

~ PRACTICAL, DETAILED AND
ILLUMINATING GUIDE ~

THE
ART OF **TEACHING GRAMMAR**

33 HOW-TO GUIDES, TONS OF LESSON IDEAS, PRINT AND GO ACTIVITIES, AND MORE



THE BEST WAYS
TO CUT OUT CONFUSION,
FIGURE IN FUN, AND
BRIGHTEN BORING
GRAMMAR LESSONS

 33 WAYS TO CHANGE THE AVERAGE GRAMMAR CLASSROOM INTO A MASTERPIECE

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10 Grammar Mistakes & How to Keep Students from Making Them

WHETHER THEY ARE BEGINNERS, WHO ARE JUST STARTING TO GRASP THE BASICS, OR ADVANCED STUDENTS WHO CAN SPEAK QUITE FLUENTLY, ESL LEARNERS MAKE GRAMMAR MISTAKES.

That's right. At any level, any stage. Most repeat the same kind of mistake again and again, and if these mistakes are not nipped in the bud, they will continue sprouting up. Although some mistakes don't affect our students' ability to communicate, we should always strive for increased accuracy. Some mistakes are so common, they are made the world over by ESL students from a variety of backgrounds. Here are the 10 biggest mistakes.

10 GRAMMAR MISTAKES ESL STUDENTS MAKE

1 CHOOSING THE WRONG TENSE

I have been to New York last summer.

In this case, the student fails to see that because he/she is referring to something that happened at a specific moment in the past, he/she should use the Past Simple, not the Present Perfect. Students may remember the correct form of the verb (and remember the correct past participle for a specific verb, for example), but the problem is that they simply use the wrong tense to express themselves.

2 USING THE WRONG PREPOSITION

What happened with you last weekend?

Happened with, to or on – prepositions are one of the most confusing aspects of learning English grammar, as there are rarely clear-cut rules.

3 CONFUSING THE INFINITIVE, GERUND OR BASE FORM OF THE VERB

I must to buy a new English book.
Students often use the infinitive with

modals like must, when they should simply use the base form of the verb. Others use gerunds when they should use infinitives (I decided going to the park).

4 OMITTING ARTICLES

I bought new car yesterday.

Get the feeling something's missing? Well, ESL students are not as intuitive. Whether it's the definite or indefinite article, they sometimes seem to avoid them like the plague.

5 MISUSING ADVERBS AND ADJECTIVES

I want to speak English good.

If your ESL students want to speak English well, they'll need to make sure their adverbs and adjectives are in tip top shape.

6 SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

People is coming to my party tonight.

People are people, but ESL students in particular often need to make sure the verb agrees with the subject of their sentence.

7 WRONG WORD ORDER

Is corrected the test?

There are several ways for a seasoned ESL teacher to tell that a student is thinking in their native language. And this is one of them. Because I can also speak Spanish fluently, I can tell you that this is the word order we'd use to ask the same question in Spanish.

8 INCORRECT PLURAL NOUNS

I have three childrens.

Childrens, geese or womens -- ESL classrooms are filled with them!

9 INCORRECT COMPARATIVES

It is more cold in my country than it is here.

The comparative form of some adjectives seem to confuse students more and more: more bad, more good and

more easy.

10 SINS OF OMISSION

I English student.

It can be a verb, preposition, article or noun - any student at any level may omit a word from a sentence. While some omissions may go unnoticed and hardly affect the flow of communication, others may seriously hinder fluency.

HOW TO HELP YOUR STUDENTS STOP MAKING THESE MISTAKES

In my opinion, there are two essential steps when dealing with grammar mistakes. The first is correction and the second is practice. Let's look at each individually.

CORRECTION

Naturally, we correct students when they make mistakes. But have you asked yourself why they keep making the same mistakes, despite the fact that we keep correcting them? In most cases, corrections are made quickly, while students are speaking and have their minds on what they are trying to say. In most cases, they simply don't register the correction. How can we effectively correct students so that these types of mistakes don't go unnoticed? First, we need to really draw their attention to them.

- The Comic Relief Strategy: Say you have students who always say childrens instead of children. Try making an exaggerated face as soon as they say the offending word. Or shout out, "You saw what in the park?" with a shocked expression. The exaggeration and the over-the-top acting helps them zero in on the problem while at the same time relieving the tension from being corrected.
- The Self-Correction Strategy: There are numerous ways to use self-correction in the ESL classroom, but whichever one you use, you can bet the student's attention

will be focused on the problem he/she has to solve. Try writing down the sentence on the board with a blank space for the mistake and have the student fill in the gap with the correct answer. Or write what the student says, and ask, "What's wrong with this sentence?" Of course, you can't do this every time a student makes a mistake, but it is a great strategy for those mistakes students repeat over and over again.

PRACTICE

Nothing beats hours and hours of practice. If you identify something that students seem to have real trouble with, like choosing the wrong tense, give them extended practice to help them overcome this particular difficulty. Games, drilling or worksheets, anything and everything helps, and you will definitely see the improvement.

Years ago, during a particularly chilly winter, I had a student who started every single class by asking me, "Do you have cold?" What he really wanted to know was if I was cold (he was wondering if he should turn up the heat). I corrected him and encouraged him to ask, "Are you cold?", but the next day he asked me the same wrong question: Do you have cold? One day, I answered, "No, actually I don't have a cold. I'm feeling quite well, thank you, but if you're wondering if I am cold, I'm fine, thanks. No need to turn up the heat." At first, he looked bewildered, then, he understood his mistake: he confused be cold and have a cold. For several days, we went through the same routine: he asked me the wrong question, and I gave him my very long-winded response. One day, out of the blue, I walked into his office, and with purpose and a certain gleam in his eye, he asked, "Are you cold?" The very long-winded answer drew his attention to the mistake, whereas a quick correction would have fallen through the cracks.

SOME MISTAKES MUST NOT BE TAKEN LIGHTLY.

They must be conscientiously and purposefully corrected. It is the only way your students will get past them.

5 Methods

for Going Beyond the Textbook

WHEN ASKED, MOST OF MY STUDENTS TELL ME THAT GRAMMAR IS THEIR LEAST FAVORITE ESL SUBJECT.

It's seen as dry and dull, disconnected from daily reality, oriented towards test-taking and university entrance exams, and full of capricious, confusing rules.

Worse still, a lot of education systems teach grammar with repetitious and highly controlled practice exercises. The grammar points seldom make the journey from the written to the spoken, or from the gap-fill to the genuine, spontaneous sentence. They are practiced in an artificial environment, impersonal and not particularly engaging, adding to the sense that this material just isn't relevant or necessary. Except, of course, when it comes to testing time.

I teach a lot of grammar, and have become determined to dispel these perceptions and change my students' attitudes to structures and forms. I've abandoned traditional testing – much to my students' relief! – and instead, we use grammar in an individualized way to express something about our own lives. We move from the written to the spoken as quickly as possible, de-emphasizing textbook exercises in favor of freshly conceived verbal examples. We start production of the grammar immediately – during the presentation phase, even – so that, in as many ways and as many times as possible, the students have created the structure for themselves, integrated it with their life experience, and used it to articulate something real.

One of my students put it beautifully when practicing the past perfect: “Who cares about ‘Jane’ and ‘Bob’, and the fact that he arrived before she did?” Instead, he told me about his own evening, and the order in which things happened, using the past perfect to verbalize his own life experience. Once this becomes routine, the teacher hears so much more about the students' own lives, how they

spend their free time, their concerns and hobbies, their pasts and potential futures. Grammar practice no longer reduces the practicing of structure to a mechanistic exercise, it doesn't close down our self-expression, but opens it up. The change in my students' attitudes has been gratifying and extremely useful.

TRY THESE 5 METHODS FOR GOING BEYOND THE TEXTBOOK

1 KEEP THINGS UPBEAT

I make fun of how boring grammar can be, break up the task into smaller pieces, and regularly remind the students that it's easy, useful and will help their self-expression. An example:

Teacher: Check this out... As soon as we hear ‘had’, we know it's going to be the past perfect.

Students: Er... so?

Teacher: Well, it's really efficient. You quickly communicate lots of information just with this one, short structure.

Students: But why do we use it?

Teacher: It makes the whole thing really clear. I know exactly when things happened, what came first, and what came second. There's no confusion. Isn't that awesome?

Students: OK, I see that.

Teacher: Let's give it a try... You're going to find it really helpful. Also, it sounds smart!

Students: Oh, really?!

2 USE COMEDY

The classic examples with ‘Jane’ and ‘Bob’ are not only artificial, they're predictable and dull. What if Jane and Bob were exploring Mars, or skydiving, or involved in a shootout with police? What if Jane were really a superhero, or Bob could make himself invisible? I use anything I can think of to enliven the examples, and encour-

age similarly fun structures from the students. One of my favorites is the third conditional: “If Jerry had realized that Barbara was a KGB spy, he would never have let her visit the missile factory”, or, “Had Grace been told that the alien was coming to dinner, she would not have freaked out quite so much when it arrived”.

Try creating characters with unusual personalities, special abilities, odd pasts or weird traits, and revisit them as you proceed through the semester's grammar points. They become familiar, zany fixtures in the students' grammatical experience, breaking down barriers and alleviating the traditional dullness.

3 GETTING PERSONAL

Almost every example we use could be about ourselves – our attitudes, past experiences, preferences, milestone events, etc. Use your students' names when modeling a structure: it's such a simple idea but the psychological change it creates, and the attention it brings from the students, can be priceless!

4 TALK ABOUT IT

Perhaps most importantly, get out of the textbook as quickly as you can. Once the gap-fills and multiple-choice exercises are finished and checked, ask for free practice sentences with the same structures. Use error corrections on the whiteboard, or on a handout, to double-check that the students have grasped the structure. These changes in the context, from textbook to more open environment, and from written to spoken forms, re-contextualize the material, ensuring that the students have used all four skills while learning the structure. Here's an example, from a recording in my classroom last year. We were checking the understanding and use of perfect forms:

Teacher: I'd had breakfast before I left the house today, so I'm not too hungry right now. Are you hungry,

Juan?

Juan: Yes, teacher.

Teacher: Oh, that sucks! Had you eaten breakfast before you came to school?

Juan: No. No breakfast.

Teacher: What about you, Martina?

Martina: Yes, breakfast.

Teacher: You had had breakfast before you came to school?

Martina: Yes, I had... had?

Teacher: Isn't that cool? The 'had' comes twice! It's the helping verb, and the main verb.

Martina: Had had?

Teacher: I know, it's crazy, isn't it? Try that again?

Martina: I had had breakfast before I come school.

Teacher: (To whole class) What do you think, guys?

Others: "I had had breakfast before I came to school."

Martina: Came to school. Yes.

Teacher: Good job, everyone. Now, what about you, Jorge...?

5 MAKE GRAMMAR COMPETITIVE

My students love Jeopardy-style quiz games, and we use them for grammar. I ask for sentences using specific tenses, or a couple of modal verbs, or including a relative clause, etc. More money is rewarded for more complex sentences. The students form these answers as a team, so there is a good deal of discussion.

GRAMMAR NEED NOT BE PAINFUL OR ACADEMIC.

In fact, when it isn't, the students are far more likely to adopt it for themselves, and thereby increase their powers of self-expression. I hope your students come to regard English grammar as indispensable, helpful and possibly even fun.

Is Task Based Grammar Right for You and Your Students?

I'm sure it's not true in your case, but when most people think of a foreign language classroom, they imagine rows of students reciting verb conjugations in rote. I go. You go. He goes. We go. You go. They go. Boring, and not very popular these days. But even though we have moved on from choral conjugations, sometimes our grammar instructions is still on the theoretical side and not as practical for our students as it can be. Task based grammar instruction is a different, and nontraditional, approach to teaching. It focuses on the task or the reason for using language rather than specific language skills or rules. It's far from rote conjugations! If you have never heard of task based grammar instruction or you have never tried it, here's everything you need to know to give it a try today.

WHAT IS TASK BASED GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION?

Task based grammar instruction does what it sounds like. It focuses on a language task rather than the theory of grammar. Task based grammar asks, "How can I accomplish the task set before me?" The language used during the task is simply a means to an end. Often, the syllabus for a task based grammar class does not list specific grammar points that teachers plan to cover in the semester. Rather, it lists different language tasks that students should be able to accomplish by the end of the semester – negotiation, problem solving, interviewing, etc. The advantage to task based instruction over traditional grammar instruction is that accomplishing a language task is more like real life language situations than performing grammar exercises. This type of instruction stresses communication, using language to reach a goal, and using the language we know to accomplish a task is what real life language use is about.

Unlike traditional grammar instruction, in task based grammar instruction, the first goal is language fluency, and accuracy comes later. Traditional models more often focus on accuracy first and then move toward fluency after grammatical consistency is achieved. Letting students make incorrect grammar choices for the sake of fluency is sometimes uncomfortable for language teachers whose natural instinct it is to correct any observed errors, but that often happens in task based grammar instruction.

HOW TO USE TASK BASED GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION

When you instruct using task based grammar, your goal is to create a situation in which students must use a given language structure to accomplish their task, but the first priority is the language task and not the grammar. This means that every language activity has to have a communication goal – solving a problem, reaching an agreement, explaining a concept, etc. The goal will NOT be to use a particular grammatical structure or set of vocabulary.

HERE'S HOW TO PLAN A TASK BASED GRAMMAR LESSON.

1 CHOOSE YOUR LANGUAGE GOAL.

What do you want your students to be able to do? You will plan your lesson around a given language goal, for example, negotiating a contract for your business that will be lucrative for your company. Both parties in the language exercise should have a different goal, so while one company is trying to reach an agreement that will benefit them financially, the other company will be doing the same for their company. Ultimately, the language users will need to meet somewhere in the middle for their agreement by using any language strategies at their disposal.

2 IDENTIFY THE NECESSARY LANGUAGE SKILLS.

Once you have your language goal in mind, you will need to think about how your students will get there. What grammar do they need to know to accomplish the task you will assign them? Do they need to know specific vocabulary? In this example, your students will need to know specific business vocabulary, but they will also need to negotiate using polite suggestions (What if my company did A for you and your company did B for us?) and use the conditional structure when they ask about their partner's willingness to agree to terms. (Would you supply the materials for \$3000 instead of \$5000?) In this case, students might also need to write up a contract defining their agreement. If so, they will also need to write their plans using future tenses and business appropriate language.

3 INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Introducing the lesson to your students will have two parts. First, you will make sure they understand exactly what their goal is during the task, in this case, what each company is trying to achieve in the agreement. After you have explained the goal, you will review any grammatical structures and vocabulary that will be necessary to accomplish the task. You will not have your students practice the different grammar points in isolation from the main goal of the lesson. (That is, they won't do exercises at their seats or with a partner specifically designed to practice a given grammar point.)

4 STUDENTS PERFORM THE TASK

This is where the lesson actually happens. Students interact with one another within the set parameters to accomplish their language goal. These language tasks might be playing a game, sharing an experience, solving a problem, or participating in a role play that requires problem solving.

While they do the assigned language task, they will likely use the grammar structures you presented in step three, but they do not have to. The goal of the task is to achieve the goal, and as long as students accomplish that the task is successful. It doesn't matter how they got there. At this point, your students might also make mistakes with the grammatical concepts you introduced to them. Do not correct them. Encourage students to use language fluently even if it comes at the cost of accuracy.

5 STUDENTS SELF-EVALUATE

After the language task is accomplished, you should give your students some time to reflect on how they accomplished that task. Let them discuss the activity in the groups they performed the task in. Have students write out how they accomplished the language goal, whether they used the grammatical structures you presented or not, and what other strategies they used. Then have the groups share with the rest of the class how they accomplished their goals either orally or in writing.

6 FOCUS ON SPECIFIC LANGUAGE STRUCTURES

The final step in presenting a task based grammar lesson is taking time to focus on the grammatical points at hand. This final stage of the lesson is where students practice a particular structure and you can give feedback on accuracy. This looks more like traditional grammar classes, but it comes at the end of the lesson and isn't emphasized at the cost of fluency.

TASK BASED GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION ISN'T FOR EVERY ESL TEACHER OR CLASS, BUT KNOWING HOW TO PRESENT A LESSON IN THIS STYLE IS SOMETHING EVERYONE WOULD BENEFIT FROM KNOWING.

If you try a lesson following the six steps above, you might find out you like this instructional model, or you might find that you hate it. Either way, you are developing more as a professional and have another tool in your toolbox should you choose or need to use it.

What do Kids and Grammar Have in Common? 4 Busy Teacher Tips

When you walk into your ESL classroom, do you see a bunch of cherubic little faces staring back at you? Teaching ESL is a calling, and teaching ESL to young children is a calling even fewer answer. Perhaps it's because teaching a second language to kids can be even more challenging than teaching adults. Kids don't have the ability to talk about language in an abstract way, and if you can't talk about language how can you teach it? Luckily kids are super learners when it comes to language, and if you teach them you know just what I am talking about. Here are some tips to keep in mind if you are teaching grammar in an elementary ESL classroom.

TRY THESE 4 BUSY TEACHER TIPS FOR TEACHING GRAMMAR TO CHILDREN

1 AN AVERSION TO GRAMMAR

If you are teaching children, or were ever a child yourself, you will not be surprised to hear that children do not like learning grammar. It's not just a struggle for ESL teachers. Students are adverse to grammar in just about any language, including their native tongue. So to teach grammar to children in an ELS class, you might have to shift your focus or change your methods (since the same methods won't work for kids that work perfectly well with adults). The good news is the biggest change is not talking about grammar at all!

As an elementary ESL teacher you will have to trust the process of language learning in your students without giving them overt grammar instruction. Are you getting tense just thinking about that? I know I am, but I also know that children are built to learn language – any language. They do not need the overt instruction of rules and exceptions that adult learners need, and you can trust that even when you are not diagramming verb tenses on your classroom board, your students are still learning what you are presenting to them. The key to this kind of grammar instruction is modeling. Show your students how to use grammar concepts without taking time to explain them, and you will be amazed at how much and how quickly your students

learn.

2 FORM OR FUNCTION

Children, just like adults, have a goal when using language. A child's language goal is simple: use language as a tool to make something happen. Their goal is the function of language, not the proper grammatical form. In other words, children want to use language in practical ways. They want a purpose, an end goal that is more than learning a particular grammatical structure. With that in mind, the more communicative you can make your (grammar) activities, the more likely your students are to learn what you are teaching, and they might not even realize it is happening.

When you plan lessons for your young learners, focus on language with a purpose. Have students talk to one another, read interesting texts, tell stories, and play games which all use the grammar point you want your students to learn. You should model the structure for them in the practical setting, and trust that they will absorb the "rules" of grammar as they participate in the activities. Don't make perfect grammar your or your students' goal. Make communication the most important goal of language and your students will be sure to meet it.

3 A YEAR IS A LONG TIME

For an adult learning a first foreign language, it is often a struggle. We all know that the older you get, the harder it is to learn another language. Kids don't have that problem, but "kids" is a very broad term. In fact, it can refer to anyone from birth to eighteen or even older. Not all of those kids, however, will learn language the same ways. To make sure your students are getting what you are giving them in the grammar department, you will have to think about their age when you are planning how and what to teach them.

A child of five years can learn a second language practically without trying. Just being exposed to the language and using it in natural contexts is enough to make that child's language skills as good as those of a native speaker. After that age, language learning probably isn't going to come quite as easily, but kids will still have a better time of it than adults. From around six to ten, children value the func-

tion of language (as described in point #2). Communicative activities are going to be best for them. From about age ten to fifteen, students can begin to understand language in a more abstract way. You can be more overt about teaching grammar, rules and exceptions. These students may never sound quite like native speakers, but they have a chance at it. After about age fifteen, though they are still children in their parents' eyes, kids are on the same ground as adults when it comes to language learning. They will have the same struggles with grammar and other language components as adults will, but they can also understand language in an abstract way, which may make teaching them English more straightforward.

4 GET OUT OF THE BOX

Most important of all, if you are teaching grammar or any language class to children, make it fun. Think outside the box (and outside the classroom) when it comes to lesson plans and activities. Something as simple as taking your class outside can make a big difference in how well your students pay attention and how much they learn. Play games in class. Do crafts, and talk about what you are doing. Give them materials they can hold and manipulate and move. Take field trips whenever you can. Invite guest speakers to your classroom. All these activities will engage your students, and engaged students are learning students. You can do almost anything and still be teaching language. Just talk about what you are doing (a great way to include the progressive tense) or what you could do (the conditional comes into play), or the next step in the process (future tenses). Describe what you see (use and order of adjectives) or how someone is doing an activity (adverbs and their use). All of these conversations work together to help your kids learn and internalize the English language.

Ultimately, ask yourself why your students should learn a particular grammatical structure. If you can determine that, you can figure out a communication oriented activity that will use that structure. You don't have to break down for your students why you are doing what you are doing. **JUST LET THEM HAVE FUN AND USE LANGUAGE IN CREATIVE WAYS. THEY WILL LEARN.**

What Do You Do? A Grammar

Review Get to Know You

THE BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR OR THE START OF THE SEMESTER IS A GOOD TIME FOR STUDENTS TO GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER.

It is also a good time to do some grammar review activities since students' minds may still be on vacation. The following activities serve double duty – letting students get to know each other while targeting specific grammatical concepts. Pick and choose the ones that will help your class most and make double use of your time.

INCORPORATE THESE WONDERFUL ACTIVITIES INTO YOUR BACK TO SCHOOL LESSONS

1 TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE (PAST TENSES)

This simple get to know you game takes no preparation or special equipment. Each person writes three facts about himself. Two statements will be things that he has done. One statement will be something he has not done (a lie). Students can use any appropriate past tense to write their sentences. One at a time, each student reads his statements to the rest of the class. Their task is to determine which of the statements is the lie. This icebreaker is sure to bring up some interesting facts about your students and keep everyone entertained.

2 HAVE-YOU-EVER TUMBLE (PAST PERFECT)

One of my best investments for my ESL classroom was a Jenga style block game. While the game alone is fun and gives students a chance to talk and get to know one another, I made the game an even more effective icebreaker. I took a list of get to know you questions and wrote one on each block in the game. Each question began with, "Have you ever..." Then, when a student pulled the block during play she had to answer the question before putting it back on the top of the stack. Some questions were simple (have you ever broken a bone?) while other questions were more personal (have you ever been really embarrassed?). I found that students became more interested in the questions than they did in the balancing game, and often every student wanted to answer the questions that were pulled.

You may find the same to be true in your classroom. Note, this game is best saved for intermediate and advanced students since beginners usually aren't familiar with all of the vocabulary in the questions.

3 THE LOTTERY (SIMPLE FUTURE)

This icebreaker starts with good news for each of your students. They have all won the lottery! How will they spend the one million dollars they have won? Have each person write three to five sentences about how they will spend their money using the simple future. The put students in groups of three or four to share their plans. After each person shares, their group members should feel free to ask questions about their choices.

4 WOULD YOU RATHER (SECOND CONDITIONAL)

Would you rather travel into outer space or the center of the earth? Would you rather not have to eat or not have to sleep? Would you rather cook or clean up? In this simple icebreaker, each of your students has the same choice. Have everyone stand in the center of the room, ask a question, and direct those who answer one way to one side of the room and the others to the other side. Then "interview" a handful of students and ask why. "I would rather travel to the center of the earth because no one has done it before. I would rather not have to sleep so I could get a job and make money." If you want less of a challenge for your students, just ask for their answer using the second conditional structure. (I would rather clean up.) Either way, you and your students will discover things you wouldn't otherwise know about one another.

5 MORE THAN A NAME (ADJECTIVE PLACEMENT AND VOCABULARY)

If you want to help your students remember one another's names, try this simple adjective centered icebreaker. Sit your students in a circle. The first person gives his name and uses an adjective to describe himself which begins with the same letter as his name. "My name is Michel and I am messy." The second person in the circle repeats the name and adjective of the person before her and then adds

her own. "This is messy Michel. I am Kimiko, and I am kind." The third person in the circle starts with "This is messy Michel, kind Kimiko..." and then adds his own information. Players take turns around the circle until they come back around to the first person who must give the names and adjectives for everyone in the class.

6 UNIQUE HABITS AND HOBBIES (YES/NO QUESTION FORMATION)

What do your students do that few would expect? Who has the most unusual hobby? Have each person in your class write down the most unusual habit or hobby that she has. (I eat sandwiches for breakfast. I collect monkeys. I have a pet crow.) Then collect all the papers and compile a list (in random order) leaving a blank for each student's name. Make copies for your students and hand them out the next class period. You students will go around the room asking each other if they do a certain activity on the list. For example, one student might ask a classmate, "Do you collect animal bones?" That student answers with a complete sentence. If the answer is yes, the asking student writes that person's name in the blank for that sentence. If the answer is no, he must go to another student and ask a question before coming back to the first person. The student to fill in all the banks first wins the game.

7 BANANAS (INFORMATION QUESTIONS)

In this silly get to know you game, choose one person in class to be "it". The rest of the class will ask that person information questions (those starting with who, what, where, when, why, and how). That person will answer them without smiling or laughing, but the only answer they can give, no matter what the question, is "bananas". For example, what is your mother's name? Bananas. If "it" cannot answer without smiling, he is out and the person who asked the winning question is now "it". Be prepared for some very silly questions and the laughs that will follow.

YOU MAY NOT BE ABLE TO BE IN TWO PLACES AT ONE TIME, BUT YOU CAN GET DOUBLE USE OUT OF THE ICEBREAKERS WHICH ALSO REVIEW KEY GRAMMATICAL CONCEPTS.

How to Teach 5 Verb Tenses that Might not Exist in L1

ONE OF THE TRICKIEST CHALLENGES FOR THE EFL TEACHER IS HELPING NON-NATIVE LEARNERS UNDERSTAND VERB TENSES THAT DO NOT HAVE TRANSLATABLE EQUIVALENTS IN THE HOST LANGUAGE.

In fact, most languages structure verb tenses differently than English. Hence, teachers cannot rely on comparisons to the host language to explain these concepts, and they have to develop original, cross-cultural methods to explain. Here are some tips for teaching five unique English verb tenses that probably do not exist in your students' first languages.

USE THESE IDEAS TO TEACH NON-EQUIVALENT TENSE FORMS

1 FUTURE

English has more than four variations of talking about the future, which can be extremely confusing for EFL learners. They will especially struggle with how to pick which version to use in which situation. Break it down into situations by creating rules, and teach the most basic concepts first. Use plenty of action-oriented examples and create an interactive worksheet to pick which versions to use in which situation. First pick one action verb in English and explain how it can have different future meanings depending on the situation, like "leave".

- Auxiliary "will" for predictions and statements of facts. Explain that will is often coupled with a future time-frame, i.e. tomorrow, next week, in a year. Example: I will leave tomorrow. She will leave next year.
- Auxiliary "going to" for intentions. Differentiate that intentions are something you want to do, but are not 100% facts. Example: I am going to leave tomorrow. She is going to leave tomorrow.
- Present progressive for arranged events. These are facts too, and have almost the exact meaning of using will. This tense is more conversational than will. Example: I am leaving tomorrow. She is leaving next year.

Create a worksheet asking students to select between the three tenses and explain why they chose that tense. Pick

apart the language and analyze!

2 COMMANDS

These can be difficult for some EFL learners. Explain it simply, as in "tell someone or something to do something". Follow that pattern with a worksheet by providing the 1. Verb, 2. Someone or Something, and then 3. Other something (use simple prepositional phrases to start).

Eat, mom, at the table.

Then break it down that this is the only instance in sentence construction that you do not use the subject noun, so mom is erased from the end result. The command is: Eat at the table. To help them understand, you can add on the subjects at the end: Eat at the table, mom.

3 PAST PROGRESSIVE

The past tense is hard enough, but past progressive can be even more difficult. Focus on teaching signal words, like when and while and continuous action indicators like every day, all of the time, etc., and explain that it is mostly used to describe something you were doing while doing something else or something you did habitually. Have a worksheet to pick between past and past progressive.

He (ate/was eating) spaghetti when the phone rang.

She (ran/was running) to school every day.

It is tricky because there is no right answer, just answers that are more correct! Again, analyze and deconstruct the different choices. Act out the difference of ran versus was running, etc. Try to make it as real as possible.

4 PRESENT VS. PRESENT PROGRESSIVE

EFL students struggle with choosing between the present and present progressive even more so, because the rules are even less defined. It is best to explain that they can always use present tense, but that they cannot always use the progressive tense. The progressive tense is for immediate or immediately future actions. Again, have them pick between present and present progressive and analyze the nuanced differences between the tenses.

*He walks/is walking to the park.
They climb/are climbing the mountain.*

5 CONDITIONAL

Conditional tenses rely on parallel structures and can be esoteric and difficult to teach. Only move on to these after students really understand the future and past tenses. Break it down into categories and explain rules the best you can to help them seek out patterns in the language.

- Real situation conditionals. Compare future fact situations with "will" to if clauses. Example: A. We will go to the restaurant if they leave work on time. B. He will go to the restaurant when his girlfriend leaves work. Explain that "if" indicates uncertainty in the future and the first event in the sentence relies on the "if" happening. B is a classic of one thing happening "when" another thing happens.
- If they understand that, move on to "unreal" conditionals. These are "if" clauses imagining a different reality. "If I had a million dollars, I would move to an island." These again use "if" clauses, but with past tense plus would. Explain that would is will in the past tense which is used here because you do not actually have a million dollars and the action is not present or future. This is tricky! Practice a lot with worksheets.
- The conditional expression of what could have been is extremely challenging. Explain it like how you had wished you had done something to have had a better result. "If I had eaten a lighter lunch, I would not have had to take a nap in the afternoon."

The amount of auxiliary verbs is confusing in these tenses, but it helps to explain all three together at the same time to compare meanings.

VERB TENSES CAN BE REALLY HARD TO LEARN, ESPECIALLY IF THEY DO NOT EXIST IN THE STUDENT'S FIRST LANGUAGE! Break it down simply and use real life examples to keep the grammar interesting and applicable. In addition, analyze the language: break it down into components and turn it more into a math equation and logical reasoning puzzle than a memorization exercise.

Are You Doing It Right? 6 Tips on Teaching Continuous Tenses

Are you thinking about teaching continuous/progressive tenses? Are you looking at your lesson plans and not sure exactly how to tackle the subject? Are you simply wishing you could take a different angle this time through? If so maybe now is the time to check out these quick tips for teaching progressive tenses. They will help you approach the subject with your students and make sure you cover all the necessary points so your students will be sure to get it.

TRY THESE 6 QUICK TIPS ON TEACHING CONTINUOUS TENSES

1 MAKE SURE STUDENTS ARE COMFORTABLE USING "TO BE".

Because the verb "to be" is foundational in correct formation of the progressive tenses, your students must first be able to conjugate this verb in the present, past, and future before they can go on to learn the more complex progressive tenses. You will also want to make sure your students can comfortably make negative statements and questions with this verb in the simple tenses. If your students are comfortable with this first step, it's time to move on to the conditional tenses.

To make sure your students are comfortable with "to be" in all its forms, try playing this simple review game: <http://busyteacher.org/7010-verb-to-be-boardgame.html>

As they play, students will have to make affirmative, negative, and interrogative sentences with the verb "to be". To give your students a greater challenge, have them sometimes make their sentences in the present, sometimes in the past, and sometimes in the future.

2 SHOW THE ACTIONS.

When you are ready to teach the progressive tenses, start with the

present progressive. The present progressive is used to describe an action that is happening right now, so give your students something to talk about. Act out verbs for them, have them act out verbs for each other, use pictures of actions in progress, and video clips, too. The more you can make actions visible and tangible for your students, the easier they will be able to describe what is happening when they use the progressive tenses.

One of your best resources for illustrating actions is right in front of you – your class. You can have students describe their classmates' typical classroom actions like writing, sharpening a pencil, or taking notes, but don't stop there. Have your students act out different verbs that you have included in your current vocabulary unit. Have students play charades or a modified version of the classic miming game. Do a complete class role play and have students pretend to be at a party while students take turns describing what each person is doing. Any of these activities will help your students understand that progressive tenses are in progress, that they are happening right now.

3 ASK QUESTIONS AND DISAGREE.

When teaching the progressive tenses, just like with any other tenses, make sure you take time to review the structure of questions and negative statements. For questions, students should be using their sentences with the correct form of "to be", and they will not need to use "to do" in any progressive questions. Likewise, negative statements will use the negative form of "to be" and will not need negative do verbs (don't and doesn't).

Give your students practice with questions and negative statements as well as negative questions by repeating the activities you did in step two. Rather than describe what their classmates are doing, have students describe what their classmates aren't

doing. You can also have pairs of students work together. The first asks a question about a particular classmate (Is Kwon sharpening his pencil?) and the second answers the question either affirmatively or negatively with a complete sentence. (No, he isn't sharpening a pencil. He is taking a test.)

4 DON'T FORGET THE SHORT FORMS.

Have you ever noticed that language can be a lazy thing? When speakers can make something shorter, they do. (Think about contractions and reductions.) The progressive tenses are no different. In present, past, and future progressive tenses, contractions abound. Make sure you are taking time to practice contractions in the progressive tenses with your students. (Be sure to review how to write contractions as well.) While you're making things a bit shorter, review how to use short answers in progressive tenses, too. Are you reading a book? Yes, I am. No, I'm not. Though students can use a full sentence when answering progressive questions, that kind of answer is sure to stand out to native speakers. The earlier you get your students giving short answers, the more like native speakers they will sound.

To practice short answers, have students work with a partner. One person asks about the activity of a classmate, and the other person answers with a short answer. This activity also works well if your students are looking at action pictures or doing a class role play.

5 BRING ADVERB CLAUSES INTO THE DISCUSSION.

If you are teaching the past progressive tense to a beginning class, you might not want to bring adverb clauses into the discussion, but then again, maybe you do. Since past progressive tenses are dependent on a time or event in the past, it is a natural lead in to talking about adverb clauses. Ad-

verb clauses are dependent clauses that act as an adverb, in this case describing when something happened. I was doing my homework when he called. They can appear either at the beginning of a sentence or at the end of a sentence, and in past progressive sentences start with “when”. The verb in the adverb clause appears in the simple past, so even students early in their language studies shouldn’t have too much trouble using them in a sentence.

PROGRESSIVE TENSES ARE VERY USEFUL IN SPEAKING AND WRITING, AND THE SOONER YOU INTRODUCE THEM TO YOUR STUDENTS THE BETTER OFF THEY WILL BE. IF YOU INCLUDE THESE TIPS WHEN YOU TEACH THEM, YOUR STUDENTS WILL HAVE A SOLID FOUNDATION IN USING ALL OF THE PROGRESSIVE TENSES.

To practice, have students talk about events in their past. Students should use adverb clauses starting with “when” to describe their age and then tell their partner what they were doing at that age. For example, when I was five, I was going to kindergarten. You can also use historical events to complete the adverb clause (though be culturally sensitive if you do). Have your students think of significant events that have happened in their lifetimes, and use them to create adverb clauses. For example, when the twin towers were attacked, I was sitting in class. You should also point out to your students that specific times in the past can be used as the time markers in past progressive sentences, but these do not appear in adverb clauses. They usually appear in prepositional phrases. For example, in 2012 I was serving in the military.

6 BRING YOUR DATE BOOK TO CLASS.

Since past progressive and future progressive tenses have to do with specific times either before now or yet to come, having students work with their calendars is a great way to make the tenses tangible. Call out a specific day and/or time, and ask students what they were doing or will be doing then. This is especially useful for business English students who likely have a full business calendar to work with. If your students aren’t the calendar type, that doesn’t mean you can’t still do this activity. Make a fictional calendar to use in class, or have your students work together to make fictional calendars to use when practicing the past and future progressive tenses.

Have students create fictional calendars, marking specific events at times in the past and future that you assign. Then put students in pairs to compare their activities at each of these times.

4 Ways to Challenge Advanced Learners with the Present Simple

THE PRESENT SIMPLE IS THE MOST BASIC TENSE IN ANY LANGUAGE AND IT IS THE FIRST TENSE THAT LEARNERS OF ENGLISH WILL LEARN AND USE, STARTING WITH THE VERB 'TO BE'.

Curiously, however, no matter how advanced the learner is, there are often basic mistakes such as formation that are continuously made. In every single ESL course book for learners ranging from starters to advanced ones, the present tenses always pop up and they're always the first tense to get covered. As learners advance, they naturally begin to roll their eyes and tire of the present simple tense often complaining that they know it and it's "too easy." But without realizing it, the present simple is used in so many different scenarios in the English language and to master the language the basics must be mastered first.

While they probably know it deep down, ESL learners often forget that to know a language well there needs to be constant revision, even of the basics.

However, it's not surprising that advanced students groan and grumble at the mere sight of the present simple as they feel they're not challenged, which in some cases with less experienced teachers this could be the case. There are many ways that we as language educators can challenge and push our learners more, even with the basics like the present simple tense. What we need to bear in mind all the time is that they're not learning the language at this stage, but merely revising it, therefore more autonomous and discovery learning needs to be encouraged to keep the learners stimulated.

PUSH YOUR ADVANCED STUDENTS MORE WITH PRESENT SIMPLE

1 DISCOVERING USES

At this stage learners know the basics of the present simple, but do

they know their uses? Like native speakers they know how to use the tense, but rarely understand why they are using it. Refrain from telling the learners that you're having a grammar review, it will surely be met with moans.

Instead begin your lesson by writing example sentences under each other showing all the different uses of the present simple (if you have access to powerpoint, it would be quicker to have this pre-prepared). Sentence uses should include: present simple for a fact (e.g. The cheetah is the fastest animal in the world), present simple for routine (e.g. Every morning Jenny wakes up at before her brother), present simple for timetable (e.g. Flight 451 to Manchester leaves on the hour every two hours), present simple for declaration (e.g. I love you), present simple with stative verbs (e.g. I know what to do), present simple for quoting someone (e.g. Maria says she's ready), present simple for a plot (e.g. Ophelia tragically drowns in a stream), present simple for a headline (e.g. Five die in city house fire), present simple for jokes (e.g. A snail walks into a bar and the barman tells him there's a strict policy about having snails in the bar and so kicks him out. A year later the same snail re-enters the bar and asks the barman "What did you do that for?"), present simple for sports commentary (e.g. Messi dribbles the ball up the centre field, he shoots, he scores, what a wonderful goal from Lionel Messi), present simple for the future (e.g. My flight leaves at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning), present simple for instruction (e.g. Finely chop the shallots and add them to the skillet) and present simple for a theoretical or planned situation (e.g. according to the CEO's idea, I help seat all the guests and give a formal welcome).

After your example sentences have been listed or projected on the board ask your students to draw the connection between the different examples. At first they'll be trying to think of re-

ally complicated connections and looking more at the meaning of the sentences rather than the connection between the structures. This activity is a perfect way of exercising the left side of the brain with logic and deductive reasoning. When they come to the conclusion, ask your learners then to produce the uses/rules of each example sentence by making reference to the examples. This activity will benefit your more advanced learners as it's a form of discovery learning which helps to further build on your students' prior knowledge and as it's more challenging for them, they won't grow bored so quickly.

2 GET COOKING

A fun and engaging way to review the present simple is through using a cooking video. I prefer to use a clip with a more famous chef that everyone is familiar with such as Jamie Oliver. Firstly, write the words present simple on the board without speaking and then instruct your learners to watch and listen carefully. Play a short segment of the beginning of a cooking show and pause the video. Ask the students why they believe you've written the term present simple on the board and showing a cooking clip. If they're really advanced students they'll pick it up almost immediately. Explain that you're going to watch Jamie Oliver or whoever else cook lasagna for example. It is the task of the learners to write down the notes of the steps involved in cooking the lasagna. Stress the importance of taking good and relevant notes as they'll be expected to produce a recipe using the present simple and the exact steps taken at the end of the show. This is a great way to incorporate both listening and writing skills while reviewing basic grammar points. As the learners have to be more active in the lesson with the reviewing of the present simple, they'll forget their usual complaints of the tense being too basic for them and focus on the task at hand.

This kind of activity can work with any

how to or instructional video, however, I find it works best with cooking and recipes as more learners can relate to this and it's more realistic in the terms of most people will cook at some stage in their lives.

3 JUST JOKING!

It's been said that to know a language completely you need to be able to understand its humor. Integrating jokes in the English classroom when reviewing the present simple with advanced learners is fun and it will really test their comprehension. Start the lesson by asking if the students know any jokes in English. If they do, encourage them to share them with the class. Scour the internet and find some age and content appropriate jokes (one-liners are great for this) that use the present simple tense. Split the group of collected jokes in half. Project one or two of the first half of the jokes on the board and explain that the segments are part of an English joke. Ask your learners to try and guess the second part of the joke or encourage them to come with their own endings. On a worksheet have all of your split jokes in two jumbled up columns and ask the students to match the two halves to form the complete joke. Model retelling one of the completed jokes using your voice to exaggerate the necessary parts and take pauses in the right places. Work your way around the class having the students do the same for the remainder of the jokes. The most challenging part of this is the last exercise where learners are encouraged to write their own one-liner jokes based on the structure of the jokes they can see on their worksheet using the present simple tense. Working with jokes is not only fun, it helps to practice and review one of the uses of everyday English and of course it gives your advanced learners a review of the present simple tense without them even realizing it. The use of jokes is also beneficial for advanced learners as it can be very relevant to life as jokes and storytelling plays a huge role in everyday life.

4 CREATIVITY AND PRESENT SIMPLE

If you wish to review the present simple tense and more specifically routine and habitual activities it is easy to get stuck with what to do with ad-

vanced learners. Over the years of them learning English they've broken down their daily routines time and time again which not only gets monotonous for the learner but also the teacher. Creative thinking is a great way to get learners to think outside the square as quite often they are stuck on specific ideas after repeating them so often in the ESL classroom. Have your learners name a list of everyday household appliances. After listing the appliances such as vacuum cleaner and dishwasher, ask your learners to choose one. Explain to your learners that they are no longer human and for this lesson they're their chosen appliance. With their appliance in mind, they must brainstorm a number of different activities that the said appliance does. This is a great time to introduce the idea of personification and giving inanimate objects human characteristics. After the lists have been drawn up ask your learners to write sentences using the present simple tense showing the daily routine of the household appliance and to make this activity even more fun and challenging each sentence could be read without naming the appliance and it could be treated as a riddle for the other participants of the class to guess what it is.

LEARNING AND REVIEWING GRAMMAR DOESN'T HAVE TO ALWAYS FOLLOW THE SAME ROUTINE AND MORE ADVANCED LEARNERS NEED TO BE CHALLENGED.

They're right in the sense that repetitive lessons and grammar points get boring when they're not mentally stimulated. Challenge your more advanced learners to keep them motivated and help them understand that even though it is only the present simple there's still a lot to learn and review when it comes to working towards fluency in English.

10 Short & Sweet Activities For Reviewing The Simple Past

IF YOU ARE A BUSY TEACHER, AND AREN'T WE ALL, THE WORDS QUICK AND EASY ARE LIKE MUSIC TO THE EAR. THAT'S TRUE FOR JUST ABOUT ANYTHING, AND CLASS ACTIVITIES ARE NO EXCEPTION.

The following activities review the past tense, and all of them are easy to bring into the classroom and need very little preparation. So if you're pressed to get tomorrow's lesson plans in place, here are plenty of ways to write and talk about yesterday and the past.

TRY THESE QUICK AND EASY ACTIVITIES FOR REVIEWING THE PAST TENSE WITH YOUR ESL STUDENTS

1 TELL ME ABOUT YOUR WEEK

With students working in pairs, have each person take turns asking questions about their partner's week. Using the simple past, one student asks his partner if they did specific activities in the past week. For example: Did you go to the dining hall? Did you pet a dog? Did you eat spaghetti? Their partner answers each question with a complete sentence using the simple past. Then they switch roles. Have students keep asking questions until you think the activity has gone on long enough. This activity is a good opportunity for you to assess students' abilities to ask questions using the simple past.

2 WHAT DID YOU DO LAST SUMMER?

Ask your students to remember a trip or vacation that was especially interesting to them. Then have each person take a turn telling the class or a group of around four about that vacation. What did they do? What did they see? How did they feel?

3 A GENERATION APART

Many things change from one

generation to another. Have students write 10-20 sentences describing their lives in the 21st century. Then, have them write the same sentences describing life for their parents or grandparent. For example, a student might write the following two sentences: I connect with my friends with text messages. My parents connected with friends on the telephone.

4 LOOKING BACK

It is twenty years in the future. Your students are talking to their children about their childhood. Have students role play, one as the parent and one as the child. The child asks questions about the parent's childhood, and the parent answers them. Both the questions and the answers should use the simple past.

5 KEEPING IN TOUCH

Have your students think of a historical figure that had an important impact on their home country. Students should write a paragraph about that historical figure describing what that person did and how their actions changed their country. If you prefer, have students write about someone in the entertainment industry or a great literary figure.

6 TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED

If you have internet access in your room, you can bring a listening activity together with your past tense activity. Show your students a simple how to video (you can find a clip on just about any topic on YouTube). After they have watched the clip, ask your students to tell you what the person did in the video. Students can work together to recount the process. Then, watch the video again. This time, have each student write out what the instructor did in a simple list of sentences or a paragraph.

7 THE PERFECT SLIP

Before class, think of some activities a person might do, prefer-

ably those that take more than one step to complete. For example, make breakfast, brush your teeth, drive a car, change a tire, work out, etc. If you like, tie the actions into your current thematic unit. Then write the actions on small slips of paper and put them in a bag. When you are ready to do the past tense activity with your class, one person comes to the front of the room and pulls a slip of paper from the bag. He reads his action and then mimes it for the entire class. After the mime is complete, the rest of the class guesses what that person's action was, using the past tense to form the questions. Once someone has guessed correctly, have the class recall the specific actions the person performed. The person who guessed the activity correctly gets to mime the next one.

8 TAKE A WALK

If it's nice outside, you can get some fresh air while still gathering information for this past tense review. Take your class to your school playground or any other natural area. Encourage students to observe carefully what they see, hear, smell, and feel. When you return to your classroom, ask students to share what they saw, heard, smelled, and felt while using the past tense of these verbs. If you prefer, have students write several sentences describing their walk and what they experienced on it.

9 THE DINOSAURS DID IT

If you teach young students in your ESL class, they will have fun talking and learning about the dinosaurs. Bring some books into your classroom about dinosaurs, and let students read them during free reading periods or at a reading center. You could also ask your librarian to read your class a few books on the extinct creatures. Once your class has learned something about the dinosaurs, have them write a brief research paper. (It's even more fun if the paper itself is in the shape of a dinosaur.) The papers should describe

the dinosaurs' habits – what they did, what they ate, how they lived, etc. If you like, assign a different type of dinosaur to each person in your class and have them do specific reading on their species. Display your students' work on a bulletin board titled "The Dinosaurs Did It".

10 HOW WAS YOUR DATE?

In this simple role play, two students have a conversation about a fictional date. In this scenario, a friend has gone on his or her first date with someone. Her good friend is trying to help her decide if she wants to go on another date with that person. The friend should ask the dater about the date and about the person they were with using the simple past. That person answers their questions, again in the simple past. Continue the role play until the friend can advise the dater whether she should plan for a second date. Change rolls and have students play out the scenario again.

FOR STUDENTS WHO WISH TO HAVE STRONG ENGLISH SKILLS, THE PAST HAS TO BE VERY PRESENT IN THE ESL CLASSROOM.

These activities are quick, easy, and can take as little or as much time as you like. All of them will give your students additional practice using the past tense in English, and your students will be proud to say that they got it.

Practicing The Past Perfect: 5 No Prep Activities For Busy Teachers

WHAT HAD YOU ALREADY PLANNED WHEN IT WAS TIME TO REVIEW THE PAST PERFECT?

If your answer is nothing or you aren't sure what to answer, maybe you need these activities that do just that. Most of them require no preparation and the others only minimal preparation, so they are great for a busy teacher on the go. Each of them challenges your students to use the past perfect in either spoken or written English, and all are easy bring in to your classroom even if you don't have much time to get ready.

TRY THESE 5 NO PREP ACTIVITIES FOR REVIEWING THE PAST PERFECT

1 REMEMBER WHEN

The end of the school year is a great time to use this review of the past perfect, but you can do it anytime by simply changing the time phrases. To prepare for this activity, just write several past times from this school year on small slips of paper (you might want to use month names or holidays as reference times). For the activity, one student will draw a past time slip of paper. That person must then say something that had already happened by then. For example, if a student draws "December" they might say the following: We had already talked about Thanksgiving in December. If a student makes a correct statement, he scores 5 points. Tell students that they can score ten points if their sentence mentions a grammar point you studied this year. For example, in December, we had already studied the passive voice. That way you get a double grammar review! Students can return their time references to the bag after they make their statement so another student can use them. The game is finished when someone reaches 30 points.

2 THAT'S NOT SO STRANGE

In this activity, students work in groups of two or three to try and stump their classmates with strange situations. Give each group a few minutes to come up with 5 to 10 strange situations that could have happened to a class-

mate at some in the past. They should write these situations in the simple past. For example, one list might include the following: He wore a dress to school. He ate spaghetti for breakfast. She brought a stuffed animal to class. Etc. Once students have completed their lists, they exchange their papers with another group. Now the groups must come up with logical explanations for the strange situations their classmates have listed, and they should do so by finishing each sentence with a dependent clause beginning with "because". The explanations should be logical and possible. For example, students might complete the sentences as follows: He wore a dress to school because at that time his sister had stolen all his clothes. He ate spaghetti for breakfast because the morning before he had finished all his cereal. She brought a stuffed animal to class because that day she had walked to class in her sleep.

3 WHAT DID HE SAY?

If you are practicing the past perfect with your students, it might be a good time to introduce or reintroduce the concept of reported speech. Reported speech is different from quoted speech. In quoted speech, a person recalls the exact words someone else said. In reported speech, a person does not use the exact words of the first person, but he still tells the listener what the speaker said. When using reported speech, verb tenses change. If a person uses the simple past in quoted speech, he must use the past perfect in reported speech. To practice changing tenses for reported speech, put your students in groups of three. Speaker A starts by asking Speaker B a question about the past. For example, what did you have for dinner last night? Speaker B replies using the simple past. I ate spaghetti for dinner last night. Speaker A pretends he did not hear what Speaker B said and asks speaker C, "What did he say?" Speaker C then restates what Speaker B said but uses reported speech to do it. For example, she said that she had eaten spaghetti for dinner last night. Students then switch roles, and speaker B asks the question, speaker C answers with the simple past, and Speaker A restates his answer using reported speech. Have stu-

dents continue the conversation switching roles after each question.

4 OVERSEAS EXPERIENCE

If you teach a class of internationals, this activity is your chance to both practice the past perfect and bring culture into your classroom. Part of travelling overseas is experiencing new things in a new culture. Have your students share some things they experienced for the first time after travelling overseas to study English. Students should start their sentences with, "Before I came to the U.S. I had never..." They then finish the sentence with something they experienced for the first time overseas. For example, a student might say, "Before I came to the U.S. I had never taken a subway before." You can then ask who else in your class had never done that activity.

5 THE WORST DATE ROLE PLAY

Students will work with a partner in this role play to talk about why a date went so wrong. While they do, they will practice using the simple past and the past perfect. One person starts by telling her partner about a terrible date that she had. She should start her story by sharing something that went wrong on the date. For example, my date showed up late. Her partner then asks why that bad thing happened: Why did he show up late? The original speaker then says what happened before that event which caused it: When he left his house, he had already lost my address. The original speaker then shares another problem that happened on the date: The restaurant didn't have any food. The partner asks why: Why didn't the restaurant have any food? The first speaker answers with a reason: Before we got to the restaurant they had already run out. Have students continue the role play until they have talked about five problems on the worst date. Then, have students switch roles and repeat the role play.

YOU WILL BE READY TO GO EVEN ON THE BUSIEST OF DAYS WHEN YOU HAVE THESE PAST PERFECT ACTIVITIES READY FOR YOUR STUDENTS.

All you need to do is print and go, and your students will be talking about what they had already done in no time.

Are Your Students Struggling With Irregular Verbs? Try Plastic Eggs

The first step in learning a language, and English is no exception, is getting to know the rules and patterns that it follows. Once a person has that down, it's time to learn all the expectations to those rules, and English has plenty of exceptions to keep ESL students busy. Here are some simple classroom manipulatives you can use to get your students' hands moving and their minds working as they review and remember irregular verbs.

TRY THESE ALMOST INSTANT HANDS ON ACTIVITIES FOR REINFORCING IRREGULAR VERBS

1 FOLD OVERS

Fold overs are a simple manipulative that, in their most basic form, require nothing more than a piece of paper. You can use any copy paper, though I prefer to make mine from cardstock so they hold up a little better. To make them, fold the paper in half vertically and cut it into strips big enough for you to write on. (You can either cut through both layers to make individual fold overs or cut through the top layer of paper only if you want a set of verbs on the same page.) On the top flap, write one form of your irregular verb (present tense). Under the flap, write its irregular past form or its past participle. To use the fold over, students simply read the word on top, decide what its irregular past or past participle is, and then lift the flap to check their answer.

2 PLASTIC EGGS

Once spring rolls around, you might want to stock up on plastic eggs from the dollar store. You can use these simple manipulatives for lots of activities in your ESL classroom. When reviewing irregular verbs, I like to write one part of the irregular verb on one half of an egg and the other part on the other piece of the egg. (Note: switch up your colors so the correct matches aren't the same color pieces.) I might include verbs such as the following: bit-ten, be-en, chose-n, dream-t, forbid-den, froze-n, hit-(blank), fit-ted, etc. I put all the pieces in a basket and let students work with them, matching the pieces together to make correctly spelled irregular verbs. I also include an answer sheet at the bottom of the basket so they can check to see if their answers are cor-

rect.

3 MILK CAPS

Have you realized how useful recycled milk caps can be in your ESL classroom? Once someone pointed it out to me, I started saving caps from milk and juice jugs to use as simple (and free) manipulatives in my English classes. To use them as an irregular verb review, you can write the first form of the verb on one side of the cap and the second (or third) form on the other side of the cap. Students pull a cap from a bag, read one side, and then give the word which appears on the reverse side. You could also do half a verb on each cap (like you did with the plastic eggs) and have students match each cap to its correct partner. Either way, have an answer sheet handy so students can check their answers.

4 PAINT SAMPLE STRIPS

The next time you go to your local hardware store, pick up some free paint sample strips, preferably ones with at least three different colors on the same piece of paper. And grab two of each strip while you are at it. On one set of strips, write the three different forms of each irregular verb you want your students to review – one form on each space. Then, tape or glue an identical sample on top of that one. Write only one form of the irregular verb on this strip. To use the strips, students read the one verb form on the top strip and decide what the missing verb forms should be. They can then lift the strip to check their answers and see if they were right.

5 INTERLOCKING BUILDING BLOCKS

Otherwise known as Legos, building blocks are great manipulatives for the ESL classroom. I like to use the larger ones designed for toddlers, but any size will work. You can use them in many different ways, and every kid likes playing with toys in school. To use them as an irregular verb review, write one form of each irregular verb on an individual block. (If you print your verbs on labels rather than writing them directly on the blocks, you can reuse the same blocks for other activities later.) On other labels, write out a sentence using one of these verb forms, attaching the first part of the

sentence on one block and the second part of the sentence on another block, leaving the verb out. Students who use the blocks will have to arrange them on a building base to make logical and grammatical sentences, choosing the correct verb form to complete each sentence. They can stack their sentences on top of each other if they like, just so they can read each complete sentence across the stacks. They might not use every form of each verb, so they will have to choose the correct one to complete the sentence. As always, have an answer key handy so your students can check their answers when they are finished.

6 DICE

I love using blank dice in my English classes. White board dice are great when you use dice for lots of different activities. But you can also use blank dice with simple stickers or make your own folded boxes for each different activity you do. To use dice to reinforce irregular verbs, choose six verbs for your set of three dice. On one die, write the present form of each verb. On the second die, write the past form of each verb. And on the third die, write the past participle of each verb. Students get three rolls each turn to try and make a complete set of verb forms for a given verb. On the first turn, they should roll all three dice. Students then choose one of the verbs showing and use their two remaining rolls to make a complete set of verb forms. (For example, if a student rolls eat on the first turn, they will try to roll ate and eaten on their remaining turns.) If they do, they score two points. If they do not roll the correct forms but can name the words they are looking for at the end of their turn, they score one point. Play six rounds and see who has the most points at the end of the game.

ONCE YOU USE THESE EASY MANIPULATIVES TO REINFORCE IRREGULAR VERBS, YOU WILL SEE JUST HOW HELPFUL THEY CAN BE.

You might even want to modify some or all of them to help your students remember other parts of the English language that don't quite follow the rules: plurals, comparative adjectives, idioms – anything your students need some hands on practice with. If you do, let us know how it goes by leaving a comment below.

More Simple Manipulatives That Reinforce Irregular Verbs

MANIPULATIVES ARE GREAT FOR THE ESL CLASSROOM.

Getting your students' bodies connected with their language learning helps them retain more information and remember it more easily. So any time you can get your students moving while they are learning will help them on their language learning journey. These simple manipulatives do just that: they get students' bodies moving while their minds are learning. And these manipulatives could hardly be simpler. Most cost little to nothing, but the rewards they bring are priceless. So if you have tried using manipulatives to reinforce irregular verbs with your students, here are six more to try with your students.

KEEP YOUR STUDENTS MOVING WHILE LEARNING IRREGULAR VERBS

1 SPELLING STONES

Who knew rocks could be so useful in the ESL classroom? Whether they are pebbles collected from the school playground or polished stones designed for floral arrangements, stones are inexpensive and easy to use in the ESL classroom. If you are looking for a way to use spelling stones to reinforce irregular verbs, try this. Have a supply of stones labeled with the letters of the alphabet at a learning station along with a list of several irregular English verbs. In pairs, students use the stones to spell out one of the verbs on the list then write or share with their partner a sentence that uses that verb form appropriately. Then, students rearrange those stones so the same verb is in a different form (for example, a student might change the past form of the verb to the past participle). They then modify their sentence so it now uses this form of the verb.

2 LIFT THE FLAP POST-ITS

Use this practically no prep activity to help your students remember irregular forms of verbs. Give each student a pack of post-it notes and a manila folder. Everyone takes three notes from their stack without separating them and sticks them on the inside of the manila folder. They then write the three forms of an irregular

verb on the three sticky notes – present, past, and past participle. Students take another three post-its, place them in their folders, and write the forms of another verb on them. Students continue until their folders are full – about eight verbs total. Then, the next time they finish an activity before the rest of the class, students can pull out their folder and test themselves on the irregular forms of the verbs they wrote on the sticky notes.

3 BAG WRITERS

This activity is particularly effective if you teach young children who are learning to write in English. For each student, get a gallon size zip top freezer plastic bag and some conditioner, hair gel, finger paint, liquid soap, or any other colored gel like material. Put enough of the gel into the bag so when the bag is on its side, the bottom is full but not bulky and still flat, then seal it, leaving it laying on the table. Have each student use the eraser side of their pencil as a writing instrument. Have students practice writing the different forms of irregular verbs in the paint or gel in the plastic bag. As they write, the gel will move out of place and leave the word impressed into the gel. Once they are finished with one set of verbs, have them squish the gel back into place and start with another set of verbs.

4 POPSICLE STICKS

If you do any crafts with your ESL students, you probably already have a bunch of popsicle sticks sitting in your classroom craft closet. You can use these materials to help reinforce irregular verbs with your students with just a few minutes' preparation. On each popsicle stick, write two forms of an irregular verb. On one end, write the present form. On the other end, write either the past form, the past participle, or both. Put the sticks in a cup with the present tense verb ends on top. Students choose one stick and read the verb on it before pulling it from the cup. They should then give the irregular form they think will be on the other end of the stick. (Make sure they know what form they are supposed to be giving.) Students can then pull the stick from the cup and check to see if their answer was right.

5 MATCHING PICTURES

This simple matching game will help students remember which verbs are irregular ones. Choose a picture pair that relates to your current unit theme or the time of year you will be doing the activity— ice cream and cones, frogs and flies, presents and bows, etc. Make several copies of your picture pair. Then, cut them out and write the present tense of several verbs (both regular and irregular) on the main objects and past tense and past participle forms that go with these verbs on the other objects. Also include some false past and past participle forms on additional cutouts. Laminate if you like, put them all in a folder, and your students are ready to play. One or more students pull out the pieces and match the past and past participle forms with the present verb forms. Once they think they have all the pictures matched correctly, they should check the provided answer sheet to see if they are correct. They shuffle all the pictures together, put them back in the folder, and it is ready for the next student.

6 FLASH CARDS

I find making my own flash cards a fun and easy way to bring manipulatives into my ESL classroom. Most often I use index cards, but sometimes I design my own with a desktop publishing program and print out more elaborate cards for my students. To use these cards to review irregular verbs, draw or print the same picture on two or three cards. Write the present form on one card. Write the past form on another card. And write the past participle on the last card. Students can then use these cards to play memory or go fish.

MOVING IS KEY TO HELPING YOUR STUDENTS RETAIN THE LANGUAGE THEY ARE LEARNING IN YOUR ESL CLASS.

By using these and other manipulatives in class, your students will engage their hands and their minds as they learn and use irregular verbs in English. These manipulatives can be used for other language goals as well, just modify them as you see fit. If you do, please share your successes in the comments below so we can all help our students learn better.

Try These 5 Low Prep & No Prep Activities for Reviewing Modals

YOU'RE A BUSY TEACHER. YOUR TO-DO LIST IS RUNNING OFF THE PAGE, AND YOU'RE RUNNING OFF TO CLASS. SOMETIMES A GRAB AND GO ACTIVITY IS JUST WHAT YOU NEED.

That's why these activities which review modals require little to no prep, just what a busy teacher needs. Simply read the directions and walk into class ready to help your students learn!

TRY THESE 5 NO PREP & LOW PREP ACTIVITIES FOR REVIEWING MODAL VERBS

1 THE PERFECT MATCH

In this activity, one person asks advice of his classmates until he gets the answer that he is looking for. Start by presenting a scenario to your class. A student is looking for advice on whether or not he should do something, for example, drop a class, go on a date, change his major, etc. Choose one person to be the student asking for advice, and send him out of the room while you discuss possible responses with the rest of your class. While that student is out of the room, assign each remaining student a modal verb (could, might, can, ought to, must). Try to give the same number of students each modal. Only one student should use "should" to answer his classmate's question. When the other student asks for advice, that one person tells the student that he should do the thing he is asking about. (For example, if the student asks, "Should I drop this class?" only one student should say, "You should drop the class.") The rest of your class should use their assigned modal to give another answer to the asking student. ("You could just stop going to class. You might want to change to pass/fail.") When the student returns to the room, he asks various students his question (Should I drop this class?) until he finds the one person who says he should do just that. Once he finds that person, the round is over. For the

next round, send someone else into the hallway to play the student who now has a different problem and assign different modals to the remaining students and play as before.

2 PERMISSION ROLE PLAY

Role plays are a great go to activity for ESL students. You can target a specific grammar point while getting in speaking and listening practice, too. To practice modals in a role play, have one person ask another for permission for a particular activity. The following role plays encourage students to use modal verbs as they negotiate with their partners.

The Teen's Weekend: One person is a teenager who wants to go away with his friends for the weekend. One or two other people are his parents who want him to spend the weekend with them at his grandmother's house in the middle of nowhere. Both parties negotiate with each other using as many modals as possible until they come to an agreement about the weekend.

Just What the World Needs: One person is an inventor who has come up with a product they want to sell to a big company. This person desperately needs as much money as possible for both the invention and to help a sick family member. One or two other people play representatives from the company, and they do not want to purchase this terrific invention. However, they do not want to pay the person any money up front since they do not know if the invention will be successful. Start the role play with the inventor explaining his product, using modals to communicate what the public could, should, and might do with his invention if they could buy it. Then, all the students in the role play should use modals to negotiate a sale or other arrangement between the inventor and the company.

3 MY SCHEDULE IS FULL

In this activity, students mingle

asking their classmates for help with a particular task they have planned for the week. Start by having students write the days of the week on a blank piece of paper – Sunday through Saturday. On that schedule, they will write one (fictional) event with which they will need help from fellow classmates: moving to a new apartment, having a big party, putting on a play, etc. Each student must then try to get six classmates to help him with that activity. To do so, he will mingle and ask his classmates for help using modal verbs. (Would you help me move on Thursday?) If a classmate agrees to help with his activity, he must also help with hers. He writes her name next to his activity, and he writes her name and activity on his blank schedule on the appropriate day. Each person can only have one event scheduled each day of the week. So if a classmate asks for help with something on Monday and a student has already agreed to help someone else with an event on Monday, he must say he cannot do it and therefore cannot get that student's help. If a student is unable to secure the help they need on the day they scheduled their event, they can change the day of the event to try to get their six helpers. At the end of time, see who was able to get enough people to help them and, at the same time, completely fill their own schedule.

4 IN IT TOGETHER

As a class, brainstorm a list of problems an ESL student new to the U.S. might have. As you are listing the problems, encourage students to use modal verbs when talking about how a new student might struggle. For example, he might miss his family. She could get lost going to class. Etc. As students suggest problems, write them on the board. You don't have to write the complete sentences. Once you have listed as many problems as your class can, have each person write a letter to a student who has not yet travelled overseas. In the letter, your student should warn his

future classmate about the struggles an English student new to the U.S. might have. The letter should also offer suggestions on how to best handle those problems. In the letter, students should use modal verbs whenever possible, both in introducing the problems and in offering solutions to them. If you like, extend the activity by putting students into groups of four or five. These groups should read each other's letters and then compile all the best advice into a pamphlet that could be sent to future students. Display your students' letters and pamphlets on a bulletin board titled "We're all in this together."

5 MOTHER MAY I

One of the easiest ways to practice modal verbs (and get out of the classroom at the same time) is to play a simple game of Mother May I. In this game, one person stands at one end of the playing field. This person is "Mother", and he or she will be giving the other students permission to move from the opposite end of the playing field toward her. Students take turns asking whether they can take a certain type of step toward mother. For example, one student might ask, "Mother, may I take five baby steps?" Mother answers either affirmatively or negatively. If her answer is yes, the student takes those steps counting aloud as they move. The next student then asks for permission. "Mother may I take three scissor steps?" Mother answers again. Students can name any kind of step, and then should then act out that step as they move – karate steps, jump steps, kangaroo steps, etc. If you like, encourage students to use modals other than may when they ask permission. The first person to reach Mother wins the game, and that person gets to be Mother in the next round. This game is particularly nice as it reviews modals, gets students moving, and reviews numbers all at the same time.

WE ALL KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A BUSY TEACHER.

That's why these activities for reviewing modal verbs are designed to work without a lot of preparation on your part. Your students will still learn, and they will have a good time doing it, too. And you'll have time to do other important things on your to-do list.

Can/Could? Will/Would? How to Teach Your Students the Difference

Modals, modals everywhere, and how do I keep them straight? This might just be what your ESL students are asking themselves. With so many modals with small nuances of meaning, things can get confusing very quickly. Two of the biggest sources of confusion come when deciding between can and could or will and would. Is one past? Is one future? Is one polite and the other not? If you suspect your students are confused about the difference between these pairs or modal verbs, here is a quick explanation of their differences.

TEACH YOUR STUDENTS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CAN/COULD AND WILL/WOULD

1 CAN EXPRESSES AN ABILITY.

Has everyone had an elementary school teacher who answers the question, “Can I go to the bathroom?” with “I don’t know. Can you?” The reason teachers (and plenty of others) respond this way is to emphasize the meaning of can. Can expresses an ability. Something of which a person is capable or is able to do. When used properly, questions with the modal can are inquiring about a person’s physical or mental capabilities. Is this a possible or viable option for them? It is in contrast, therefore, with “may” which asks permission to do a particular action.

To practice proper use of can with your students, brainstorm a list of special skills a person might have. Your list might include serious items such as play the guitar or order a meal in English. It might also include silly items like rolling your tongue or wiggling your ears. (As you are brainstorming skills, you might want to use the opportunity to introduce some unusual vocabulary to your students.) Once your class has brainstormed as many abilities as they can think of (or until you run out of time) have pairs of students ask one another if they possess any or all of the abilities your class listed.

Can you speak Chinese?

Yes, I can. No, I can’t.

Can you ride a unicycle?

Yes, I can. No, I can’t.

2 COULD EXPRESSES A POSSIBILITY.

Whereas can asks about the ability to do something, could asks about the possibility of something. Could you do something? Is it possible for you to do something? Often these possibilities are part of a polite request. Could you pass the salt? Most often, a person would be physically capable of passing the salt. Using could in your question makes it a request rather than an inquiry about a physical ability, and polite one as well. Could you come early and help me set up? Could you stop calling so late? Though grammatically questions, they are rhetorical: the speaker does not expect an answer to his question since it is a request.

To practice the use of could, set up a role play for your students. One person is a house guest who has over stayed his welcome but has no other place to go. The other is the homeowner who wants his guest to leave. Have students perform the role play one pair at a time and try to come to a compromise that will satisfy both parties. As they do the role play, they should concentrate on using could to ask questions of possibility as they negotiate.

3 WILL EXPRESSES PLANS FOR A FUTURE EVENT.

Even the most elementary of ESL students knows that will is used to express future plans. It is the key to correct formation of the simple future tense. When it’s used as a modal verb, will expresses plans for a future event. Will you finish that project this week? (Are you planning on finishing the project this week?) Will you call your sister? (Is it in your plans to call your sister?)

One of the easiest ways to practice using will is to talk about your daily schedule. Have students share with a partner the things that they will do tomorrow, next week, and next month. Remember the plans they share should be exactly that – plans. If an event is tentative or just in the idea process, do not use will to share it.

4 WOULD EXPRESSES CONDITIONAL RESULTS

AND POLITE REQUESTS.

In some ways, would is similar to could. It is used to make polite requests. Would you finish the project this week? (Please finish the project this week. I want you to finish it.) Would you call your sister? (I am asking you to call your sister.) Would expresses a little bit more certainty and is a little bit stronger than could when making requests.

To practice using would for polite requests, set up a role play for groups of four to six students. For the role play, students will pretend to be at a business lunch. Each person should have a unique goal for the group’s project – designing a brand new theme park. As the group makes their plans for the park, they should ask their coworkers to compromise using would questions. (Would you be willing to include a roller coaster? Would the people like a merry-go-round?)

Would is also used for future unreal conditionals, also known as second conditionals. In this structure, a condition is expressed in an if-clause (the verb tense is in the simple past in the if-clause) and the result clause is expressed with would + main verb. These future events should be unlikely or even impossible. For example, if I won the lottery, I would buy a new house. (It is extremely unlikely that I will win the lottery.)

To practice conditional structures using would, have groups of two to three students make a list of ten questions about unlikely or impossible futures for their fellow classmates. (What would you do if...) Once groups are finished writing their questions, have two groups combine and ask each other the questions they came up with. Encourage creativity in the questions as well as the answers.

MODAL VERBS MIGHT BE CONFUSING FOR YOUR STUDENTS AT FIRST, BUT WITH PRACTICE AND PERSEVERANCE, THEY WILL BECOME COMFORTABLE AND FLUENT USING THEM.

Take the time to walk your students through the different meanings, answer questions as they come up, and be patient with your explanations. All the work will pay off in the end when your students are clear and precise in the modal verbs they use.

Are Your Students Suffering from Conditional Confusion?

Conditionals can be confusing for ESL students. Since they talk about real and unreal pasts, presents, and futures, sentences get complicated quickly. If you are ready to introduce your students to the conditional structure in English, here is a basic summary of the four different patterns they will need to know.

TRY THESE SIMPLE ACTIVITIES FOR PRACTICING CONDITIONAL STRUCTURES

1 ALWAYS TRUE: ZERO CONDITIONALS

The first type of conditionals are generalized cause and effect statements. These statements, also known as zero conditionals, express a natural and consistent consequence for a particular set of conditions. They are a general truth. These conditions have happened in the past, still happen today, and will continue to happen in the future.

*If it snows, the city plows the streets.
If you eat too much, you get fat.
If you don't brush your teeth, you get cavities.*

Like any other conditional statement, zero conditionals have an if-clause and a result clause. The if-clause states the condition, and it is expressed in the simple present tense. The result clause is the independent clause, and it is also expressed in the simple present tense. (Like any good grammar point, there are exceptions to the present tense/present tense rule, but if you are just introducing conditionals to your students or are trying to clear up confusion, keep it simple for now and introduce the exceptions later.)

2 POSSIBLE FUTURES: FIRST CONDITIONALS

One type of conditionals, often referred to as first conditionals, are used to talk about possible future events. We can predict lots of events that might happen in the future, and an English speaker communicated those events or circumstances in the if-clause of his conditional statement. As with zero conditionals, first conditionals consist of an if-clause (the dependent clause) as well as a result clause (the independent clause). For future events,

ones that are possible, the condition expressed in the if-clauses uses the simple present tense even though that condition is happening in the future. If he calls you tonight..., if she gets accepted to the school..., if we don't get home on time... The result clause can be expressed with three different structures depending on what the speaker is trying to say. For simple predictions, the result clause should be expressed in the simple future tense.

*If he calls you tonight, I will be surprised.
If she gets accepted to the school, she will move to California.
If we don't get home on time, we will be in trouble.*

A speaker might also want to give instructions in a result clause, and if so he or she should use the imperative structure in the result clause.

*If he calls you tonight, don't answer.
If we don't get home on time, don't tell your parents.*

A third possibility for the result clause of a possible future conditional is the use of a modal verb.

*If he calls you tonight, you should tell him the truth.
If she gets accepted to the school, she might move to California.
If we don't get home on time, you should pay your little brother to keep his mouth shut.*

The key for your students to remember is that future conditionals have an if-clause that is expressed in the simple present. The verb tense of the result clause will then depend on what the speaker wants to say about that future.

3 IMPOSSIBLE FUTURES: SECOND CONDITIONALS

We all like to dream about futures that we know will never happen – winning the lottery, getting discovered and becoming famous, winning a Nobel peace prize. For some people these futures are possible, but for the rest of us we already know they will never happen. And that is exactly when it's time to use second conditionals. Like any other conditional sentence, those that talk about an unreal or impossible future have both an if-clause and a result clause. The if-clause refers to a future situation, one that really has

no chance of happening. To indicate such a set of conditions, a speaker uses the simple past in the if-clause. The result clause in second conditionals uses would with the base verb.

*If I won the lottery, I would travel around the world. (I won't win the lottery because I don't have a ticket.)
If I had ten children, I would go crazy. (I do not want ten children and will never have that many.)
If I ruled the world, I would treat all people equally. (There is no way for me to become ruler of the world.)*

4 UNREAL PASTS: THIRD CONDITIONALS

Do you ever wish you could have done something differently in your past? If so, you might express your wishes using a third conditional. This structure is used to talk about events that did not happen in the past (and cannot happen in the future) and the results that also did not happen. For both the condition and the results, the events are impossible since they should have happened in the past but did not. Third conditionals express these ideas again with an if-clause and a result clause. For unreal past events, speakers should use the past perfect in the if-clause (the circumstances that did not happen). The result clause (that also did not happen) is expressed with would have + the past participle of the verb.

*If she had won the contest, she would not have changed careers. (She did not win the contest. As a result, she changed careers.)
If he had read the instructions, he would have put it together correctly. (He did not read the directions. He did not put it together correctly.)
If it had rained last weekend, we would have had the party indoors. (It did not rain. The party was not indoors.)*

Also keep in mind that it is possible to use could have, might have, or should have for result clauses in third conditionals.

*If he had asked me to marry him, I might have said yes.
If you had invited her, she could have arranged a ride.*

NOW THAT YOUR STUDENTS KNOW THE BASICS OF CONDITIONALS, GIVE THEM SOME PRACTICE.

What Would You Do? Getting Personal with the Conditional Tense

What would you do in a given situation? What would your students do? When your class is learning and practicing conditionals in English, it's a good time to get to know each other better.

The following exercises give your students an opportunity to share about themselves, their habits, opinions, and hopes while practicing conditional structures in English.

TRY THESE CONDITIONAL TENSE ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR STUDENTS

1 EVERYBODY'S SHUFFLING (FIRST CONDITIONALS)

This game will get your students up and moving and thinking about how they would handle possible situations. Every student in class should receive two index cards. They will use these cards to write a complete conditional sentence. On the first card, students should write a condition clause (if-clause). The condition should be a possible future event. It can be about anything at all as long as the person writing it will be able to logically and grammatically complete the sentence. Conditions might read as any of the following: If it rains this afternoon, if I get the wrong food at a restaurant, if I get married this year, etc. On the second card, students should write a statement that completes the sentence, a result clause. Because the condition is in the future, the result clause should be in the simple future. Result clauses might read as follows: I won't play tennis, I will talk to the manager, my mother will be very happy, etc. Once everyone has both clauses written on separate cards, collect the condition cards in one pile and the result clauses in another. Shuffle them, and deal each student one card from each pile. Students should then mingle around the classroom asking about their classmates' cards until they find the match to each of their clauses. When two people find a match, they should stand next to each other – the condition card on the right and the result clause on the left.

Once all the condition cards are correctly matched with all the result cards, all your students should be standing in a continuous circle.

2 HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW ME? (FIRST CONDITIONALS)

How well do your students know each other? Can they predict what their classmates will do in unusual situations? Find out with this conditional writing activity. Start by assigning an unusual condition to each person in the class. For example, if a person won a million dollars, if a person made an important scientific discovery, if a person was "discovered" by a movie producer, if a person became step parent to twelve children, etc. Using their conditions, each student should predict what the members of his class would do. He should write his condition clause and predictions in complete sentences on separate slips of paper (sticky notes work great). (For example, If Maria won a million dollars, she would give it all to charity.) Then collect all the predictions and separate them into piles for each person in the class. While you are sorting the predictions into piles, give students a copy of all the unusual conditions and ask them to write a complete sentence for each condition about themselves. Once everyone has finished writing predictions about themselves, give each person his pile of sticky notes. Students score one point for each prediction they made that matches his classmate's actual answer. The student with the most points wins the game.

3 THE BUCKET LIST (SECOND CONDITIONALS)

Do your students know what a bucket list is? It's a list of activities a person wants to do before they die (or kick the bucket). Have your students think about things they might put on their own bucket list as they practice writing second conditionals. Tell your class to imagine they only have one week left to live. How would they spend that time? Have each person write a paragraph using the second conditional structure telling

what they would do with the seven days they have remaining. After writing the paragraphs, have each person share her plans in front of the class for two to three minutes.

4 WHAT IS TRUE FOR YOU? (ZERO CONDITIONALS)

What do you do in typical situations? What do your students do? In this activity, students will guess what the conditions might be based on their classmates' reactions to them. Each person should start by listing five to ten situations that they typically encounter each week. These situations might be things like if I have a test, if I want to watch a movie, if I forget my phone, etc. Students then write conditional sentences that include the conditions and their typical reactions to them. If I have a test, I study the night before, for example. Once the sentences are complete, have students work with a partner. The two will take turns reading one result clause but not the condition clause. The other person then has to guess what the condition is that predicated that result. For example, an exchange between two students might sound like this.

A: I call my mother.

B: Do you call your mother if you get homesick?

A: No.

B: Do you call your mother if you need money?

A: Yes, if I need money I call my mother.

Students take turns guessing at their partner's conditions until they have both finished their lists.

5 REGRETTING THE PAST (THIRD CONDITIONALS)

Everyone suffers some disappointments in life. Likewise, we all make mistakes. Give your students a chance to think about the things in their past that they wish they could change. Have each person write a statement about something in their past they wish was different. They should write one sentence that says what actually happened and then a conditional statement (us-

ing the third conditional structure) that says what the person wishes had happened. For example, a student might write, "I never went to summer camp. If I had gone to summer camp, I would have made more friends." Collect everyone's statements and then read them to the class one at a time. The rest of the class should guess whose past they are hearing about in each conditional statement.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS NATURALLY GROW CLOSE TO EACH OTHER AS THEY STUDY OVERSEAS.

You can give your students a chance to deepen their understanding of one another with these conditional activities that allow them to share about themselves. If you do, your class will be more understanding of and sympathetic toward each other, and they will gain experience with the conditional tense as well.

Get Conditional with If & Unless:

Make Sure Students Have It Straight

Conditional sentences can be confusing for ESL students. After all, these sentences are talking about imaginary situations and imaginary outcomes. How does a person get tangible lessons into the classroom when the topic is imaginary? One particular area of confusion many ESL students (and teachers) struggle with is the difference between “if” and “unless”. On first glance, the two seem very similar, opposite in fact, but in actuality each has very specific circumstances under which it should be used. If you want to make sure your students are clear on the difference between if and unless, follow these five simple steps for distinguishing between the two.

MAKE SURE STUDENTS KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

1 BE COMFORTABLE WITH “IF” CONDITIONALS

Obviously, before your students can distinguish between if and unless in conditional statements, they will have to understand how to use if-clauses. Conditionals are used to talk about a situation, event, or reaction that are directly related to another situation, event, or reaction. Sometimes these events are real, and other times they are hypothetical, and the outcomes depend on certain circumstances. If he comes, I will be upset. (I don't want him to come, and I will be upset if I see him there.) English has four basic types of conditional statements, often referred to as zero, first, second, and third. For a general review of conditionals, see *Are your students suffering from conditional confusion?* Try these simple activities for practicing conditional structures. Each conditional statement has an if-clause (the hypothetical or yet to be circumstance) and a result clause (what will happen if the circumstance in the first clause happens). The if-clause states the specific circumstances that will bring about the result in the second clause.

You can find exercises on conditional sentences in just about any grammar book or on more websites than you will ever need. The most important part of these exercises is that students understand the two different functions of the two different clauses in the conditional sentence.

2 NEGATIVE “IF” CONDITIONALS

Once your students understand the general construction of conditional statements, it's time to add a negative into the mix. Negative conditional statements again express a certain set of circumstances as well as a result of those circumstances. They are the same as positive conditional sentences in structure except for the negation of the verb in the if-clause. If he doesn't come, I will be upset. (I want him to come. If I do not see him there I will be upset.) Negative conditional statements can be used to talk about any circumstances that may or may not happen, to express any typical results that would happen if the circumstances in the negative if-clause are met. To practice negative if-clauses, have students take the sentences from the first exercise and make the if-clause negative. What do they have to do to the result clause to keep the meaning of the sentence consistent?

3 UNLESS = IF...NOT

The easiest way to explain “unless” is to say it is the equivalent of a negative if-clause. If I do NOT win the lottery, I will not be able to buy a car. Unless I win the lottery, I will not be able to buy a car. This explanation is a good introduction to unless-clauses, but it is not the whole story. For example, the following two sentences are not equivalents. If I don't win the contest, I will be disappointed. Unless I win the contest, I will be disappointed. The latter sentence sounds strange, as if winning the contest is the only thing that will keep that person from being disappointed, which brings us to the exception to the unless-rule.

4 THE EXCEPTION TO THE RULE

Unless-clauses are not used for ordinary cause and effect relationships. By using “unless” in a clause, the speaker is implying that the circumstances in the unless-clause are not very likely. The event in that clause is the ONLY circumstance under which the result clause will happen. In the above example, many circumstances might prevent the speaker from being disappointed, one of which may be winning the contest, but the general state of that person is probably not to be disappointed. The event in the result clause,

therefore, is what we expect to happen. It is the normal outcome, the most likely result, and so unless is not the appropriate choice for that sentence. In this case, the appropriate sentence is this: If I don't win the contest, I will be disappointed. Therefore, speakers should not use “unless” for an if-clause that is likely to happen.

5 IF NOT OR UNLESS

Your students will need practice to determine which choice is the best one for a given sentence: if not or unless. To do so, encourage your students to ask themselves the following questions. Is the event in the result clause almost always true? Is the if/unless-clause unlikely to happen? Is the circumstance in the if/unless clause the one set of circumstances which would prevent that result from happening? If the answer to these questions is yes, the correct choice is “unless”. Also ask these questions. Is the result clause something that is true? Is the if/unless-clause something that might change the result clause? Is that event or are those circumstances something that is likely? If the answer to these questions is yes, “if... not” is the better choice. In short, if the circumstance in the if/unless clause is likely to happen, ‘if... not’ is the right choice. If it is not likely to happen, ‘unless’ is the best choice.

Give your students some practice distinguishing between ‘if...not’ and ‘unless’ in conditional sentences with examples such as the following. Have students decide which sentence is the better choice in the following pairs. (Correct answers are in italics.)

If you don't have your book, you cannot do your homework.

Unless you have your book, you cannot do your homework.

If he does not wear a tie, he will be dressed appropriately for the event.

Unless he wears a tie, he will be dressed appropriately for the event.

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN CORRECT USE OF IF AND UNLESS WILL TAKE SOME PRACTICE FOR YOUR ESL STUDENTS. If you are patient and walk them through the logic of the choices, they will eventually be successful in distinguishing between the two structures. Take it one step at a time and all of you will get there.

4 Ways to Use Pop Music to Teach Conditionals

TEACHING CONDITIONALS IS DIFFICULT FOR ANY ESL/EFL TEACHER, SO TRY USING AN INTERESTING SUBJECT MATTER TO ENGAGE YOUR STUDENTS!

Here are four strategies to integrate pop music into your conditional grammar sessions. You can also use these as classroom breaks to keep reviewing these difficult tenses.

TRY THESE 4 STRATEGIES TO INTEGRATE POP MUSIC INTO YOUR CONDITIONAL GRAMMAR SESSIONS

1 A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

Differentiate between first and second conditionals, will and would, with a little help from the Beatles! Download the lyrics to “With a Little Help From my Friends”, pass them out to students, and play the song three times.

- Ask them to circle all of the “wills” on the first pass. This is a bit tricky because they are used in contractions. Explain the grammar behind first conditional tense.
- Play the song again and have them circle the “woulds”. Ask them what the difference is between will and would and explain second conditionals.
- Play the song again and ask them to circle the “ifs”. Have them underline the verbs in the if clauses and discuss how past tense is used in those conditional cases.
- You can also play the song a fourth time asking them to circle the “coulds”, and explain the difference between can and could.

2 IF I COULD TURN BACK TIME

Use Cher to explain second condi-

tional if clauses! Pass out the lyrics to “If I Could Turn Back Time” (or just the chorus).

- Before playing the song, explain “if I could, I would” conditional clauses and their grammatical structure.
- Then, play the song and deconstruct the conditional phrases.
- Use the song as a launching point for a conversation class or quick writing assignment to ask students about regret. Ask, “If you could change something you did in the past, what would it be?”

3 WOULD HAVE, COULD HAVE, SHOULD HAVE

For a homework assignment, ask students to find song lyrics in English that use “would have, could have, or should have” third conditional constructions. This is a particularly difficult verb tense because of the number of auxiliary words, but song lyrics integrate it often in simple speech and are hence a good teaching tool.

- Have a computer hooked up to the Internet ready, and pick a few of the students’ songs, look for them on the Internet, and play them to discuss for the entire class.
- You can help them by giving them starter search words like “would have been” and “could’ve loved”. Give a different search term to each student.

4 I’LL BE THERE...

This lyric is used in a plentitude of pop songs and is perfect for teaching first conditional tense while simultaneously ingraining a commonly used English idiom! Favorites include:

- Bon Jovi’s “I’ll Be There for You”, which uses multiple first conditional phrases as well as second conditional. Pass out the lyrics

and have the students pluck out the “I’lls” and the “whens”, and then explain how the singer’s action is conditional on the action of his lost love.

- Jackson 5’s “I’ll Be There” is a good song for teaching the principle of first conditionals without using obvious connector words. The song is entirely conditional, but it does not use many “whens” or “ifs”. Rather, it is more subtle. Have students pick apart the language and figure out which are the conditional clauses.

Use one or two songs in class, and then ask students to find their own “I will be there” song on the Internet and pick apart the conditional clauses for homework! You can discuss their songs at the next class.

CONDITIONALS CAN BE CHALLENGING TO UNDERSTAND GRAMMATICALLY, BUT SONGS CAN REALLY HELP YOUR TEACHING AS THEY USE A COMPLICATED GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE WITH SIMPLE WORDS THAT EMOTIONALLY RELATE AND ENGAGE YOUR STUDENTS.

Try some of these suggested songs and activities to break up your class and reinforce the conditional concepts!

4 Out of the Ordinary Activities for Practicing the Conditional Tense

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A CREATIVE AND FRESH WAY TO PRACTICE THE CONDITIONAL STRUCTURE WITH YOUR ESL STUDENTS, YOU MIGHT WANT TO TRY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING EXERCISES.

They use fun stories, silly songs and pop culture to talk about what might happen if...

TRY THESE 4 OUT OF THE ORDINARY ACTIVITIES FOR PRACTICING THE CONDITIONAL TENSE

1 IF YOU GIVE A MOUSE A COOKIE...

If you haven't read it, "If You Give a Mouse a Cookie" is a fun picture book which shows the chain reaction starting with, as you might guess, giving a mouse a cookie. If you do, he will want milk and a napkin which will lead to cleaning the house and coloring a picture, and ultimately to having another cookie. The book starts with an if clause, and the mouse's resulting activities are all phrased in the conditional tense. Read this book with your class, once just for fun and then a second time pointing out the grammatical structure. (You can also play a YouTube video of someone else reading the book if you want to challenge your students' listening skills.) Then challenge your students to write their own crazy conditional picture books. Put your students in groups of about three and have them write a story modeled after "If You Give a Mouse a Cookie". You might want to start with the same if phrase or choose one of your own (e.g. If you give a snake a sandwich, if you give a chipmunk some cheese, if you give a cat a cracker...). Once students write their stories, have them illustrate them and bind them into a book. Let students share their books with the class either in a reading circle or at a reading center and enjoy the creative conditional.

2 IF YOU'RE HAPPY AND YOU KNOW IT...

If you're happy and you know it, the clas-

sic children's song, says to clap your hands. And while that's good, your students might enjoy coming up with more creative responses for the simple little tune. Arrange your students in a circle, and teach them the simple song. Then, challenge your students to think up their own physical responses to being happy. Have one person stand in the center of the circle and sing, "If you're happy and you know it..." At this point, have that student point to another person in the circle who must offer up a different reaction to being happy. The whole class then finishes the verse with that person's suggestion. For example, if your student says spin around, the class would sing the song as usual substituting spin around for clap your hands. Of course, the student must phrase the conditional correctly when she gives her answer. Once that verse is completed, the second student moves to the center of the circle and takes a turn leading a round of singing with another student's happiness reaction. If you want to challenge your students even further, lead the song yourself but use a different verb tense in your if clause. (If you had been happy and you had known it...) Make sure students use the correct form to complete the sentence.

3 IF I WERE A BOY...

Do your students know the popular song by Beyonce "If I Were a Boy"? In it she sings about how she would be different if she could change her gender. Ask your students if they have ever thought about what it would be like to be a member of the opposite sex. Play the song for your class as they follow along with a copy of the lyrics, and ask them to share any initial reactions they have after listening to it. Divide your students into two groups – girls in one group and boys in the other. (You can have two of each group if your class is very large.) Ask each group to talk about what it would be like to be a member of the opposite sex. Remind students to use the conditional appropriately as they discuss what their lives would be like as a boy/girl. After your same sex groups have discussed the question, reform your class into groups of about four students each – two males and two fe-

males in each group. Have them share the ways their initial group decided their lives would be different. At this point, students should feel free to challenge one another's assumptions or ask clarifying questions. Once groups have finished their discussions, have the class vote on whether they would change their gender for one day, one month, one year, or not at all if they had the opportunity to do so. Ask students to share why they made the decision they did using the conditional tense.

4 THE WORST CASE SCENARIO

What would you do if your car was on fire? What would you do if you were attacked by a king cobra? What would you do if your only escape was from a fourth story widow? The book *The Worst Case Scenario Book of Survival Questions* challenges readers to answer these dilemmas for themselves. Invest in a copy of the book or borrow it from your library and ask your students to answer questions from the book to see if they know how to survive. Try giving one question to groups of two or three students to discuss. Once they have come up with what they think is the best plan, show them the answer the book gives and see if their plan matches the author's. Then, have each group pose their question to the class and see if anyone can come up with the right answer. Have the members of each group guide the class discussion in response to their scenario. For homework, have each student come up with their own survival question and do some research on how to handle the dangerous situation. Then, have students compile a book of their survival questions and answers to make available for independent reading time in class.

PRACTICING THE CONDITIONAL TENSE IN ENGLISH CAN BE FUN AND CREATIVE AND STILL CHALLENGE YOUR STUDENTS' LANGUAGE SKILLS.

If it's time to talk about what ifs with your students, try approaching the task from a unique and creative angle. If you do, your students will thank you, and they will definitely remember what they have learned.

5 Simple Steps to Teaching the Passive Voice

WRITE IN THE ACTIVE VOICE. WE HAVE HEARD IT FROM OUR TEACHERS TIME AND TIME AGAIN, AND WE HAVE TAUGHT IT NEARLY AS MUCH.

But as much as our writing teachers seem to hate the passive voice, reality shows us something different. English speakers use the passive voice construction without a thought, both in speaking and in writing, and that's why it's so important to teach the passive construction to ESL students. If you are ready to teach the passive voice to your students, here are five simple steps how to do it.

HOW TO TEACH THE PASSIVE VOICE: 5 SIMPLE STEPS

1 STEP 1: RECOGNIZING THE ACTIVE STRUCTURE

Not all sentences can be changed to the passive voice. Only an active voice sentence with a direct object can be made passive. Your students will have to learn to recognize active structures with direct objects before they can restructure these sentences into the passive voice. In English, the subject always comes first in the sentence (with some exceptions that we will not address here). After that is the verb which is sometimes followed by a direct object and/or an indirect object. Active sentences that have a subject, verb, and direct object can be restructured using the passive voice. The direct object is essential because it becomes the subject of the passive sentence, so if an active sentence does not have a direct object, it cannot be restructured in the passive voice.

To practice determining if an active sentence can be made into a passive sentence, review the parts of a sentence with your students. Give them several examples both with and without direct objects. Be sure that everyone can identify the direct object before moving on to STEP 2.

2 STEP 2: MAKE THE OBJECT THE SUBJECT

Restructuring the active to the passive includes two major changes in a sentence's structure. The first is taking the direct object of the active verb/sentence and making it the subject of the passive sentence. Once your students can correctly identify the direct object in an active sentence, they should be able to easily determine the subject of the passive sentence.

3 STEP 3: CHANGING THE VERB

When changing an active sentence to a passive sentence, the tense of the verb changes. Every passive sentence contains a "be" verb. To change an active verb to a passive verb, use the correct form of "be" and the past participle of the original active verb. For example, eat becomes is eaten. Give becomes was given. You can find a summary of the tense changes when forming the passive from the active on slideshare.net. Let your students practice changing active verbs to passive verbs in various tenses and using them with the correct passive subject.

4 STEP 4: WHEN THE SUBJECT REMAINS

If a speaker or writer wants to include the noun performing the action (the subject in the active sentence) in a passive construction, they must include it in a "by" phrase after the passive verb. The original subject becomes the object of the prepositional phrase, and it comes after the passive verb. Take this active sentence, for example. "George Orwell wrote 1984." George Orwell is the subject (performing the action of writing). In the passive sentence, 1984 was written by George Orwell, this subject appears in a "by" phrase after the main verb. The by phrase is optional in the passive sentence though in this case the information (the author's name) is important and should be included.

5 STEP 5: WHEN TO USE THE PASSIVE

Though we are usually told to use active sentences, there are times when using the passive is actually more logical. In active sentences, both the one performing the action (the subject of the active verb) and the recipient of the action (the direct object of the active verb) are important. Passive sentences are different. Using a passive sentence makes sense when the noun performing the action is not important. For example, "The test was administered." (It doesn't matter who administered the test.) Also, if a person does not know who performed the action, the passive is the construction to use. "My purse was stolen." (We do not know who stole the purse.) A third reason to use the passive voice is that the one performing the action is obvious. "She was fired." (She could only be fired by her boss.)

TRY THESE PASSIVE VOICE EXERCISES

Now that you have taught your students how to form the passive voice from an active sentence, give them some practice doing it.

Start by giving your students ten sentences written in the active voice, such as the following.

Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492.

My mom baked a cake for my birthday.

Our mail carrier brought the mail to the front door.

The librarian always recommends great books.

Janie plays cards with a full deck.

They include appetizers at that restaurant.

Now have your students change these sentences from the active to the passive omitting the original subject.

America was discovered in 1492.

Our mail was brought to the front door.

Appetizers are included at that restaurant.

To practice using “by” phrases in the passive voice, give your students ten simple passive sentences that do not contain a “by” phrase. Ask have students work individually or in pairs to read each sentence and then add a logical “by” phrase after the passive verb. You can use the following sentences or other similar ones.

The money was found.

The law was passed.

The man was arrested.

The girl was dumped.

The cat was rescued.

I was fired.

You were scolded.

We were rewarded.

Jackie was told many times.

The newspaper was delivered.

The modified sentences might look like the following.

The money was found by the boy.

The law was passed by Congress.

Jackie was told many times by her mother.

Once students have added their “by” phrases, have them change these passive sentences back into active sentences using the object of their by phrase as the subject of the active sentence. For example,

The boy found the money.

Congress passed the law.

Her mother told Jackie many times.

LEARNING THE PASSIVE VOICE IS IMPORTANT FOR ESL STUDENTS, BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE COMPLICATED.

If you take it step by step and give your students practice at each point, they will be comfortable reading, writing, and hearing the passive voice.

Get Passive Aggressive: 5 Easy Activities for Practicing Passive Voice

IN SCHOOL, MOST OF US WERE INSTRUCTED TO AVOID THE PASSIVE VOICE WHENEVER POSSIBLE.

We were told that active sentences are more descriptive, more interesting, better choices for our writing. And while getting rid of the passive voice is a challenge that teachers to native speakers face, ESL teachers have an opposite challenge – teach students how to recognize and use the passive voice. Because even though teachers tell their students not to use it, the reality is that they do, and so your students will have to understand it as well. Here are five simple activities you can use to practice the passive voice. Some need time for set up (like solve the crime), but others (like the research race and blame it on your brother role play) don't need any preparation. Just walk into the classroom and go. All of these activities, however, will get your students using the passive voice and having fun while they do.

HELP YOUR STUDENTS REALLY USE PASSIVE

1 SOLVE THE CRIME

The set up for this activity may take you a bit of time, but once it's set up students can pretty much work on their own. You will want to create a crime scene in your classroom. Think of a crime that could have been committed in your classroom. It doesn't have to be realistic. Maybe the pencil sharpener attacked the garbage can or a fire breathing dragon tried to burn all the books in the classroom. Designate a corner of your room as the crime scene and put several clues in the crime scene area. These clues can be anything, for example, a turned over chair, cookie crumbs on the ground, a torn piece of paper, footprints (or paw prints) on the floor, etc. If you want your students to solve a crime, then have an idea in your mind what happened and set up the scene accordingly. If you are only going to use this activity to practice the passive voice, put any clues you want to in the area. Students will then role play the investigators for the crime. They will investigate the scene noting the clues as

they do. They should write their clues in the passive voice. (The chair was turned over. Footprints were left on the floor.) Tell students how many clues are hidden in the crime scene (you don't have to make all of them obvious) and see how many they are able to find and write passive sentences about.

2 MYTHICAL CREATURE COMPOSITIONS

Are your students into zombies? Vampires? Werewolves? Whatever creature of the night excites your students, use them to help your students distinguish sentences written in the passive voice. Start by giving students a list of ten sentences, half written in the passive voice and half written in the active voice. You can either write these sentences yourself, which I recommend, or have students write their own sentences. Show students how to tell if a sentence is passive with this little trick. If they can add the phrase "by zombies" (or vampires, werewolves, etc.) after the verb, the sentence is passive. If they cannot add that phrase, the sentence is active. If your students are young enough to appreciate art in English class, have them rewrite the passive sentences including the mythical creature phrase and then illustrate their favorite sentence. Display these illustrations with their passive sentences around your classroom.

3 RESEARCH RACE

What inventions do your students think are most necessary in their lives? As a class, brainstorm as many different inventions necessary to modern life as possible. Then use that list of inventions in this combination grammar and reading activity. Give students ten minutes to work with a partner on their smartphones or other technology devices (this works best if you have Wi-Fi in class or can take your students to a computer lab) and identify who masterminded each of their necessary inventions. For every inventor they find, they should write a sentence in the passive voice. "The telephone was invented by Alexander Graham Bell." Give your students only ten minutes to research as many inventions as possible. When you

call time, award each pair one point for identifying the correct inventor and one point for writing a grammatical passive sentence. The pair with the most points wins the game.

4 BLAME IT ON YOUR BROTHER ROLE PLAY

What kid hasn't gotten into trouble and blamed a sibling for the damage? Take advantage of this universal blame game for a simple role play to practice the passive voice. Choose two students to play the parents and two students to play the siblings, who will be placing all the guilt on each other. With the four students in the front of the class, have the parents ask their children about various negative situations around the house using the passive voice. (E.g. How was the lamp broken? The cookies were stolen by whom?) The siblings both try to blame the activities on the other (I didn't break the lamp. It was broken by Hyun.) or on a third party (The cookies were eaten by Big Foot.) using the passive voice. Parents and kids should try to stump one another with the outrageous damages or causes of those damages. If one pair is able to render the other pair speechless, they win the role play.

5 REMEMBER THIS

Here is a simple activity you can do with your students that touches on grammar, vocabulary, memory, and observation skills. Use either a tray or a desk not in use to set up an arrangement with familiar (or unfamiliar) objects. Give your students one minute to study the tray. Then hide it from their view (behind a large piece of cardboard works well) and make five changes to the tray. You might want to remove objects, reposition objects, or add new objects. Then reveal the tray to your students. They will have to note the differences in the tray using sentence in the passive voice. (The pencil was moved to the other side of the tray. The coffee mug was removed.) Once students get all five changes, reset the tray and try the activity again with new changes. If you like, ask students to come up to the front of the class and make the changes for one round.

Defying Description: 10 Fun Ways to Teach Adjectives

BEING ABLE TO DESCRIBE WHAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT IS KEY TO COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY.

Your ESL students may be learning the nouns and verbs to get across their basic wants and needs, but now they want to add in some details. Use the 10 activities below to help them spice up their conversations today!

TRY THESE 10 FUN WAYS TO TEACH ADJECTIVES

1 A STRONG START

You will need to begin by presenting basic adjectives to your students. The adjectives you choose will depend on your class make-up. Younger students should learn basic words, but adults will need to go further. If your adult class is specific to a job, for example if you are teaching a group of workers from a bakery, you will want to tailor your list to them. As you present each word, you will need a large picture showing it accompanied by the word written clearly. Introduce the words slowly, reviewing as necessary.

2 CLEVER CATEGORIES

Divide the class into two teams for this fun activity. Put a noun up on the board (show the actual object, if possible). Give each team one minute (or an appropriate amount of time for your class) to come up with as many adjectives as possible to describe that noun. At the end of the minute, have a reader from each team read their list aloud. They get one point for every adjective that the other team did not list. The first team to get ten points wins.

3 IT'S IN THE BAG

You will need to have enough small items for each student in your class to have at least one each. Show all of these items to your students, reviewing their names. Depending on the class, you may want to put up all

of the item names on the board. Next, put all of the items in a bag. Have your students take turns leaving the room and picking one item out of the bag. Let them come back in and use three adjectives to describe the item. The other students will take turns guessing what the item could be. The difficulty of this game can be varied greatly, such as by using items very similar or very different, or not putting up the names of the items on the board, and so on. This makes it an activity which can be used at almost any level.

4 WHO AM I?

This activity gets students talking, which is always our goal. Review your list of adjectives, and introduce any that are commonly used to describe a person which you have not covered. For a more advanced class, you may want them to brainstorm these adjectives as a class, guiding them as necessary. Have the list up on the board. Next, tell students they need to pick five adjectives to describe themselves. As the teacher, you read the list of adjectives aloud, and allow the students to guess who it is. This enjoyable activity is a good one for sparking conversation.

5 OPPOSING OPPOSITES

Introduce (or review, depending on the level of your class) some pairs of adjectives that are opposites, such as “hot and cold,” “expensive and cheap” or “tall and short.” Have them written on cards. If you have a small class, you may just need one set of cards. For a larger class, have multiple sets and they can play in pairs or groups. Have students place all cards face down. Take turns turning over two cards each. If the students pick two cards that are opposites, they keep them. If not, the next player goes. Play until all cards are gone. Make sure all students are reading the cards as they turn them over.

6 CUT-UPS

This activity is fun, but requires

your students to be able to write a sentence. Pass out two or three sentence strips to each student, and have them write a simple sentence on it. For example, “The cat is on the bed,” or “The boy is at the store.” Next, have them trade sentences with another student. Now have them separate each word by cutting them apart. Have that student add one or two adjectives to the sentence. For example, “The clever cat is under the enormous bed.” Have students share their new sentences. If you would like, they could pass their originals to another student and repeat the process. This activity is bound to create some smiles!

7 OUTSTANDING OUTFITS

Have students bring in a picture (or get one from their phone) from home. Have them write a description of themselves, using as many adjectives as possible. When everyone is done, have them share what they have written. An extension of this would be to hang up all of the photos and then you, as the teacher, read the descriptions. Students would then guess who is being described.

8 ABC'S OF ADJECTIVES

Give students a page with the alphabet written on the left hand going down. You can have students write the alphabet themselves if you would like them to practice the alphabet in English. Tell students they need to try to think of an adjective that begins with every letter. Depending on the class, you may have to give them support with a word bank, just letting them fill the words in the right spots.

9 I SPY

You can use the game of “I Spy” to teach adjectives. Model for the students by saying, “I spy something _____ and _____ (insert two adjectives).” Have the students take turns guessing the object you are describing. The student who guesses correctly can have a turn to come up with two adjectives for the

class. Make sure everyone gets a turn to guess, and that the more timid students do not get overshadowed by the louder ones. Everyone has to speak the language in order to make mistakes and learn from them.

10 PICTURE THIS

Explain to the students that they will be drawing for this activity, so they may want to think of an object they feel comfortable sketching. The student should think of a noun, and make a list of at least five adjectives to describe it. Next, they should sketch out that noun on a piece of paper. Finally, take the adjectives they have written and write them around the shape of the object. This is a very visually appealing way for your students to show the adjectives they know.

ADJECTIVES ARE IMPORTANT FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS TO KNOW AND BE ABLE TO USE.

It will improve the quality of their conversation. No matter what the age of your students, you will find some engaging activities in this article to get them using adjectives today!

Make It Fun: Teach Adjectives Using These 9 Creative Writing Ideas

CREATIVE WRITING CAN BE A POWERFUL TOOL FOR INCREASING YOUR STUDENTS' VOCABULARY.

Having fun whilst learning is an objective that most teachers aim for and this can be achieved during a lesson with a focus on writing. Getting your students' creative juices flowing will result in fun lessons and lots of opportunities for learning new vocabulary. Adjectives are just one area of vocabulary that can benefit from writing creatively.

Many students may claim that they don't know where to start with creative writing but giving clear instructions and suggested themes will start the ball rolling. Using a story telling exercise to teach topic vocabulary is just one way of getting their creativity going. Don't be disheartened if they don't take to the idea immediately, they will once they see how easily a story can evolve from a simple prompt!

Try these creative writing ideas to help your students to expand their bank of adjectives:

USE THESE IDEAS FOR TEACHING ADJECTIVES IN AN EFFICIENT WAY

1 CHARACTER ADJECTIVES WARMER

Ask students to pair up with a student they don't know well and write ten adjectives to describe what they think the other student is like. For example they may choose friendly, serious, clever etc. When they have written ten adjectives they should compare their lists and see whether they are correct.

2 MAKING ASSUMPTIONS

We all make assumptions when we first meet someone and this is a good 'getting to know you' exercise. Describing character is an essential part of creative writing and one in which you can have lots of fun. In pairs ask your students to make assumptions about another pair that they don't know well. Give them prompts ie Do they like Chocolate? Do they play football? Who is their favourite band? Make sure you give them some suggestions and make it clear that they're not writing what they know but what they think! When they've

made their assumptions they should join up with the other pair and discuss them to see which are true and which are not.

3 CHARACTER ADJECTIVES

Tell your students that they are now going to create their own character. First they have to decide the following: age, gender, appearance, interests/job. Then give them a list of around ten questions to consider. For example: How would they feel if their best friend had a party and didn't invite them? What would they do if somebody fainted in front of them? How do they feel when they watch a scary movie? When they have answered these questions they will have a good basis for a character which can then be developed.

4 DESCRIBING CELEBRITIES

The idea is to get your students to describe a famous person in as much detail as possible. Put the students in pairs and ask them to choose two famous people and brainstorm as many descriptive adjectives as they can to describe them. Give prompts such as hair colour, physical build, eye colour etc. but stress that this is about appearance not personality. When complete do the same with descriptive adjectives about personality, job, nationality. They are only allowed to use adjectives – allow them to use dictionaries if necessary. When they have at least ten adjectives the pair should join with another pair and try to guess each other's celebrity from the descriptive adjectives.

5 SENSORY DESCRIPTIONS

If possible take the students out of the classroom. Let them look around them and brainstorm as many adjectives as they can to describe what they can see, smell, hear and touch. Then back in the classroom get them to find synonyms for the adjectives they have come up with and construct a poem or short descriptive passage using the new adjectives.

6 WHERE I LIVE

In mixed nationality classes ask the students to brainstorm as many de-

scriptive adjectives as they can about the town/city where they live. Alternatively they could write an acrostic and find an adjective to represent their town/city for each letter of the name. Check out <http://busyteacher.org/6712-n-fun-esl-activities-you-can-do-with-a-name.html> for other activities using acrostics.

7 MUSICAL PROMPTS

Students often like to use music in lessons and a good way to elicit some adjectives for mood is to play a piece of music and ask your students to write a few adjectives to describe how it makes them feel.

8 PEOPLE WATCHING

People-watching is a large part of any writer's life and can make a fun homework activity. Ask your students to look around them when they are next on the bus or walking around outside of the school. Ask them to look for someone who looks interesting to them and write down some of their observations. Ask them to think about appearance, personality, feelings and background. They can then use their observations to develop a character.

9 SUBSTITUTION

Give your students a descriptive passage from a book, magazine or newspaper. Blank out all the descriptive adjectives in the passage and ask you students to add their own. They can then join another student and compare their passages.

ALL OF THESE IDEAS WILL EXPAND YOUR STUDENTS' BANK OF ADJECTIVES.

Getting them into the habit of looking for synonyms when they learn a new word and to step away from the use of favourites they've already learnt can only enhance their learning experience. It is not always necessary to stress that an activity is focused on vocabulary but let the vocabulary come naturally from a descriptive or writing exercise. Most students are enthusiastic about learning new words and will participate fully in any activity which helps them to do this. Most of all have fun!

Survey Says... Using Comparatives & Superlatives to talk about people

ENGLISH SPEAKERS USE COMPARATIVE ADJECTIVES TO TALK ABOUT EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE AROUND THEM.

We compare adults and children, native speakers and internationals, northerners and southerners. Everyone is fair game when it comes to comparisons. The activities listed here focus on using comparative and superlative adjectives to talk about people. Whether those people are celebrities or the students in your classroom, your students will have to be creative and quick thinking as they talk about who is good, better, and best.

PRACTICE DEGREES OF COMPARISON TALKING ABOUT PEOPLE

1 CELEBRITY DUEL

Have each person in your class choose a picture of a celebrity for this one on one show down. Divide your class into two teams: each team should make sure everyone on the team has chosen a different celebrity. Have each team choose their first player, and have that person keep their pictures secret. On each person's turn, they will make statements about their celebrity comparing that person to the other player's celebrity. On your word, both students show their pictures to each other and to the rest of the class. One person starts by making a comparative statement about the two celebrities. (Anne Hathaway is more elegant than Cindy Lauper.) Then the other student makes a comparative statement. (Cindy Lauper is funnier than Anne Hathaway.) The duel continues one sentence at a time until one person cannot think of a comparative sentence for the two celebrities. When that happens, the other person wins the round and scores a point for his or her team. Once everyone has had a turn, the team with the most points wins.

2 PICTURE PERFECT

Do you have any artists in your class? This activity will challenge students to not only draw but to use comparative adjectives to direct the best picture. Put students into pairs, and give one person in that pair a picture of a person. If you did the celebrity show-down activity, you can use those pictures

again, or you can use photos of people in the class or advertisements featuring people. The person holding the picture will describe that person to his partner. The partner should then draw that celebrity using the descriptions of her partner. As the first student gives his description, he should use comparative adjectives to direct and correct the picture his partner is drawing. For example, the nose should be longer, make the mouth wider, the ears are higher on the head... After five to ten minutes, show everyone's drawing and have the class decide whose picture is closest to the original. Then give out another set of pictures, this time to the people who did the drawing in the first round, and have students reverse roles.

3 COMPARING CAREERS

This activity uses a set of career flashcards to compare people with one another. Any cards that have pictures of people would work, though, and you can make your own people cards using index cards and pictures or stickers. Put students in pairs, and give each pair ten career flashcards. The challenge is to put these cards in a sequence using a comparative sentence to link each card to the next. Students can only use a given adjective once in their connections. For example, if I was connecting a doctor, a teacher, a salesman, and a librarian, I might use the following comparative sentences. A doctor is smarter than a babysitter. A babysitter is nicer than salesman. A salesman is more talkative than a librarian. Students can put the people in any order as long as they can make comparative sentences to connect them and all ten connect in one direction once the sentences are complete. Once students have competed their sequences, have them share their cards and their comparisons with the class.

4 ARTISTS AMONG US

How accurately do your students picture themselves? Do they think of themselves as they really are? Hand out drawing materials and ask each person to draw a self-portrait without looking at themselves (in a mirror, with their phones, etc.). Tell students to make the drawings as accurate as possible. Once students have completed their drawings, have them look in a mirror or take a picture of themselves to see what they really look

like. Then have students share the differences between their self-portrait and their photo with a partner. As they share, they should compare their real self with their portrait self using comparative or superlative adjectives. (E.g. My nose is bigger in my drawing than in real life. My eyes are bluer in the photo.)

5 THE WEEKEND ME

What do your students do to relax on the weekends? Are they very different on Saturdays and Sundays from their Monday through Friday selves? Ask your students to make a list of at least ten ways they are different on the weekend and then use that list to write ten comparative sentences about themselves. Each sentence should contain a comparative adjective as well as the reason for the difference. Students might write sentences like the following. I am more relaxed on the weekend because I sleep more. I am more active on the weekend because I go for a run every morning. (This activity is also a good opportunity to review the difference between independent clauses and dependent clauses and how to punctuate them.)

6 RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT

Not many of your students will run for president in their home countries, but everyone can have a chance to run for class president for a day. Tell your students that everyone in class will be running for the one day class presidency, and each person's task is to convince their fellow students that they are the best person for the job. Give your students some time to prepare, and then choose them in random order to give their election speech in front of the class. Each person should have three minutes to convince the class to vote for them by comparing themselves to the rest of the members of the class. They should use as many comparative adjectives in their speech as possible. Remind students, though, that they will be comparing themselves to the same people that will be voting, so they should choose their comparisons carefully. Once everyone has given their campaign speech, hold a secret ballot and see who has won the presidency for the day. Let the president choose a fun theme for the following day: wear your pajamas to school, backwards day, blue day, etc.

What You Need to Know about Gradable & Nongradable Adjectives

Are your students familiar with the difference between gradable and nongradable adjectives? If you haven't tackled that subject with your ESL class, here is a step by step explanation of these two types of adjectives and the adverbs that go with them in English.

WHAT IS A GRADABLE ADJECTIVE?

When I hear the word gradable, it makes me think of report cards and assigning As, Bs, and Cs to a student's performance in class. In a way, grades on a report card are kind of like gradable adjectives. This subset of English adjectives refers to descriptive words that can express different degrees of a given quality. For example, you might see a girl and think that she is pretty. Well, how pretty is she? Is she fairly pretty? Extremely pretty? Just a bit pretty? Likewise, you might have a friend who falls for every practical joke in the book. That friend is naive, but is he intensely naive? Or just a little naive? These adjectives and others like them can refer to someone or something with a high degree of that quality or a low degree of that quality, all with the same word! Since these are adjectives that can express a range of degree, gradable adjectives can be used in the comparative and superlative forms. When comparing two nouns with a gradable adjective, you might say one house is bigger than the other. If a given item is at the top of the list, you would use the superlative form. That was the hardest test I have ever taken. In both cases, two items are being compared which both possess the quality of that adjective but do so in differing degrees.

WHAT IS A NONGRADABLE ADJECTIVE?

Nongradable adjectives, on the other hand, are the opposite of gradable adjectives. They do not describe a quality of various degrees. They are more black and white, yes or no. You either have it or you don't. To think of the report card analogy, these adjectives are pass/fail. Generally speaking, these adjectives are considered all or nothing. A noun either possesses that quality or it doesn't. They aren't used in the com-

parative or superlative forms because if two items possess that quality, then they both possess it in equal measure (since it's an all or nothing quality to begin with). For example, deep sea diving without scuba gear is impossible. It sounds strange to ask, "How impossible is it?" It just is impossible. It possesses that all or nothing quality. You also would not say that breathing underwater is more impossible than breathing in outer space since both possess that quality equally.

CLASSIFYING ADJECTIVES ARE NONGRADABLE

One particular type of nongradable adjectives are classifying adjectives. Classifying adjectives are those which label their noun as a particular type or as a member of a particular class. Here are some examples of classifying adjectives.

She has a nervous disorder.

I speak two foreign languages fluently.

That hotel has an indoor pool.

Classifying adjectives do not take comparative or superlative forms. However, sometimes classifying adjectives function as normal (non-classifying) adjectives and can be gradable.

How many musical instruments do you play? (classifying adjective, nongradable)

She is a very musical person. (normal adjective, gradable)

The context of the adjective should be used to determine if it is a classifying adjective or not.

GRADABLE ADVERBS IN THE MIX

So gradable adjectives are qualities that a person or thing might possess in different measures. Nongradable adjectives are qualities that a person or thing either possesses or doesn't. There is no varying degree of possession of nongradable adjective. As a result, nongradable adjectives are not used in the comparative and superlative forms. Likewise, English speakers do not use gradable adverbs to modify nongradable adjectives, but they do use them to modify gradable adjectives. What is a gradable adverb? It is

an adverb that describes how much of a certain quality (adjective) a noun possesses. Gradable adverbs include a bit, extremely, barely, hardly, and rather. A speaker can, therefore, say, "I am extremely tired," since tired is a gradable adjective. He would not, however, say, "I am not an extremely native speaker," because in this sentence native is a classifying adjective and therefore nongradable.

NONGRADABLE ADVERBS

Nongradable adjectives don't get left out in the cold when it comes to adverbs, however. English possesses nongradable adverbs which can be used with nongradable adjectives but cannot be used with gradable adjectives. Since these adverbs express complete possession of a particular quality, they fit naturally with nongradable adjectives but sound strange with gradable adjectives. Nongradable adverbs include extremely, absolutely, and completely.

That stunt man is completely insane. (nongradable adverb with a nongradable adjective, correct)

That professor is absolutely old. (nongradable adverb with a gradable adjective, incorrect)

AN EXCEPTION TO THE RULE

One adverb exception is very, which is used consistently with both gradable and nongradable adjectives.

I am very tired. (gradable adjective, correct)

He is a very brilliant scientist. (nongradable adjective, correct)

HOW TO TEACH IT

To teach your students the difference between gradable and nongradable adjectives, draw a line across your board and label it with a gradable adjective such as hot. Ask your students to offer different nouns that might be described as hot. When they do, ask how hot those items are and place them on the line as if it were a spectrum. On your line, you might have the sun which is extremely hot, freshly baked bread which is very hot, a cup of coffee which is somewhat

hot, and bath water which is a little hot.

Now write the word boiling on the board and draw a line beneath it. Ask your students to offer some nouns which might be described as boiling. As they do, ask them to suggest where on the line these items should go. Your students should realize, and you should point out, that an item is either boiling or it is not. It cannot be graded on the line since it is an all or nothing quality.

If you like, repeat the exercise using these pairs of gradable and nongradable adjectives

Cold/frozen

Happy/overjoyed

Scared/terrified

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

To help your students remember the difference between gradable and nongradable adjectives, try this exercise. Have groups of three or four students brainstorm a list of twenty adjectives. Then have them sort the list into gradable and nongradable adjectives. Challenge students to come up with a gradable adjective that has similar meaning to each nongradable adjective and vice versa (as in the examples above). Then have students write ten to fifteen sentences, fill in the blank style, which their classmates will have to complete with either a gradable or nongradable adjective. Make sure students are using gradable and nongradable adverbs in their sentences.

IF YOU HAVEN'T GONE THROUGH THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GRADABLE AND NONGRADABLE ADJECTIVES WITH YOUR STUDENTS, GIVE IT A TRY.

It will help them understand the nuances of vocabulary and give them the tools they need to use more precise language when they speak.

4 Must Know Types of Adverbs and How to Teach Them

THE TERM “ADVERBS” ENCOMPASSES A LOT IN ENGLISH.

You can break this large category of speech into four smaller groups to make learning easier for your students. Here are the four types of adverbs your students should know and exercises you can use to practice them.

CHECK IF YOU DEAL WITH ALL FOUR TYPES OF ADVERBS IN YOUR CLASSROOM

1 ADVERBS OF MANNER

Adverbs of manner communicate how something happened. They are generally used to modify verbs. In the sentence, they appear after the verb or after the object. They should not be placed between the verb and its object.

The boy laughed loudly.

Elena did a pirouette gracefully.

Not: Elena did gracefully a pirouette.

An adverb of manner can be placed at the beginning of a sentence or before a verb + object to make the statement stronger.

Gracefully, Elena did a pirouette.

Elena gracefully did a pirouette.

Adverbs of manner are used with active verbs, those that show action. They are not used with stative verbs, verbs that show a state of being.

Not: Elena seemed gracefully.

(Seem is a stative verb and does not show action. It does not, therefore, take an adverb of manner.)

To determine if an adverb is one of manner, ask a “how” question.

How did the boy laugh?

How did Elena do a pirouette?

To teach adverbs of manner, try one of the following activities.

ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS

Have your students work in pairs to brainstorm a list of ten simple nouns and the actions they could perform (rabbit/run, student/study, dog/fetch...). Once pairs have their lists,

have them exchange the lists with another pair. Students now take the nouns and verbs on the new list and use them to write a sentence that also contains an adverb of manner. (A rabbit runs quickly. The student studies hard. The dog fetched the stick clumsily.)

NO THEY DON'T.

In this pair activity, one student makes an untrue statement using an adverb of manner. (E.g. Professional dancers move clumsily.) The second student responds by saying, “No they don’t,” and then makes a correct statement. (Professional dancers move gracefully.) Students then switch roles. As students make their statements, move throughout the room and offer corrections as needed.

2 ADVERBS OF DEGREE

Adverbs of degree tell us the degree or intensity to which something happened. They can modify verbs, adjectives or other adverbs. Adverbs of degree are generally placed before the main verb or the adjective or adverb they modify.

She was entirely wrong in her judgment.

He drove very quickly.

Clarisse thoroughly believes he is innocent.

She is too stubborn to change her mind.

To determine if an adverb is one of degree, ask a “to what degree” or “how much” question.

To what degree was she wrong in her judgment?

To what degree did he drive?

How much does Clarisse believe he is innocent?

One exception to adverb placement is “enough” which appears after an adjective or adverb it modifies.

Are you warm enough?

Am I working quickly enough?

To teach adverbs of manner, try the following activity.

HOW SURE ARE YOU?

How sure are your students about

their classmates’ statements? In this exercise, one person will make a statement that may or may not be true and a second student will say how sure they are about that statement. In their response, they should use one of the following adverbs of manner (listed from most sure to least sure). Extremely, especially, particularly, pretty, rather, quite, fairly, not especially, not particularly.

3 ADVERBS OF PLACE

Adverbs of place tell us where something happened. They are generally used to modify verbs and appear after the main verb or after the object in a sentence.

I'll meet you there after class.

She would go anywhere with him.

Victor put the book away.

To determine if an adverb is one of place, ask a “where” question.

Where will I meet you after class?

Where would she go with him?

Where did Victor put the book?

To teach adverbs of place try one of the following activities.

HERE AND THERE

Here and there are common adverbs of place which are often combined with a preposition to show location. Point out to your students that “here” is used to describe something near the speaker and “there” is used to describe something away from the speaker. Have pairs of students take turns pointing out items in the classroom using a preposition (down, over, under, up, through) plus either here or there.

E.g. The door is over there.

My pen is under here.

ONE DIRECTION

Adverbs of place ending in –wards express movement in a particular direction (backwards, forwards, downwards, upwards, inwards, outwards, northwards, southwards, homewards, onwards). Have pairs of students work together to write two sentences for each of these adverbs, one showing something that moves that direction

and one showing something that does not move that direction. (E.g. Birds do go southwards in winter. They do not go northwards in winter.) Make sure your students do not confuse “towards” with these adverbs. Towards is a preposition and must be followed by a noun phrase. (Birds move towards the equator when it gets cold.)

4 ADVERBS OF TIME

Adverbs of time tell about when something happened. They can also tell us for how long or how frequently something happened. They are generally used to modify verbs. “When” adverbs usually come at the end of a sentence. One exception is “still” which appears before the main verb in a sentence.

Let's meet then.

The package arrived yesterday.

Mike and Dave have swimming lessons weekly.

They are still learning the basics.

To determine if an adverb is one of time, ask a “when” question or a “how long/how often” question.

When shall we meet?

When did the package arrive?

How often do Mike and Dave have swimming lessons?

Point out to students that that they must be careful when using “yet”. This adverb of time is only used in questions and negative statements.

Have you finished your homework yet?

I have not finished it yet.

Not: I have finished it yet.

To teach adverbs of time, try one of the following activities.

FOR HOW LONG?

“For” is an adverb of time which expresses the duration of an activity. Have pairs of students practice using this expression by asking about activities in the past. The first person asks a question starting with “how long”. The second person answers the question using “for” plus a length of time. (E.g. How long did you live in Germany? I lived there for three years.) If you like, have students ask about actions that began and ended in the past and answer using the simple past, actions that began in the past but are not complete and answer in the past perfect (I have studied English for five years), or actions that started in the past and still continue and answer in the past perfect progressive (I have been taking classes at the university

for two semesters).

SINCE WHEN?

Repeat the previous activity, but instead of having students ask “how long” they should ask “since when”. Students should then answer using with since + a specific point in time. These questions and answers should not use the simple past tense. (E.g. Since when have you lived in the U.S.? I have lived here since 2012. Not: Since when did you live in Germany?)

TEACHING ADVERBS DOESN'T HAVE TO BE OVERWHELMING FOR YOU OR YOUR STUDENTS. BREAKING THEM INTO THESE SUBCATEGORIES MAKES LEARNING THIS PART OF SPEECH MORE MANAGEABLE AND LESS INTIMIDATING.

How Do You Do? Thinking Outside the Adverb Box

READING, WRITING, AND ARITHMETIC MAY BE THE FOUNDATIONS WHEN IT COMES TO EDUCATION, BUT IN ESL CLASSES THE FOUNDATIONS ARE NOUNS, VERBS, ADJECTIVES, AND ADVERBS.

Your students have probably reviewed these parts of speech many times in their ESL studies already, even if they are only just at the beginning level. The following four activities target adverb practice and do it in out of the ordinary ways. They will get your students interested, solidify the concept and vocabulary of adverbs in their minds, and make class fun.

CHECK OUT THESE INSPIRING IDEAS FOR ADVERB PRACTICE

1 ACTING OUT

We all enjoy a little play acting from time to time, and getting your ESL students moving in class will help them remember better and learn faster. What better reason do you need for incorporating this silly adverb game into your lesson plans? Divide your class into groups of around four or five students each. Give each group a paper bag and ten index cards. Each group will be responsible for supplying part of the game with these materials. Half of your groups should write adverbs – one on each card. They should be adverbs of manner, or those that show how something is done (clumsily, secretly, boldly, etc.). The other half of your class will write actions on their cards. These actions should be something that they could do on any normal day (study for a test, make dinner, brush their teeth, etc.). They should label their bag either adverb or action. Ideally, you will have at least two groups coming up with adverbs and at least two groups coming up with actions. Once the groups have finished, have them put the cards in the bag and shake them up. Now comes the fun.

One person from each group, on his turn, chooses one card from an ad-

verb bag and one card from an action bag (not the bags they filled). He must then perform the action in the manner defined by the adverb card. He might end up brushing his teeth loudly or studying for a test angrily. His group will then try to guess what action he is performing and in what manner. He will only have sixty seconds to perform, and he cannot say any of the words on any of the cards while he does. In fact, it's best if he doesn't say anything at all. If his team is able to guess correctly, they score ten points. Teams take turns performing. At the end of the game (when you run out of time, cards, or students) whichever team has the most points wins.

2 ANIMAL ACTIONS

If you are teaching children in your ESL class, they will love this animal themed dice game that gets them up and moving. To play, you will need three blank dice, white board dice, or paper "dice". With your class, decide on six adverbs that you will write on one of the dice. Take suggestions from your students if possible, and suggest your own adverbs when necessary. You might want to include quickly, carefully, angrily, noisily, or sadly. For the second die, have your students decide on six animals that you will fill in the blanks. These can be any common animals such as an elephant, a dog, a cat, a mouse, a bear, a fish, or a bird. On the third die, you and your students will decide on six actions that any of these animals might perform. Your actions should be simple, daily actions like eat, walk, talk, or sleep. Now that your dice are ready, give each student a chance to show off their acting abilities. On his turn, your student rolls all the dice. He should put the three words into a sentence (either orally or on the front board) and then act out how the animal performs the action. For example, if he rolled quickly, dog, and eat he should form the sentence: the dog eats quickly. Then he would pretend to be the dog and act out his sentence. Be prepared for laughs from

your students and eager volunteers for the next roll. Make sure everyone in class gets at least one turn. If you like, you can keep the dice in a learning center for independent learning time. Also include a lap size dry erase board so students can write out their sentences as they play with a partner.

3 ADVERB BATTLESHIP

In this game, your students will have to identify the adverb in sentences in order to sink their enemy's ships. First, review with your students how to play Battleship. Then divide your class into two teams (or four teams if your class is very large). Each team should set up a grid and position their ships on a ten by ten grid of graph paper, keeping the paper hidden from the opposite team. They should label the columns A-J and the rows 1-10. Each team should have five ships on their grid covering a total of 17 spaces. Each team will need to write 17 sentences which contain one adverb. You may want to give them a list of common adverbs or a collection of the adverbs your class has already learned to help them as they write their sentences. Once the sentences are complete, collect the lists of adverbs, and it's time to play. Each team calls one coordinate. If it is a miss, nothing happens and the other team takes a turn. If it is a hit, the other team reads one of their adverb sentences. The first team must correctly identify the adverb in that sentence. If they do, the hit counts. If they do not correctly identify the adverb, the hit does not count and the other team takes its turn. They will have to try and identify the adverb in that same sentence on their next turn. Play continues until one team has identified the adverb in all of its opponent's sentences and sunk all of their ships.

4 ADVERB MEMORY

No matter how old we are, we all have some idea of how the world works. We know that racecars move quickly and turtles move slowly. We know that soldiers march stiffly and

surgeons move carefully. To prepare for this easy card game, work with your students to list ten to fifteen sentences that describe how the world works. Each sentence should include one adverb. Then have students work with a partner to create a set of cards with those sentences. To make a matching pair, students write the noun and verb on one card and the adverb on a second card. When placed next to each other, these cards will make a complete sentence. (Racecars move) (quickly). Using these cards, your students are now ready to play memory. To prepare, students lay all the shuffled cards face down on a desk top. They take turns flipping two cards at a time over in hopes of making a match. If the cards match, they keep them and take another turn. If the cards do not match, they flip them back and the other person takes a turn. Play continues until all the matches have been made. The player with the most cards wins the game.

NOT ONLY DO THESE ACTIVITIES GIVE YOUR STUDENTS PRACTICE USING AND REVIEWING ADVERBS, THEY MAKE CLASS FUN AND MEMORABLE. TRY THEM THE NEXT TIME YOU WANT TO REVIEW ADVERBS WITH YOUR STUDENTS.

The Adventure Begins: 4 Fresh Ideas For Teaching Prepositions

IS IT PREPOSITION TIME AGAIN IN YOUR CLASSROOM? THESE LITTLE WORDS CAN BE THE SOURCE OF BIG STRUGGLE FOR SOME ESL STUDENTS, SO THEY FREQUENTLY TURN UP IN EVERY ESL TEACHER'S LESSON PLANS. The more activities and the more variety you use to teach and reinforce them, the better.

WANT TO MAKE TEACHING PREPOSITIONS FUN? TRY THESE NOT SO TYPICAL ACTIVITIES

1 IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?

If you teach younger ESL students, they will have a ball role playing physician while reviewing prepositions at the same time. Have an animal hospital day in your classroom, and invite each of your students to bring in a small stuffed animal. Your preparation is pretty simple: purchase a really large box of Band-Aids. When you are ready to do the activity, give each student several Band-Aids. Then tell them that their stuffed animal has come to them for medical assistance, and they will have to put the Band-Aid in the correct place on the animal. Give your students instructions, using prepositions, on where to put each Band-Aid – under the animal's eye, behind his ear, above his knee, etc. Either have students check their positioning with a partner or check their Band-Aid placement yourself. Their animals may look a little worse for the wear when they come out of the activity covered in Band-Aids, but your students' ability to understand prepositions will definitely be in the better.

If you prefer not to do this activity as a class, it also makes a great learning center. Simply put one stuffed animal, some Band-Aids, and a list of where students should put the Band-Aids together for students to use during free learning periods. If you are worried about sticky stuff on your and your students' animals, make Band-Aids out of felt. It will take you longer to prepare, but you can use the felt Band-Aids again and again, and you won't be sending the plushies out sticky from head to toe.

2 MR. PLAY DOUGH HEAD

If you have a collection of Mr. Potato Head pieces in your classroom or at home, you can use them to help your students review prepositions as well. I like to give each of my students a large lump of play dough to use as the base rather than the plastic potato. It gives us more flexibility where we put the facial features. Then I give each student a collection of plastic facial features. If you don't have actual Mr. Potato Head pieces, you can still do this activity. Get some plastic outlet plugs and draw facial features on them or tape small pictures of a mouth, eyes, ears, moustache, etc. on the flat side of each one. Once your students have their play dough and their facial features, you are ready to do the activity. Give your students instructions on where to put each of the pieces in their play dough head/body. As you do, draw a simple picture of what the face should look like, but don't let your students see it. When the faces are complete, show your picture and have students check their own feature placements. Have students remove their facial pieces and reform their dough to play another round. If you like, have one of your students come up and call out the instructions using prepositions as they do.

If you are looking for a fun learning station, you can modify this activity to be a two person independent preposition practice center. Have two seats separated by a large piece of cardboard with the same materials on either side of the barrier. One student positions the facial features and tells the other person where they are putting them. The second person does the same on his face without commenting. Once the first face is complete and the second student has followed all the directions, students compare their faces to see if they look the same.

3 POLICE LINE: DO NOT CROSS

If you have the room and enough time to prepare this activity, it's sure to be one your students will remember. Create a crime scene in your classroom, and challenge your students to solve the crime. Start by thinking of a silly crime that could have been committed in your classroom. Then stage the

scene complete with several clues. For example, if your fictional crime is a bear stole the students' lunch boxes, have bear prints, turned out lunch bags, claw marks, an open refrigerator, etc. set up in a small corner of your room. Tape it off so your students cannot disturb it. When your students arrive in class, have them look at the crime scene. As they do, they should note any clues they see and where those clues are. These notes should be in complete sentences use prepositions to describe the location of each clue. If you like, have students share their theories in a written "police report" which also includes the clues they saw, or have volunteers offer their observations and speculate on the perpetrator and crime.

4 STICKER STORIES

Not every preposition activity has to be as complicated as the crime scene. This activity requires no preparation and lets pairs of students practice using prepositions in their spoken language. Pair two students together and have them draw a simple scene – a bedroom, a meadow with a tree, a car – anything will work, and stick figures are perfectly legitimate. Then give the pair a sheet of stickers which they will add to their pictures. Students take turns adding one sticker at a time and telling a story as they do. Every time a student places a sticker on the page, she should use a preposition to say where it is and how it fits into the story. For example, if I started with a picture of a house, I might place a dog sticker in the living room and say, "The dog likes laying in front of the fire." Then my partner might add a cat sticker behind the dog and say, "The cat sneaks up behind the dog. She is going to scare him." The story and the stickers continue until all the stickers are on the page and the story is complete. If you want to extend the activity, have each person write out as much of their story as they can remember after all the stickers have been placed.

PREPOSITIONS WILL ALWAYS BE PART OF THE ESL CURRICULUM. These unusual activities will let your students have a good time while they continue to develop their English skills and practice prepositions at the same time.

10 Ways to Invoke St. Valentine to Teach Prepositions

PREPOSITIONS ARE COMPLICATED FOR EVEN NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS TO USE CORRECTLY, AND WE KNOW THAT CONSTANT REINFORCEMENT WITH EXAMPLES IS THE ONLY WAY TO MASTER CORRECT USAGE.

ESL/EFL students get tired of the same activities over and over again, however (as do we teachers). Try making the concepts special by connecting them to a special day. What better day to do so than Valentine's Day! The cultural peculiarity of Valentine's Day insists on practicing communication – on forming perfect expressions of emotion. For those expressions, we need to use prepositions masterfully. Here are 10 ways to use Valentine's Day traditions to practice preposition use with your class.

COMBINE PREPOSITIONS AND ST. VALENTINE'S DAY FOR YOUR STUDENT BENEFIT

1 SONNETS

Sonnets are particularly about love and unique to the English language. The specificity of 14 lines and exact syllable use requires detailed attention to preposition use! Shakespeare might be too difficult for your students, but you can find an example from another writer easily on sites such as <http://sonnets.org/>. Have students circle all of the prepositions and discuss.

2 FOR VALENTINES

Ask students to make and write four different valentines that they actually plan to give to loved ones (or classmates), using expressions of "for" to show gratitude to people they care about, like "I love you, mom, for your fantastic dinners and for your strength".

3 CONVERSATION HEARTS

Buy a bag of NECCO conversation hearts, or whatever knockoff can-

dy is available with valentine expressions. Give each student 10 candies and have them write out their phrases, decode if necessary, and circle the prepositions. At least 3 will use prepositions or prepositional words, like "EZ 2 Love" and "Table 4 2".

4 CUPID'S ARROWS

Write out amorous expressions using prepositions, like "your smile is the light of this world", on paper cut out arrows. Put them in a vase or other quiver receptacle, and "shoot" them at students at the beginning of class. Have them one by one read their arrows and pick the prepositions out of the sentence.

5 WOOING COMPETITION

Ask students to write a short statement (two or three lines) to woo their favorite pop star crush. They should then read them in front of the class, and students can vote on who wooed the best! Have a prize for the woo winner.

6 VALENTINE'S SCENE

Show a classic Valentine's Day movie scene, like Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks on the Empire State Building in New York City in *Sleepless in Seattle*, or something younger for teens. Ask students to record as many prepositions as they can that they catch in the dialogue, and then check for correctness.

7 SECRET VALENTINE

Prepare cards with the names of professionals for which students would seek common services, like doctor and teacher, and place in a box. Ask students to pick a professional at the beginning of the activity, and tell them to write a secret valentine note professing their imaginary love for that person (or admiration if they are uncomfortable with love). The note needs to have at least three different prepositional phrases. Have students read their notes and ask classmates to identify the phrases.

8 LOVE SONGS

Find the lyrics to a classic or fun love song and give a copy to each student, like *Friday I'm in Love* by the Cure. Play the song, and ask students to circle the prepositional phrases. Discuss afterwards! You can then task them with a homework assignment to pick another song they hear on the radio in English often and write down as many prepositional phrases as they can.

9 ROMANTIC MEAL

Ask students to pick a city to which they would take their boyfriend/girlfriend/spouse if they could for a romantic meal. They should prepare a statement for where and what kind of food using "to". Give an example such as "I would go to Japan to eat sushi". This is a great activity for beginners/intermediates to differentiate prepositional "to" and infinitive "to".

10 LOVE GONE WRONG

Try a prepositional venting session about how love is awful. Ask students to write down the five worst things about their ex-boyfriend/ex-girlfriend, or think of a friend's ex that did him terribly wrong, using "because of" or "for". "I hate him because of his ugly car." "She was terrible for treating me bad." Have them read the complaints, and pick one or two from each student to write on the board and deconstruct.

PREPOSITIONS ARE CHALLENGING TO UNDERSTAND, AND WE AS TEACHERS NEED TO CONSTANTLY THINK OF NEW WAYS TO INTEGRATE THEM INTO CLASSES TO OVERCOME THAT CHALLENGE!

Try making prepositions interesting by connecting them with the most engaging concept in the world across any culture and time zone – love, as invoked by St. Valentine.

Relatively Speaking: 5 Strategies for Teaching Relative Clauses

SOME GRAMMAR TOPICS ARE BEST TAUGHT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF WRITING, AND RELATIVE CLAUSES IS AMONG THESE.

By moving from noticing, to guided practice, to production, students can begin to incorporate relative clause structures into their writing, which will serve to enhance the level of detail and description, as well as cohesion and coherence in their writing. Relative clauses can be a tricky concept for students, and they will likely need thorough practice with the form in order to begin to produce the form correctly.

CHECK OUT THESE SPLENDID IDEAS TO HELP YOU WITH RELATIVE CLAUSES

1 IDENTIFY IN-TEXT

Like with any new grammar form, students benefit from being introduced to relative clauses through exercises that are based first on simply noticing patterns. Therefore, to begin a lesson on adjective clauses, have students first identify relative clauses within a text or isolated sentences. This requires some guessing on their parts, so the instructor will need to go over the answers with the class and discuss, but it's a great way to get started. The teacher will want to direct students' attention to both form and function, asking students to identify how the clauses are structured and what purpose they serve in sentences. This should lead in nicely to a formal explanation from the teacher, at which point a handout outlining the rules of usage is always a good idea.

2 INTRODUCE THE STRUCTURE

Once students have a basic understanding of relative clauses, it's time to present them with the formal rules for constructing and using this form. Students can contribute to a lecture on relative clauses in a guided discussion. Remember, students learn best when they come up with the information they need to learn by themselves first. In other words, the teacher should strive to ask questions that will guide the students' attention to the information that he or she would like them to have. With relative clauses, questions for students should include the fol-

lowing:

What do you notice about the structure of relative clauses?

Which words do we see at the beginning of relative clauses?

Where in a sentence do relative clauses appear?

Which words do they describe?

What happens if we remove the relative clause?

It's also very important to directly compare restrictive clauses and non-restrictive clauses by providing example sentences that are identical, but for the difference in relative clauses. For example, the teacher might write the following two sentences on the board:

The girl who has red hair has two brothers.

The girl, who has red hair, has two brothers.

Students will probably have a difficult time discerning any difference between these two sentences, at first, but with a little coaching, they for the teacher, they will eventually start to see how a subtle difference in comma usage can have a major impact on meaning. The first sentence has a restrictive relative clause, the information within it is necessary in order for the reader to know which girl is being referred to. In the second sentence, the relative clause is non-restrictive, and the information provided serves as added detail, but it is not necessary for the purpose of identifying the girl.

3 START TO ADD RELATIVE CLAUSES TO SENTENCES

Once students have a general understanding of relative clauses, it's time to engage them in productive practice. A simple way for students to begin using relative clauses is to design a speaking or writing activity in which students add a descriptor to a sentence in the form of a relative clause. If students are catching on slowly, the teacher can give students pre-prepared relative clauses to be used in a matching activity as part of a worksheet or in a more interactive way. As learners become more comfortable, they can eventually create their own clauses to use

4 USE SCRAMBLED SENTENCES

There are many ways to create fun

and interesting games that target relative clauses. When students are first working on acquiring familiarity with the structure of this form, scrambled sentences are a useful tool for increasing students' level of comfort with using relative clauses. This kind of activity can be set up in worksheet format, but for a more interactive approach, it can also be done with cut-up words that students need to work as a team to put together to form sentences with relative clauses. The sentences that students create can then be put on the board and evaluated by the class as a whole. This kind of hands-on activity engages students in a way that is harder to achieve with traditional exercises done in a workbook or on paper. Getting students up and moving is always great when the option is available.

5 CREATE RELEVANT WRITING TASKS

Like with any grammar that we teach, our ultimate goal is to have students use the forms they learn in speaking and writing as naturally and as automatically as possible. Once students have had the opportunity to practice relative clauses in scaffolded activities, it's time to give them the opportunity to produce the form within a larger context. Presenting students with an appropriate writing task is essential. Because relative clauses are typically used to add description, it's best to assign a paragraph or other short writing assignment that asks students to describe something in detail, whether that's a person, a favorite vacation, or a special place. If the relative clause lesson coincides with an American holiday, it can be fun for students to write a story that relates to the traditional customs associated with the special occasion. For example, at Halloween time, students can write a spooky ghost story, or at Thanksgiving, they can recreate the traditional (though perhaps fictional) tale of the pilgrims and the Indians.

RELATIVE CLAUSES ARE A VALUABLE GRAMMAR POINT FOR WRITING, IN PARTICULAR.

Students will need ample practice in order to fully understand the structure and usage of these clauses and to ultimately integrate them into their own productive language.

I Know...That There are At Least 5 Ways to Teach Noun Clauses

NOUN CLAUSES ARE TYPICALLY TAUGHT IN ADVANCED LEVEL ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE COURSES, AND STUDENTS WILL NEED CAREFULLY-DESIGNED PRACTICE IN ORDER TO USE THIS FORM CORRECTLY.

This is an advanced grammar concept that students will need ample practice with to master. It's a form that experienced students are most likely already using, but they may not be doing so consciously with intention or awareness. Teachers should start by giving students examples in-text or by providing a list. From there, it's time to practice using them in context.

TEACH NOUNS CLAUSES CREATIVELY

1 MAKE IT FUN WITH SPEAKING

Most students are, of course, more open to using new grammar when it's framed in a fun and interactive way. Noun clauses are often used in writing, and students will definitely need to practice this form in a variety of ways, but it may be best to begin practice through the use of speaking tasks. One activity that can be used is a group interview using note cards with questions on them. Students can use a list of teacher-created examples to help them form answers to the questions orally using sentences that include noun clauses. It's necessary to provide questions that will elicit responses that will require the use of noun clauses. For example:

Question: "What did your mother tell you when you left for the United States?"

Answer: "She said that..."

Question: "What do you know about New York City?"

Answer: "I know that..."

Question: "What have you learned about noun clauses?"

Answer: "I have learned that..."

2 HAVE STUDENTS CREATE A SILLY SKIT

Because noun clauses are used for reported speech in English, having students complete tasks that require them to recount a dialogue is a useful way of having them put their knowledge of noun clause structures to use. By having groups of students in a class develop and perform silly skits, an opportunity is created for this kind of practice. Students can watch their peers perform a fun scene and then recount the story in speaking, or even better, in writing, using noun clauses. Like with any grammar task, be sure to provide students to help get them started, both for those developing the dialogue and for those who will be reporting what they saw.

3 INTRODUCE ALONGSIDE PARAPHRASING

One of the language tasks that relies heavily on the proper use of noun clauses is paraphrasing. If noun clauses are being taught in a writing course that also includes paraphrasing, it is ideal to teach these two together. As students develop their proficiency around using noun clauses, their paraphrasing abilities will be strengthened and their capacity to clearly convey the meaning of an original passage will increase.

4 TEACH USING NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Reported speech is often used in written news reports, and creating activities that incorporate this kind of writing will help students to connect noun clauses to real life. Newspaper articles can be used initially as reading material that students can use as an opportunity to find examples of noun clauses, or later on, after students become more familiar with the form and function, they can write their own news reports of real events happening around the school or the community.

5 USE SONG LYRICS

For the advanced class, using song lyrics with embedded noun clauses is a challenging and enjoyable activity. Many song lyrics have layers of noun clauses that are used in poetic and creative ways that we don't often hear or use in everyday language. While this may not be the best form of practice when time is limited, for those students with an appetite for grammar, dissecting the complex structures often found in song lyrics will provide a great mental workout, and students will walk away with better awareness of the recursive nature of clauses in English.

NOUN CLAUSES ARE AN ADVANCED TOPIC THAT ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE STUDENTS MAY ALREADY BE FAMILIAR WITH INFORMALLY.

Easier to acquire than some other types of clauses (i.e. adjective clauses), noun clauses are essential form for writing students, especially, to gain solid proficiency in using. As is true of all grammar forms, students will learn best with interactive, integrated lessons that provide students with the opportunity to practice all four of the skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Are You Feeling Affix-iated? 4

Hands On Ways to Teach Affixes

I LOVE TEACHING AFFIXES TO MY ESL STUDENTS.

Doing so not only increases their vocabulary, it gives them tools to understand words they have never encountered before. These activities are designed to be hands on ways of teaching and reviewing affixes with ESL students. Like any students, the more they get their hands involved in learning, the better they will remember the information. Not to mention these activities are fun and engaging, too.

CHECK OUT SOME INVOLVING ACTIVITIES TO TEACH AFFIXES

1 PAPER PLATE DIVIDE

This is a simple activity to review affixes which you can do as a class or set up as a learning center in your classroom. Start by typing up a list of words that have both prefixes and suffixes using a large font. They can be words that are either familiar to your students or words that they do not know but you would like them to learn. Give each person a set of the words and a divided paper or Styrofoam plate. (These plates usually have one large section and two smaller sections.) Students should label the large section “roots” and the smaller sections “prefixes” and “suffixes”. Have students separate the words from each other. Either as a class or individually, students should then look at each word and determine what prefix(es) and suffix(es) the word contains. Once they have decided, they should cut off each prefix and put it in the right section of the plate and cut off each suffix and put it in the right section of the plate. The roots go in the largest section. As you do the activity, talk about the meaning of each affix and root word. When all the words have been divided, encourage students to rearrange the pieces to make new words with both prefixes and suffixes.

2 THE AFFIX GARDEN

If you are teaching prefixes and suffixes in the spring, this combined art project and affix review might be just right for your students. In this activity,

students will build a flower garden using root words and affixes. Start by giving each student a large piece of white paper and some green strips of paper to use as flower stems. On each stem, students should write a root word. They will then add a prefix and suffix to each word root. To add a prefix, students should cut a flower shape out of a colored piece of paper, write the prefix on it, and then glue it to a stem. To add a suffix, students should cut out a leaf, write the suffix on it, and then glue it to the stem. When a flower is complete, it will have a prefix flower, root word stem, and suffix leaf. You can also make this activity into an independent practice activity for students. Rather than gluing their flowers together, have students carefully place their flower parts on their paper. Once all the flowers are complete, they should collect all the pieces and put them in a zip top bag. Students can then exchange bags with a classmate and race to see who can put the flowers together correctly fastest. This is a good activity for your students to use dictionaries in class as well, especially if they are struggling to think of words with prefixes and suffixes.

3 PAINT CHIP WORD BUILDERS

Have you realized the value of using paint samples in your ESL class? They are free, pretty, and sturdy, and they are one of the most versatile materials you can use when teaching language. To use these simple color cards to teach affixes, you will need paint samples with at least three different colors on the card, clothes pins, and some time to get the materials set up. Grab two of each color sample for every one or two students in your class. One will remain intact and will be the building area for a word. The other one you will cut into squares (or use a circle hole punch in you have one the right size). For each word, write one piece of the word on one of your square cut outs – prefix, root, and suffix. Make sure you keep your cutouts in the same order as they appear on the card. (For example, the prefix would be on the darkest color, the root on the middle color, and the suffix on the lightest color on the card.) Then glue each cutout to a clothes pin. Do the

same for each word you want your students to practice.

To use the materials in class, “shuffle” the clothes pins and pin them around the edge of a small bucket or container. Put the intact paint samples inside the bucket. Students work by themselves or with a partner to build all the words from the pieces on the clothes pins. They take turns taking a clothes pin from the bucket and placing in on the correct location on the paint sample. When they have completed a word, the three colors on the sample will each have a clothes pin clipped to it. Those clothes pins together will make one complete word – prefix, root, and suffix. As you do the activity, remind your students that prefixes come at the beginning of a word and suffixes come at the end of a word. This activity is especially good for students just learning affixes since they will have the assistance of the colors to help them build their words correctly. Once your students have mastered this activity, ask them to sort the clothes pins into categories: prefixes, roots, and suffixes. See if they can combine them in different orders to make new words.

4 ROLL AN AFFIX GAME

This game is simple to play, and it can review prefixes, suffixes, or both. On a blank die, write six prefixes (or suffixes or some of each). Have students work in pairs for the activity. Have students roll the die (if you have one for each pair in class) or roll it yourself (if you want the whole class to do the activity at one time). For the prefix that comes up, students take turns giving a word which starts with that prefix. Students keep giving words until someone cannot think of another word. The last person to give a word scores a point. The first person to score four points, wins the game.

I LOVE BRINGING HANDS ON ACTIVITIES INTO MY CLASSROOM.

My students get excited and involved in the activities we are doing, and I know they are learning and remembering the information they are working with. When you are ready to teach prefixes and suffixes to your ESL class, try one of these activities and see if you don't get the same results.

Who? What? Where? Top 10 Activities for Practicing Questions

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A FUN AND CREATIVE WAY TO REVIEW ASKING AND ANSWERING QUESTIONS WITH YOUR ESL STUDENTS, HERE ARE SOME ACTIVITIES YOU MIGHT WANT TO TRY.

INFORMATION QUESTIONS

1 TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

Getting to know your fellow students is one of the greatest ways ESL class members can practice asking questions. This activity can be as simple or as complicated as your students can handle. For advanced students, have students work with a partner and ask questions to get to know them. Increase the challenge, however, by requiring students to use each of the twelve tenses in the English language. You might want to review the tenses and then give students some time to prepare before the interview, and have them make sure they have at least one information question written in each tense. Not only will this challenge their grammar use, it will also bring forth some interesting information about their partners that they might otherwise never know.

2 CHARACTER DEVELOPMENTS

If you teach writing, this activity does double duty as a prewriting activity as well as a question review. One of the key components of fiction is having good characters, and that's not as easy to do as some might think. Truly interesting characters are complex, and the writer knows much more about that character than ever shows up, overtly, in the fictional piece they write. One way to develop such a character is to think about the details of that person's life and relationships. Many resources exist for character development through questionnaires such as this one:
<http://bit.ly/Npf7RX>

Have your students use these and similar questions to help a classmate develop a character for a fictional story. Either have students answer the questions in writing or have pairs of students ask each other the questions about the characters they are developing. If you want to make this activity work double duty in your reading class, have students speculate answers to the questions about a character in a piece you have already read.

3 PIN THE QUESTION ON THE STUDENT

You will need a blindfold to play this simple question asking game. One person stands in the center of the room wearing a blindfold. The other students are free to move about the room, keeping a good amount of distance from other students, until you say stop. Once you have stopped your students, the blindfolded person points toward someone and asks an information question. "What is your favorite sport?" That person must answer, either in his normal voice or by disguising it. The blindfolded person must then guess who answered the question. If they guess correctly, the players switch places. If they guess incorrectly, they play another round.

4 MEET THE FAMILY

Family means a lot to most people, and this activity gives your students a chance to talk about their family, review family vocabulary, and ask and answer questions about their and their classmates' families. Invite each person to bring in one or more pictures of his family. The person introduces his family to the class, and then the class members ask questions about those people.

5 SPEED DATING

Are your students familiar with the practice of speed dating? At a speed dating event, several women and men sit in two lines across from

each other. The moderator gives the pairs two minutes to get to know each other, and then the men shift one seat to the right, facing a new partner. The moderator then times two minutes and the new couples talk. This continues until everyone has had an opportunity to meet every member of the opposite sex. Play a celebrity version of this game with your ESL students by assigning every class member a secret celebrity. Rather than meeting a significant other, your students will use their two minute sessions with their classmates to try and figure out what secret celebrity their partner is role playing while at the same time trying to keep theirs a secret. Students must answer each other's questions as accurately as possible. Give each person a list of all the students in class so he or she can make note of which celebrity they think each person is playing after their two minutes together. At the end of the event, reveal the secret identities and see which student guessed the most correctly.

6 QUESTIONS ONLY

This activity is strictly for advanced ESL students, but it's fun and challenging and worth a try if your students are very creative and capable. The basic premise is to have a conversation between two people where every question is answered with another question. You can see examples of the improve exercise on Whose Line is it Anyway?
<http://binged.it/1rh5h36>

(Heads up – adults only.) Have two speakers come to the front of the room and give them a scenario. You might also want to have two or four other people ready to enter the dialogue as needed. Have the first two speakers jump right in to the scenario with question after question. If someone gets stuck and cannot think of a question that fits the scenario, he is buzzed out and another speaker takes his place. When you feel the scenario has gone on long enough, ask your students to sit down and see how many questions your class

can remember from the activity. Write them on the board if you like.

YES/NO QUESTIONS

1 20 QUESTIONS

This game is great for practicing yes/no questions with your ESL students. The rules are simple. Someone chooses an object. It can be anything – a person, place, or thing. Then the other students take turns asking questions and trying to determine what that object is. The class limit is twenty questions (hence the name), and those include the final guesses. (E.g. Is it the Sydney Opera House?) If the class guesses the object correctly, they win the round. If not, the person who chose the object wins.

2 MOTHER MAY I

Here is a simple game that gets your elementary ESL class outside for some fresh air and allows them to practice questions at the same time. (You can also play this indoors but it will probably require moving some furniture in your classroom.) One person play the “mother” who gives permission to move to the other players. She stands alone at one end of the playing area. The other players start shoulder to shoulder in a line facing her. These players take turns asking Mother if they may take a certain number and a certain type of step toward her. “Mother, may I take three giant steps?” Some classic steps are giant steps, scissor steps, baby steps, karate steps, and jump steps, but your students can be creative and come up with their own types of steps. The mother gives permission, or not, according to her whim (but no playing favorites). After everyone has had a turn, the first player goes again. Play continues until someone is close enough to touch the mother. When that happens, the round is over and that person is the mother for the next round.

3 FINDING YOUR WAY

Here is a question review activity that also practices use of specific vocabulary words. It will take some simple preparation on your part, but once you have the materials you can use them over and over. Have students all start in one corner of the room. Their goal is to move to the op-

posite corner of the room, but to do so they will have to ask and answer questions about specific vocabulary. For each vocabulary word, print a picture on a standard piece of paper and slip it into a plastic sleeve to minimize wear and tear. (You can also use flash cards if you have them handy.) Have each student take a turn moving to one of the pictures. He or she must then either ask a yes/no question using the word in that picture or answer a yes/no question you ask about that picture. (You can also play this game using information questions.) If she formulates her question or answer correctly, she moves on to another space. If she is incorrect, she stays on that picture till her next turn. No two students can occupy the same picture at the same time. Students will have to choose the best route from the starting corner to the finishing corner. The first one to reach the goal is the winner.

4 GO FISH

This simple children’s game is great for practicing yes no questions. Play by the standard rules or play using current vocabulary words. You will just need two sets of flashcards (either store bought or homemade and printed on card stock). Students must remember who is asking for what and make as many pairs as they can. The person with the most pairs of cards at the end of the game wins.

THESE ARE SOME OF MY FAVORITE ACTIVITIES FOR REVIEWING BOTH INFORMATIONAL AND YES/NO QUESTIONS IN THE ESL CLASSROOM.