELF

Teaching is a challenge. **If you think you have learned everything there is to learn about being an effective and successful teacher, you have missed the mark.** Though sobering, it is beneficial to your teaching career in the long run to take an honest look at your strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. Once you know where you need to improve yourself, you can take steps to become a better teacher in those areas. No one is perfect, and by accepting that about ourselves and then taking measures to make changes we end up better teachers than we were to begin with.

**EVERY TEACHER HAS THOSE NOT SO GREAT DAYS, SO DO NOT LET THEM GET YOU DOWN. SIMPLY TAKE A LOOK AT WHERE YOU ARE AND WHERE YOU NEED TO GO, MAKE CHANGES AND ADJUSTMENTS KEEPING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE AND EVERYTHING IS SURE TO WORK OUT JUST FINE.**

Overall, just hang in there. Tomorrow will be a better day!

# 8 Tips to Encourage Student Participation During Discussions

For some students, nothing will give them the push they need to share in a group. For most others, though, small changes in your leadership style and your expectations can be just what they need to open up and contribute to the conversation. Here are just a few ideas to help you get those silent students starting to share in your next group discussion.

## HOW TO Encourage Student Participation

**1** **SOMETIMES DURING DISCUSSIONS, STUDENTS MAY NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT TYPE OF ANSWER YOU ARE LOOKING FOR. A SIMPLE WAY TO ENCOURAGE THESE STUDENTS TO SPEAK IS BY GIVING A MODEL ANSWER. ANSWER YOUR OWN QUESTION AND SHOW YOUR STUDENTS WHAT TYPE OF ANSWER THEY SHOULD GIVE YOU.** This gives them a grammatical structure on which to base their own ideas and removes some of the intimidation that they might otherwise feel.

**2** **MAKE SURE YOU ARE NOT FALLING VICTIM TO A COMMON MISTAKE AMONG TEACHERS, ESPECIALLY INEXPERIENCED ONES. DO NOT BE AFRAID OF SILENCE. THE NEXT TIME YOU LEAD A CLASS DISCUSSION AND NO ONE SEEMS TO HAVE AN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION, TIME YOURSELF AND WAIT A FULL SIXTY SECONDS BEFORE BREAKING THE SILENCE.** Sometimes an uncomfortable silence will be just what a hesitant student needs to speak up. For other students, that small amount of time can be enough for them to gather their thoughts and formulate what they would like to say before they open their mouths. If the teacher is filling in all the conversation spaces, your students are not likely to interrupt and it may appear that they do not want to participate in the discussion.

**3** **BE CAREFUL WHAT AND HOW MUCH YOU ARE CORRECTING. IF YOU ARE CORRECTING PRONUNCIATION AND GRAMMAR AND CONTENT ALL AT THE SAME TIME, IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT YOUR STUDENTS MAY FEEL TOO INTIMIDATED TO OPEN UP!**

**FOCUS YOUR CORRECTIONS ON ONE ISSUE SO YOUR STUDENTS FEEL AS THOUGH THEY CAN SPEAK WITHOUT BEING OVERWHELMED WITH THEIR MISTAKES.** Also, encourage your students that their opinions are welcome even if they are not in agreement with yours or their fellow students'.

**4** **DON'T PUT STUDENTS ON THE SPOT. CALLING ON A STUDENT WHO IS NOT READY TO SPEAK WILL ONLY INCREASE HIS OR HER ANXIETY AND WILL OFTEN CAUSE THAT PERSON TO RETREAT EVEN FURTHER INTO HIS OR HER SHELL. BY REFRAINING FROM PUTTING PRESSURE ON UNREADY STUDENTS, YOU TAKE AWAY THAT FEAR FACTOR.** Though this alone may not get a quiet student talking, it will help create an atmosphere conducive to speaking.

**5** **MAKE SURE YOUR STUDENTS KNOW THEY HAVE FREEDOM TO FAIL DURING GROUP DISCUSSIONS. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT YOU WANT YOUR STUDENTS TO UNDERPERFORM. WHAT IT DOES MEAN IS THAT YOU ARE NOT GOING TO CRITICIZE YOUR STUDENTS FOR MAKING A MISTAKE.** When students know that there is freedom to be imperfect, the intimidation level of group discussion will decrease and that in turn will free your not so perfect students to speak.

**6** **LET YOUR STUDENTS WORK TOGETHER. SOMETIMES INTIMIDATION AND A FEAR OF SPEAKING IN FRONT OF ONE'S PEERS IS ENOUGH TO SHUT DOWN STUDENTS WHO ARE UNSURE OF THEIR SPEAKING ABILITIES.**

For those who might be more willing to talk when only one person is listening, designate one speaker for each group to share with the class and ask the remaining students to share with the designated speaker. Because you eliminate the fear of sharing in front of the entire class, your students may be more willing to participate in their discussion group.

**7** **THINK ABOUT HOW YOU ARE GROUPING YOUR STUDENTS TOGETHER DURING DISCUSSIONS. IF YOU HAVE SOME STUDENTS WHO ARE MORE**

**TALKATIVE THAN OTHERS AND WHO ALSO HAVE A TENDENCY TO DOMINATE A DISCUSSION, PUT THEM IN A GROUP TOGETHER. PUT ALL OF YOUR QUIETEST STUDENTS IN A GROUP OF THEIR OWN AS WELL.** By doing this, you force your more quiet students to engage in the discussion as no one else will be steering it for them.

**8** **SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AS WHERE YOUR STUDENTS ARE SITTING IN A GROUP CAN CONTRIBUTE TO HOW MUCH THEY SHARE DURING DISCUSSIONS AS WELL. IF YOU ARE LEADING, MAKE SURE YOUR MOST TALKATIVE STUDENTS ARE SITTING DIRECTLY TO YOUR LEFT AND RIGHT IF YOU ARE IN A CIRCLE. LIKEWISE, SEAT YOUR QUIETEST STUDENT DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF YOU.** If you are not leading the discussion, designate a facilitator for each group and arrange your students' seats in the same manner. The amount of eye contact that each person receives from you or the facilitator can have an influence on how much that person speaks during the discussion.

**THESE IDEAS ARE NOT GOING TO SOLVE EVERY STUDENT'S HESITANCY TO SHARE IN GROUPS, BUT THEY WILL GET YOU STARTED MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION IF YOU HAVE STUDENTS WHO STRUGGLE TO PARTICIPATE IN DISCUSSIONS.**

The first step toward open discussion is to give your students the model they need and the time to formulate their own ideas for sharing. Then by creating an atmosphere that encourages discussion and not perfection, your students will be less intimidated to share in class. Finally, by strategically grouping and seating your students in their groups, you will create a physical environment in which your students will be willing to share.

Ultimately, each person's participation comes down to him or her, and you cannot force an unwilling student to participate in class. Do what you can to **make your class more open to discussion** and then **challenge your students to step up to the plate** and use the language they are trying too hard to acquire!

# 4 Types of Problem Students and Strategies to Manage Them

*As with any classroom setting you may encounter problem students in ESL classes.*

Problem students are challenging because they may disrupt the learning environment, make your job more difficult than it has to be or just plain frustrate you and the other students. We've outlined four types of problem students and provided several strategies to deal with them. You will be able to spot these personality types from a mile away!

## THE FOUR TYPES of Problem Students

It's pretty easy to identify the prospective problem student from the get-go. Always go with your gut and diagnose the issue as early on as you can. That is half the battle. **The sooner you recognize the problem student the sooner you can begin working on your strategies to alleviate the issue and get the student on track.**

### 1 THE KNOW-IT-ALL

Some students are overzealous, rambunctious, loud talkers or just plain annoying. This is usually the student who may be above his classmates in speaking ability, but not necessarily in overall language skills. They tend to display helpful nature, but may chronically interrupt, talk way too much or for too long, and in extreme cases may try to challenge you in front of the class. **The best way to deal with this type of student is to provide appropriate times where he or she can be the leader, but set very firm boundaries.** You need to make it clear to them that you are facilitator which basically means you are running the show. They can have their forum occasionally and often have a lot of good ideas and questions to contribute.

You don't want to shut them down completely but if you can disengage them in the class when they are getting off topic or stealing the spotlight, they generally get the hint. Other times it may take a private conversation. That conversation needs to be treated delicately as this type of student usually gets a

bruised ego pretty easily. Give them guidelines for how long they are allowed to have the floor, and show them each and every time that you are the decision-maker in the class.

### 2 THE PAINFULLY SHY

If anyone has worked in Asia or has Asian students, we have all encountered this student. **They are usually female, afraid to speak, won't make eye contact, and generally want someone to translate for them.** This is a delicate situation and **it takes some grace and humor to reach them and pull them out of their shell.** Give them time and take baby steps. If everyone is asking and answering questions, expect that they will do almost nothing until they reach a certain comfort level. Don't pressure them too much, but try to get them to at least repeat after you and praise anything that they do contribute. The other trick to this personality is to **use her classmates to break through.** They will instinctively try to help, so let them. Students like this are more apt to start sharing with someone from their own country or someone very similar to themselves. Put her in pairs with someone who will be gentle, and chances are that student will reach her.

You can also try to approach something that will get a reaction out of the student. Maybe she really likes to eat sweets. Try a little bribery. Or maybe she is very close to her family, so the lesson on family may get her to respond. Keep trying and don't give up. Persistence is key with this one, and the student will eventually come around.

### 3 MR. INAPPROPRIATE

**This is the guy who is taking an English class to try to get a date either with other students or with the teacher.** It is usually a man, but some women can also be inappropriately flirtatious in the class as well. First **do not engage this behavior.** A few times you may be able to laugh it off, but with this type of problem student, you are going to have to tell them what is appropriate (and not) for the classroom. You may

have to disengage the behavior a few times publicly, and then take him or her aside and give them the boundaries talk. In some cases the student doesn't realize why their actions are inappropriate. One tactic may be to teach a lesson on body language, pick-up lines, or relationships. That way you are able to approach the sensitive topics as a group and get some dialogue happening.

### 4 THE REFUSER

The refuser is different from the painfully shy. **The refuser never wants to participate and feels that they don't have to do the same level of work as everyone else.** Often they don't do their homework, will clam up during activities, and also may challenge you in front of the class because they are unprepared. This type of student can be really frustrating as you start wondering why they are in the class in the first place. One way to reach them may be **soft public humiliation**, meaning that you put him or her on the spot when they should be prepared and see what happens. With younger learners just being called out and not being ready is often enough for them to start applying themselves. You can also apply some discipline. Give the student double the amount of homework and follow through. Ask them if they need extra help and pair them with a student who can be a good role model. You can also try and set goals for this student. For every three days in a row that you participate you get 5 minutes extra of break time. The incentive should be small but meaningful and should also be applied to the whole class not just the problem student.

**GENERALLY THE ESL CLASSROOM IS A JOY TO TEACH IN BECAUSE STUDENTS HAVE A REAL NEED AND DESIRE TO BE THERE.**

Occasionally though, you may come across one of these problem students. Always be sure to keep your cool, apply patience instead of pressure and realize that you have the facilities to solve student issues.

# Are We Having Fun Yet? Addressing the “Entertain Me” Attitude

*You've experienced it: you're in the midst of explaining some complicated grammar point, perhaps having to do with the different tenses of the passive voice, writing on the board as you're explaining various examples, and you glance back at your students — uniformly young — and see the glazing eyes, or the eye rolling, or the drifting off.*

At any rate, there isn't a pretense of attending the lecture. Maybe someone even says aloud, “This is boring.” And then you remember, “Oh, no! I forgot to entertain them!” Other than getting sarcastic with, “If you are looking for can-can's and circus acts, you have come to the wrong class,” **what can a teacher do?** A certain amount of curricula probably just isn't very interesting, by its nature. How inherently fun really is instruction in standard punctuation?

There is also the question of how fun teachers should make school. Does making every instructional moment fun set student up for inevitable disappointment? However, the “Are we having fun yet?” attitude is the one we as instructors are facing and seems to be our job to address in some way. So on this issue of the entitled “entertain me” attitude, there are several things to balance as follows.

**HOW TO** Address the ‘Entertain Me’ Attitude in Your Classroom

## 1 ADDRESS THE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Most subject matter, properly addressed — properly taught, that is, — is inherently interesting.

I hated science as an elementary school child because I associated it with reading boring, dense textbooks with impenetrable, Latinate vocabulary and indecipherable charts and graphics. That isn't really science. Science is about asking questions and seeking answers in the natural world. This is how science is taught to my daughter, and science is her favorite subject. If a number of students are complaining

about boredom, look at **how the subject matter is being taught**. Is English being treated as if it is something that exists only in textbooks? Are students being asked to spend an excessive amount of time diagramming sentences or manipulating verb tenses? If so, consider changing the instructional method and add more opportunity for student interaction and actual use of the language.

## 2 DELVE INTO CURRICULUM

Too often students are allowed to only skim the surface of knowledge. Almost anything, however, is boring if only superficially understood and interesting only once enough is known of it. One of my favorite books when I was a teenager was about a girls' soccer team—not something I normally would have been interested in, but the author gave enough detail about the sport and the team relationships to make it interesting. Find those details about the subject that will make it relevant and interesting to students.

## 3 INCLUDE A VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES

The “This is boring” complaint can also be a sign that **there is not enough variety of activities within a class period**. The average learner can only attend fifteen or twenty minutes to one activity before needing a change. In just the hour or so it's taken to type this article, for example, I've had to get up twice just to stretch my legs, and my attention span is greater than most of our students'. **Plan for at least two activities during a one-hour class**, and give students a chance to get up and move around in between if the class session is longer.

## 4 ADDRESS THE ATTITUDE

If, after changing the curriculum and making instruction more student-centered, students are still complaining of boredom, it's time to face the attitude head-on. Ask the students if they can tell you specifically what is

boring and what would be less boring. **What is a class that they find less boring and why?** This can be done in an informal and anonymous questionnaire posted on the board, and students can turn in answers on a sheet of paper before they leave. Sometimes you can get valuable information: e.g., “I like Ms. Chang's class because she gives us a chance to get up and move around,” may be a sign that you have some kinesthetic learners in class, and incorporating more activities with some movement might be helpful.

## 5 PREPARE STUDENTS FOR BOREDOM

If, after addressing the curriculum and instruction, as well as student attitudes and learning needs, students still are complaining, “I'm bored,” it's time to address the whole nature of boredom. This is really an extension of addressing student attitude — specifically, the belief that boredom is something negative and something students should never be exposed to. Discuss other situations that are boring, besides class: waiting in line at the Department of Motor Vehicles or in the dentist's office comes to mind. Will the DMV or dentist feel responsible for entertaining the students? Probably not to the extent of their teachers. **What can students do in these situations to keep themselves entertained?** Then go back to the curriculum. Acknowledge some parts of it probably aren't very interesting, such as standard paragraph structure, but also put the responsibility back on the students. What can you notice about this paragraph that is interesting? How does it relate to your life?

**THE NOTION THAT TEACHERS ARE ENTERTAINERS IS ONE DEEPLY INGRAINED IN OUR CULTURE AND DIFFICULT TO ADDRESS.**

However, by addressing the curriculum and student attitude, a richer curriculum is developed, and students become independent enough to entertain themselves instead of waiting for someone else to.

# How to Correct Mistakes

## THROUGHOUT THEIR STUDIES, STUDENTS WILL MAKE LOTS OF MISTAKES.

It is an important part of the learning process. If they are not making mistakes then they are not being given difficult enough topics and structures to work with. You have to choose material that is challenging but manageable for your class and correct mistakes in positive ways. Singling out students who make errors will make students feel self-conscious and shy so some tact when correcting mistakes is important.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 PRACTICE

When introducing new vocabulary, emphasize correct pronunciation and during the drilling exercises have students practice using **choral repetition**. This means students are not immediately singled out to pronounce new and unfamiliar words and they can become accustomed to the sound of the words together.

The next step is generally to call on students or have students volunteer to pronounce words or phrases. It is an important step to check pronunciation on an individual basis however it means that a student is being singled out to perform independently in front of the entire class. Correcting mistakes at this level is the most challenging but you can use the same process to correct errors in any situation.

### 2 SELF-CORRECTION

The best way to correct mistakes is to **have students correct themselves**. Ideally a student will realize a mistake has been made and fix it automatically but that is not always the case. If a student answers a question incorrectly you can gently prompt them to revisit their answer. One of the ways to do this is to **repeat what the student said placing emphasis on the incorrect portion**,

for instance *"I have play baseball."* and saying it in a questioning way. At this point the student has an opportunity to think about and revise his initial response.

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

### 3 PEER CORRECTION

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

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

### 4 PROVIDING THE ANSWER: LAST RESORT

Sometimes individual students as well as entire classes have no idea what the answer to your question is. If providing hints and examples does not lead them to the correct answer, you will have to provide it.

Generally this is a last resort and means that a lot of review activities may be in order but keeping a positive attitude and explaining the answer good-naturedly will do a lot to keep your students positive about learning

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

## AT EVERY STAGE OF AN ACTIVITY, PRAISE SHOULD BE GIVEN.

If a student volunteers to answer a question, you can **thank him immediately for volunteering** which will boost his self-confidence. At that point if the student provides an incorrect answer you can correct in an encouraging way by saying *"Almost."*

If the student gives the correct answer, be sure to say *"Good job!"* or *"Excellent work!"*

As long as you are positive in your method of correcting errors, **reassure** your students that they are doing well, and do not get upset with them for making mistakes, they will continue to volunteer and try their best because making mistakes is OK. That is how learning should be. If students never take risks, they will not improve.

# How To Provide Quality Feedback In The ESL Classroom

## PROVIDING FEEDBACK THROUGHOUT LESSONS IS IMPORTANT.

It is something that will become second nature with just a little bit of practice. Feedback should be used to **encourage students to work hard** and indicate what they need to focus on when they are having difficulty.

Feedback often takes one of three forms: verbal, visual, or written. In this article we'll take a look at how teachers can use these different methods to provide feedback in the ESL/EFL classroom.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 VERBAL FEEDBACK STRATEGIES

During lessons, teachers use a lot of verbal feedback to let students know how they are doing and also to transition from one section to another. Short expressions such as *"Great!"* or *"Good job!"* can be used to praise students for correct answers.

Rather than tell students directly they are incorrect, it is better to ask them to try again or reconsider their answers. The goal is to **elicit the correct answer from the class and students should not be afraid of being wrong** so keep your reactions positive.

You can summarize how students did and introduce the next topic for transitions by saying *"Alright! You did so well talking about food. Now let's move on to ~."* This will reinforce the fact that students should keep up the good work.

If student responses are a little lackluster, you can point that out in your comments too. By saying *"I know it's Friday but I need a bit more energy in this next section, OK? \*wait for student response\* OK! Great, now we're going to talk about ~."*

you show that you empathize with students while still pushing them to do their best. It is easy to include verbal feedback in every stage of your lesson.

### 2 VISUAL FEEDBACK

Visual feedback can come in **two forms**.

The first is any expression or gesture you use with or without verbal feedback that indicates how students are doing in class. A **smile or thumbs up** would be one form of visual feedback. When using visual feedback, it is not always necessary to add verbal feedback and could save you time when working through an activity quickly. You can also prompt students to reconsider their answers and self correct using visual feedback. If you use the same expression each time students say the incorrect answer, they will pick up on that. This visual feedback allows you to give students another chance without verbally telling them they are wrong.

Another form of visual feedback can accompany written evaluations. This may take the form of **stickers, stamps, or even charts** that reflect student accomplishments. You may choose to have a display in the classroom that visually represents how well the class is doing in reaching their goals so that students can see how much progress they have made and stay motivated.

### 3 WRITTEN FEEDBACK

Teachers often have the opportunity to give students written feedback on homework assignments, on exams, and at the end of each term. These are great opportunities to **point out what students did well and what ar-**

**as they still need to work on.** You should provide students with some suggestions of what they could do to improve and offer to assist them by meeting with them for tutorials or providing them with extra study material.

You can also allow **students to provide feedback for each other.** Doing this during **role play exercises**, for example, means that students who are not performing still have to pay attention. Categories could include *pronunciation, creativity, and performance* so that the presenting students are marked on how well they were understood, the quality of their script, and the quality of their acting. Students could be graded as a group or individually. Student evaluations should not have any bearing on the grades that you give students but you might want to use the information to say which skit was the best and who the best actor was.

## REGARDLESS OF HOW OFTEN YOU USE THESE DIFFERENT TYPES OF FEEDBACK, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT STUDENTS ARE GIVEN A CLEAR IMAGE OF THEIR PERFORMANCE AS WELL AS THEIR GOALS.

This will help them focus on what is most important. Giving constructive criticism and providing students with both the materials and support they need to succeed are important. Doing these things will help students excel in their studies and maintain a **positive attitude towards education.**

# How to Teach Using Gestures and Mime

## A LOT OF TEACHING ENGLISH IS ABOUT ACTING.

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

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 GIVING DIRECTIONS

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

### 2 VOCABULARY

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

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

### 3 PRACTICE

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

### 4 PRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

### 5 CULTURAL

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

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

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

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

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

# Keep 'Em Under Control: How to Handle Disruptive (and Disrespectful) Students

## DISRUPTIVE AND DISRESPECTFUL STUDENTS CAN BE A PAIN FOR ANY TEACHER.

This tends not to be so common when it comes to teaching adults. A lot of people who are learning English are doing it for their own gain. Normally the money for the classes is going to come out of their own pockets, and therefore they will be wanting to pay as much attention as possible. In some countries, people might even just take English classes in order to get out of the house. Either way, those who are paying for the service themselves will be paying the utmost attention to their teacher. But when it comes to teaching children, there might be problems in this department. It is therefore important to know how to handle them.

Also be aware of the different rules and regulations of the school on is in before doling out punishments. Usually teachers of English as a second language tend to have pleasant experiences in the classroom, but **on rare occasions when things don't go right you need to understand what to do.**

**HOW TO** Handle Disruptive and Disrespectful Students

### 1 DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS

**Students who disrupt the class may or may not know they are doing it.**

This depends entirely on the situation. When teaching adults, there could be one member of the group who enjoys speaking. They may speak a lot, and therefore cause others to miss out on their turn. This is usually not a problem, and one will easily be able to turn this around in order to make it useful for the entire class. Organizing an activity which will involve everybody, but with that person leading it is often a good idea. This way they will be able

to continue talking as much as they please, and everybody else will be able to get their say as well!

### 2 SET DOWN RULES

When starting with a specific course, or at the beginning of a class if one is substituting, it is important to set down the rules.

**Tell the students what is appropriate and what isn't.** This will usually help to set the tone of the classes that are to follow. This is especially important when one is teaching teenagers and children. Encourage them to raise their hand when they wish to speak, and also state that it is important that they speak only in English. Emphasize this to the students. By having a list of rules by which they have to abide at the beginning of the class, the students will be more likely to listen and participate accordingly. It is also a good idea to emphasize respectfulness. This is not just to the teacher, but also to their fellow students.

### 3 SINGLING STUDENTS OUT

Although a lot of teachers don't like doing this, it is usually a very effective method. **By putting the student on the spot, they will realize that all the attention is on them and therefore they will probably be a little quieter in the future.**

Again, this is usually more so the case with teenagers than any other type of student but it is also possible with adults. If one finds that the student is continually talking, then ask them a question about the subject at hand. If they weren't listening, they won't be

sure what to say. This is also a good opportunity to discuss the topic further and might lead to some insight.

Of course, some students relish attention. It is therefore a good idea to **turn this attention into a positive thing.** Try getting them to go up to the board and explaining a particular concept or idea.

### 4 TALKATIVE STUDENTS

A good method is, if a student is speaking too much and disrupting the class, to **walk over to them and stand next to them.** Often they will feel embarrassed and quieten down a little bit. Another good idea is, if one hears students talking, to ask them to share it with the rest of the class. Normally they will be a lot quieter after this, for fear of being singled out.

**IT IS VITAL THAT ONE ADDRESSES THE ISSUES AT THE VERY BEGINNING AND NIPS IT IN THE BUD.**

Other suggestions include drawing up a "*classroom contract*" which the students should all agree to. It might also be effective to **get the students themselves to think up the rules.** Ask them what they think should be appropriate classroom behaviour with regards to listening, respect and disrupting the class.

All of these methods usually work quite well, although there may be special cases. If one is working in a secondary or primary school, it might be pertinent to send continually disruptive students to the principal.

# Encouraging Students to be Close, but not too Close, to their Peers

*It's the first day of your ESL class. Your students, some of them in jeans and others in traditional religious clothing, eye each other suspiciously.*

They talk only to you and then only in monosyllables and in response to a question. Well, this seems to be the start of a terrific semester. So you implement plenty of **ice-breaking activities**, in which students have to talk to and get to know each other. You then introduce a lot of group work in various configurations. And guess what! It works. Students are now talking to each other, helping each other with class work, getting each other's cell phone numbers, and coming to and leaving class together. They're relaxed and actually seem to enjoy each other's company. Cross-cultural friendships occur...

**All of this sounds wonderful, correct? So what's the problem?** Well, maybe your students are a little too... chummy. While you're honestly glad that they are now talking to each other, you would rather they not laugh and chat through your lectures. And while you also are happy they are now helping each other, you really don't want them helping each other on tests.

You don't want to be the killjoy who destroys the new-found classroom rapport. However, within the confines of the class, friendships are secondary and there to support the instruction, while the instruction is not secondary to the friendships. But students might not see it that way: their lives outside the class may flow to inside the class without boundaries or changes in behavior.

**SO WHAT ARE SOME WAYS TO PRESERVE THE CLASSROOM FRIENDSHIPS WHILE AT THE SAME TIME ALSO PRESERVING THE CLASSROOM INTEGRITY?**

## 1 SET THE BOUNDARIES

**Students often have not reached that stage of development where they see themselves as having different "selves": their classroom self, their dorm self, their football self.** Unfortunately, American culture contributes

to this lack of separation because our society is largely informal, and there is a romantic tradition within our culture that altering your behavior according to the situation is somehow inauthentic. The teacher should disabuse students of this notion: they will be expected to act according to the situation all of their lives. A lesson or series of lessons can even be given on the different behavior and language expected of a classroom situation as opposed to a party, for example.

## 2 REMIND STUDENTS OF WHY THEY ARE HERE

**Students, particularly young ones, can lose track of the larger picture in their first weeks or months of school, forgetting they are here to study first and socialize second.** Socializing is important, of course, but it is usually not the top priority of going to college and getting a degree, and even American students who forget this and focus on socializing over studying their first year often find themselves failing and returning home. A few class discussions on what student hope to gain from their college experience might help them refocus on their coursework.

## 3 SET LIMITS

**Again, there is nothing wrong with students socializing with each other — especially if it's in English.** Those cross-cultural friendships are indeed valuable. But there is almost always "too much" of any good thing. It's fine if students catch up with each other and chat at the beginning of class as you are taking attendance and returning papers and conducting other classroom business. But if it's ten minutes into the hour, and students are still talking, it's time to set a limit. "*Stop talking, now*" is too direct, of course, and may backfire by alienating students. You could accomplish this by clearing your throat and announcing in a voice slightly louder than the students' the class objective for the day: "*Today we're going to continue studying the present perfect tense. We'll pick up where we left off on page 37.*" Students usually respond

by getting out their books and opening them. Rarely does it take a more direct although still pleasant prompting, "*Miguel and Sophia, I need you to stop talking please and take out your books.*"

## 4 CURB THE GROUP WORK

**It's hard for an instructor trained in the value of cooperative learning to accept that group work ever has disadvantages.** However, group work, or cooperative learning, while yielding many benefits, is really not magical: it doesn't solve all problems, it is not effortlessly implemented, and it carries its own distinct disadvantages. One of the disadvantages is the students can become too close to each other and focused on socializing rather than studying the course material. If this is happening in your class, and students are talking through your lectures and not paying attention to the class because they are paying more attention to their buddies, then it is time to cut back on the group work and **include more individual work**: more Sustained Silent Reading or more journal writing, for example. Overall, a balance between individual and group work is desirable.

## 5 MIX UP THE GROUPS

**Another step the instructor can take is mixing up the groups.** If students always work in the same groups each class period, there is the danger of the group becoming like a dysfunctional family: negative patterns of behavior develop, like Julio always copies off of Benjamin, or Tatiana and Juan are always cracking jokes, and so forth. If you frequently change the groups, there are fewer chances of these habits settling in.

**A CLASS IS LIKE A FAMILY IN SOME WAYS—CERTAINLY YOU WANT STUDENTS TO FEEL SAFE IN THIS ENVIRONMENT TO EXPLORE AND MAKE MISTAKES.** However, it is also not like a family and more like a job in other ways — we are all there to conduct the business of study, and bonding with each other is secondary to that.

# R-E-S-P-E-C-T: How to Build an Effective Classroom Environment in a Multilingual Classroom

**RAPPORT BETWEEN THE TEACHER AND STUDENTS IS IMPORTANT, BUT EQUALLY IMPORTANT IS RAPPORT BETWEEN STUDENTS. IN A CLASSROOM WITH STUDENTS FROM MANY CULTURES, THIS CAN OFTEN BE A DIFFICULT FEAT.**

Many students have never traveled outside of their country or have never interacted with other cultures before. In order for a classroom to be a safe place for students to practice learning, they need to feel comfortable with each other. Below are some helpful hints for making your classroom as conducive as possible to learning.

**HOW TO** Build an Effective Classroom Environment in a Multilingual Classroom

## 1 START FROM DAY 1

One of the most important days in a classroom is the **first day**. Make sure you set the tone that you want to have for the entire term right from the get-go. You should **establish some ground rules**, but you should also establish a *classroom community feeling* early on. Icebreakers are a great way to accomplish this on the first day. Warming up with a few of these will get students mingling, talking, and connecting with their peers.

## 2 GET PHYSICAL – A PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT THAT IS

Make a friendly environment by moving desks around in a *circle, U-shape, or group formation*. This opens up communication and creates a welcoming, collaborative environment as opposed to having desks in rows. If desks are movable, try to change up the formation based on your lesson for the day.

Hanging up student work in the room is also another way to build a strong community in your classroom. Students **love to see their hard work acknowledged**, and putting up accomplishments in the class helps the students to feel more involved and a part of the class.

## 3 LEARN

**Let students share about their different cultures.** Towards the beginning of the term, allow students to interview one another to understand each other better. Work facts from their country or culture into your teaching examples (i.e. grammar sentences, quizzes, etc.) This helps to **break down walls between students from other cultures**.

Additionally, work time in each class to let students share about their daily lives. This lets students get to know one another and practice language skills at the same time. **As the teacher, don't be afraid to share real things from your life too.** Most of all, don't be afraid of differences -- celebrate the diversity in your classroom!

## 4 MINIMIZE EMBARRASSMENT

Feedback and error correction are important parts of the language classroom. However, **there are successful ways of doing this without embarrassing the student.**

The most important way to avoid embarrassment is by making the environment safe enough for mistakes. When a student feels comfortable in the classroom, they will be more likely to take the risks that are necessary for language learning, and they won't feel bad about themselves when they

make mistakes. Another way to avoid this is to **play on student strengths**. It's important to challenge students, but when having students call out in class, try to play up their strengths so they can build confidence.

When students do make mistakes, be gentle in your correction, and try to use positive phrases if you can, such as *That was a tricky question. or You were close, but the correct answer is....*

It's often better for you the teacher to correct the student than to have another student call out the correct answer. Make sure that you **stop other students from embarrassing the student** as well. Be firm that no mocking of students is allowed, even in jest. Additionally, allow students to call you out on your mistakes too. This helps to reinforce the idea that mistakes are a natural part of language and **nobody's perfect -- not even the teacher.**

## 5 COMPETITION

Review games and competitions are great motivators for students to practice their language, and **nothing brings students together faster than a team effort.** When forming teams, mix up the students based on *culture, first language, and proficiency*. When they work together towards a common goal, cultural bridges are crossed, and this helps to foster a better class environment even when the competitions are finished.

## 6 MIX IT UP

Every good classroom takes advantage of different student interaction patterns. Having students work in pairs or small groups is good for appealing to multiple learning styles, and it helps

students be more autonomous in their learning.

**When you have students work in groups, change partners** so that everyone gets experience working with new students. It's okay to let students choose their partners every now and then, but they typically will choose only those students they feel comfortable with. A teacher-selected pair will push students just enough outside of their comfort zone to help them form new relationships and understand their classmates better. After students have worked closely with many of their peers, this will improve whole-class relations.

## **A STRONG COMMUNITY CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT NEEDS TO BE ESTABLISHED IN ORDER FOR MAXIMUM LEARNING TO TAKE PLACE.**

Having a safe environment where students feel involved and respected will reduce discipline issues, increase student motivation, and ultimately enhance learning. A multilingual classroom has many challenges in helping students come together. However, it can be a most rewarding experience when community is achieved!

## **7 KEEP IT LIGHT**

The more **jokes and humor** you can incorporate in the daily class, the more students will feel relaxed. If you find that jokes or humor don't come naturally for you, don't force it. Instead, try using riddles or asking students for funny things that happened to them throughout the week. Having running inside jokes with your students helps to build common ground and build the community environment!

## **8 IT'S ALL ABOUT RESPECT**

**Respect is the foundation for a successful classroom environment.** From early on, stress the importance of respect in your classroom. Students need to understand how to respect one another and why this is important. As a teacher, you should model this for your students right from the beginning.

**Respect is a two-way street, and students know when they're not being respected.** This is especially important if you're teaching adult EFL students: although their language production is limited, they're not children, and they shouldn't be treated as such. Adults and children alike will give more respect to each other and to the teacher provided the teacher also respects them. Students know when a teacher genuinely cares about their success and will often work harder when they feel the respect and support from their teacher.

# ESL Activities to Teach to the Seven Different Learning Styles

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

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

**HOW TO** Teach to All Learning Styles

## 1 VISUAL

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

## 2 VERBAL

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

## 3 PHYSICAL

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

## 4 AURAL

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

## 5 LOGICAL

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

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

## 6 SOCIAL

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

## 7 SOLITARY

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

## THE HUMAN BRAIN IS AN AMAZING CREATION.

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

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

# Fairly Addressing Dead Grandmothers, Sick Uncles, and Other “Family Emergencies”

There’s a high mortality of my students’ extended family members at the time of finals. Uncles get sick, grandparents die, sometimes there’s a burial in a distant country requiring time off, extensions on projects, and incompletes.

Sometimes it’s not necessarily a death but the generic “family emergency”. Not that I’m cynical — well, maybe a little. Even my daughter noted it, when I dismissed an email from a student with, *“Yes, if I had to pick out a student whose uncle was going to get sick at the time of the midterm, it would have been her.”* The student wanted two weeks off to deal with the emergency. Of course the course syllabus didn’t allow this. *“But, Mom,”* my daughter protested. *“What if her uncle really is sick?”*

What if indeed. But there seems to be a pattern: the more lower the student’s grade, the more likely an extended family member (it’s almost never a member of the immediate family) will die during the course of the semester. What if, however, it really is true? How to balance fair treatment of the student of the afflicted family, uphold the standards of the course, and be fair to the rest of the students who turn their projects in on time?

## HOW TO Fairly Address Family Emergencies

### 1 IN THE BEGINNING

It all begins with the syllabus.

Your syllabus is your contract with students, your promise on how the class will be conducted. Explain clearly on the first day the policy and consequences of absences, tardies, and incomplete or late work. You will have the syllabus to go to if students violate or claim ignorance of the policy, reminding them the policies were gone over the first day of class. Some instructors go so far as to have students sign a statement that they have read and understood the syllabus.

### 2 POLICY FOR THE EXCEPTIONS

**What are the rules for those situations that are supposedly outside the rules?** I’ve had students come up to me on the first day of class to ask for two weeks off during the term, framing the situation as if it is somehow “exceptional.” It’s been my policy to point out to students that the situation really isn’t an “exception” as certainly most students have families and would also like two weeks off to visit them, but they have chosen to take a class for these five months, and the class has an attendance policy. To sum up, it is my policy to treat most “exceptions” as if they are not and draw them back into the framework of the class policies even as the student works to frame the situation as exceptional. Usually, it isn’t.

### 3 WHEN A STUDENT IS “EXCEPTIONAL”

Usually, as in the case above, students need only one conversation to understand that the situation isn’t an exception but really one requiring a choice (their own): the class or an extended break. However, **there are those rare students whose lives seem to be a series of mishaps:** they fall ill to mysterious viruses, relatives die, cars break down. When a student has presented multiple crises like this, I’ll often invite her to my office for a private conversation, listen to the student’s situation, and try to resolve it, getting the student back on track in class.

### 4 LET THE STUDENT TELL HER STORY

**Students are used to not being heard, I believe.** So when given the chance to speak, some interesting things can come out. With just a simple, “So what’s been going on?” when invited to my office, sometimes they’ll abandon the entire “sick grandmother” facade and say simply that they’ve experienced a painful breakup and haven’t been able to

concentrate on their class work, but they were either embarrassed or thought the problem wasn’t serious enough to warrant special concern. **Extending deadlines in a situation like this, with a student who is clearly troubled but motivated to get back to the business of being a student, is appropriate.**

### 5 NATURAL CONSEQUENCES

When the student’s situation, however, is more a matter of not planning, **let the student bear the consequences -- don’t bear them yourself.** Oftentimes, probably seeing the teacher as the adult and person in authority, the student will try to thrust consequences on her shoulders. However, if the student so lacked in planning skills that she scheduled her vacation during class hours or her class during work hours, don’t let the student thrust responsibility onto you by expecting you to flex the class schedule for her to accommodate her other plans. Put the responsibility back on her: calmly explain that it isn’t possible for her to be at work and class at the same time or to take vacation during the course, and she will have to choose or rearrange her schedule, possibly by taking another class. Sometimes the student is so dumbfounded at this — being forced into making her own choices — that she just stands there silently. It’s fine to gently repeat your position: the student has to decide herself what is more important, vacation or class. It may be the first time she’s made such a decision on her own, but she will be making them her whole life.

### MOST PEOPLE, PROBABLY, ARE CONVINCED OF THEIR EXCEPTIONALNESS.

In our students, that belief is fine in that certainly we want to encourage them to have a strong self-image and belief in their own abilities.

However, we also want to temper that with a sense of limits, of an understanding of rules, and a respect for the laws of physics: even truly exceptional people cannot be in two places at one time.

# Teacher, I'm Bored; Teacher I'm Lost - Teaching Multi-Level Classes

## ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES OF THE ESL EDUCATOR IS TEACHING THE MULTI-LEVEL CLASS.

And all ESL classes are multi-level, even those not officially designated as such: for example, one student may be strong in speaking skills while another strong in reading.

A concern with teaching the multi-level class is holding everyone's interest and meeting everyone's needs, no matter their level. A variety of students study in a multi-level class: students who are just learning to speak English, students who are fluent but want to work on their pronunciation, as well as students who have conversational English but need to work on academic skills.

## HOW TO Meet the Varied Student Needs of a Multilevel Class

### 1 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Start with a needs assessment. Find out **what students want to learn and are interested in**. If most in a class are career-oriented, for example, focus on the vocabulary needed for career success.

For example, academic English vocabulary is full of Latin root words such as "obese" that are different from the more Anglo-Saxon roots of conversational English, such as "fat." It is this vocabulary students need to succeed in college classes for later professional success.

### 2 SKILLS ASSESSMENT

In addition, do a skills assessment the first day and find out **what students' levels are** by an informal interview, asking students about their background and then taping it. Also do a writing assessment on a simple topic like "A Life Lesson." Then make decisions about grouping from this assessment. Sometimes it makes sense to group students of similar ability levels, such as when doing a listening comprehension task, while other times, however, such as when engaged in discussion, students can be grouped across levels.

### 3 THEMES

Choose themes. Find out what **themes students are interested in** by polling them and showing visuals: sciences, education, art, and so forth. Build your class around these themes, with easier materials for the lower levels and harder for the higher levels. Usually one week of focus on a theme is sufficient.

### 4 PLAN CAREFULLY

Plan carefully for the multilevel class. This is crucial, to have **enough activities for each of the levels, or flexible activities**, with different material for students at different levels of English acquisition. So while a beginning student could be working on vocabulary related to college life, for example, a more advanced student could be writing a paragraph or essay on the same topic.

### 5 PROPER APPROACH

Use the **whole-class-to-leveled groups approach**. In larger classes, you may group students by level or in heterogeneous groups while in smaller classes you can split your time effectively between individual students. Start an activity by discussing it in general with the class as a whole: the topic of family, for example. Allow students to offer comments as they wish at the beginning then break into leveled groups for learning vocabulary words related to family, for example, for lower levels, while higher levels can do a more advanced reading on the topic.

### 6 VARIETY OF STRATEGIES

Include a variety of modalities and strategies: **use visuals, stories, and movies**. These are amazing tools in a multi-level class because a variety of students at different levels will relate to and gain something from them.

Showing a movie, for example, provides opportunity for a variety of activities. If the movie can be shown with closed caption, in English, this helps students' reading skills. Higher level students can write critiques and engage in discussions after

about the movies, lower level students can focus more on short oral and written summaries.

### 7 VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES

Include also a variety of activities for different language skills within a class. This is a way to meet the needs of all students, from the student who needs work on basic literacy to the student who wants to work on more advanced pronunciation and accent reduction.

Referring back to your themes list, you may start out with an activity such as a **visual that all students will benefit from**: a provocative picture from a recent news magazine, for example, or a picture of an abstract painting. Have students first discuss the visual as a whole class, and then the higher level students may write their interpretation of the visual while the instructor can help the lower level students with vocabulary and grammar.

Language experience, in which **students dictate a story related to the theme**, and the teacher or another student writes it on the board, is also a useful approach involving a variety of skills and levels. Again, move from a broader topic and break it down by pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. This also presents an opportunity for teachers to mix up groupings, from heterogeneous to level based to skilled based.

### 8 ASSIGN PROJECTS

Projects are a great way for all students to be able to participate at a level that is comfortable yet also challenges them.

For example, in the project of setting up a class website, the student with excellent literacy and computer skills may find himself in a leadership role that challenges him to use his speaking skills more, skills he is not so sure of. The students who are just learning English may also participate by posting their profiles to the site. **Projects are a good way for everyone to participate, develop English skills, and make friends.**

## 9 PEER TUTORING

A multilevel class provides a great opportunity for peer tutoring, where students work in pairs, with one tutoring the other. Students with strong reading skills could be matched with students strong in speaking skills, and they could assist each other.

## 10 DRAMA

Finally, drama is an activity that all students in a multi-level classroom can benefit from. In completing the class project of a short play, the upper level students can write the scripts, and the lower-level students can participate in minor roles while students with stronger speaking skills can take the major roles.

### TEACHING THE MULTILEVEL CLASS CAN BE CHALLENGING.

Instructors have to be flexible to accommodate not only different levels of English learning but also different language skills and instructional methods. With flexibility, however, teaching the multilevel class can be very rewarding.

# Teacher-Tested Ways To Keep A Class Interesting

MANY TEACHERS WILL FIND THAT A PARTICULAR CLASS MIGHT DRAG. FOR THEM, THIS COULD SOMETIMES BE A ONCE-OFF THING AND GENERALLY THEY GET ON WELL WITH A PARTICULAR GROUP OF PEOPLE. BUT EVERYONE, NOW AND THEN, WILL COME ACROSS A GROUP OF STUDENTS WHO APPEAR BORED BY EVERYTHING.

There could be a number of reasons for this. When teaching in a large company, it could be that the people there are only doing it to get out of work. Having a language trainer in is a great excuse for many people to skive off for a bit. Children might be taking classes because their parents are making them: this is usually the case. Therefore, one needs to **keep the students interested and engaged at all times**. Allowing them to become bored will cause their minds to wander. Not paying attention will mean that they will absorb very little information. Here are several pieces of advice which a teacher can use in order to keep a class's attention.

**HOW TO** Keep Your Class Interesting

## 1 ROLE PLAY

Putting two people into a situation where they have to **act out specific roles** can be a very effective method of language learning.

A lot of people quite enjoy this, too. There are many benefits. The student isn't simply sitting there and passively taking notes: they are actively involved in the class and what is going on. They need to think creatively, and this will stimulate the mind in a specific way. Using the language they already know, the students will be able to come up with new words and phrases. It is important to start the class off, perhaps, on a warmer exercise by giving them a set dialogue. After this, however, one is completely free to allow the students to follow their own dialogue and see where it ends up.

## 2 GAMES

Games are definitely a great way to keep people engaged. **Both children and adults enjoy them**, but these are especially important for children. Turning class time into play time, and helping them to speak English is definitely a good idea. Teachers of younger learners will discover that the kids will pick up the language a lot quicker. Bingo is often a good idea for teaching beginners, particularly if one is teaching numbers. People can get very competitive, and it is important to make sure that **even if arguments arise they must speak in English**. This way, the class's attention will be held.

## 3 WRITING EXERCISES

Allow your students' creativity to flow. Writing doesn't have to be a boring exercise. Perhaps give them a topic and, in groups, let your students think up all kinds of situations for particular characters. This way they will be able to come up with their own unique story. Tell them to write out a *plan, a draft* and then *write the story in full*. Beforehand, however, have a brainstorming session to which everyone can contribute.

Another great idea is to have a brainstorming session about two characters, and write half of the story up on the board with help from the students. Afterwards, pair them off or get them into groups and ask them to finish the rest of the story off. People will be interested in finding out what is going to happen next, and their attention will be fixed on the readers.

## 4 CHINESE WHISPERS

This little activity is usually a schoolyard game but it can be a very interesting exercise in terms of language. Students might find it amusing with the kind of words and sentences that one comes up with in the end. In order to play this game, seat the students in a circle if at all possible. Start

from one end, and **think up a sentence but do not tell the rest of the class**. Whisper it to the first student in the line, and have them whisper it to the person next to them. Usually the end result is completely different from the one which they began with!

## 4 SUDDEN DEATH

This is a very simple game which language teachers everywhere use in order to test vocabulary. It will keep the students on edge. Give them a list of vocabulary to memorize within a few minutes. This will give them something to focus on and, once time is up, have everybody stand up. At random, **ask students to describe a particular word**. If they get it right, they remain standing. If not, then they have to sit down. Other names for this also include "bowling" or "knock out".

These are of course, only a few ideas. It won't be difficult for the skilled teacher to come up with more interesting ways of keeping a class's attention.

**CLASSES NEED TO BE INTERESTING IN ORDER TO ALLOW THE STUDENTS TO KEEP THINKING.**

There is no use in them just sitting there, taking notes and learning passively. Language learning is an active and creative process. It needs to be taken advantage of as much as possible.

Allowing your students creative freedom in their learning is essential. Learning off set phrases is useful up until a point. After that, **they need to be able to understand why a particular word is said in a particular way, and how they can manipulate it to suit the current situations.**

# Therapy for the Dysfunctional Classroom: Advising and Teaching Your Troubled Students

*Most teachers who have been teaching any length of time have experienced it: you look around your class in about the middle part of the semester and realize you have become like a dysfunctional family, held together by your problems in a sort of resentful bond. How did it get this way, and what can be done now?*

It's no secret that many ESL students are troubled individuals, having experienced trauma in their home countries. In addition, the immigration process itself is often a source of trauma as students and their families try, with varying degrees of success, to adjust to their new culture. These anxieties often get played out in an ESL classroom, where troubled students might come into contact with other similarly troubled students.

**WHAT ARE** Some Dysfunctional ESL Student Types?

Dysfunctional behavior and ways of relating to one another are universal, with negative patterns occurring across cultures and genders rather than being associated with any specific one. Some of the types you may see are the following:

## 1 MISS CODEPENDENT

**“Dependent” seems to be the operant part of the term, with the student viewing the teacher as a parent figure.** This isn't necessarily bad, to an extent.

A student last term, for example, told me she saw me as a “second mom,” which I found flattering, not a cause for concern, for the student, very new to U.S. culture, simply accepted — and then applied -- some pointers for getting along in an American college. It's when students solicit help but then ignore it yet keep coming back for more that the problem arises. This may be called “codependent” behavior, when

both parties are locked in a dysfunctional pattern of continually helping and requesting help. A teacher's job is in fact to help — but ultimately to help students toward independence.

It is tricky to balance helping yet not helping too much, but it can be done by limiting the amount of help given to the same student. If he always comes to class unprepared, for example, the teacher should stop lending out paper, pens, dictionaries, the text, etc., which will teach the student to bring his own materials.

## 2 MR. PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE

**Mr. Passive Aggressive goes through the course syllabus thoroughly, looking for loopholes to wiggle through.** If the syllabus says students may be absent “up to three times,” he is absent two times then asks if “up to three” includes a third time or really means only two. He sleeps in class. He turns in papers with extra-large font, a title page, pictures, and an extensive bibliography to get to the required page count.

Since Mr. Passive Aggressive seems to thrive on exploiting the ambiguous, make materials as clear as possible: *“A thousand words means a thousand words, Mr. Passive Aggressive. No more nor less.”*

You may also call the passive aggressive behavior what it is: *“Sleeping in class seems rude. Can you explain to me why you do it?”* Because direct questions bother Mr. Passive Aggressive, he will likely stop the behavior.

## 3 MS. ANTISOCIAL

**The gloves are off with Ms. Antisocial.** There is nothing passive about her aggressive: she is loud and belligerent in challenging the teacher and her peers. Sometimes other students are frightened of and avoid working with her groups, which is fine

with her — she'd rather sit alone and glower or carry on angry cell phone conversations, anyway. Sometimes the antisocial behavior carries over into course writing — essays or journals, in which the student recounts aggressive encounters with others.

**Dealing with the anti-social student requires care.** Once, with a student whose journals were his venting of anger with his girlfriend, his best friend, his mother, etc., I scrawled a note that he might benefit from therapy and didn't think I was at all out of line. In other cases, I've pulled aggressive students aside and simply asked for more cooperation in class. Usually students will comply — never becoming the most popular classmate, but at least getting along with their peers well enough for the duration of the course.

## 4 MR. OH-SO-SHY

**You know this type of shrinking violet.** Mr. Oh-So-Shy won't open his mouth in class and has to be almost dragged into group work. His eyes are usually on his book or an electronic device.

**Gentle insistence with the shy type is most effective:** he must put away his electronics and books, join a group, and participate. Since Mr. Oh-So-Shy is not usually antisocial, just shy, finding a classmate he can relate to also helps him relax and participate.

**HOW TO** Address the Dysfunctional Types in Your Class:

The good news is almost never do all of these dysfunctional types turn up in one class. The bad news is it can take only one to ruin a class. How do you keep him or her from doing that?

## 1 SET THE TONE

The teacher sets the tone that she wants from the beginning through

the course syllabus and on how she treats the students: **friendly yet professional**.

## 2 ESTABLISH NORMS

**Group norms, the acceptable and unacceptable behavior for the class, can be established in a list.** If you find text-messaging unacceptable during group work, state so in the list. Have students add their own norms for the class or for their groups.

## 3 KEEP YOUR COOL

**Keep your cool with students, and don't lose your temper even with the most exasperating student.** This relates to establishing the norms — if it is an expectation that students always treat each other with kindness and respect, the teacher is responsible for modeling this value.

## 4 --UNTIL YOU LOSE YOUR COOL

**Sometimes the teacher "losing it" is an effective technique.** The trick is that this is really a strategy, and the teacher who appears to have lost his temper is still in control of the situation. The point of "blowing your cool" with students is to reaffirm "this is not how we act" in an extreme violation of the group norms.

## 5 REGROUP, REAFFIRM THE NORM

**After your brief tirade, or mild scolding, or earnest discussion, however you choose to handle the departure from the norm, be sure to reaffirm the norms.** For example, a high school teacher I know who found a group of his students had defaced the halls with graffiti stalked into class and treated the abashed students to a stern lecture about how disappointed he was, that they were nothing more than gang members in the making, the instigators would be smoked out and the authority notified, etc. His ending comments, however, returned to the group norms: "This is not how civilized people act, and it is not, specifically, how we act at this school." The point of such a tirade is ultimately not to intimidate the students but rather to draw a stark line between what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior and is effective only when the teacher is by contrast usually calm.

## EVERYONE BELIEVES MY CLASSES MUST BE VERY INTERESTING, AND THEY ARE — "INTERESTING" BEING SUBJECT TO INTERPRETATION, OF COURSE.

ESL classes attract more than their share of troubled students who should be treated with care while being gently guided to the behavior expected in an American university.

# 7 Best Ways to End a Lesson

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 1 WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED TODAY?

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

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

## 2 PERFORMANCE CORRECTION AND FEEDBACK

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

## 3 60 SECONDS

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

## 4 WRITE AN EMAIL

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

## 5 SAY GOODBYE

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

## 6 TIDYING UP

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

## 7 SHARING WITH THE CLASS

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

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

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

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

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

# CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

# MANTRA

## Do:

- ✓ use routines and rituals
- ✓ increase self-esteem with praise and encouragement
- ✓ show your students that you care about them
- ✓ try to be a role model
- ✓ change it up
- ✓ make sure you have everyone's attention before you start teaching
- ✓ emphasize your point
- ✓ be interesting in the classroom
- ✓ start each day in a happy way
- ✓ try to understand why your students are misbehaving
- ✓ keep a bag of tricks up your sleeve! (songs, finger plays, games, etc.)

## Don't:

- ✗ insist that you are right
- ✗ be critical of your Ss
- ✗ be a friend, be a mentor
- ✗ yell
- ✗ be sarcastic
- ✗ insult or embarrass your students
- ✗ use tense or angry body language
- ✗ use physical force
- ✗ ask students to follow a rule and not follow it yourself
- ✗ preach
- ✗ throw a temper tantrum
- ✗ mimic the student
- ✗ make assumptions about your students
- ✗ compare your students with their siblings or other students

