

~ PRACTICAL, DETAILED AND
ILLUMINATING GUIDE ~

THE
ART OF TEACHING VOCABULARY

27 HOW-TO GUIDES, LESSON IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES TO MAKE VOCABULARY EXCITING



YOU CONTROL
THE LESSON
COMPLETELY

SO MAKE VOCABULARY
MEMORABLE AND ENTERTAINING

STARTING
WITH YOUR
VERY NEXT
LESSON

MAKE YOUR STUDENTS
ENJOY VOCABULARY

TEACHING VOCABULARY ISN'T JUST A JOB, POSITION, PASSION OR CALLING – IT'S ALSO AN ART

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FAQ for Vocabulary Teachers

ARE YOU GETTING READY FOR YOUR FIRST TEACHING JOB? ARE YOU PICKING UP NEW SUBJECT AREAS TO TEACH?

Here are the questions (and answers) about teaching vocabulary that I have been asked most during my time as an ESL teacher.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR VOCABULARY TEACHERS

1 SHOULD I ALLOW MY STUDENTS TO USE TRANSLATORS IN CLASS? WHAT ABOUT DICTIONARIES?

As long as students study English, they will want to use translators and dictionaries in class. At times, they are quite helpful. When a student comes to class with little to no knowledge of English, translators may seem like the only way of communicating. However, in my years as an ESL teacher, I have seen far too many students become overly dependent on translators and dictionaries. Because of that, this is what I have found works best. I do not allow students to use electronic translators in class. They are too easy to use and become dependent on. For beginning students, I do allow bilingual dictionaries in class. Paper dictionaries are more cumbersome and therefore less likely to become addictive than translators, so if my students want to wrestle with the pages for a time, I am okay with that. By the time students are studying at the intermediate level, they should be able to get some kind of understanding of unfamiliar words without the use of dictionaries. I no longer allow bilingual dictionaries at this point, but I will allow students to use an English only dictionary. Languages rarely have exact equivalents with each other anyway, so learning a definition of an English word in English will actually help my students more than the translation their bilingual dictionary gives.

No matter what level they are at, I encourage my students to communicate creatively with the language they know rather than looking up the “right”

words in a dictionary. The more they can use the language they possess, the better off they will be.

2 HOW DO I DECIDE WHICH WORDS TO TEACH?

Most of the time, vocabulary units center around themes. Often, the curriculum dictates what these themes will be. Beginning level students usually study food, transportation, sports, family, school and similar themes. Intermediate students will often move on to more complex vocabulary units such as countries and careers. Advanced students with a good foundation in vocabulary will often study units built around reading or listening material. If you are deciding on your own what words to teach, think about what your students need most. Are they business English students? Try to teach an area that will help them with their careers. Are they academic English students? What will they need to know to successfully navigate their first year at a university? Are your students trying to get a general foundation of the English language? What types of words do they need to go about a typical day? If you think about the greatest needs of your students, you will know what types of vocabulary they most need to know and can choose your unit themes from there.

3 WHERE DO I FIND VOCABULARY UNITS?

If you are teaching at an established school, the curriculum has most likely dictated the words you will have to teach in vocabulary class. If you are starting your own program or if you have a flexible curriculum and can choose your own themes, you may decide your own word lists for vocabulary class. I find that examining the greatest needs of your students is the best way to determine what vocabulary they need to know. Once I have a subject area, I compose a list of the words I will teach. If you decide to compile your own list of vocabulary words, here are several ways to compile a vocabulary unit from scratch:

<http://bit.ly/1okCBZu>

4 HOW DO I MAKE CLASS MORE THAN MEMORIZING LISTS OF WORDS?

Teaching words in context is the most important step in avoiding the memorization rut. Though students learning vocabulary will always have some degree of memorization on their to do list, using words in context and in practical situations helps cement them into the learners' minds better than anything else. Start by presenting words to your students in context. You can do this with a picture (most effective for beginning level students) or with a video or reading selection. Give your students a chance to puzzle out the meaning of the word on their own, from context, before you give definitions or have them look up their own definitions. Then, give your students a chance to recognize the words in a new but similar context, a dialogue for example. Finally, ask your students to produce the words as they speak or write. If you include these three steps, (determining the meaning, recognition tasks, production tasks) your vocabulary class will certainly be more than an exercise in memorization.

5 WHAT DO I DO IF MY STUDENTS ARE COMPLETE BEGINNERS?

Students who truly have no experience with the English language are a challenge for any ESL teacher. While some teachers would start their instruction in the students' first language, which is a good strategy for teaching complete beginners, for me that is not an option. Though I have taught overseas, I would not claim fluency in any language other than English. My preference in this situation is using the TPR (Total Physical Response). Just as babies learn their first language with nothing more than physical clues, second language learners can learn English without instruction in their first language. It's not easy teaching students this way, but it does work. I had the privilege of getting one five minute TPR lesson in Hebrew over ten years ago. I still remember what my teacher, whose intention was to show us the effective-

ness of TPR, taught us in those few minutes.

6 IS IT OKAY TO TEACH GRAMMAR, WRITING, ETC. EVEN THOUGH IT'S SPECIFICALLY A VOCABULARY CLASS?

Vocabulary is important for ESL students. In fact, it's one of the basic pillars of language. However, vocabulary in isolation does not make a language. I can buy a bilingual dictionary or use an online translator, but that does not make me a speaker of Japanese. Language is more than just the sum of its words. Because of this, I have always taught grammar, speaking, listening, reading and writing in my vocabulary classes. Memorization will only get a person so far with language -- they must use the words that they are learning in meaningful contexts to really learn them. My strategy for vocabulary class has always been to teach grammar and other subjects as needed as they relate to vocabulary class. I try not to let these lessons dominate my class time, but I do include them as necessary. For example, if I am teaching business vocabulary, I may have my students write a memo as a production task. They benefit from a few minutes spent on how to format a memo. If I am teaching a unit on food, we may talk about how to read a menu and then do it in class or for homework. Grammar is never primary for me in vocabulary class. It is a tool to help my students move to competency with the words they are learning in class.

Get Rid Of Lists! Teach Vocabulary Without Students Realizing It

ONE OF THE NEVER-ENDING QUESTIONS ESL TEACHERS ASK THEMSELVES IS, "HOW DO I INCREASE MY STUDENTS' VOCABULARY?"

Learning a language and becoming fluent in that language is a long and complicated process. Much of it revolves around grammar rules and their exceptions along with discourse rules and how native speakers use language to communicate with one another. But knowing all these things won't get your students very far if they don't know vocabulary – individual words in the English language and what they refer to in the real world, be it the things we see around us or things we can't see. My guess is that no matter what area of English you are teaching, you probably include some element of vocabulary in your class. The good news is you don't have to subject your students (or yourself) to boring lists of vocabulary words that only offer a tedious memorization task. You can teach your students vocabulary without them even knowing what you are doing. Here are some ways you can slip those English words into your students' subconscious and then conscious minds.

HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR STUDENTS' VOCABULARY

1 DECORATE WITH WORDS

There is a reason that most people envision language classrooms with labels on everything from the clock to the pencil sharpener. Labeling the items in your classroom is a great way to teach vocabulary to your students without them even realizing it. Ok, so they might realize you have labeled the items so they will remember the names that go with each, but they might not realize they are also learning spelling whenever they read those simple classroom labels. My advice to any English teacher is to label everything. You don't need anything fancy – just scraps of paper and a black marker will make labels sufficient for this purpose. If you are worried about

the labels showing when your students are taking tests, just cover them up. Get yourself a stack of large sticky notes and cover up what you don't want your students to see during the test. It's simple, and having the labels there reaps more benefits than the trouble it takes to cover them.

2 MOTIVATE WITH POSTERS

Not every ESL student will need to learn the names for the objects in your classroom. Those words are basic English after all, but don't let that stop you from decorating with vocabulary. Put posters around your room that include or center around English words. Motivational posters are one option. They usually offer a nice picture with some less familiar words underneath. If your students' attention wanders during a lesson, they just might wander over to the saying on the poster and end up internalizing the words they see there. Grammar posters are a great option, too. Posting grammar rules around your classroom does double duty. Your students internalize the rules they read, and they also internalize the words with which those rules are written. You can also keep posters that your class creates specifically for vocabulary development. Write out your current vocabulary list and post it on the wall, post a collection of words related to an upcoming holiday, or post words that follow particular spelling patterns or pronunciation rules. All of these words on display in your classroom will help your students internalize vocabulary every day, and you won't have to take time out of class to teach them.

3 USE IT. DON'T LOSE IT

You have probably noticed it yourself and seen me write about it before: ESL teachers tend to decrease their speaking vocabulary without even realizing it in order to communicate more easily with their students. It's happened to me, and I'd bet it's happened to you, too. You can help your students learn more vocabulary by keeping your own words in check.

Don't simplify your language. In fact, do more than that. Include words in your spoken English that you know your students don't already know. When you use the words you want your students to learn, they will learn them. Don't settle for saying, "Good job," ten times a day. Change your words up: excellent work, well done, I'm impressed, you should be proud of yourself, great performance, etc. Expose your students to a variety of vocabulary right from your own lips, and they will eventually absorb what you are saying.

4 SAY IT AND SAY IT AGAIN

And while you are focusing on using unfamiliar words in your own speaking, try saying everything to your students in more than one way. Take your books out and Get out your textbooks may sound the same to you, but they won't sound the same to your ESL students. Every word they haven't encountered is a new opportunity for them to increase their vocabularies. But when you say things more than once and use different words to get your meaning across, you are actually doing two things. First, you are introducing them to new words. Second, you are also telling them what those words mean. If your students understand what take out your books means, they can probably figure out what get out your textbooks means, too. New vocabulary introduced and defined? Check.

5 REFERENCE THAT

Do you keep English reference books in your classroom? You should. English only dictionaries can make a huge difference in what your students learn and how well they learn it. I am a big proponent of English only dictionaries rather than bilingual dictionaries, and you can help your students increase their vocabulary with these simple tools just by keeping them on hand in your classroom. When a student looks up a word in an English only dictionary, he finds a definition, you guessed it, in English. Likely, that

definition will contain words your student does not understand. Now the point is not to send your students on a chain reaction definition hunt, going from one word to the next until he forgets the word he looked up in the first place. But likely, your student can get the gist of a definition even if he doesn't understand every word, and those words he doesn't understand, when he encounters them in enough contexts, will begin to work their way into his receptive and then productive vocabularies. Likewise, a thesaurus is a good reference book to keep around the classroom. Seeing a group of words with similar meanings, even if your students don't at first understand the nuances that make them individual words, will help your students learn vocabulary in clusters, another great vocabulary learning tool.

VOCABULARY WILL ALWAYS BE A PART OF LEARNING ENGLISH, BUT IT DOESN'T ALWAYS HAVE TO BE THE MAIN FOCUS OF A LESSON. THESE ARE EASY WAYS TO SLIP NEW VOCABULARY INTO YOUR STUDENTS' MINDS AND MOUTHS WITHOUT MAKING IT A BIG DEAL. TRY IT AND SEE FOR YOURSELF.

3 Keys to Learning: What Every Vocabulary Unit Needs

WHETHER YOUR CURRICULUM DESIGNATES THE VOCABULARY YOU TEACH OR YOU CHOOSE YOUR OWN ESSENTIAL WORD LISTS FOR YOUR ESL STUDENTS, YOUR GOAL IS THE SAME.

You want students to learn, recognize and produce the words naturally in English. Helping your students accomplish this goal is really quite simple, even when the words on the list are complex. As long as your vocabulary unit contains these three key activities, your students will be well on their way to using these words fluently.

CHOOSE YOUR WORDS

If you are following a curriculum that designates vocabulary for your students, choosing your vocabulary words is very easy. If you are developing your own vocabulary lists or if you want to add to what the curriculum has already put together, you have a little more work to do. You may choose your words based on a listening or reading passage you will cover with your students. You may develop a vocabulary web or present vocabulary clusters (synonyms or antonyms) to your students. You can choose appropriate vocabulary for your class a lot of different ways, and once you do you are ready to move on to the first key component of any vocabulary unit.

EXPLORE KEY NUMBER ONE: DETERMINE THE MEANING

Once you have your list of vocabulary words, it is time to introduce them to your students. Before you hand out a list of words and their corresponding definitions though, it's best to have students try to decipher the meanings of the words from context. For some students this exercise will be very uncomfortable. Bilingual dictionaries will come out faster than a cowboy can draw a pistol, but you'll have to stand

firm with a no dictionary rule. Make sure your students know that you do not expect right answers at this stage in the vocabulary learning process but that you want to challenge their ability to understand unfamiliar words without external aids. Start by giving them a sentence using each target vocabulary word. If possible, take the sentence from the text you are using or from the dialogue you will present to your students. Have students use prior knowledge and context clues to guess at and note the definition of the word. Once your students have guessed each word's meaning from its context, give them a list of definitions and challenge them to match each word to its correct definition and modify their own definitions as necessary. Students who develop this skill, determining a definition from a word's context, will find future encounters with unfamiliar vocabulary less intimidating and off putting. In fact, determining meaning from context is a skill that even native speakers must learn.

EXPLORE KEY NUMBER TWO: GIVE RECOGNITION TASKS

Now that your students have some familiarity with their vocabulary words, it's time to weave them into your students' speech and writing. To start, give your students recognition tasks. Recognition tasks are those that provide your students with the target vocabulary and ask them to use the words appropriately. Here are two examples of recognition tasks.

1 MATCHING WORDS TO DEFINITIONS

Index cards are one of my favorite tools for the ESL classroom, and they are especially useful for recognition tasks in vocabulary development. Have students write each target vocabulary word on one card and a definition, synonym, or picture of the word on another card. Shuffle the cards and have students match each word to its definition. You can lay the cards

out so your students can see them all at once, play a memory style game, play go fish matching words and definitions, or do any other activity where the ultimate goal is to match each word with its definition.

2 FILL IN THE BLANK

Another way to challenge your students' word recognition skills is to have them complete a fill in the blank with the target vocabulary words. Give them a list of sentences or a paragraph using the target words along with a word bank. Like any fill in the blank exercise, students must use the clues in each sentence to determine which word best fits the context. Though it might be tempting, don't omit the word bank. At this point in the learning process, your students are just determining how the target words are used and not coming up with them on their own.

EXPLORE KEY NUMBER THREE: GIVE PRODUCTION TASKS

The final step in the vocabulary learning process is to give your students production tasks. In these tasks, they are starting with just the word (not its definition or context) and then determining on their own how to use it appropriately. Here are three examples of recognition tasks.

1 USE THE WORDS ORALLY

You might challenge your students to use the target vocabulary in an oral exercise. Have groups of students compose a skit which uses the target words. Another option is to get out your index cards again and use them for a dialogue. Give two students a scenario for the role play and have them draw a vocabulary card. Each student must use his or her word appropriately in the dialogue before he can draw another card, and he must then use that word in the dialogue. Once all the cards are taken and used, the person with the most

cards wins the role play challenge.

2 USE THE WORDS IN WRITING

Have your students write their own sentences or a paragraph which uses the target vocabulary, again without bilingual dictionaries. Have them develop a crossword puzzle using their own definitions. Any situation in which students write can be directed to use specific vocabulary. In these exercises, start with a list of the words but no definitions and have students use them in their compositions.

3 DEMONSTRATE UNDER- STANDING OF THE WORDS

Once you have given your students written and oral production tasks, have some fun with a game of Pictionary or charades using the target vocabulary. Grab those handy index cards and divide your class into two teams. Each person takes turns acting out or illustrating the vocabulary words for his team thus demonstrating his understanding of the word.

THE PROCESS OF LEARNING VOCABULARY WORDS DOESN'T HAVE TO BE COMPLICATED.

Students start by determining the meaning of each word. They follow by using that word appropriately when they have context clues or definitions. Finally, they use the word appropriately in speech and writing without referring to outside sources for help. If your students can do this, they will not only learn the words you have chosen for your vocabulary unit. They will also have a tool that will serve them well in their futures as English speakers.

'DDD Your Language' & 3 Other Little Habits You Need To Have

HOW COMPLEX ARE YOUR STUDENTS' VOCABULARIES? ARE YOUR HABITS INCREASING THEIR LEXICONS OR LIMITING THEM? DO YOU KNOW JUST HOW MUCH INFLUENCE YOU HAVE ON HOW MUCH YOUR STUDENTS LEARN?

If you have been an ESL teacher for a while or if you're still new to the field, these simple habits can make the difference in how fluent your students are in the language they are learning. And they will certainly help build complex and rich vocabularies in your students. The best news of all? You may already be doing them!

TRY THESE 4 SIMPLE HABITS THAT BUILD STUDENTS' VOCABULARY:

1 DDD (DON'T DUMB DOWN) YOUR LANGUAGE

One of the easiest ways to help your students increase their vocabulary recognition and usage is to keep your own language as natural as possible. That's not always an easy thing to do when you are an ESL teacher. Without thinking about it, ESL teachers tend to simplify what they say and how they say it. They choose words they expect their students to know rather than ones they don't. I know it's true. I've caught myself doing it many times. I'd say "difficult" rather than "hard" or "easy" rather than "simple", "quick" rather than "fast". I'll bet you have, too. And while our students might understand what we are saying more often, this language modification isn't helping them increase their vocabularies. In fact, it's only reinforcing that what they already know is enough. If you have been teaching ESL for a long time, it may be tough for you to go back to a more natural and complex level of vocabulary in your speech, but that doesn't mean it isn't worth it. Try to talk to your ESL students as you would to native speakers. Yes, you will end up doing more explaining up front, but in the long run your students will benefit by having

more complex and rich vocabularies.

2 USE REAL MATERIALS RATHER THAN ESL DESIGNED ONES

Another temptation for the ESL teacher is to use materials specifically designed for use in the ESL class. Like our modified language, these materials tend to use words your students already know so that comprehension comes easier. While this is easier in the moment, it's not as beneficial to your students long term. A better option is giving them realia, or real English materials written for native speakers. Have you ever tried to use a simple newspaper article in class? I'll bet you learned just what I did: it's not as simple as you thought. Though the vocabulary is familiar to you, your students will encounter word after word that they do not understand and have not learned in just one simple little article. This may tempt you to give up, to stick to the articles fabricated especially for your intermediate reading text. Don't do it! Students need exposure to these types of realistic materials. The articles or song lyrics or short stories you bring to class will be challenging, yes, but they will also be motivation to learn more and retain more. Plus they'll motivate your students to adopt habit number three for developing and maintaining a more complex vocabulary:

3 STOP USING THE DICTIONARY

Whoa! You say. How can an ESL teacher possibly encourage getting rid of the dictionary? It's because of the way the brain learns and retains language. When a person learns new words, whether it's in a first or second language, he makes connections to what he already knows. Think of new vocabulary in the brain like a scrabble style word grid. Each word connects to another that is already there. When ESL students use a bilingual dictionary to learn new vocabulary words, the connections still happen, but the

connections happen between words in the student's first language (that he already knows) and the new English words. That means when the student's brain tries to access that new word in English, he will have to do so through words in his first language, since they are where that new word is attached. This means your student will have to first compose what he wants to say in his first language and then translate it into English. Not smooth. When students rely on their first language to understand and access vocabulary in English, they are not moving toward fluency. Their language will likely be staccato, hesitant, or even nonexistent in the worst cases. Encouraging students to learn the meaning of new English words with the English words they already know will improve fluency and make them less dependent on their first language. It will also keep the mental translations to a minimum. Ultimately, fluency is the goal in second language instruction, so stick to an English-English dictionary and leave the bilingual ones at home!

4 KEEP YOUR DOOR OPEN

No, that's not to say fresh hallway air makes students better learners. What it does mean is this. ESL classrooms that encourage frequent visitors will expose students to a greater variety of vocabulary. It goes back to the first point – ESL teachers tend to modify their language to make comprehension easier for their students. It happens without thinking, and it's very tough to break out of that cycle. One way around it is to invite native speakers to your classroom any chance you get. If your guests are not accustomed to working with ESL students, they will invariably expose your students to a greater vocabulary than you will on your own. More than that, even ESL teachers whose vocabularies are simplified do so in different ways. So even if your guests are other ESL teachers, your students will still benefit from listening to them. Use that as an excuse to trade classes with another ESL teacher from time to

time or have combined lessons. Invite guest speakers for special occasions. Take frequent field trips. Do everything you can to get language partners into your ESL classes. All of these things will give your students exposure to greater and more complex vocabularies, and getting exposure to a greater variety of words is the first step in your students' building a more extensive vocabulary themselves.

VOCABULARY IS ONE OF THE MORE IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF LEARNING ENGLISH.

Whether students plan on using their language skills for education, business, or pleasure, the more words they recognize and can use, the better their communication skills will be. If you adopt these simple habits in your ESL classroom, and maybe you already have, your students will thank you, and you can rest assured that you have done the best for your students that you can.

Teaching a Thematic Unit Across the ESL Spectrum

THOUGH SOME ESL PROGRAMS HAVE GENERAL CLASSES THAT ADDRESS ALL ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING, MY EXPERIENCE HAS ALWAYS BEEN SEPARATE CLASSES DESIGNED AROUND PARTICULAR LANGUAGE SKILLS.

Reading, writing, grammar, listening and speaking have all been distinct classes. In these types of programs, having continuity and connection between classes can be difficult. One solution is teaching a thematic unit in all of those classes. It's not as complicated as you might think, and it works really well if you teach all the classes or if you have good communication with those who teach the other classes. Planning and carrying out this type of unit is easy, too. Just follow these steps.

PLAN YOUR LESSON USING THE FOLLOWING COMPREHENSIVE STEPS

1 VOCABULARY AND SPEAKING

The first step in creating a cross curricular unit is determining what your students already know about a topic. Most ESL classes are made up of people from different backgrounds. Consequently, you students will know different things about any topic you choose for your thematic unit. Start your unit by asking students to brainstorm any vocabulary they know that is associated with the topic. You might also consider using a vocabulary web as you write down, on the board, the words your students know and, perhaps, use.

Then have your students work in groups of three to determine what they would still like to know about this. This activity will serve two purposes. First, your students will get speaking practice. Students will have a chance to ask questions and get clarification from their fellow students. Second, you will have a better idea of what in-

terests your students. If possible, design the rest of your unit around what your students want to know. They will be more engaged and learn more easily when they are interested in the topic. Once you decide on the subtopics you will teach, determine what materials you will need and the additional vocabulary your students will have to learn.

For example, say you wanted to do a unit on music. You spend some time with your students determining what musical vocabulary they already know and what they would like to know about the topic. They may be interested in professional music careers in the U.S., music education in U.S. schools, or the music entertainment industry. Based on this, you can determine what topics within music you will cover with your students. You may even try to touch on all of them in different subject areas.

2 READING

Reading is usually an easy place to include realia in the classroom. If you read the newspaper or get your news online, keep your eyes open for any articles related to your topic. You can start collecting them several months in advance. Then use these articles for your students' reading assignments while teaching the reading skills your students need. You can have them read for the main idea, read for details, write summaries, or do any other assignments you typically give in reading class.

You can also have your students bring in articles that interest them. It's a good opportunity for them to present the information the class and give them some additional speaking practice. Also, having students write summaries of their articles and then posting them in your classroom gives the rest of your students a chance to read independently and learn more about the topic. Or if you rather, make copies of each summary for the entire class to read or reference as you see fit.

Articles aren't the only way to bring realia into your classroom. Collect any items related to your topic that your students can read. And these items don't have to come on sheets of paper. For the music example, I might include CD cases, album reviews, concert programs, or song lyrics in my reading materials.

If your students are looking for more of a reading challenge, try assigning a short story or novel related to your topic. Many publishers offer simplified versions of popular novels suited to ESL students or consult a short story index to find smaller pieces of fiction related to your topic.

3 WRITING

Writing classes are often tied very closely to reading classes, and you can use your reading materials as a starting point for many writing assignments. Writing summaries is always good, but you can integrate writing assignments into your unit in plenty of other ways. Try writing letters with your students to someone in the industry. A research paper is another way to connect class goals with what your students are interested in learning. Simple as well as complex essays can tie in, too, depending on what topic you are studying.

For my music unit, I might have students write a letter to a music label asking for information about upcoming projects or what types of bands they are interested in. Students could also write a letter of recommendation to the school district suggesting improvements to the current music education program. With the right group of students, I might even have them write a process essay which outlines how to write a song, learn an instrument, or download digital music files.

4 LISTENING

For my listening classes, I always try giving my students a chance to listen to different voices and speaking styles. Though listening to na-

tive speakers is challenging, I think it's important for students to use the language that they know in creative ways to make communication happen, even if they don't know every word or grammatical structure in perfect spoken English. Because of this, I design listening activities to bring my students into contact with native speakers. Surveys are a great way to do this. I send my students out in pairs or groups of three to talk to native speakers and ask a few questions. With the questions on paper in front of them, these conversations are less intimidating, and students are usually able to get good information from their survey takers.

Guest speakers are another great way to giving your students authentic listening practice. The more connections you have, the more likely you will know someone who can speak intelligently about the topic your students are studying. Another option is inviting another class as conversation partners. If possible, make sure the other class has some connection to your topic.

For a unit on music, I might invite a music teacher, a music blogger, or someone in a garage band to come talk to my class. Or I might invite the concert band from my local high school or college. My students get the opportunity to listen to someone other than me, and my guests get to talk about something they love.

If you have the time and the resources, field trips are another way to give your students good listening practice. Depending on where you teach, you may have several free resources available for fieldtrips. For a music unit, I love taking my students to a fine arts school tour or on a tour of a local music venue. It's free advertising for the school or theater and great listening practice for my students.

5 GRAMMAR

Grammar is probably the toughest area to include in a cross-curricular unit, but it's not impossible. I ask myself what my students will need to say or what structures they will need to know to accomplish the goals related to this unit. If they will be writing letters, I might include modal verbs or the conditional tense in my grammar plans. If they will be discussing

their past experiences, I may include a review of past tenses. If I can't make connections this way, I know my in-class examples or homework assignments can tie in to whatever topic we are studying. In a lesson on the simple past, for example, I might describe a concert I attended using the past tense.

CROSS-CURRICULAR THEMATIC UNITS USUALLY MEAN MORE WORK THAN OPENING UP A BOOK AND TACKLING THE NEXT CHAPTER, BUT THEY ARE WORTH THE EFFORT IT TAKES TO MAKE THEM HAPPEN. IF YOU ARE THINKING ABOUT DOING A THEMATIC UNIT WITH YOUR STUDENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO TRY MUSIC, EDUCATION, SPORTS, OR FOOD AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS.

7 Easy Set Up Learning Centers for Vocabulary Class

LEARNING CENTERS ARE GREAT FOR ENCOURAGING STUDENTS' OWNERSHIP OF THEIR OWN LANGUAGE LEARNING.

These centers, designed especially for vocabulary class, are easy to set up and will give your students an opportunity to work with their vocabulary hands on.

TRY THESE IDEAS FOR VOCABULARY CENTERS

1 ROCK AND ROLL VOCABULARY

Are you looking for a way to review vocabulary words with your students? This learning center will do just that, and all you need are a list of your vocabulary words (write one word each on a Popsicle stick and put them in a cup at the center) and a six sided die. If you like, make copies of You're On a Roll With Vocabulary recording sheet available free from Teachers Pay Teachers. Students should choose a word from the cup and then roll the die. They must follow the directions for the number they rolled. Students keep rolling until they have rolled every number from one to six and followed the directions for those rolls. For the roll instructions, write the following on a poster or handout and display it at your learning center.

1. Write a definition of your word
2. Use your word in a sentence
3. Give a synonym for your word
4. Give an antonym for your word
5. Draw a picture of your word
6. Write a word that rhymes with your word

2 I SPY VOCABULARY

This simple set up vocabulary center will have your students learning words from A to Z. For this center, print one or more pictures from an I Spy book -- like this one:

<http://bit.ly/LaFM36>

Students at the center should list the

letters A to Z on a piece of paper and then look carefully at the picture. They should try to find something in the picture that begins with each of the letters of the alphabet. Students will have to be creative and think of synonyms for objects in the pictures (for example, car/automobile/vehicle...). You might also want to leave a thesaurus at the center as a resource. For more advanced students, set a timer for five minutes and see how many of the 26 letters they can complete.

3 WORD CLUSTER VOCABULARY

Teaching vocabulary clusters, or several words with similar meanings, can be a very effective method of instruction. To review groups of synonyms with your students, try this learning center. Write each vocabulary word on a clothes pin. Then take a paper plate and divide it into sections (like the pieces of a pie). In each section, write a synonym or category for the vocabulary words. (For example, you might write "walk", a synonym of saunter, stroll, mosey, etc. or "emotions", a category for happy, sad, scared, etc.) Students then read each clothes pin and clip it along the edge of the paper plate in the correct section.

4 COMPOUND WORD MATCH UP

Next spring when plastic eggs fill the dollar store bins, grab a package or two for this easy vocabulary learning center. Choose several compound words that your students already know or that you will teach them. Then, separate the plastic eggs and match each top with a different colored bottom. Using a permanent marker, write one compound word on each complete egg -- the first part of the word on the top half of the egg, the second part of the word on the bottom part of the egg. Separate all of the compound word eggs and put the pieces in a basket. Students who use this center should match the two halves of each compound word together. If you like,

include an answer sheet at the center so students can check their matches.

5 ICE CREAM MATCHUP

Give your students a chance to review synonym or antonym pairs with this fun and easy learning center. Print out several ice cream cone templates and cut them out (or have your students cut them out). For each cone, write a synonym or antonym pair -- one on the cone and one on the ice cream (be sure to mix up the colors). Shuffle them together. Clean out an ice cream tub and put it at your center with the labeled cutouts. Students using the center should match each word to its synonym/antonym by matching ice cream scoops to cones. You can also vary the templates in your center according to the season -- use two halves of a heart around St. Valentine's Day, pairs of flip flops in the summer, etc.

6 HAVE A BALL WITH VOCABULARY

If you are teaching ESL students in the U.S. or other English speaking country, your students probably encounter unfamiliar and interesting words every day. This activity from Imagination Station can turn your vocabulary learning center into a class vocabulary roundup:

<http://bit.ly/1GpMc72>

Position your center near a blank bulletin board or empty table. You will want to create a gumball machine on your bulletin board or have a real gumball machine on the table (check thrift stores or the classifieds). Also put a dictionary and several circles cut from different colors of construction paper. When students hear interesting or unfamiliar words, encourage them to note those words in a vocabulary notebook. During your next free learning period, they can share these interesting words with the rest of the class. Students with a word to share should look that word up in the dictionary and then write the word and a simple or paraphrased definition on a construc-

tion paper “gumball”. They can then post in on your board or put it in the gumball machine. Students who do not have a word to share but want to learn interesting new words can read the gumball words with definitions at their leisure during free learning periods.

7 ABC CLASS BOOK

No matter what theme you are covering in your current vocabulary unit, your students can work together to make an ABC book on that theme. This learning center is almost too easy to set up. Simply staple 27 pages together booklet style, write your unit theme on the front, and put it in the center with some art materials and a dictionary. You might also want to write the letters A to Z in the upper right hand corner of the 26 booklet pages, but you can leave that to your students, too. Students using the center will find and illustrate a word related to your theme and do so on the correct letter page of your booklet. For example, if your theme is sports, one student may write Baseball on the B page and then illustrate it. The next student may write Tennis on the T page and illustrate that. The book remains in use at the center until students have completed every page and thus every letter of the alphabet. Once the book is complete, leave it out for your students to read during their free learning periods and put another blank book in the ABC center.

VOCABULARY IS KEY TO LANGUAGE LEARNING, AND THESE CENTERS WHICH TAKE VERY LITTLE SET UP WILL HELP YOUR ESL STUDENTS INCREASE THEIR ENGLISH VOCABULARIES AND HAVE FUN AT THE SAME TIME. TRY ONE FOR YOURSELF AND SEE.

Eat, Drink, and be Merry: Top 10 ESL Activities for a Unit on Food

ESL TEACHERS SOMETIMES FACE CHALLENGES UNIQUE IN THE WORLD OF EDUCATION.

One such struggle is bringing together students from all corners of the world. A class that is composed of students from Africa, Asia, Europe and South America may at first sight have very little common ground. Helping these students relate to one another, though, is not impossible. In fact, one of the basic necessities of life – food – is also one of the best ways to bring ESL classes together. Even better, a unit on food is a part of almost every ESL program. Talking about food can provide your students with an opportunity to be creative, practice their language skills, and have fun while also bringing them together. Here are some activities you might want to try when you are teaching a unit on food.

HAVE YOUR STUDENTS EXPERIENCE FRESH ACTIVITIES WHILE STUDYING FOOD

1 HABITS SURVEY

How do your students eat on a regular basis? What do they do every day when it comes to food? Noting what foods they typically eat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner as well as when they eat them and where will give your students a chance to use the simple present tense. You're your class some time to write down their daily eating habits. After each person has written down their top three habits for each meal, use the information to take a class poll. Divide your class into three groups, and give each group the class notes for either breakfast, lunch, or dinner. Then have each group tally the habits of their classmates and create visual aid (a bar graph or something similar) to use in a class presentation. Then have each group share with the class what they learned about their classmates in regard to their assigned meal. Make sure that everyone gives a piece of the presentation to get their speaking practice in.

2 RESTAURANT ROLE PLAY

Role plays are a great way to get your students thinking quickly and using language creatively, and a restaurant role play is easy to put together and practical in its application. Have your students create original menus using the food vocabulary you presented in class, or use take out menus from some local restaurants. Have two students sit at a table and play the part of the restaurant patrons. Another student plays the role of server. For the role play, have the server welcome the patrons to the restaurant and then take their orders. The server should also answer any questions the diners have about the food. As they play these parts, your students will put their food language to practical use and will be ready for the next time they decide to eat out.

3 POPUP RESTAURANT

The new trend in the world of fine dining is popup restaurants. These restaurants use an existing restaurant building to host their dining concept for a very short time. They open for only one or two days when the regular restaurant loans out their building. Creating a popup restaurant is a lot of work for everyone in its leadership. Restaurateurs must plan every aspect of the restaurant: the name, the type of food, and the menu. In the professional world, the purpose of these restaurants is often sharing a vision and gaining support from investors. Though your students probably don't need these things, they do need to practice their language skills. Working with a partner or in a group of three, challenge your students to make plans for a popup restaurant of their own. They will need to use any food and restaurant vocabulary you have taught them as well as the future tenses and conditional tenses to make plans for their very own popup. You can turn the process into a full verb tense review, too, by having students evaluate how successful their popup was. If you like, role play the

opening of the popup with your class as the restaurant patrons.

4 COOKING DEMONSTRATION

One of my favorite food activities in my ESL classes has been live food demonstrations. I like to give my students opportunities to share about their home cultures, and food is a very practical and eye-opening look into any culture. When I want my students to give a class presentation, and particularly if I want them to practice imperative statements or review food vocabulary, I invite them to do a cooking demonstration in class. I start by giving a demonstration of my own and challenging my students to listen for key vocabulary and information. I sometimes follow my demonstration with a sequencing challenge, and I always follow it by sharing the food that I have made. When I give them the chance, my students do great at their own food demos. I supply a hot plate for them to use in class (if they need it) and they bring in everything else they will need to demonstrate. I also allow students to create their own props for the demonstration if they do not want to use real food or can't spare the expense. I ask each student to do a 5 minute presentation on how to make a dish from their culture, and the whole class enjoys sampling it afterward. It's a good speaking activity for my students and a great way to increase cultural sensitivity in the entire class.

5 COOKING SHOW

If a live demonstration is too much for your students or you don't have the resources in your classroom to make it happen, having students record their own cooking show will meet many of the same goals. Working in pairs, have students record a cooking demonstration that they do at home, and then play the recording for the class. With video cameras on phones and music devices, it's not difficult for anyone to make a video and email it so I can play it during class.

If you decide to have your students record their demonstrations and then view them in class, make a fun day by having popcorn for the premiers. Give your class a chance to ask questions of the demonstrators and require the demonstrators to answer after each video.

6 RESTAURANT TOUR

For an even more challenging listening activity and a chance to get out of the classroom, plan a tour of a local restaurant for your class. Many restaurant owners are willing to give a tour of their kitchens to school groups, and it's always good for your students to listen to someone other than their teacher. Talk to the management at one or more restaurants within walking distance of your school (or schedule a bus field trip) and see if one of them would welcome your class for a tour. Have your students prepare by reading the menu and composing some questions about how the food is prepared. After the tour, pull up some chairs and have a casual lunch with your students. Have students share what they learned at the restaurant during a class discussion or for writing homework, and then send one or more thank you cards to the manager after your tour.

7 CREATE A PLATE

If your primary goal is teaching food vocabulary, having your students create a plate of their favorite foods is a good way to bring vocabulary into your classroom that they will also use in real life. Collect a bunch of old cooking magazines (parents or fellow teachers can be great resources for these) and have your students create their ideal plates. Each person should glue pictures of the foods that they love to a paper plate. Then, either review the vocabulary as a whole class or have your students look up the English words for the foods on their plate. This activity is also easy for reviewing holiday or special occasion food. You can give your students copies of food clipart or have them search for pictures of specific foods if you want to limit the potential foods they choose for their plates.

8 THE PERFECT SANDWICH

Have your students create their own card game whose goal is creat-

ing the perfect sandwich. Have students work in groups of four to make a deck of cards for the game. (Index cards or cut up card stock will make find playing cards.) Have each group brainstorm as many items as possible for each of the following categories: types of bread, sandwich meats, cheeses, vegetables, condiments used on sandwiches, and things you would never put on a sandwich. Each group should choose five items from each category and ten from the last category and create playing cards for each that include a picture of the (non)food and the vocabulary word. The groups should then put all the cards together, shuffle them, and get ready to play. The game starts by dealing each person five cards and placing the remaining cards in a draw pile. Flip over the first card from the draw pile and play can begin. For their turn, each person picks up one card – either from the draw pile or the discard pile – and then discards another card. The goal is to have one card for each category of the sandwich (bread, meat, cheese, vegetable, and condiment). Play continues around the table until one person has one of each type of card in his hand.

9 HEALTHY EATING

What does it mean to eat healthy? Put your students in groups of three to discuss what is important for healthy eating habits. Then bring a real life reading activity into the classroom by teaching your students how to read nutrition labels from some common foods. Also, give your students a copy of the food pyramid and have them share their thoughts on following it. After they have read the pyramid and some familiar food labels, have groups discuss whether it is easy or difficult to eat healthy both at home and in the U.S. Close the activity by having each group write their top ten rules for eating healthy.

10 IT'S IN THE BAG

Have your students make predictions about how well different foods are packaged in this hands on experiment. Bring a collection of differently packaged foods into your classroom (try an assortment including an individual box of cereal, a granola bar, a small bag of chips, a juice box, a slice of processed cheese, etc.) and ask your students to predict how each

package will hold up when submerged in a bucket of water. Using the simple future, students can predict what will happen to each package and the food inside it. Once everyone has written their predictions, put each package to the test by holding it under water for sixty seconds. Remove it from the water and have students observe the packages and the food inside them. Then, have students use the simple past to write what happened to each package and whether their predictions were correct.

A Totally Yummy ESL Lesson Your Students Will Just Gobble Up

THE FACT THAT EVERYONE DEPENDS ON FOOD TO SURVIVE IS OF NO SURPRISE TO ANYONE. WE NEED TO EAT AND A LOT OF US ALSO ENJOY IT, SOME OF US MORE THAN OTHERS.

For this reason, the topic of food is always present in any and all ESL programs. These programs are designed to cover needs our ESL students might have abroad or when dealing with foreigners. Our students need to be able to talk about food and to describe it. Also, keep in mind what an important role meals play from the social point of view. We share meals to celebrate events and even to do business. So, if you think about it, our students might have a lot riding on a simple meal!

HELP YOUR STUDENTS WITH THEIR WINING AND DINING, WITH THESE KILLER TIPS ON WHAT TO TEACH

1 ASKING ABOUT AND DESCRIBING FOOD

The unknown can be scary for most of us. Dealing with something we are unfamiliar with can be a daunting task and when talking about unfamiliar food, it is no exception. All of us have a story or two about eating something we were a bit reluctant to try. A lot of times, these stories end well. After tasting whatever it is you are trying, you realize it is quite palatable or even yummy. Other times, however, we are faced with a very different situation. We try something and we don't like it at all. This is very hard to manage, but we will deal with this later. For now let's concentrate on asking about food and describing it.

UNFAMILIAR FOOD

When someone is unfamiliar with some type of food or drink, the best and most obvious way to handle this is to simply ask the host /hostess about it. Let your students know they should be careful not to insult anyone, so a good way to start would be by complimenting the host/hostess first, then ask about the food. Take a look at some examples.

This looks delicious/ fabulous/ incredible. May I ask what it is?
This look amazing! What are the main ingredients?
What a fabulous meal! How is this prepared?

DESCRIBING FOOD

Hopefully your students will also have the opportunity to entertain others. In that case they need to practice describing food. Take a look at following examples.

Flavor: *This is (a little/ very) sweet/ salty/sour/ bitter/spicy/hot.*

Temperature: *It is hot/warm/chilled/ cold*

Texture: *It is tender/ soft/ hard/ tough/ crunchy/ crispy*

Comparisons: *It tastes like... or It's like/ similar to...*

2 DECLINING FOOD AND DRINK

There will be times your students will need to say no to food or drink. Perhaps because they have eaten too much, or because they are sure they won't like it. Also many people suffer from different conditions that don't allow them to eat certain foods. There can be many reasons, and whatever the reason is, they have to be ready to say, "no thank you".

Medical Conditions.

It looks delicious but I'm allergic to...

This looks great but I have/am... and I can't eat/drink...

It Is Too Much

This is incredible but I can't take another bite.

Everything is so delicious but I'm full.

There Is Something They Don't Want to Try:

Some foods with their flavors, smells and textures are way out of our comfort zone. This can happen to anyone and it is a delicate situation. After all, we don't want anyone to feel insulted or rejected. Tell you student there are different strategies for this. They can come clean with expressions like:

It looks very delicious but I'm afraid it is a bit too different from what I'm used to. Is it OK if I just have..?

Another choice is to use an excuse like allergies or that they are not hungry.

3 ASKING FOR SECONDS

Let's imagine another scenario, a much happier one for your students. They have been invited to a meal and everything is absolutely scrumptious. They are enjoying the food so much in fact, that they want more. Teach them the following expressions and they will be able to continue stuffing their faces.

This is amazing! May I have some more?

Incredible! Can I have seconds?

May I have another piece/ portion/ slice of ..?

SHARING A MEAL WITH A NICE GROUP OF PEOPLE IS ALWAYS LOVELY. HELP YOUR STUDENTS ENJOY THEIR SOCIAL LIFE.

Prepare them and encourage them to go to dinner parties and restaurants, to try new dishes and flavors. They'll thank you for it.

Serving up the World: 5 Days of Food and Culture!

BEFORE DIVING INTO THIS TOPIC, A DISCLAIMER: THIS PROJECT BASICALLY REQUIRES A KITCHEN.

You can do it without one, but you will have to choose your recipes very carefully and it may limit the choices you have of cultures to encapsulate. Further, this is designed for use in camps where a teacher has the same students for about half a day. It can work with normal class schedules, but it stretches over a much longer period.

So you have a kitchen area and the time to take on this project, fantastic! Students of all ages love food. Heck, most teachers love food. As ESL teachers, part of our role, at least in many cases, is to be a cultural ambassador for our country of origin. But why stop there? Why not showcase a whole world of cultures? And what better way to do that than through food? Every culture or region has a food for which it is known and that is generally associated with that area or culture. Combining these foods, and the students' love of eating in class, with English language learning and cultural awareness is a great way for everyone to come out ahead. How to go about this you ask?

First, you must select your representative countries/cultures. It's not a bad idea to select cultures/countries from five continents. Leave out the continent on which you are teaching. It does not really matter which cultures you select but be sure to research them, and their cuisine, carefully to ensure you are capable of delivering both food and knowledge that are relevant.

Second, be sure that you have access, and permission to use the cooking area at your school. Also, be sure you can secure the necessary ingredients for each day's recipe.

Third, determine what the keywords and phrases will be for each lesson. A portion of each lesson's vocabulary will be the ingredients for the daily recipe. Other words may include cul-

tural references, religions, famous locations, or even animals. . Remember that throughout they will be practicing cooking terminology and before this unit commences, the students should receive a short lesson on English cooking words (ie. cup, teaspoon, mix, etc.).

Once the planning is complete, each of the five days will follow a similar format.

COOK WITH YOUR STUDENTS TO TEACH ABOUT FOOD AND CULTURE

1 PRESENTATION

Each day will start with a presentation about the country/culture that will be the topic for the day. Vocabulary should centre on the relevant continent, and country or countries. The presentation should include information on some of the central traditions of the culture and some fun facts about the culture and/or country (ie. Australia has more kangaroos than people). Ideally these presentations will also be illustration heavy showing imagery of famous sites, cultural sites, and natural phenomenon. The final part of the presentation should be the culturally relevant foods, especially if there are foods that would be considered weird by your students. Last, is the food that you will be preparing as representative of that country/continent. This should include some explanation of the significance of this food, the origin (if known), and how it is prepared.

2 THE RECIPE

Following the presentation, the students will go to their pre-assigned groups and be given the recipe they will be preparing that day. Before any ingredients are handed out, the teacher will review the recipe with entire class to make sure they fully understand what they will be doing. Each in-

gredient must be identified along with the amount that is required. Teachers should have different students read out the steps of the instructions and pause to have a different student explain what that actually means. This ensures that there is a smaller chance of errors once the ingredients are actually handed out and the cooking has commenced.

Depending on the class level, this is also an opportunity to talk about where the ingredients come from and why they might form part of an important cultural dish. If a spice is native to an area where a culture originated, that is a good thing to include in the explanation.

3 COOKING AND EATING

Hand out the ingredients to the groups and have them start making their food. The teacher should circulate among the groups ensuring that there are no problems, assisting where necessary. For low level classes, teachers may want to have a system of check points. For example, when groups reach step five, call the teacher over to check before going any further. This will not only help prevent errors, but will help keep everyone on about the same timeline. When the students are finished, have them serve up and enjoy! As an alternative, the teacher can taste every group's dish and declare a winner. This can factor into an overall score for the duration of the unit, or, there can be a prize for best group every day.

4 CULTURAL GAMES

For the final part of the lesson, when the students are full of food, tired, and lethargic, give them a series of cultural games to play. Ideally this takes the form of a relay style race. Have a series of five or six different tasks/games based on traditional games of the culture being studied. Preferably, there are as many games as there are members in each group. Each task should take at least one

and at the most three minutes to complete. These will be laid out around the classroom in a rough circle. After the teacher explains each of the tasks and the significance it held in the culture being studied the groups will send one member to each station. They will be given five to ten minutes to practice their task (ie. keep a hacky sack up for 15 strikes). Afterwards there will be a race. The students at station one start. Their teammates at station two cannot begin their task until they receive a baton/ball/ some other random object passed to them by their station one teammate once the first task is complete. The first team to complete all the tasks wins.

Note: If there is only a single kitchen area available, parts three and four can be overlapped. Divide your class into five groups. Each day a different group will cook the meal, enough that every student can have a small sample, while the others learn to play some of the traditional games.

STUDENTS LOVE TO EAT, COOK, AND PLAY GAMES, SO IF TEACHERS CAN ALLOW THEM TO DO ALL OF THAT WHILE STILL LEARNING AND USING ENGLISH, WHY NOT LET IT HAPPEN.

This unit takes a lot of time to complete, but, if there is time in your schedule, it is a great way to introduce some laughter and motivation into your classroom. Few things motivate students as much as the possibility of food at the end of their labours. The best part? It's a lot of fun for the teacher as well. That and if you play your cards right, you get to be a taste tester for five days!

6 Super Fun Language Activities You Can Do with Kitchen Items

I LOVE INCLUDING COOKING IN MY CLASSROOM.

My students have fun sharing their food and culture, and eating what I and their classmates prepare, and it creates a relaxing atmosphere in class. When we cook, though, we cook with a purpose. I always have language activities linked to our culinary forays. Cooking may not be right for every ESL teacher, but it's super simple to bring in a few kitchen items to use in class. And you'd be surprised at how many activities you can do with items that are just sitting around your kitchen. Here are some activities you can do with simple kitchen items, even if you are not a gourmet, that will also make memorable activities for your ESL students.

CONSIDER USING THESE COOKING IDEAS IN YOUR LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

1 KITCHEN ITEMS: COPIES OF A RECIPE

Whether you have cookbooks at home or you go online when you need to find culinary instructions, any recipe is great for sequencing in the ESL classroom. Make copies for your students (white out any numbers on the cooking instructions), cut apart the steps in the cooking process, and have students work independently or with a classmate or two to sequence the steps in the recipe. You don't have to use a complicated recipe, and you might even want to write out a few simple steps for a recipe of your own. Try writing instructions on how to make a peanut butter and jelly or grilled cheese sandwich, cut out instructions from a box of baking mix on how to make pancakes, or copy a more complicated recipe from any cookbook you have at your disposal. When they sequence the steps, your students will get practice with reading comprehension and logical ordering as well as exposure to new vocabulary.

2 KITCHEN ITEMS: A FEW BOWLS OR CONTAINERS OF VARIOUS SIZES, A SPOON OR SMALL KITCHEN OBJECT (OPTIONAL)

When it comes time to review prepositions with your students, you can have a lot of fun with just a few bowls and a small kitchen item like a spoon or timer. Simply bring your items into class, set up a table at the front of the room, and put the objects in different arrangements to review or test your students' knowledge of prepositions. (Put the bowl over the spoon, the spoon in the bowl, the bowl next to the spoon, etc.) You might even want to have students copy your setups with a few props of their own. Try giving each student one or more plastic cups and the cap from a milk bottle, and have them recreate your preposition demonstrations on their own desks. Stop after each arrangement for students to tell a partner about their set up, using prepositions of course, or for students to write a sentence about their objects. (E.g. The large cup is over the milk cap.)

In addition to reviewing prepositions with your students, you can use these times to practice comparative and superlative adjectives. Have students make sentences that compare their objects or those you are demonstrating with up front. They might talk about objects that are bigger, rounder, more colorful, or more useful than others.

3 KITCHEN ITEMS: ANYTHING

The most obvious use of kitchen items in the classroom is teaching cooking related vocabulary. Bring in items on your vocabulary list, and let students handle them and examine them. If you are teaching a group of internationals, they might be interested in seeing the differences between items they have at home and those that Americans have at home. (For example, you might use a fork where they

might use chopsticks.) Don't limit your vocabulary lesson to nouns, however. Show your students how to use the items you brought in, and you can get a good collection of verbs in your vocabulary lesson. Try teaching words like mix, fry, chop, turn, test, and let cool. Then let your students take turns acting out the verbs with the items you bring in.

4 KITCHEN ITEMS: FOOD, HOTPLATE/GRIDDLE/HOT-POT, COOKING UTENSILS

Because food is such an integral part of culture, bringing in kitchen items will naturally lead into a discussion of cultural differences. If you can, bring in some items and prepare a favorite dish for your students (as always being allergy sensitive). Tell your students when you traditionally prepare that dish and what memories it evokes. If you like, invite your students to share a favorite item of theirs with the class as well. I have had great success with students giving informational presentations by demonstrating how to cook a favorite dish. My students' favorite part is eating the food their international classmates prepare. If you're not one for cooking, you can still do this activity. Just describe the food (a great chance to practice descriptive language) and let students share about theirs.

5 KITCHEN ITEMS: EMPTY FOOD PACKAGES SUCH AS CEREAL BOXES, CRACKER BOXES, ICE CREAM CONTAINERS, YOGURT CONTAINERS, ETC.

If you teach young ESL students, you know how important imaginative play is for children. Give them something interesting to use for their pretend play by bringing in empty boxes and containers from your kitchen. Simply tape empty boxes closed and put your props in a corner of your classroom. Students will love playing with these items during free play time, and they

will be using kitchen vocabulary without even realizing it.

Don't teach young students but still want to bring kitchen items in? Have students use them for a role play. Have students play roles at a restaurant, in a family, or at a supermarket. Give each person a goal for their role play that is in conflict with the other person's goal and watch them negotiate for a solution while having fun with your props.

6 KITCHEN ITEMS: SEVERAL DIFFERENT FOODS

As ESL teachers, we are always trying to get our students to use descriptive and specific language. It's not too hard to have students describe what they see or hear in your classroom, but how often can they taste the items normally around them in class? Bring in a few foods (as always being allergy sensitive) and you have a great opportunity to use words like bitter, sweet, tangy, bland, spicy, salty, and others. To make the activity even more entertaining, have one person come to the front of the room and put on a blindfold. Then have them taste a food item and describe what it tastes like.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A GREAT COOK TO SEE HOW BENEFICIAL KITCHEN ITEMS CAN BE FOR YOUR STUDENTS AND YOUR CLASSROOM.

If you want to give it a try, see what you have hanging around the kitchen, bring it in, and a language lesson will practically create itself.

How to Teach Phrasal Verbs

[Get]

"WHAT DOES 'GET' MEAN?" ONE SIMPLE QUESTION CAN SPEAK VOLUMES ABOUT THE KIND OF PROBLEMS OUR ESL STUDENTS FACE.

One little word used in so many ways leaves them confused and at the same time eager to get to the bottom of this: what does this word really mean?

How can we answer this simple question in a way students will really "get"? You can simply launch into a list of the most common uses of this verb. Or you can teach this all-purpose verb (and others!) like this:

HOW TO TEACH THE DIFFERENT USES OF 'GET':

1 CHOOSE 5 TO 10 PHRASAL VERBS WITH GET

One dictionary lists about 20 phrasal verbs with 'get' and another 20 idioms – enough to drive any ESL student up the wall. This is precisely the problem with all-purpose verbs: dictionary definitions are no help at all. The best way to approach a verb like this is to choose five to six uses of the verb. And if possible, you should choose them with a theme. Let's consider this example: Visiting London. Here you have about a dozen uses of the verb 'get', all surrounding the topic of visiting another city. This is a great group of phrasal verbs to focus on because you can contrast and compare some (get across vs. get through).

2 CAN THEY GUESS THE MEANING?

I would use the worksheet mentioned above as a review or practice exercise. To introduce a new set of phrasal verbs, I'd first write up a paragraph where these phrasal verbs are used and have my students read it. Then, ask students to guess the meaning of each phrasal verb (the context helps!) and then challenge them to come up with a synonym (for example, get to

means to arrive).

If they have a hard time coming up with synonyms on their own, help them out by supplying more examples: I got to school at half past seven this morning. You may also simply introduce them as you would introduce any new vocabulary (by replacing them with a synonym, or substitution, for example), but I believe it is important for students to get into the habit of figuring out phrasal verbs on their own. There are hundreds of them, some of which have more than one meaning. Even if you teach several dozen phrasal verbs every year, they will most likely encounter others that are completely new to them.

3 PRACTICE: PHRASAL VERBS WITH 'GET'

You can use any of the worksheets you'll find here:

<http://bit.ly/1u0IMIX>

or create your own. Here are just a few ideas for great phrasal verb practice:

- A gap-filling exercise – Give them a text or reading in which they must fill in the blanks with the right phrasal verb
- A word search – Instruct them to search for phrasal verbs, but give them a list of synonyms.
- A board game – As they move across the board, you supply students with a word that must be replaced with a phrasal verb, or ask students to use a phrasal verb in a sentence.

4 PERFORMANCE: CREATE A DIALOGUE

Divide your students into pairs and have them write a conversation where they include phrasal verbs with get. Tell them that the pair that uses the most phrasal verbs in a single conversation wins. Walk around the classroom and provide assistance as needed. When all pairs are done, they take turns acting out their con-

versation to the class. Remember that phrasal verbs are used more often in spoken, rather than in written English. This exercise helps them understand how these verbs sound in a conversation.

5 RECYCLE AND REUSE

One of the best ways to ensure students will remember the phrasal verbs is to expose them to these expressions again and again. So, when you learn a new batch of phrasal verbs review the ones previously seen in class. Also, try to use them as much as possible and encourage your students to do so, as well. For example, if a student says, "I was not able to contact Juan", you can prompt him/her to use the phrase get through to.

But the fun does not stop here! 'Get' is only one of many verbs that tend to pop up in English conversation. Other useful all-purpose verbs to practice include do, take and put. You may also choose your groups of phrasal verbs to suit a topic like transportation or health. Or you may prefer to choose a group of phrasal verbs with the same preposition, rather than the same verb, like phrasal verbs with out or phrasal verbs with for and on.

IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER HOW YOU CHOOSE TO ORGANIZE THE DIFFERENT GROUPS OF PHRASAL VERBS.

The important thing is they have something in common, something that will help students remember them and not confuse them. No matter which group of verbs you choose, providing a context is key. Think of it as a solid foundation upon which they can build their knowledge.

Where Are You From? A Cross-Curricular Unit on Geography

WHETHER YOUR ESL CLASS IS FULL OF INTERNATIONAL TRAVELERS OR JUST THOSE DREAMING OF TRAVEL ONE DAY, A UNIT ON GEOGRAPHY IS A GREAT OPTION FOR THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM.

With a little planning, you can bring speaking, reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary lessons to your students while talking about interesting places all over the world. Here are some ways to specifically tie geography into your language lessons.

MAKE YOUR LESSONS VARIED WITH THE HELP OF GEOGRAPHY

1 WHERE ARE YOU FROM? SPEAKING

I have had the pleasure of teaching students from all over the world, and one of the benefits is I have learned so much about different places around the globe. Most students love to share about their home countries and cultures, and their classmates like hearing about them as well. Give your students a chance to talk about home in front of their classmates in a three to five minute presentation about their home country. If your students are full of ideas on what to share, let them decide what their presentations will contain. If they need a little more direction, you can guide them with these questions. What is your country known for? What do you like most about your country? What should people know about your country that they don't already know? Why should someone visit your country? If you like, you can also tie in other ideas that relate to what you are studying in class such as holidays or sports.

2 GOOD, BETTER, BEST: GRAMMAR

How well can your students formulate comparative and superlative sentences? This fast paced, geography based activity will tell you. Divide your class into groups of around five stu-

dents. Each group will work together to create comparative and superlative statements about different countries. First, give the groups five minutes to brainstorm as many adjectives as they can. Then have each group list ten different countries. Have each team post their adjective list and their country list at the front of the room (ideally on the whiteboard). Then each team should line up for a relay race. On your go, the first person from each team will rush to the front of the room and write a comparative sentence using one of the adjectives on their list and two of the countries on their list. For example, a student might write, "The United States is bigger than Korea." Once the player is finished writing his sentence, he rushes back to his team and tags the next person in line. Players race to write sentences as quickly as possible. The first team to write a grammatically and factually correct sentence for each country on their list wins the race.

3 IT'S TIME TO TRAVEL: READING AND WRITING

It's probably safe to say that students who travel overseas to study English like to travel. Granted that isn't always true nor does every ESL student leave home to study the language. In this activity, though, your students can travel anywhere they want to in the world, at least in their minds. Start by asking your students to think about a country they would like to travel to and that they have never visited before. Once students have chosen a country, have them start a KWL chart about that country. Starting with the first column, students list everything they already know about that country. This might include tourist attractions or things that would bring travelers to the country. In the second column, students should list what they want to know but don't yet. Then, give your students some independent research time in the computer lab or the library to read up on their countries and answer their questions. As they do their research, students can fill in the third

column of their chart with the things that they learned about their vacation destination. Students can then put all their knowledge and research together in a travel brochure for the country they would like to visit. Either with a desk top publishing program or by hand, ask students to write a trifold brochure for potential visitors to the country. Display the brochures on a bulletin board or make them available in a learning center so your students can read them during independent learning periods.

4 THE WONDERFUL WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE: VOCABULARY AND READING

Maps are a good visual to bring into the ESL classroom, and no time are they more appropriate than when you are doing a unit on geography. Your students can identify countries and cities all over the world on maps, but don't let their use end there. Your students can also use maps to identify important geographical features throughout the world, things like rivers, lakes, mountains, desert, forest, the equator, volcanoes, islands, the oceans and the continents. Review these words with your students and show them how these geographical landmarks are marked on various maps (online or in an atlas). Looking at map keys is a good place to start. Once your students are somewhat familiar with mapping landmarks, divide your class into seven groups and assign one of the world's continents to each group. Have each group read several maps to identify the important geographical features on their assigned continent. Then, give students time to make a poster of their continent showing these important geographical landmarks. Display the posters in your classroom or in the hallway outside.

5 A FLAG FOR ALL NATIONS: SPEAKING

How well can your students identify national flags? To find out, copy or

print a selection of flags from countries around the world and cut them out to make a sort of flashcard. (The greater the number of flags, the more challenging this activity will be.) Then give students a list of the countries whose flags you have cut out. Less familiar countries will get your students speaking more as they try to determine which flag goes with the country. Have students work in groups of three to match each flag to the correct country. If students are unsure of a particular flag, they should talk about it among their group and make an educated guess. Once everyone has made their best guesses, come together as a class and review the answers.

ESL STUDENTS ARE BY NATURE GLOBALLY MINDED. THEY ARE HARDWORKING STUDENTS WHO HOPE TO USE ENGLISH TO OPEN THEIR FUTURES. YOU CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEIR BROAD PERSPECTIVE ON THE WORLD WHEN YOU TIE GEOGRAPHY INTO LANGUAGE IN THE ESL CLASSROOM. TALKING ABOUT THEIR COUNTRIES OR LEARNING ABOUT OTHERS MAY BE JUST WHAT YOUR STUDENTS NEED TO COME OUT OF THEIR CONVERSATIONAL SHELLS.

Color Me Happy: 8 Ways to Teach Colors in English

COLOR WORDS ARE KEY VOCABULARY IN ANY LANGUAGE, AT ANY AGE. BEING ABLE TO DESCRIBE SOMETHING BY ITS COLOR IS SOMETHING WE DO EVERY DAY.

Teaching colors to a beginning English learner can be challenging. They may not have enough vocabulary for you to be able to describe things to them in order to teach colors. In this article, you will find 8 activities to teach colors even to someone at the most primary level, no matter what age. The first six activities require no writing and little to no reading. The last two activities do require minimal writing and reading skills. Let fun color your world with these great activities!

CHECK SOME FRESH IDEAS TO TEACH COLORS

1 FIRST THING'S FIRST

First, the vocabulary must be introduced. This is best done with a card that has the target color on it along with the written name of the color. Showing one card at a time, it is good practice to pronounce the color clearly to the class, and then have them repeat it as a class back to you. Do this with several colors and then review just those colors. Then do that with another small set of colors, reviewing as you go. Eventually, mix up all of the cards and review them with the students. After this initial presentation, you may start playing games and doing other activities to reinforce the color words.

2 SWAP SEATS

This game will keep everyone hopping, even adults. To start, review what the colors are and point out what colors people are wearing. Put chairs in a circle, enough so that each student has his own chair. Hold up a color card, and have all those who are wearing that color swap seats. After the students become comfortable, take one seat away after calling the color so that someone will not have

a seat after swapping. That person is then out. Play until there is a winner. Students of all ages enjoy this engaging game.

3 IT'S ALL IN THE BAG

This is another fun game for reinforcing colors. This one requires some prepping ahead of time for you. You will need to gather various small items of different colors and put them in a large canvas bag. You will also need either a color wheel which you can spin and have it land on a certain color or a small deck of cards with the colors on them. In class, explain to the students that they will be hunting for a certain color. Have one student spin the wheel or pick a card to choose a color. Have the other students each blindly pick an item from the bag. They must tell you what color it is. If it matches the target color, they get a point. This continues until all of the items are gone from the bag. Whoever has the most points at the end of the game, wins.

4 I SPY

The traditional game of "I Spy" is great for teaching colors. You should start by saying explaining the meaning of the phrase "I spy." Then say, "I spy something _____ (name of color)." The students need to guess what you are thinking of in the classroom. Try to be mindful of the fact that some students may not have the vocabulary to name their intended item. First, have them try to describe it, but if you see frustration setting in, you may let them point to it and give them the word. This game can help not only with color words, but with general vocabulary as well. You'll see how determined to use their vocabulary a student can become if they want to guess that item!

5 B-I-N-G-O!

Playing Color Bingo will help enliven any classroom! Students of all ages enjoy playing bingo, and Color Bingo will help them put to use all of

their vocabulary. If you have or can find a Color Bingo game, that is great. If not, you can easily make one. Print out a blank one (easily found on the internet), get something for them to use as markers or chips on the board, and hand out one card to each student. Also, give them markers, crayons or colored pencils in the colors that you want in your game. Put up color cards for all of the colors you want to include in the game, and tell the students to color in their boxes using the colors on the board in whatever order they choose (be sure to have them mark the center box as a free space, if appropriate). Next, start calling the colors. Students need to mark each color as it is called, and call out, "Bingo!" when they have it. Then they need to say the colors as they check them with you. You may want to have small prizes available for the winners.

6 CONCENTRATION

Another fun game for learning colors is concentration. In this game, there are two sets of cards: one with the colors in word name, and one with the colors right on them. Again, this game may be found commercially, but you may also make it yourself. Either way, you place all cards out on the table, face down. Students must turn over two cards and either read them or say what color it is. If they have a match, they take them. The person with the most matches at the end wins. If you are making it yourself, there is a way to vary the degree of difficulty. The easier way is to make the back of the word cards one color, and the back of the color cards another color. This way, students know to take one of each color every time, and they will not pick two word cards at once. The more difficult way is to make the backing of all cards the same color. This will make the memory portion of the game even more challenging. If you only have a few students you can all play together and you can be a part of it. Otherwise, set the games up and walk around the room to supervise all groups. If you have volunteers, this

would be a great way to use them.

7 WHICH COLOR IS YOUR FAVORITE?

This activity is best for students who can sit and interview each other. Each pair of students will get a sheet of paper with 5 (or more) questions on it, each of which can be answered with a color. For example, "What color is your favorite snack?" or "What color is your favorite shirt?" Students take turns asking each other these questions. They must be answered in a complete sentence, such as, "My favorite fruit is red." This activity promotes oral communication among students which is important to foster their confidence in general. When they are done, each partner introduces the other. For example, "My partner is _____. (name) His favorite fruit is blue. His favorite ice cream is white," and so on. Students bond during this activity which reinforces colors. Forming relationships in an ESL classroom is essential because as the student's comfort level rises, so does his desire to communicate in that classroom.

8 RIDDLE ME THIS

This activity is for students who can write and have some English vocabulary. Have the student think of a color and then think of three objects that begin with that color. Have them fold a piece of paper in half, to make a card shape. On the inside, have them write the name of the color the others will try to guess. On the outside, have them write the name of the three objects which are that color. Have them take turns coming up to the front of the room and reading their three clues to the class. See if someone can guess the color they are thinking of. This activity reinforces general vocabulary as well as the color words.

ALL OF THESE ACTIVITIES WILL PROVIDE GREAT PRACTICE IN LEARNING COLORS FOR YOUR STUDENTS.

Use them sporadically throughout your sessions, or focus on colors for a class or two by playing several games in a shorter period of time. However you decide to teach your students their colors, they will be thankful you have these fun activities to help them on their way!

But Didn't They Make a Movie?

5 Ways to Get Them to Read

THE SITUATION IS GETTING WORSE, AND YOU KNOW IT. STUDENTS ALL OVER THE WORLD, ESPECIALLY YOUNG ONES, ARE LESS INCLINED IN OUR VISUAL MEDIA FLOODED WORLD TO WANT TO READ, AND THEY LOOK FOR WAYS AROUND BOOKS AND EXCERPTS.

We teachers know that reading is one of the best ways to reinforce and improve vocabulary, however, and look for ways to engage students in the written word. Here are five unconventional tips to encourage students to read more.

ENCOURAGE YOUR CLASS TO READ USING NEW METHOD

1 LET THEM WATCH THE MOVIE

If they really want to watch the movie as opposed to read the book, let them do so. You have three options to encourage reading along with the movie.

- Make them read English subtitles by providing a worksheet or activity for the film where they have to mark how many times different vocabulary words are used.
- Give them a question and answer worksheet using actual dialogue from the book that was used in the movie.
- If they loved the movie, give them the book to read afterwards! It might have sparked their interest to delve into the words. Have an optional assignment ready for extra credit to summarize three key differences between the book and the movie in a short reading comprehension assignment.

2 PASS E-BOOK CHAPTERS TO THEIR CELL PHONES

You can download thousands of books for free from the Internet. Find a good one from a new author for teens for free online at www.goodreads.com and then develop questions. Or you can find a huge amount of free Eng-

lish literature at www.gutenberg.org. Use a classic Edgar Allen Poe short story to engage teens in a reading assignment where they have to answer short discussion questions for homework and then talk about their answers in groups in class. Provide text files that can be read on the computer if they do not have a cell phone or tablet.

3 GIVE THEM MAGAZINE ARTICLES

Find well written articles from the New York Times or Cosmopolitan about pop culture, dating, music, or some other interesting subject for teens. Have them write a paragraph about their reaction to the article as homework before class. You can also design an assignment for them to find an article and present it to classmates. If they use interesting articles, you can have some great discussions!

4 MAKE BOOKS IN CLASS

Download books for pre-intermediate or intermediate teens at a site like www.readinga-z.com and have students pick books they like and bind them in class. They can do this alone, or they can work in teams of four to be responsible for reading and summarizing a few pages of each book. They will be more inclined to read the book chapter if they have a social impetus to complete a certain part for a group grade. Actually making the book will give them a sense of ownership over it as well which will encourage engagement.

5 CREATE AN EDUCATIONAL PAMPHLET ASSIGNMENT

Ask them about a social problem in which they are interested, and then task them to go to a local NGO, government agency, or doctor's office, or to search online for an educational pamphlet about that subject. Assign them to write a few bullet points about the subject and either hand it in as homework or use it as a classroom

discussion tool. Good topics on which they can find brochures might be college/university options, special diets to lose weight, or beauty tips they can get at a salon or hairdresser.

IT CAN BE HARD TO GET ANYONE TO READ FOR CLASS, ESPECIALLY TEENAGERS OR YOUNG LEARNERS THAT ARE BUSY WITH OTHER SCHOOLWORK AND ACTIVITIES AND HAVE A CONSTANT STIMULUS OF ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA AT THEIR FINGERTIPS.

ESL teachers should still actively encourage reading though, as it is the best way to reinforce vocabulary and learn new words and grammar concepts. These are just a few tips to make reading more interesting for your students!

How to Teach MAKE and DO:

4 Clear Tips

FOR MOST STUDENTS THERE ARE TWO WICKED LITTLE VERBS, DO AND MAKE, THAT CAUSE QUITE A CONFUSION.

Does this look familiar? “Every morning I make my homework”. It is an all time classic mistake most students make at some point. We correct and correct but often, the confusion persists. So why don't we take a look at some killer examples and explanations that will definitely help them see the difference between do and make and when to use each one!

WHEN DO WE USE MAKE?

Though make is similar to do, it is used in a slightly different way. Generally, we use it for producing, constructing, creating or building something new, something that did not exist before.

1 TO TALK ABOUT THE MATERIALS THAT ARE USED TO MAKE SOMETHING.

*This statue is made of bronze.
She lived in a cabin made of wood.
The toy was made of plastic.
The sheets are made of cotton*

2 WHEN SOMETHING PRODUCES AN ACTION OR REACTION.

*Romantic movies make me cry
The news made her so angry.
There is too much dust and it is making my nose itch.*

3 WHEN WE TALK ABOUT MEALS AND FOODS

*Can you make me a cup of coffee?
I made dinner last night but you never came.
It's your turn to make lunch tomorrow.
My Dad makes the best sand-*

wiches.

4 WITH NOUNS ABOUT SPEAKING AND CERTAIN SOUNDS:

*She made a joke when she saw what her sister was wearing
Don't make a sound! Jane is coming and we want to surprise her.
Please don't make any comments about my haircut.*

WHEN DO WE USE DO?

1 ACTIVITIES IN GENERAL WITHOUT SPECIFYING (SOMETHING, NOTHING, ANYTHING, EVERYTHING ETC.)

*Look! There is a fire! Do something!
Are you doing anything tomorrow?
She just wants to watch TV and do nothing.*

2 JOBS, WORK OR TASKS (THESE JOBS AND TASKS DON'T PRODUCE ANY PHYSICAL OBJECT).

*She usually does the cleaning in the morning
Did you do your homework?
I need a babysitter. Do you know anyone who does that?*

3 THE MEANING OF A VERB IS OBVIOUS, WE CAN REPLACE IT WITH DO (QUITE INFORMAL).

*Who is going to do your hair for the party?
You do the glasses and I'll do the dishes.*

HELP THEM REMEMBER!

OK, so let's imagine you go the extra mile to teach your student something challenging like how to use make and do for instance. Is that it? Will they automatically remember everything on their own from then on? Sadly, the answer is no. Despite your amazing use of teaching techniques and preparation, students just forget. Well, in their defense they do have a lot to remember. Here are some great activities that can help your student retain what they have learned.

- Activity 1: Prepare cards or strips of paper. On each there should be a sentence using either do or make. Some sentences should be incorrect. Place all the cards on a table and have them identify which are correct and which aren't.
- Activity 2: Provide short texts for students that have one or two example of do and make. Have the students read the text and ask them to find the examples. When they are done they can exchange texts with other students to work on finding examples in other texts.
- Activity 3: They can do this activity at home. Write a list of activities on the board and assign one or two to each student. The first task for them is to decide is whether to use make or do. After that they have to write a sentence with each.

YOUR STUDENTS WILL FACE MANY CHALLENGES WHILE LEARNING.

Keep in mind that what we do can make things much easier for them. The trick to learning anything new is practice. Always provide as much practice as possible and your students will be ready to use what they have learned confidently. As they say, practice makes perfect.

Everything a Busy Teacher Needs to Know About Phrasal Verbs

ARE YOU TEACHING BEGINNING STUDENTS?

Intermediate students? Advanced or beyond students?

Then it's the perfect time to introduce or reintroduce phrasal verbs. Here's just what you need to know about these unique elements of English and a simple method of teaching them.

WHAT ARE PHRASAL VERBS?

Besides being the big bad boogey man in the ESL learner's closet, phrasal verbs, simply put, are verbs composed of two (or more) words. When we think of verbs, we naturally identify them as single units that express an action or state of being. Phrasal verbs, which are often a combination of a verb plus a preposition or a verb plus an adverb, also express an action or state of being. What makes them different from typical verbs, however, is that they use more than one word, and their meaning is most often not related to the words which compose it. For example, the phrasal verb *carry on*, which means to continue doing something, has nothing to do with the verb *carry*. It is this unique characteristic of phrasal verbs which makes them so difficult for ESL students to remember and use fluently.

WHY TEACH PHRASAL VERBS?

For most, and possibly all, phrasal verbs, a single word verb exists which expresses the same meaning. So why bother teaching (or learning) phrasal verbs at all, especially when they cause students so much frustration? Phrasal verbs are prolific in spoken English. Though they don't show up as often in formal English or written English, casual English speakers use phrasal verbs without batting an eye. ESL students who do not use phrasal verbs will sound formal or stilted when they speak. They will also struggle to understand native speakers whose use of phrasal verbs is uninhibited.

If your students are going to sound comfortable speaking English and if they are going to understand what native speakers say to them, they have to become comfortable using phrasal verbs.

TRANSITIVE AND INTRANSITIVE, SEPARABLE AND INSEPARABLE

Phrasal verbs also have different characteristics, as do typical verbs. They may be transitive (taking a direct object) or intransitive (not taking a direct object). In some transitive phrasal verbs, the direct object can come between the two pieces making up the phrasal verb. Take the following sentence using the phrasal verb *make up*: The student made an excuse up for why he didn't do his homework. For others the direct object must come after the phrasal verb. For example, the expenses added up to \$500. In some cases, a direct object in either position is grammatical.

USE SIMPLE IDEAS TO TEACH PHRASAL VERBS

All this may be very interesting and even profitable, but if you are not comfortable teaching phrasal verbs, your students certainly won't be comfortable using them in their speech. Teaching these important words, though, does not have to be overwhelming. Here are five simple steps you should follow when introducing them to your students. You can use them with students as early as beginners, and the sooner you teach them to your students, the better off they will be when it comes to speaking English fluently.

1 CHOOSE THE PHRASAL VERBS YOU WILL TEACH

Sets of about ten phrasal verbs are good numbers to start with. If possible, start with verbs that show physical action and that do not have a common verb (e.g. *run for* (an office), *run*

through (practice), *run out of*). Because the meanings of phrasal verbs most often are not related to their components, teaching overlapping sets only confuses students.

2 INTRODUCE THE VERBS

If your students are not familiar with the phrasal verbs you will be teaching, and if you are teaching beginners they probably won't be, read each verb and mime the action for it. As you do, write each verb on the board. Once you have demonstrated all the verbs on your own, give your students commands using those phrasal verbs. For example, if you chose the phrasal verb *pick up* and its opposite *put down*, you might tell students to pick up a pencil or pick up their book. Then have them put those same objects down. Make sure your students get a chance to act out each of the phrasal verbs on your list. This step is important for laying a good foundation for learning phrasal verbs. By associating the verbs with their action rather than a one word equivalent, you are establishing these words in your students' vocabularies in a primary position. If they learn these verbs early on, they won't be tempted to use single word equivalents because phrasal verbs will be deep set in their English vocabularies.

3 HAVE STUDENTS WRITE SENTENCES WITH THE VERBS

If you are teaching absolute beginners, you will want to write several sentences fill in the blank style using each of the phrasal verbs. Make sure when you do that you only provide one blank for each phrasal verb to reinforce to your students that phrasal verbs, though more than one word, act as one part of speech in the sentence. Act out each sentence, and have students fill in the blank with a phrasal verb. If you are teaching intermediate or advanced students, simply act out a sentence that uses a phrasal verb and have your students write out a sentence explaining what you are doing.

Be sure to leave the phrasal verbs written on the board behind you. Their answers should read along the lines of the following: The teacher opened up her book. She picked up her pencil. She wrote out the answers to the questions.

4 GUESS THE PHRASAL VERB

Now that your students have seen you act out the phrasal verbs and have practiced writing them, have your students play the teacher. Have each person choose one phrasal verb from your list and act it out for the class. The rest of the class will have to guess the verb that person is acting out. Give each student a turn, if possible, to act out at least one of the verbs.

5 USE THE PHRASAL VERB

Now that students have seen the verbs acted out, have had some writing practice, and have acted some of them out on their own, it's time to put these phrasal verbs to use. Have students write original sentences using the verbs or use them in a speaking activity. Even better, do both. The more your students use these verbs in their written and spoken English, especially if they are just beginners, the more comfortable they will become with them and the easier they will learn additional phrasal verbs.

PHRASAL VERBS DON'T HAVE TO BE A SOURCE OF FEAR FOR EITHER YOUR STUDENTS OR THEIR TEACHER.

Taking them a few at a time, early in their English studies, your students will build a thorough bank of phrasal verbs in their fluent English vocabularies. If you would like a reference list of phrasal verbs, you can find one here:

<http://bit.ly/1oHHRpP>

5 Ways To Take What They Know To The Next Level

ONE PLUS ONE EQUALS ONE?

Though your math teacher may cringe, that's exactly what you get with compound words. It's not logical, someone might say, that two (often unrelated) words come together to make a completely different word (think along the lines of hum plus bug equals humbug – neither music nor insect). That's why the more practice you give your students with compound words, the better they will remember them and be able to use them. So the next time you are looking for ways to teach compound words to your ESL students, try one of these fun ideas.

CHECK OUT ON INNOVATIVE IDEAS OF TEACHING COMPOUND WORDS

1 COMPOUND WORD MEMORY

After explaining the concept of compound words, you can use a simple memory style game to help students remember which words come together to make a compound word. Prepare your own playing cards or have students make their own sets. You will need two index cards for each compound word you want your students to learn. Write one half of the word on each card, shuffle them, and you are ready to play. Students lay all the cards face down on a table grid-style. On a player's turn, he or she turns over two cards. If they make a compound word, she keeps the cards and takes another turn. If they do not make a compound word, she must turn them back over and let the next player take a turn. The double challenge is to know which words make a compound word as well as remembering where those cards are in the grid. Once all the pairs have been matched, the player with the most cards is the winner.

2 STUDENT MATCH UP

If you are looking for a way to get your students moving in class and

reviewing compound words at the same time, try this student match up game. Write several compound words on sticky notes, one half of the word on each note, and place one sticky note on each student's back. On your go, students mingle with their classmates trying to find a partner who will complete their compound word. It's up to you if you want permit students to tell each person the word they are wearing (for an easier game) or if students are not allowed to tell each person the word on their back but can give clues as to what it is (for a more difficult match up but one that elicits more conversation among your students). See if everyone in your class can find their matches in a certain amount of time. Then change up the stick notes and give your students even less time to complete the challenge.

3 COMPOUND WORD DAISIES

This activity helps students understand how one word can be part of several different compound words, and it's a great way to teach compound word families. Each student will need one piece of yellow paper and several pieces of white paper which they will use to make daisies. Students should cut a center for their first flower out of the yellow paper – a simple circle will do – and then paste it in the center of the white paper. Then, students should draw five or six petals for their flower (your choice) around the yellow center. The picture should take up the entire page or as much of it as possible and still look like a flower. Give your students a word to write on the center of the flower. This word will be the first part of their compound word. (For example, you might choose “back”.) Then, ask students for words that can be combined with that word to make a compound word. (In the case of back, students might suggest the following: fire, ground, lash, pack, rub, slide, stroke, and track). If a student gives a word that makes a compound word (backfire, background, backpack, etc.) have

students write that word on one of the petals. Continue until every petal has a word on it and your students have listed six compound words for that family. If you like, make another flower with a different center to create another compound word family - either with a common first word (For example, bookcase, bookkeeper, bookmark, bookstore, bookworm... Sunday, sunshine, sunray, sunset, sunflower, sunburn) or a common last word (for example, baseball, kickball, basketball, football, gumball, handball). If you like, display your flowers on a bulletin board titled “Growing Our Vocabularies”.

4 COMPOUND WORD EGG MATCH

This activity works well as an independent learning station, but you could also do it as a group activity or a relay race. Whatever your choice, recruit your students to help you create the playing pieces. Start by purchasing a package of simple plastic Easter eggs and putting together a list of twelve compound words you want your students to learn. Have students separate the eggs and then put them back together making sure each egg has pieces of two different colors. Then, using a permanent marker, students should write one compound word on each egg – the first part of the word on the top of the egg and the second part of the word on the bottom egg. Separate the eggs again, throw them into a basket or bag, and you are ready to play. On their turn, each person takes two pieces out of the bag and decides if they will make a compound word. If they do, he puts them together and sets them aside. If not, he leaves the pieces on the table for the next player who pulls two more pieces and tries to make one or more compound words from his pieces as well as those on the table. Play continues until all the compound words are properly formed.

5 COMPOUND WORD DOMINOES

For a real challenge, see how well your students do at a game of compound word dominoes. In this game, students will have to place either the first part or the second part of a compound word in its proper place on a chart. The key is that the end of one compound word is the beginning of its matching compound word. For example, makeup and upstairs would make a “domino match” because the first word ends with up and the second word begins with it. To play the game, students pull one card at a time and try to place it in the given chart until all the compound words are formed. You can either see how well your students do with the words without practicing (though you may want to give them a reference list of compound words to help them out), or go over the words before giving them the incomplete chart. To make the cards, copy the worksheet as is and cut out all the red words to use as playing pieces. Use the student sheet to play the game.

COMPOUND WORDS AREN'T IN THE PLANS FOR EVERY ESL CLASS, BUT THEY ARE A GREAT WAY TO DEVELOPING VOCABULARY AND MAKE CONNECTIONS IN YOUR STUDENTS' MINDS WITHOUT HAVING TO LEARN AND MEMORIZE NEW VOCABULARY SINCE YOU ARE USING THE TOOLS ALREADY AT YOUR STUDENTS' DISPOSAL.

If you are looking for a list of American English compound words, Paul Noll has compiled a list of 600 English compound words for your reference. Print them out and then try your class with one of these compound word activities, and see how quickly they learn and how much they retain.

Give It a Year: 7 Strategies for Teaching about the Calendar

THE TOPIC OF CALENDARS IS A VERY IMPORTANT ONE FOR ESL STUDENTS.

Everyone needs to be able to discuss the date or the year, no matter what their age. An added challenge for some is that they may usually put the date before the month, but now need to adjust to the month and then the date. Of course, there are also ordinal numerals to work with as well. Here are some simple, fun strategies to teach reading a calendar for your ESL class.

TURN YOUR STUDENTS INTO EXPERT CALENDAR READERS

1 SPELL IT OUT

First you will need to introduce the names of the days of the week and the months of the year. Show a calendar of the year in its entirety. Point out how the calendar week starts on Sunday, as in other cultures it may start on Monday or another day. Go over the pronunciation of the months and the days. This lends itself to a lot of repetition. If you have covered birthdays, or it is an intermediate or advanced class, you can ask, "Who has a birthday in _____?" (insert month), or simple questions like "On what day is this class?" and look for correct answers. This keeps it a bit more interesting.

2 WHO'S ON FIRST?

In some other languages, it is not necessary to use ordinal numbers to express the date. You may need to explain to your students that in English it is done this way. Teach them the ordinal numbers all the way to "thirty-first," as is necessary for the calendar. Some fun activities to teach them would be to have students line up, and other students tell you who is first, second and so on. You can make this activity as easy or difficult as you choose. Depending on your class, you may want to continue further with the ordinal numbers now or in future sessions.

3 IT'S A DATE

It is very important to teach how to

say a full date in English. Students may be used to giving the number before the month and so on. You will need to explain to them how the date is said in English: the month followed by the ordinal number, then the year. Start with today's date and proceed with a few other example dates. Be sure to work on the pronunciation of the year as well. You may want to explain that some people say "two thousand thirteen," while others say, "twenty-thirteen," but they both mean 2013. You may want to ask the students for dates important to them to make it more relevant. Asking them who has a birthday in a certain month and then having them tell you the actual date is a fun way to include everyone on a personal level.

4 MAKE IT YOUR OWN

This activity requires some preparation from your student. If possible, order blank calendars from a teaching supply site, or print them out. You will need blank calendars with a space for a picture on the top. Have your students bring it a list of dates that are important to them, at least one for each month if possible. Have them design their own calendars, drawing a picture symbolizing either the month or the people who have important dates for them in that month. On the calendar grid, have them write "Anna's birthday" or whatever the occasion may be, filling in the correct English terms. After they are done, have the students write sentences for five of those occasions. For example, "My sister's birthday is on October 16th." After they are done writing, they can share these with the class.

5 YOUR NUMBER'S UP

Reading and writing the date using numbers only may be a challenge for your students, particularly those who are used to putting the day before the month. Now, using numbers, they will need make sure they are putting the month before the day. You may want to start by drilling them regarding the numbers for each month. You call out a number and they respond with the month, and vice versa. For a fun twist, you may let the students act as

the leaders and call out the numbers or months. Many students enjoy taking a leadership role.

6 FRIENDLY COMPETITION

This is a fun way to practice writing the date using numbers correctly in English. Begin by reviewing how to write the date in number form. This is very important because students will need to be able to write the date in number form on a check or the like. Divide the class into teams (number of teams would depend on number of students). Have one member of each team come to the board. Read aloud a date in this format: "the 27th of February." The first player to write "2/27" correctly wins that round. This becomes a high energy game and is popular with students.

7 THIS IS YOUR MONTH

Assign each student a month of the year (repeating if necessary), but tell them not to tell others which month they have. Have them write three clues about the month, such as its holidays, season or usual weather in your area. When they finish, have them take turns reading them aloud. When it is their turn, have them choose volunteers to guess the correct answer. It is fun to see who can guess the answers the most quickly.

BEING ABLE TO READ A CALENDAR AND READ AND WRITE THE DATE ARE ALL VERY IMPORTANT SKILLS FOR YOUR ESL STUDENTS.

It will help them at work, at home and socially. Calendar is definitely one of those activities that you can and should put into your class routine, either at the beginning or end of every class. You can practice by yesterday was "_____", today is "_____" and tomorrow will be "_____." Getting into a routine of saying the date on a regular basis will help your students become comfortable with using a calendar in English.

Teaching Chores Is Not a Bore: 6 Activities to Keep Their Attention

MOST PEOPLE DO NOT LIKE DOING HOUSEHOLD CHORES, SO TEACHING OR LEARNING ABOUT THEM IS NOT USUALLY FIRST ON ANYONE'S LIST.

However, household chores are an important part of our daily routines, and therefore ESL students need to learn how to communicate about them. Use the activities below to teach your students about household chores.

MAKE SURE YOUR CLASS COMMUNICATES ABOUT CHORES EFFECTIVELY

1 FINDING THE WORDS

In order to talk about chores, your students need to have the vocabulary words. You will need to present clear pictures and labels to accompany each word. Go over all of the common household chores you feel are appropriate for your class. As you review them, ask them which one is their favorite and their least favorite. Students can say, "My favorite chore is _____, but my least favorite chore is _____." Relating to them on a personal level tends to let students see how important learning these terms is to them.

2 GET EQUIPPED

Along with the names of various household chores, your students will also need to know the names of the equipment we use to do household chores, such as a broom or a vacuum. You will need to get actual examples of this equipment ahead of time to have it for your class. Show them each item, saying, "This is a _____ (item). We use it to _____ (action)." Have them repeat it back to you, paying attention to pronunciation. When you are done, place large titles of each household chore around the classroom. Choose a student, and have them come up and choose a piece of cleaning equipment. See if they can place that item under the correct label, for example they would need to put the broom under the word "sweeping." For a fun twist on this game, divide the class into two teams. Divide the equipment up into

two equal piles. The two teams will race to see who can put their equipment in the right spots first. Some friendly competition usually makes class more fun and memorable.

3 MAKE IT A GAME

This involves some preparation ahead of time on your part. You will need to design a simple board game. "Blank board game templates" can easily be found online by using a search engine, and you can print one out. You will also need one pair of dice for each board. Mark some of the spaces with commands such as: "You made your bed. Go forward 3 spaces," or "You forgot to take out the trash. Lose a turn." Make copies of this game and laminate them. Have some item to use as markers, such as bingo chips or coins, a different one for each player. Divide the class into groups of 2-4, depending on your numbers. Have them roll the dice and move that number of spaces, reading the board as necessary. You may make it as complicated as you wish by adding spaces to the board with a "?" that lead you to pick a card. Then you would need to prepare of pile of cards with additional directions. Have fun with this activity to review the names and actions associated with household chores.

4 DAY BY DAY

It is important that students are able to talk about their daily routines, and household chores are usually a part of that routine. This activity works best if you have already taught telling time in English. You will need to prepare a sample daily routine with times of day, such as, "7:00: Wake up. 7:15: Walk the dog. 7:30: Make breakfast," and so on. Review this routine with your students, answering any questions. Then give them a blank template. Tell them they need to provide 5-10 (depending on the level of your class) times and routines for their typical day. Tell them to include as many household chores as possible. When everyone is done, let the students share their schedules. Compare and contrast the different schedules over a typical day.

5 WOULD YOU RATHER?

This activity is another way to review household chores in a fun game format. You will need to prepare sets of cards ahead of time. On each card, you should write something like, "Would you rather clean the bathroom all day for a month and never have to do it again, or clean the kitchen floor with your toothbrush once a year for ten years?" These questions should be silly, but force the student to make a choice. The student should answer, "I would rather clean the bathroom all day for a month because _____." Model a couple of cards for your students, so they can see what your goal is, before you divide them into groups with sets of cards. Have no more than 4 students per group, so everyone gets a chance to talk. This is a fun way to review this material.

6 ROBOT TO THE RESCUE!

This activity gives students a chance to use their imaginations while reviewing household chores, which is always a great way to help remember what you have learned. It may serve as a culminating activity for the topic of household chores. Begin by reviewing the various household chores and equipment that you have covered. Let your students know that today, they will have the chance to invent a robot that will do one of their chores. Provide them with a blank template that has room for: the robot's name, its chore, how it completes its chore, how much it would cost and why they chose that specific chore for the robot. It should also have space for a drawing of the robot. This activity works for children and adults alike, as everyone would like to find a way to get out of their chores! Have them share their robots when they are done. If this is a class of children and this can be a multi-session activity, you may even want them to build the robot out of recycled materials and then present it to the class.

LEARNING ABOUT HOUSEHOLD CHORES IS A NECESSARY PART OF LEARNING ENGLISH. You can make it a bit more interesting for you and your students by using the above activities.

Warning: 5 Activities To Teach About Household Dangers

NO MATTER WHAT THE AGE OR LEVEL OF YOUR ESL STUDENTS, THEY MUST BE ABLE TO TALK ABOUT HOUSEHOLD DANGERS FOR SAFETY REASONS.

For some of these activities, you will need to think about the age of your students. For example, in general you would teach the term “childproof” to older children and adults, but not to primary age students, as even native speakers at that age generally do not use that word. Nevertheless, all students need to know how to communicate about household dangers in order to stay safe. Use the activities below to teach this skill.

HOW TO TEACH ABOUT HOUSEHOLD SAFETY

1 ROOM BY ROOM

This activity is a great one to use if you have already covered the names of rooms in the house. You will need a large cut-out of a house. You can even use a dollhouse if one is available to you. Your teaching is always more memorable for your students if you have visual aids. Begin by going room by room, and reviewing or teaching the names of the rooms. Explain to the students that you are going to talk about household dangers. Next, make a chart that has each room as a heading. Brainstorm with your students for possible household dangers, and discuss what room they might happen in (it could be more than one room, such as a fire). You will also want to cover general terms, such as “dangerous,” “poisonous,” and “warning.”

If it is an intermediate or advanced class, you can try just brainstorming with little to no prompting. If it is more of a beginner’s class, have pictures of various household dangers, for example a fire or a child getting into cleaning solutions under the sink. Have them put the pictures in the right places, and then give them the vocabulary for the danger terms. Let-

ting them brainstorm first allows them to process the idea before adding on learning some new vocabulary.

2 PICTURE THIS

This is a good follow up activity to the introduction of the vocabulary terms. You can also use it to teach the imperative sentence. If you are not ready to teach that yet, just teach them the phrases necessary, such as, “Don’t play with matches!” and the like, without going into the term imperative. You can always refer back to this lesson when you do cover it. Review the terms they have learned to describe emergencies. Explain to them that today they are going to be the teacher, and warn others about possible household dangers in their homes. Give the example of “Don’t play with matches!” and see if the students can come up with some other examples. Depending on the class, you may need to give them some possibilities. Have them each create a poster warning others of their chosen household danger. When they are done, have them share. At a minimum, they should read what they have written and label their pictures aloud. More advanced students may talk more in-depth about the poster, and even take questions from the audience.

3 UNDER THE SINK

This activity’s focus will vary depending on the age of your students. Typically, many people keep cleaning solutions and the like in the cabinet under the sink. This activity will focus on the dangers lurking there. If this activity is for children, it should focus on knowing not to ingest any of the cleaning solutions found there. If it is for older children or adults, it should focus on childproofing that area and keeping children safe. Begin by having various empty containers of different cleaning products. Discuss their names and their purposes. Review a typical label, showing an enlarged one if possible, and talk about the important terms, such as “Warning,”

“Do not place near heat,” and “Poison Control Center.” Discuss where they may typically be found in a home (in the cabinet under the kitchen sink). Introduce the term “cabinet,” if necessary. Talk about keeping that cabinet locked if possible, and/or keeping those cleaning products out of the reach of children. Model a phone call to the Poison Control Center in case of ingestion and have the students role play that, if possible.

4 FIRE SAFETY

This activity would be best for older children and adults, due to the subject matter of planning an escape route on their own. Younger children can learn the vocabulary for fire, smoke and firefighter. They can see what a firefighter looks like in his full gear, and that they are there to help even though they look strange in all their gear.

A big household danger, of course, is fire. Review with students the possible causes of a fire in the home. If you have not done so with them yet, role play calling 9-1-1 in case of a fire or other emergency. In addition, let your students know that it is important to have an escape plan in their homes in case of fire. To do this, have your students make a map of their home with the rooms labeled. This can help to serve as a review. Next, tell them to draw lines on the map to show how their family could escape from various rooms in their home in case of a fire. They also need to mark a meeting place for the whole family outside. Have them share their maps, using prepositions to explain how they would escape from the house, if possible. This can be a great preposition review if you have already covered them. If not, provide assistance as necessary. Students can take these maps home and discuss them with their family.

5 WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

This activity would be great for a class that has some conversational

skills. You will need cards (approximately five per student) prepared with various household danger scenarios. One example would be, "You smell smoke in the living room, so you feel the wall. It is hot. What would you do?" Start by modeling: choose a card, read it and give an example of how to answer it. Next, put the class into partners and divide the cards among them. Have them take turns with their partners answering the questions. When they are done, have each person choose one card from their pile, read it and answer it in front of the whole class. Giving them a choice of answers which they have already composed makes students feel more comfortable. Having that level of comfort enables students to take risks with speaking, which is always our goal.

ALL ESL STUDENTS NEED TO BE ABLE TO TALK ABOUT HOUSEHOLD DANGERS, ESPECIALLY IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY.

Use the above activities to help your students be ready to communicate in English in any of these dangerous situations.

Surf's Up: 8 Activities To Teach About The Beach

TEACHING ABOUT THE BEACH CAN BE A LOT OF FUN.

After all, most people enjoy going to the beach, so your students will probably be happy to learn how to communicate about it. Use the activities below to teach your students about the beach.

USE THESE IDEAS TO TEACH ABOUT SUMMER FUN

1 OFF TO THE BEACH!

This introductory activity will depend a lot on the background of your students. You will need to introduce basic vocabulary for the beach. If they are familiar with the beach, you can show a picture of the beach in general, and then show individual pictures of each word with the spelling, spending some time on pronunciation. If they are not familiar with the beach, you may want to show a video to give them a better idea of what the beach looks like in general.

2 SANDY HIDE AND SEEK

This is a review of the basic vocabulary, with a twist. You will need to get a few big basins and fill them with sand. You will also need to get up to five small items you can use at the beach (shovel, small ball, etc.) and bury them in the sand. Divide the students into as many groups as you have basins. Tell them there are x amount of items hidden in the basin, and that they will need to find them. Choose one person to be the recorder, and have them write down the items. If you have different items in each basin, you can then have them rotate and try again. This is a fun activity for all ages.

3 WHAT TO WEAR?

Start this activity by reviewing all types of beachwear. Be sure to include t-shirts, shorts, flip flops and all types of swimwear. You will need to have some beachwear and some cold weather clothing, such as sweaters and jeans. Take a box and mix up the beachwear with the cold weather clothing. Hand out the boxes to groups of students. Tell

them they have to separate them into two piles, beachwear and non-beachwear, and make a list of the beachwear using their vocabulary. After they do this once, they can trade boxes with another group and do it again, but this time you can time them to make it more competitive. The group that has them separated and listed correctly first, wins.

4 SHE SELLS SEASHELLS

This is a great activity to do as a review or introduction to adjectives. You will need a collection of seashells, enough to give a small assortment to each pair of students. Review or introduce adjectives to describe the shells as necessary. Then tell the students they will have a certain amount of time to write at least one adjective for each shell they have. When they are done, have them share. You can also have them talk about which one is their favorite, which one is their least favorite, and so on.

5 STAY SAFE!

Safety is important at any age at the beach. Present some of the more common safety rules, such as listening to the lifeguards and staying within the buoys or ropes that define where swimming is allowed. After presenting and discussing these rules, have students choose their favorite rule and make a poster illustrating it. Have each student share their poster.

6 WHO IN THE SEA AM I?

This activity will work best for students who have some writing ability, as they will compose some simple sentences. You will need a set of flashcards with all the sea creatures you are going to talk about. Start by reviewing or introducing a variety of sea creatures, especially any that the students are likely to see at a local beach. Afterwards, hand out a flashcard to each student. Explain to them that they need to compose a riddle for the class to guess their creature. It will consist of three simple "I statements," and one question of "Who am I?" at the end. For example: "I am long. I

slither. I look like a snake. Who am I?" In that case, the answer would be an eel. Students enjoy composing and guessing these riddles.

7 CHARADES AT THE BEACH

The game of charades is always a fun one when reviewing vocabulary. You will need cards with the vocabulary and/or phrases you want to use in this game. You may need to model the game of charades for your students. After doing so, divide them into two teams. Have students take turns choosing a card and acting it out for their team. If the team gets the word in the allotted time, they get a point. The one with the most points at the end is the winner. To make it less competitive, do not divide the class into teams. Have one person pick a card and have the whole class guess together.

8 AT THE BOARDWALK

This activity would be a great culminating one for a beach unit, or for a celebration. Some beaches have a boardwalk where games of chance are played and food, beverages and souvenirs are sold, and where there are carnival type rides. Your students may not be familiar with this, so you may want to show them a video about it just to introduce the idea the lesson before this one. For this activity, you will need to set up some simple typical boardwalk games, such as "knock over the cans" or "ring toss," for example. You will need several volunteers to help you run these games. It would be fun to have the classroom set up to look like a boardwalk, and even to have some typical food there, such as pizza or ice cream. You will also want some appropriate beach type music playing. Your students will interact as if it were a real boardwalk, needing to ask how to play or ask to obtain their food. This can be a lot of fun for all!

GOING TO THE BEACH IS A FUN ACTIVITY FOR MANY. IT MAY ALSO BE A TOTALLY NEW EXPERIENCE FOR OTHERS.

Either way, these activities will help you teach your students all about the beach.

10 Activities to Teach about Going to the Movies

GOING TO THE MOVIES IS FUN FOR EVERYONE.

You can use these fun activities as an opportunity to teach your students more English, as well as teach them about typical routines and conversations about going to the movies. Enjoy!

TRY THESE 10 ACTIVITIES TO TEACH ABOUT GOING TO THE MOVIES

1 FIRST THINGS FIRST

To begin talking about going to the movies, you will need to introduce the vocabulary to your students. You will want to include terms like: movies, tickets, seats, theater, popcorn, soda, candy, and so on. You may also include terms directly relevant to the movie, such as: actor, scene, previews and so on. Use large, clear pictures with clearly written labels to introduce these vocabulary words. Check for pronunciation as your students repeat after you.

2 WHAT'S PLAYING?

Your students will need to be able to check what is playing at a given theater. It would be great if you had computers available for this activity, or at least one teacher computer to model. Choose your favorite movie times' website. Let students know you want to see a certain movie between two given times. Let them search for it on the website. They will need to tell you the name of the theater and the starting time of the movie there. You can treat this like a scavenger hunt, having them look for running times of certain movies or a theater that has three certain movies playing in it. This will all make them familiar with using a website to find movie times.

3 TICKETS, PLEASE

While it is possible to purchase movie tickets online, many people still go to the theater and buy them in

person. Therefore, it is a good idea to role-play for your students how to buy tickets at a movie theater. You will need several role plays ready giving examples of how to say, "Two adult tickets for the 5 o'clock showing of 'The Movie,' please." It would be fun and fairly easy to construct a cardboard cut-out for the "worker" to stand behind while the "customer" asks for their tickets. Model one or two role plays, and then let the students take over. Building familiarity with the concept of buying tickets in English will make them more at ease when they actually go to do so.

4 SNACK TIME

You will definitely want to go over typical encounters at a concession stand. Go over typical food and drink items that are sold there, bringing in empty containers of them, if possible. Emphasize pronunciation here, as the worker's understanding of your student may hinge on that proper pronunciation of his order. Discuss small, medium and large as sizes of containers. Introduce sentences such as, "Where are the napkins, please?" or "May I have butter on the popcorn, please?" This can be driven home by role playing as well.

5 MOVIE ETIQUETTE

Have students brainstorm examples of movie theater etiquette, such as silencing cell phones and not talking during the movie. When you have the list up and have discussed them, write them down on a piece of paper and cut it up into individual sentences. Pass them out, and play a game of charades with them. Pick a student randomly, and have that student act out their etiquette example. The other students should try to guess what that student is acting out. In a beginner's class, you may want to leave the brainstorming on the board so they have an idea of what the answer may be, but in an intermediate or advanced class, you may want to erase the brainstorming so they have to remember the etiquette example on

their own.

6 WHAT KIND OF MOVIE IS IT?

Your students need to be able to categorize movies for when they have conversations in their social lives about them. You will need to prepare several clips from all types of movies: horror, romance, drama, documentary and so on. Show a clip of one type and introduce the name of it, for example, "This is a scene from a documentary," and explain what a documentary is. Be sure that all of your movie clips are appropriate for your audience. After you have gone through all of the movie types, divide the class into two teams. Have one player come to the front of the room from each team. Show a different movie clip, and the first player to buzz in with the correct type of movie gets a point. Play until one team has five points, or an appropriate number for your class. This is a fun way to get students familiar with this topic.

7 PICTURE THIS

It is always great to let students use art to learn. Show students several movie posters from famous movies. Talk about what is on the poster, such as the picture, the title, the main actors' names and maybe even a quote from the movie. Tell the students this is what they will need for their movie poster. Have them think of one of their favorite movies. Assist them with finding the title in English, and any other information, if necessary. Have them each design a movie poster for their movie. When they are done, they will each share with the class. These posters can be hung in the classroom, if possible, as a reminder of what they have learned.

8 YOU'RE A STAR!

Tell the students that today, they will become a movie star. Explain the concept of a movie star, if necessary. Have them make up a stage name (if

they would like) and a short biography talking about in what movies they have appeared, and what type of movies they like best. Have some props if possible, such as sunglasses, hats and a boa for them when they present their “autobiography.” Let them take turns sharing in front of the class with their props. This activity provides opportunity for using their imaginations, which is always a fun direction.

9 THE CLASSICS

Choose 10 appropriate classic movies for the class. Discuss the plots and the main characters. If you would like, show a short clip from each. Have several sets of cards ready: You will need cards prepared that have the movie title, and then cards prepared listing a one sentence plot about that title. Divide the class into pairs, and play the game of concentration with them. This will reinforce the titles and main storylines of some classic movies.

10 MOVIE DAY!

Allow the class to vote on a favorite movie of those ten movies listed in the activity above. Let them watch the movie they voted on for a special treat. You may choose to provide typical movie snacks while they are watching the film, just be sure to check for food allergies in the class first. Watching a movie together will be a fun culminating activity for a group who has covered the topic of movies. Depending on your class time, this may take more than one class period. Enjoy!

GOING TO THE MOVIES IS A POPULAR ACTIVITY FOR EVERYONE.

Use these activities to help your ESL students become more familiar with the associated vocabulary and routines. This will help make going to the movies an even better experience for them.

Hollywood Here We Come! 5 Star Studded Movie Themed Activities

ALMOST EVERYONE LIKES MOVIES, AND YOUR ESL STUDENTS ARE SURELY NO EXCEPTION.

You can take advantage of this interest. Integrate movies and movie activities into your normal classroom plans to keep your students interested and let them blow off some steam. Here are some ideas on how to do just that.

TRY THESE 5 MOVIE THEMED ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR ESL STUDENTS

1 MOVIE TALK

Whether you are just getting to know someone or have been friends for a long time, movies are fun to talk about. You can learn about pop culture, the entertainment industry, and what your friends like and don't like. If you are preparing to show a movie to your class or if you just want to talk about the latest films, try these discussion questions.

- What is your favorite movie?
- What types of movies do you generally like? Why?
- What types of movies do you generally dislike? Why?
- What is the last movie that you saw?
- Do you see movies in the theater? Do you rent them? Do you subscribe to a movie service such as Netflix? How often do you watch movies these ways?
- Did you ever expect to like a movie and end up disliking it? Did you ever expect to dislike a movie and then like it? Tell me about it.
- What was the last movie you saw? Did you like it? Tell me about it.
- Who is your favorite actor/director? Which of his/her movies have you seen? Which is your favorite?

2 MOVIE REVIEWS

Movie reviews are a great way to gauge whether you will like a movie before you see it. That is if the reviewer is

reliable. They are also a fun and short writing project perfect for ESL students. Start by creating a bulletin board titled Movies in Review. Tell your students that they will be writing movie reviews for movies that they loved and hated, and that these reviews will help their classmates decide whether to see a movie or not. Have each person choose two movies – one that they loved and another that they hated. It's best if each person chooses different movies, but it's not essential. Then teach your students how to write a short movie review. The review should include each of the following.

- The title of the movie, its director and major actors and the type of movie it is
- A brief summary of the plot – don't reveal the ending!
- What was good or bad about the movie – these should be specific. Don't give general statements like, "It was exciting." Give specific examples from the film if possible.
- A general recommendation – whether or not to see the movie and if it's best for date night, guys' night, or another event.

Once the reviews are complete, have students post their review along with a picture from the movie or the movie poster on your bulletin board. When they have a few minutes, students can browse the movies on the bulletin board (the display serves double duty as a short reading assignment) and decide if they want to see a particular movie their classmates recommended or didn't.

3 MOVIE PREPARATION, MOVIE CELEBRATION

Many movies start as novels, and your students may enjoy reading an abridged version derived from a popular movie. Penguin Readers publishes contemporary novels for every level of ESL students. Reading these abridged books will give your students a sense of accomplishment while also providing entertainment. Before your class

reads the book, you may want to hold a viewing of the movie. It will aid your students' reading comprehension and help them absorb the finer details of what they read when they aren't concentrating on plot. If you opt to not show the movie before your students read the book, think about a cinematic viewing to celebrate the completion of the novel. See The Movie-Novel Connection for ideas on using a movie with a novel in class:

<http://bit.ly/1uH6qWg>

4 MONSTER MOVIE MARATHON

If you want to get your students out of the classroom and get their creative energies flowing, this might be the activity for you. In groups of about five, students will film their own monster movies and then screen them for the class. Since this activity is fairly involved, you may need to schedule several class periods to complete it. On the first day, have students plan their movies (see the scenes listed in session two) and decide which part they will play in the movie. Each group will need a government official, a monster, a hero and a person who needs to be rescued. The second session is the recording session. Every group member should have a speaking role in the film. Students should use a recording device (cell phones work great) to record the following scenes in order. (Recording in order eliminates the need to edit film.)

1. The opening credits – make sure you give the name of the movie as well as which parts each student will be playing
2. How the monster came to be and why it's threatening the town
3. The monster wreaks havoc in the town.
4. The government official contacts the hero and asks for help.
5. The hero faces the monster, but he cannot defeat him. The hero fails.
6. The monster now captures someone that the hero loves.

7. The hero must rescue the one he loves. He confronts the monster and defeats it.
8. The government official thanks the hero and rewards him.

In the last session, students will view the movies their classmates created. Reserve a projector, pop plenty of popcorn and get ready for tons of laughs. If you like, have each student choose one movie to write a review of. (See activity #2.)

5 MOVIE VIEWS

Of course, showing movies in the ESL classroom is always a hit with students. They enjoy relaxing for a bit and seeing popular movies. But in class movies don't have to waste valuable class time. Use in class movies to do any or all of the following.

- Listen for comprehension questions/specific information: give your students multiple choice questions, short answer questions or an information gap activity
- Learn new vocabulary: preview the vocabulary with your students and then have them determine meaning from context
- Write plot summaries: review the important events in a movie and write them in sequential order
- Write character analyses
- Discuss the movie in small groups – talk about plot, character, and theme

You can find lesson plans for specific movies at ESL Paryland and other websites for inspiration or to use in class.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO HEAD FOR THE BIG SCREEN TO ENJOY A GOOD MOVIE.

Whether you are watching and reviewing movies or creating some block busters of your own, your ESL class will enjoy these activities that combine fun and function movies.

Are They Ready? 5 Great Tips on Preparing Students for Disasters

EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS ARE EVERYWHERE.

Who hasn't been affected by one in one form or another? Whether it's extremely cold or hot, wet or dry, our weather conditions are changing drastically and bringing all sorts of unexpected chaos in its wake. Let's face it, these problems are here to stay. Now, facing difficult situations like these is certainly hard anywhere you are, but think about your ESL students who usually need to travel and might even live abroad at some point. Don't they deserve to be ready? If you consider that disasters of different sorts are more and more common, helping your ESL students for unexpected mishaps is very important. So the question is, how can you do this? Take a look at these tips.

TEACH STUDENTS WHERE THE INFO IS

The first rule in any kind of preparation is info, info, info. The first thing your students will need to do is learn where they can find information about the disasters they might encounter. So a little research is required here but fortunately, there plenty of different sources of information. The main objective here is not only to find information but for them to learn how to search for that kind of information by themselves. Once they are on their own things could get a bit hairy if they aren't ready. Also since there are many sources of information on just about anything, it is necessary to check these sources ahead of time.

1 SOURCES OF INFO

Be sure to do a bit of research ahead of time so that by the time you have the lesson you are ready to guide your students to the best sources. Governmental organizations are usually very trustworthy but there are others as well. A bit of looking around will definitely help you find great info.

TEACH ABOUT DISASTERS AND WHAT THEY ARE ABOUT

So now that we know where the good information is, you are ready for the next step. First things first, what is a natural disaster? In this case you will need to learn about different kinds of disasters together and go over the information with your students.

2 A LIST OF DISASTERS

Start with a list of some of the most common disasters. Of course there are different types so what you should focus on is names and general description of each. It is important to understand what the consequences of each type of disaster are. Ask yourself these questions. What happens when they hit? What do they do? What is the degree of destruction? Of course you can add to this list and remember the more info you cover, the more they will know.

3 PLACES FOR DISASTERS

Your students will not encounter all types of disasters. They might however bump into one or two depending on where they are traveling or moving to. After going over a list of common natural disasters, you should focus on where they happen. What types of disasters affect the place where they'll be. By doing this you can spend more time on the types of situations they will likely encounter.

TEACH ABOUT THE WAYS OF REACTING

OK, you have your sources, you know about disasters, some of their main characteristics and where they hit. What comes next? Well, just learning about possible problems isn't very useful unless you know what to do about them. So for this last part of the lesson, you should focus on what should be done when disasters come knocking at your door. Once again,

you will find this info on the sites you consulted earlier.

4 UNDERSTANDING PROCEDURES

Make sure your students are ready to follow steps and fully understand what they need to do when something happens.

5 KNOWING EXPRESSIONS

Teach them expressions like take cover, evacuate, warning, emergency, etc. They are necessary for them to understand what they need to do. You will find much more vocabulary on the sites you are consulting. They should understand all of them clearly because there may be cases where their survival might depend on it.

BEING READY CAN GIVE PEOPLE A FIGHTING CHANCE TO GET THROUGH HARD SITUATIONS UNSCATHED.

However even though we are talking about disasters, we must always keep the lessons upbeat, goal oriented and positive. Keep in mind that we are preparing them for the worst but even in hard conditions we should always hope for the best.

It's One of the Hardest Pieces of English, And It's as Easy as 1, 2, 3

NUMBERS!

They are one of the first things children learn, and we use them every day. Why then are they so difficult for ESL students to master? Perhaps using numbers correctly and fluently is a struggle because by nature, people always revert to their first language when it comes to numbers. Have you ever noticed your students whispering in their native language before they answer a simple question using numbers in English? Have you seen math students be able to write a problem out correctly but be unable to say what they did with those numbers or why? These are just two examples of how your students' native language can encroach on their English fluency in the neighborhood of numbers. That's why it's important, no matter what level your students are at, to spend some time doing activities with numbers in English. These numeric activities don't have to cut into your class time, either: just keep a few of these activities on hand for when you need to fill five or ten minutes at the end of class. You'll have a quick and easy time filler for your students, and it will be one that helps them in an area that is likely a perpetual struggle.

MAKE YOUR STUDENTS COMFORTABLE WITH NUMBERS

1 TWENTY-FOUR

I learned one of my favorite ESL number activities when teaching in East Asia. My students there loved playing the simple game they called "Twenty-Four", and all you need to play is one deck of cards for every group of two to four students who will be playing. To play the game, divide the cards equally among the players. Each round, players turn four cards face up. (In a four player game, each person lays down one card. For three players, two lay one card and one lays two cards, rotate the person laying down two cards each round. For a two player game, each player lays down two cards.) Players race to come up with a mathematical formula using the numbers on the cards (jack=10, queen=11, king=13) which equals twenty-four. Players can use addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Once a player has an answer, he slaps the cards and then

gives his equation orally. He then keeps the four cards. The player with the most cards at the end of the game wins. Your students may have no trouble coming up with their twenty-four equation, but they may not find it so easy to explain that equation in English. Why not see who's up for the challenge? Note, this game won't be right for every ESL class. Because there is so much math involved, it is best for students who are ages eight and up.

2 GO FISH

Have you tried this traditional card game with your students? I'll all for modifying "Go Fish" to teach vocabulary on just about any subject, but when it comes to using numbers in English, traditional is the way to go. To start, deal each player seven cards. They then take turns asking a specific player for a number card to match a card they have in their hand. If they get a match, they put the matching two cards aside and ask for another match. If they are incorrect, their turn ends and they draw a card from the pile aka "go fish". The game is over when all twenty-six pairs have been made. The person with the most matches wins the game.

3 LEGO MATCH

If you are teaching beginning level students who are just learning numbers in English, this simple matching game is just right for you. Check your local resale shop for some Lego blocks, or borrow a few from your kids' toy chest. To make a permanent set of game pieces, simply write on your Legos with a permanent marker. If you want to give them back to the kids unchanged, stick some masking tape on your blocks before writing on them. You will make a set of three blocks for each number from one to twenty (or for each of the numbers you want to teach your students). One block should have the numeral (1, 2, 3, etc.), one block should have the written number (one, two, three etc.), and one block should have that number of dots on it (like you would find on a traditional die). Take all the blocks apart and put them in a bag. Students take turns pulling one block from the bag and reading the number on that block. No matter which block they choose, students will have to say the number aloud in English. Once

all the blocks have been pulled from the bag, assign each student a number. On your go, students mingle, still holding the blocks they drew, asking one another for a block with their number on it. If a student has the number his classmate asks for, he gives that person the block. Students should try to get their set of three blocks before any other student gets theirs, and they should sit down once their set is complete. If you have fewer than twelve students playing, assign each person multiple numbers. Play until everyone has found all the blocks to complete their number set.

4 WORTH A THOUSAND

Here is a challenging game that is extremely simple to play. Each player gets four decks of cards (face cards and tens removed but aces remaining) which they put in front of them, face down in four piles. (If it's easier, you can have your students make their own sets of cards – each set should have four each of numbers one through nine.) At the start of the round, each player flips over the top card from each of his piles, making a number with four digits. At the same time, each player scans his opponents' cards as well as his own to determine which number is the highest. When he finds it, he slaps that number. To get the cards, however, he must read the high number aloud as well as every other number on the table. For example, a player might say, "Five thousand three hundred twenty nine is higher than four thousand eight hundred thirty-three, ..." If he reads all four numbers correctly, he gets all sixteen cards and puts them aside. If he makes a mistake on any of the numbers, he loses the turn and another player gets a chance to earn the cards. Play until all the stacks are gone or you are out of time, and the person with the most cards set aside in his pile wins the game.

EVERY TEACHER BENEFITS FROM HAVING A FEW TIME FILLERS ON HAND FOR THOSE FIVE OR TEN MINUTES OF UNEXPECTED CLASS TIME. And every ESL student benefits from practice using numbers in English. Why not kill two birds with one stone by keeping these number games at the ready? Your students will never lack for something to do, and they will get practice at one of the hardest and yet most straightforward elements of the English language.

4 Fantastic Hands On Activities For Teaching Prefixes And Suffixes

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.

TRY THESE 4 ACTIVITIES NEXT TIME YOU 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 us-

ing 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.

5 Types of Abbreviations Your Students Need to Know

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IS RIFE WITH ABBREVIATIONS.

I'll never forget the moment I learned how true this is. I was teaching at a university ESL program, instructing business students one on one. In the next room was another teacher who was doing the same. He and his student walked into my classroom and asked for a moment of my time. The other teacher proceeded to give me one abbreviation after another and asked me to share what they stood for. After a few of my answers, his student conceded. They explained that his student didn't believe that English speakers knew as many abbreviations as my coworker was teaching his student, and I had proved the teacher right by explaining what just a few of the abbreviations on his list stood for. Another thing I realized through that experience was that ESL teachers shouldn't wait till their students have reached the advanced level before teaching them abbreviations, shortened forms of longer words, as we often do. We educators need to include English abbreviations wherever they logically fit throughout our ESL instruction programs, and that doesn't mean waiting till our students reach the advanced level before bringing up the idea.

5 TYPES OF ABBREVIATIONS YOUR STUDENTS NEED TO KNOW

1 ABBREVIATIONS FOR PEOPLE

Often we encounter abbreviations when we see written names of people. Mr. and Mrs. (mister and misses) are perhaps the first abbreviations that English language learners encounter and are taught. When you do teach these and other terms of address, be sure to point out to your students that Miss is not an abbreviation but a word unto itself. In addition, Ms., though it follows the convention of Mr. and Mrs., is not an abbreviation even though it is often treated as one. Abbreviations

often follow a person's name as well. Not only will your students see Jr. and Sr. (junior and senior) after names, but they will also see abbreviations such as Ph.D. (doctor of philosophy), M.D. (medical doctor), B.S.N. (Bachelor of Science, nursing), etc. There is some disagreement whether these abbreviations should be written with periods or not, so how you teach your students is a matter of personal preference. It might also be worth mentioning to your students that some very famous people sometimes have their entire name abbreviated, such as LBJ, JFK, or MLK.

2 ABBREVIATIONS FOR PLACES

Have you taught your students how to address letters and envelopes? If so, you have probably talked about the abbreviations used for places around the world. In the U.S., we use standard two letter abbreviations for states (NY, CA, and FL for example). These are written without periods. We also use abbreviations for various countries including the U.S.A. and the U.K. These are written using periods. You can find a list of standard two and three letter abbreviations for the nations of the world here:

<http://www.worldatlas.com/aatlas/cty-codes.htm>

3 SCIENTIFIC ABBREVIATIONS

Scientific abbreviations may already be familiar to your students since some of them are used across cultures. You will find abbreviations for the scientific elements and compounds (Cl, Ag, H₂O, etc) as well as units of measurement (M, Kg, Lb., etc.) wherever you go. If your students don't already know these often international abbreviations, take some time to review them with your class. They tie in great to a unit on jobs or science readings.

4 ABBREVIATIONS FOR COMMON OBJECTS AND PHRASES

As you teach your standard vocabulary units, you are likely to encounter abbreviations for common objects (VCR, CD, TV, etc.), and teaching them along with the full vocabulary words is probably best for your students. You will also encounter abbreviations for common phrases as you teach the units on your syllabus. When terms like mph, mpg, and IQ come up in your units, take a minute to explain what they are abbreviations for. You will also find yourself teaching abbreviations that relate to time (B.C., A.M., etc.), and those are best taught as they come up in your regular units.

5 TEXT ABBREVIATIONS

Texting abbreviations are shortened forms of common words and phrases that gained popular use in recent years such as ttyl8r (talk to you later) and lol (laugh out loud). If you decide to teach your students some popular texting abbreviations, check out this list of the most common ones: <http://www.netlingo.com/acronyms.php>

Though these abbreviations may not be as common or as important as the others your students will need to know, they will if nothing else provide your students with a fun code for expressing the English language.

ACTIVITIES FOR PRACTICING ABBREVIATIONS

Memory is a great game for practicing abbreviations with your students. Make a set of two cards for each abbreviation you plan on reviewing, one card with the abbreviation and another with the entire word. Have students lay them all out face down on a table and turn over two cards at a time looking for a match.

Go fish is another game that is great

for matching abbreviations to their complete words. You can use the same cards that you made for your memory game to have students match their abbreviations correctly.

To practice text abbreviations with your students, try giving them a short text written in abbreviations and ask your students to write it out longhand. You could also give them an entire conversation written in abbreviations or ask students to write a conversation using specific texting abbreviations.

You can do an abbreviation sort with your students to help them remember specific abbreviations and what they stand for. Give your students a random list of abbreviations used for people, places, scientific words, and texts. Have students cut each abbreviation and sort it into the correct category. You might want to provide students with a second sheet of paper with a circle labeled for each category of abbreviations and have them glue the abbreviations into the appropriate circle as they sort.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronyms may seem like abbreviations, and you can often teach them in similar ways, but technically they are not abbreviations but something else entirely. Whereas an abbreviation is a shortened form of a word or words, an acronym is a “word” made up from the first letters of the words in a phrase. NATO, for example, is an acronym for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, but we treat it like a unique word in English. Likewise, laser is an acronym (light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation) which has become part of the English lexicon. These acronyms are pronounced as words, and that is what makes them acronyms. If English speakers pronounced them as individual letters, such as FBI, they would be abbreviations. Sometimes an acronym can become an abbreviation or vice versa. One such example is URL, which stands for Uniform Resource Locator. If the letters are pronounced individually, it is an abbreviation (U-R-L), but if the three letters are pronounced as a “word” (“earl”) it is an acronym.

It's not important that your students

can explain the difference between an acronym and an abbreviation. What is important is that they know which words to pronounce as letters (abbreviations) and which to pronounce as words (acronyms). As you teach abbreviations and acronyms, be sure to point out not only how they are written but also how they are pronounced so your students will know how to use them when they are speaking English in the real world.