

HOW TO ELICIT, INTRODUCE, TEACH AND REVIEW
ENGLISH VOCABULARY EFFECTIVELY

VOCABULARY GENIUS

29 TOP SECRETS EVERY VOCABULARY TEACHER SHOULD KNOW AND USE

● TAKE YOUR
VOCABULARY LESSONS
TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL

WORDS REALLY
ARE FUN

If you just use a little imagination and your students exercise their gray matter, students can do far more than just memorize a list of words and their definitions

“... top moves for introducing and practicing vocabulary!”

🔧 FANTASTIC VOCABULARY TIPS, TRICKS & LESSON IDEAS YOU'LL BE USING EVERY DAY

CONTENTS

VOCABULARY GENIUS	
3	ELICIT: 8 Great Ways to Elicit Vocabulary from ESL Students
4	FIND: 7 Best Sources for New Vocabulary
5	INTRODUCE: 7 Best Ways to Introduce New Vocabulary
6	REVIEW: 7 Best Ways to Review Vocabulary
7	GAMES: 7 Best Games for Vocabulary Class
8	REVIEW: 8 Killer Online Resources for ESL Vocabulary Review
9	REMEMBER: 7 Infallible Tricks to Help ESL Students Remember New Vocabulary
10	TEACH: What Do You Do? How to Teach an Interdisciplinary ESL Unit on Careers
11	TEACH: Are You Free on the 12th? Realistic Ways to Teach Appointment-Making
12	TEACH: Extreme Structures: ESL Lessons with Strength
13	TEACH: Getting Serious About Fire Safety: Essential Activities for Your ESL Class
14	TEACH: Good Luck and Bad: Secure the Former With These ESL Activities
15	TEACH: Let's Go Try a Kite
16	TEACH: Have Some Laughs While Learning English
17-18	TEACH: Mail Call! Turning Your Classroom into a Life-size Post Office
19	TEACH: No Pain, No Gain: Goal-Setting Activities that Get Results
20	TEACH: Putting the Shoe on the Other Foot: ESL Activities with Sole
21	TEACH: Savvy Senses - It's All About Observation
22	TEACH: What Does It Mean to Be Free? Conversations and Activities for the ESL Classroom
23	TEACH: Trick or Treat: How to Teach Giving and Making Choices
24	TEACH: X-Ray Vision: What Will You See?
25	TEACH: Star Light, Star Bright, Seeing Stars in Class Tonight
26	TEACH: You Can Get There from Here: The Keys to Teaching Your Students to Give Directions
27	TEACH: Once Upon a Time: Teaching ESL with Fairytales
28	TEACH: 10 Tips to Teach Collocations
29	TEACH: 10 Language Activities that Can Make Everyday Better
30	TEACH: Survival Time: Working Together to Overcome
31-32	TEACH: 5 Ways to Help ESL Students Start Improving Academic Vocabulary Tomorrow
33-34	TEACH: Still More Conversational and Academic Phrases to Fake Your Way to Fluency

8 Great Ways to Elicit Vocabulary from ESL Students

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

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

WHEN SHOULD WE ELICIT VOCABULARY?

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

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

8 GREAT WAYS TO ELICIT VOCABULARY

1 OPPOSITES

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

T: Are you usually awake at 3 am?
S: No, I'm asleep.

2 SYNONYMS

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

T: I can type quickly.
S: You mean you can type fast.

3 DEFINITIONS

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

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

S1: A pair of scissors!

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

S2: A ruler!

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

S3: A stapler!

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

4 SCALES

There are some words that are best understood in a scale. Here's one example: cold – cool – warm – hot. Draw a scale and omit the words you want to elicit from students.

<- cold ----- hot ->

Ask students:

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

S: It's warm.

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

S: It's cool.

This also works great with adverbs of frequency: never – seldom – sometimes – usually – often – always

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

T: How often do you go to the movies?

S: Once a year

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

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

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

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

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

6 VISUAL CLUES

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

7 WORD CLUSTERS

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

8 "DO YOU REMEMBER?"

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

STUDENTS ARE OFTEN QUICK TO GRASP NEW WORDS AND WILL REMEMBER THEM FOR SOME TIME.

And that is the problem – **for some time**. If they are not given the opportunity to use the words they've learned, rest assured, they will forget them. If students are not using all of the vocabulary they've learned, try to find ways to draw them out from them and use them in contexts that will help them remember them. They won't be at a loss for words again.

7 Best Sources for New Vocabulary

TRY THESE 7 BEST SOURCES FOR NEW VOCABULARY WITH YOUR STUDENTS

1 IT'S BLACK AND WHITE

Use a newspaper or magazine to teach new vocabulary. Have students choose one unfamiliar word from an advertisement or headline, cut it out, and illustrate that word on a separate piece of paper or in their vocabulary notebooks.

2 PLAY THE GAME

Games like Scrabble, Scattergories, Balderdash and Boggle give you a chance to introduce your students to new and unfamiliar vocabulary words. Leave these games in a corner of your classroom for independent study periods or play in groups or as a class, either on rainy days or the day before vacation. Consider not keeping score, but challenge yourself to play words your students do not know.

3 ACTION!

Movies and television are great sources for realistic dialogue. Your students can find not only situational vocabulary but slang expressions as well when they look to the big screen. Show short clips in class multiple times and challenge students to listen for specific or unfamiliar words or expressions on the second or third time through.

4 THAT'S YOUR OPINION

Ask students about their areas of interests, and then give them vocabulary that they can use in those situations. For example, a student may enjoy theater, video games or cooking. Each of these interests uses lingo, or vocabulary specific to that topic. When you give your students words that link to a preexisting interest of theirs, they are more likely to remember the words and use them in real situations.

5 LISTEN UP

Listen up, that is, listen in on conversations between native speakers. Challenge your students to go to a public area and listen to two or more native speakers talking to one another. As they listen, have your students write down any unfamiliar words they hear and then bring those words back for the class to discuss.

6 COFFEE TALK

Setting your students up with conversation partners will give them a limitless resource for new vocabulary. If you can, set some class time aside each week or each month to meet with a class of native speakers. Let pairs of students have natural conversation, and challenge your students to write down any unfamiliar words they hear and ask their conversation partner for an explanation.

7 BY THE BOOK

Particularly for older or academic bound students, textbooks can be one of the biggest challenges of their post ESL careers. Use textbooks in your class to show your students the types of vocabulary they will need to be familiar with. Collect text books from several different subject areas and then challenge students to read selections from the books and memorize any vocabulary they come across.

7 Best Ways to Introduce New Vocabulary

TRY THESE 7 BEST WAYS TO INTRODUCE NEW VOCABULARY

1 PICTURE IT

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

2 KEEP IT REAL

Using real objects to introduce new vocabulary will aid your students in remembering the new words. It will also give your kinesthetic learners a chance to make a physical connection with a lexical concept. Show your class an object, say the word, write it on the board, and then pass the object around and have each of your students say the word out loud.

3 TELL IT LIKE IT IS

Before introducing a new vocabulary word, describe the scene which in which it would be used. Then, rephrase the scene using the new vocabulary word. For example, 'I ate too much food. I overate'. This will help build connections between English words and teach synonyms without even trying!

4 SING IT LOUD

Make up original songs to introduce new vocabulary. It will not only aid certain learning types, but it will also bring an element of fun into your classroom. Simply use a simple, familiar tune (Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, The Wheels on the Bus, Happy Birthday, etc.) and make up your own lyrics using the vocabulary you are teaching your students.

5 INTRODUCE COUPLES

Try teaching pairs of words at one time. Antonyms are the perfect

material for this type of vocabulary instruction. You can also pair synonyms, homonyms or any other sets of words that have some connection.

6 GET PHYSICAL

Use Total Physical Response, the ESL technique that links a physical movement to English words. Illustrate new words through action as you introduce the word to your students, and then have them repeat the words and the actions that go along with them.

7 THE ROOT OF THE ISSUE

Teaching word roots as you introduce new vocabulary has many benefits for your ESL students. It gives them tools for understanding new vocabulary they have yet to encounter, helps them see the relationships between words, and can even help them make links between their native language and English.

7 Best Ways to Review Vocabulary

TRY THESE 7 BEST WAYS TO REVIEW VOCABULARY

1 WEAVE A WEB

Use an idea web to review any themed vocabulary your students have studied. Start with your theme in the center of the board (e.g. sports, school, etc.). Then add spokes off that topic for each word your students offer (e.g. soccer, baseball, etc.). You may even want to add spokes off those words for further related vocabulary (e.g. goal, goalie, score, etc.).

2 PUT YOUR CARDS ON THE TABLE

Have students create their own set of vocabulary flash cards. Using a metal ring and small cards or cardstock, students write each vocabulary word with its definition on a card. Then, they punch a hole in the corner of their card and attach it to their ring. Students can carry these convenient sets of words with them and review them in any free moment they have.

3 JOIN THE CHORUS

Have your students respond to questions or repeat what you say in chorus. First, give them the correct pronunciation of a word and then listen as everyone repeats it in unison. Then ask a question and see if your class can answer it together.

4 FILL EVERYONE IN

Fill in the blank activities are a classic and effective way of teaching and reviewing vocabulary. Give your students independent sentences, paragraphs or phrases with key vocabulary omitted and have them fill in the blanks. You can also have your students write their own fill in the blank activities for their classmates.

5 GET YOUR POINT ACROSS

Use an original crossword puz-

zle to review vocabulary with your students. Clues can be word definitions, fill in the blank sentences, synonyms or antonyms. Then, students fill in the puzzle with the target vocabulary words.

6 GET TOGETHER

Pair work can be a great means of vocabulary review for your students. Have one person read a sentence or definition and quiz his partner. Then have students switch roles. As students play the role of teacher, they will also be learning themselves.

7 KEEPING ORDER

To review a conversational pattern which includes new vocabulary, give groups of students a list of the phrases that should be used in the dialogue. Students must then put those phrases in the correct order so that the conversation makes sense. If you like, have students copy the correct conversation into their vocabulary notebooks.

7 Best Games for Vocabulary Class

TRY THESE 7 BEST GAMES FOR YOUR NEXT VOCABULARY CLASS

1 CHARADES

Write vocabulary words on individual index cards. Break your class into two teams, and have one individual from each team act out the same word. The team to correctly guess the word first scores a point.

2 Pictionary

Write vocabulary words on individual index cards or use your set from charades. Break your class into two teams, and one individual from each team draws a picture on the board. Drawers cannot use letters numbers or symbols in their drawings. The first team to guess the word correctly scores a point.

3 MEMORY

Create your own memory game using vocabulary words. Write each word on individual index cards. For each existing card, make a matching card with the definition, a synonym or an antonym. Students shuffle the cards and arrange them all face down on a table. Students take turns flipping over two cards. If the cards make a set, the student keeps the cards and takes an additional turn. The person with the most cards at the end of the game wins.

4 MODIFIED CATCH PHRASE

Write each vocabulary word on an individual index card. Students sit in a circle with a timer set for a random amount of time (3-8 minutes works well). Shuffle the cards and give the deck to the first person in the circle. That person draws a card and tries to get his classmates to guess the word by giving verbal clues. He cannot say the word or any part of the word. When someone guesses the word, he passes the stack to the next person

who takes a turn with another word. The person holding the stack of cards when the timer goes off loses.

5 SCATTERGORIES

Choose ten categories with your students or before class starts (e.g. types of pets, city names, sports, items in a kitchen, etc.). Use an alphabet die to determine the letter for each round of play. Set a timer for three minutes, and students must think of one word for each category that begins with that round's letter. Students score one point per word, and the person with the most points at the end of three rounds is the winner.

6 THE DICTIONARY GAME

Choose an unusual word from the dictionary and spell it for your students. Each person creates a fictional definition for the word and writes it on an index card. You write the actual definition on another index card. Collect and shuffle the cards, and then read all the definitions. Students must try to guess which definition is the real one.

7 A-Z PICTURES

Using a picture with many elements (I-Spy books work great), students attempt to find an object in the picture that begins with each of the letters A through Z. After about five minutes, students compare answers. The person with the most correct answers wins the round.

8 Killer Online Resources for ESL Vocabulary Review

IT'S NO BIG SECRET THAT ENGLISH VOCABULARY IS ESSENTIAL TO YOUR STUDENTS' SUCCESS, NOT ONLY WHEN IT COMES TO DOING WELL ON TESTS, BUT ALSO IF THEY WISH TO IMPROVE THEIR OVERALL ENGLISH FLUENCY.

First, you need to teach vocabulary like a pro. Then, you need to review the words they've learned, preferably through some fun games. But it doesn't stop there. To really acquire new vocabulary, students must constantly practice and use new words. With these 8 vocabulary learning resources, your students will have the extra practice and review they need. Try some of these online activities in class to review for a test or instruct students on how to review vocabulary when they're on their own.

8 KILLER ONLINE RESOURCES FOR ESL VOCABULARY REVIEW

1 WORDDYNAMO

(dynamo.dictionary.com) It's no exaggeration. This is one dynamite online resource for advanced vocabulary review. Powered by Dictionary.com, WordDynamo offers lots of different ways in which students can practice and review vocabulary, from matching games to crossword puzzles and flashcards. The site is not specifically tailored to ESL students, so most of the vocabulary may be too advanced, but I always recommend this resource to students who are planning to take the TOEFL as there are exercises that are specifically targeted to this group. For your less advanced ESL students, I'd recommend checking out the Elementary School level lists - they may offer just the right amount of challenge to beginner/intermediate ESL students.

2 SPIN&SPELL

Spin&Spell (www.spinandspell.com/game.swf) is a fantastic online resource for young ESL learners. The app gives you five categories to choose from: clothes, food, transportation, animals or home vocabulary. Once stu-

dents have chosen a category, they will find lots of words to review. They can choose to spell each word by themselves by clicking on the appropriate letter in the spinning wheel, or they can choose to see how each word is spelled. In the classroom, you can set up teams to challenge each other for points.

3 LEARNINGCHOCOLATE

LearningChocolate (www.learningchocolate.com/) is an online vocabulary platform that provides great practice for students of all ages. Though the images are not that great in some cases, it still gets the job done. Students have a variety of matching exercises to complete, and may even listen to and write each word. There's also a nifty little dictation exercise! Wonderful for self-study!

4 MYVOCABULARY

MyVocabulary (www.myvocabulary.com/) is another site that is not specifically tailored to ESL students, but offers some interesting vocabulary lists and activities. If you go to Themed Puzzles section, you'll find vocabulary activities for all of major holidays like Halloween, Christmas, Thanksgiving and more.

5 VOCABULARY.COM

Vocabulary.com is an invaluable source of vocabulary for advanced learners, particularly adult learners who have reached a language plateau they can't seem to get out of. Under Vocabulary Lists they have words that relate specifically to today's news and current events. A great complement if you wish to discuss current events with students.

6 ENGLISHMEDIALAB

In their Vocabulary Games section, EnglishMediaLab (www.englishmedialab.com/) provides dozens of lists and activities to choose from. There are memory games with or without audio, video lessons, interactive quizzes and online games that are great for beginners in particular. Now of particular in-

terest to more advanced students is the Idioms section, where students will not only see the definition of each idiom but also read it and hear it being used. Finally, there are links to online games designed for the classroom, with classics that any ESL teacher will enjoy playing with their class, like Jeopardy.

7 ESLGAMESWORLD

ESLGamesWorld (eslgamesworld.com) offers interactive classroom games that your students will absolutely love. There are games to practice grammar and sentence structure, as well as great vocabulary games featuring classics like Snakes and Ladders, but also picture labeling games and listening games, as well as an assortment of other types of games. There are also fantastic Vocabulary Quizzes on a wide range of topics, including phrasal verbs.

8 CAMBRIDGE.ORG

You'd be surprised at how many free online resources Cambridge offers for ESL learners to practice vocabulary. Although these resources are designed to accompany some of the books published by Cambridge University Press, they can be used for vocabulary review, whether you are using these books in particular or not. For instance, if you're teaching students who will be sitting for the PET, Cambridge offers a Vocabulary Trainer through which they can review all of the PET vocabulary they'll need. Although it's meant as a complement to their Objective PET book, any student taking the test will benefit from this practice. The same happens with the First Certificate. There's a Vocabulary Trainer for FCE any student can use.

EVERYTHING YOU DO IN CLASS TO REVIEW VOCABULARY WITH STUDENTS GOES A LONG WAY TOWARDS HELPING THEM IMPROVE THEIR ENGLISH SKILLS.

But don't forget to give them enough resources so that they can continue working on their own at home.

7 Infallible Tricks to Help ESL Students Remember New Vocabulary

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

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

HOW TO HELP YOUR ESL STUDENTS REMEMBER NEW VOCABULARY

1 ALWAYS TEACH VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

You've probably heard this again and again (especially from me!) but it can't be emphasized enough. The first step in helping students remember vocabulary is teaching it in context. This means you should never provide a list of isolated, and least of all unrelated words, for them to learn. Words should be introduced within the context of a story, everyday situation, sport, activity or any context your students are familiar with.

Try this: We often teach words related to weather with pictures of clouds, rain, sun, etc., and that's perfectly fine, but try this instead. Print out the Weather Channel's 10-day forecast. Talk about what the weather will be like today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. Will there be any thunderstorms in the next 10 days? When that storm hits you can be sure your students will remember the word "thunderstorm".

2 USE THE RIGHT TIMING FOR REPETITION

There are plenty of scientific studies and papers on vocabulary teaching and learning, but let me summarize the results. Most studies agree that it is essential to repeat or practice a new set of words immediately after being exposed

to them. And then repetition should follow at progressively longer intervals. So, to ensure that students will remember the words you teach them, they must use them again – and again.

Try this:

- Use new words immediately after they are introduced (introduction followed by practice)
- Use them again one hour later (quick review at the end of class)
- Use them again one day later (review the words they learned the previous day)
- Use them one week later (general review of words learned in the previous week)
- Use them one month later (review/preparation for a test)

3 USE PICTURES AND VISUALS WHENEVER YOU CAN

When we speak, words are gone with the wind – they disappear in a matter of seconds. Students may understand them, but their minds are quickly filled with other thoughts. Our brains, however, are wired to process visual information differently – it sticks, whether we are visual learners or not.

Try this: Whenever possible use flashcards, pictures, or posters when introducing new words. Use the same visuals, or different ones, to test students' memory of the words previously taught.

4 MAKE THE WORDS MEMORABLE

By definition, "memorable" event or occasion is easily remembered. By the same token, you can make new words more "memorable" by using techniques that engage students and get their attention.

Try this: Introduce vocabulary related to feelings by making exaggerated faces. It will make your students laugh, and chances are they'll remember them more. The same thing will happen if you draw funny pictures on the board or use realia. These types of experiences are memorable for students, which makes the vocabulary you use easier to remember as well.

5 USE WORD CLUSTERS OR WEBS

Organize words into word clusters, and it'll help students create associations between words. For each set of new words, create the first cluster together, then for future clusters have students recreate them on their own.

Try this: Let's suppose you have taught animals in different lessons throughout the year. Write the word "animals" at the center of your cluster and let students branch out from there by supplying different types of animals, like farm, jungle, domestic animals. Students then continue by naming the different animals in each category.

6 USE WORDS IN PHRASES OR COLLOCATIONS

When practicing new words, make sure students not only remember the "word" itself but its proper collocation or usual verb-noun combination.

Try this: When teaching Business English, don't just teach words like "appointment", "contract" or "meeting", teach phrases like "make an appointment", "sign a contract" or "cancel a meeting".

7 PRACTICE OUT LOUD

Quite often we give students vocabulary exercises to complete, and while this is important to help them practice writing the new words, studies also show that practicing words out loud is more effective in improving retention than practicing them silently. Apparently, the ear is an important ally when it comes to remembering vocabulary.

Try this: Games are a great way to practice vocabulary out loud. Play this Clothing Memory Game (busyteacher.org/10115-clothing-memory-game.html) but make sure students make sentences with the words. Or try a game like Guess the Sport (busyteacher.org/1144-guess_the_sport.html).

MOST STUDENTS HAVE NO TROUBLE COMPREHENDING NEW VOCABULARY; THE PROBLEM IS GETTING THEM TO REMEMBER TO USE THESE NEW WORDS. All we have to do is give them the opportunities to put what they've learned to practice.

How to Teach an Interdisciplinary ESL Unit on Careers

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP? WE HEAR THIS QUESTION MANY TIMES THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES, AND SOMETIMES EVEN AS ADULTS WE DO NOT KNOW THE ANSWER. BECAUSE OR IN SPITE OF THIS, CAREERS OFTEN COME UP IN THE ESL CURRICULUM.

Adult students have often had experience working, and are pursuing English to further their careers. Younger students are thinking about what they want to be for the rest of their lives, and talking about careers in class will give them the words to think their career paths through. Whatever your reason for covering careers in the classroom, here are some activities you can use across the curriculum for your ESL students.

HOW TO TEACH AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ESL UNIT ON CAREERS

1 GRAMMAR

Talking about careers with students who have not yet decided on their own is a great opportunity for introducing or reviewing the conditional tense. Start by asking students if they had to choose a career today what career they might choose, or if you have adult ESL students, ask them to choose a career other than the one they currently have. Explain that to use the conditional in the present tense, that is to talk about the career they chose for today, start with the phrase "If I were..." Each person can insert a career here. "If I were a firefighter..." or "If I were a chef..." Then, have your students think about the tasks they might have if they pursued that career. They should then finish the phrase "I would..." with the simple form of the verb. "I would fight fires." or "I would have sharp knives." for example. Then let your students work in pairs to practice the construction, each person choosing several possible careers and giving between three and five duties he might have. This could also be a good time to introduce some vocabulary specific to different careers.

2 LISTENING

A career fair can be fun and informative for any student. Learning about what other people do and what their jobs entail can inspire or clarify a person's own call. Think about the resources you have at your disposal, parents, other students, friends, bicultural teaching colleagues, or others who might volunteer a few minutes of their time, and invite them to your classroom to share about their jobs. Have your students take notes on the short presentations and note any unfamiliar vocabulary each presenter uses. After your series of guest speakers, which you can schedule either all on one day or over a series of days, review the information with your students. To test their comprehension, see if they can complete a matching activity where they identify the career that goes with a specific job duty.

3 SPEAKING

Do your students know how to speak in a professional setting? Would they be able to give good customer service? Because customer service is important in so many businesses in today's world, take some time to do customer service role plays with your students. First, have groups of students brainstorm several contexts in which an employee would have to provide good customer service. These might include waiting tables in a restaurant, working the check out at a shopping center, answering customer calls or any of dozens of other situations. Then, have pairs of students role play how they would act in one or more of the situations. To make it more interesting, you may want to put the specific situations on small slips of paper and have each pair of students draw one from a hat or basket. Particularly challenging and just as useful will be role plays in which participants cannot see one another as they interact as in a telephone conversation. To role play a telephone conversation in the classroom, have your students sit back to back and play out as they interact.

Because they will not have facial or contextual clues they would normally have in personal contact, the dialogue will be more difficult and will challenge their speaking skills even further!

4 WRITING

You may want to use the topic of careers to teach your students how to write a process composition. Have your students think about a career they might choose for the future. Then, have each person list all the steps he would have to make to reach that career goal. Would he have to attend school? Would he have to move to another location? Would he have to meet certain people and make connections? Do an example with the class pointing out all the steps in the process of reaching one particular career goal being very specific, and then have your students make their own lists for their own careers. Tell them to make sure every step is included so that someone who knows nothing about the career could follow those directions and reach the same goal. Then, ask each person to look at his list of steps and divide it in logical places to make three or four sets of steps. Finally, ask each person to convert the list of bullet point instructions into paragraphs that explain the process, one paragraph for each group of steps. Transitional words are very important here, so you may want to review with your class how to use transitions within and between paragraphs as well.

WHETHER YOU ARE TEACHING ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY OR ADULT ENGLISH CLASSES, YOU HAVE GOOD REASON TO BRING CAREERS INTO THE CLASSROOM.

These are only some of many career related activities you can do with your students. For more adult lessons on careers, you may want to look at Busy Teacher's series How to Teach Your ESL Students Job Application Skills. These articles will take you and your students through the job application process from determining the right job to the final steps of getting hired.

Realistic Ways to Teach Appointment-Making

AS TEACHERS WE ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE FACT THAT SOME OF OUR GROUPS MAY BE A LITTLE TIME-CHALLENGED.

Teaching appointment-making in a hands-on way can provide students with a way to re-examine how they view and use time.

HOW TO TEACH APPOINTMENT-MAKING

1 REVIEW

The first thing you'll want to do when teaching appointment-making to any level is to review time and the calendar. Remind students how we speak about dates and times and allow them a little practice time. You can also provide them with some structures how to ask and answer questions about availability. For example, have students do a few rounds of various types of questions and answers. Some examples could be:

- Are you available on June 10th from 10-12? Yes I am or No I am not.

- Are you free on the 15th for lunch? Yes I am or No I am not.

You can do this for as long as they need to or get into a more detailed review of dates and times if they are struggling. The review should be like a warm-up for the rest of the lesson, but if they don't remember details or are having trouble, continue the review process.

2 NEGOTIATION AND CALENDARING

After they are refreshed with the details of dates, numbers and times, you can then get into negotiation. Negotiation is all about finding a date, a time and a place that is mutually agreeable to all parties involved. You can start out by discussing how it works with two friends, and provide some language for negotiating. For example:

Negative responses for negotiation:

I'm not free at that time, how about 12:00 instead. Does that work for you?

I can't make it on the 12th. Are you free on the 15th?

Positive responses for negotiation:

Sure, Thursday works great for me.

Yes, I'm free on the 15th. Could we/

do you want to meet at 12 for lunch?

Sounds good. See you on the 12th

at 2pm.

As you see we use a lot of expressions

and phrases to discuss meeting time and place. Make a list of the ones you think would be most useful for your students and then take time to define and practice them. A great way to practice this is to actually have the students do some calendaring of their own. Give the students a calendar for the month. Have them write in five to ten appointments that they have for that month. They can be real or imagined commitments. Then provide them with or brainstorm a list of activities. Each student then must find a friend to do each activity with and arrange a time and a date. This would be done best as a mingling exercise so that they got a lot of practice asking and answering a variety of questions. It gives them a real world experience of comparing calendars and negotiating what is best for both people involved.

3 APPOINTMENT TYPES

Once the students have practiced some informal appointment setting, they will be ready for larger tasks. It is time to introduce the more intimidating prospect of making appointments over the phone, and learning the various appointment types. Brainstorm types of appointments with your students. These may vary depending on where you teach. Some examples that you will definitely want to touch on are:

- Medical—dentist, doctor, pediatrician
- Hair cut
- Manicure or massage
- Educational—guidance counselor, teacher, principal
- Work-related appointments or job interviews
- Work or deliveries to your home

When working with people to organize appointments, especially over the phone, you want to make sure that you stress some things with the students. First, they need to ask for clarification if they are not sure what the question was or what the agreed time/date was. Second, students always need to repeat and confirm the information to make sure they got it right. And third, it is very important for them to be able to think on their feet in this situation. When you call the doctor's office to make an appointment, often times they are busy and don't have a lot of time to spend on the phone. Also, the students may have to suggest several dates

or times before they reach success. One of the best ways to practice the more formalized appointment-making is to do role plays, either scripted or unscripted. Put the students into small groups and give them several scenarios. Provide some examples on a worksheet or on the board as prompts and have them role play phone and in-person appointment setting. Before you do this activity, you will want to also go over what the receptionist is going to say and the ways they might phrase questions or responses. For example:

When would you like to come in to see Dr. Bradley?

We don't have availability for that day.

The next available appointment isn't until January 27th. Can you come in on that day?

Do as many different types of role plays that you think the students would benefit from and be sure to not only monitor them, but also to debrief at the end and answer questions.

4 PLAN A PARTY OR EVENT

An entertaining way to wrap up or continue reviewing appointment-making is to have your students choose an event that they would like to do as a group. They will then have to plan it. Whether or not they actually do it is up to the group. It could be a birthday party, BBQ, outing to the movies, etc. You can split them into groups to make it more manageable or allow them to do it as a whole class. In either case you will need to appoint someone as the group leader, someone who takes all the notes and then someone who will notify the class of the decided date, time, and location of the outing. Students need to find a date that works for everyone by calling each other or talking in person and finding dates and times that would work for all. You can set this up in any number of ways, but essentially what you want is a lot of back and forth and negotiation. You could utilize the calendars they used earlier so that you are sure that there will be conflicts on everyone's schedule. Get creative with this and adapt it to your needs!

APPOINTMENT-MAKING IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT TO STUDENTS TO BEGIN GAINING INDEPENDENCE.

The more they can see the real-world connections to their language learning, the more motivated they will be to practice and take risks.

Extreme Structures: ESL Lessons with Strength

Whether students and teachers realize it or not, physics can make for some of the most memorable classes in a school career. Anyone who has ever designed a machine to protect an egg as it falls from the roof of the school building remembers that experience, and there are plenty of similar lessons to engage and entertain students. Just because you teach English, though, does not mean your students cannot have these types of memorable in class experiences. Whether it is physics or history, language is part of the learning process, so when you feel inspired to bring a little daring science into the language classroom, do it! Here are some suggestions on how to make it a successful experiment.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 BUILDING BRIDGES

Depending on the city in which you live, bridges may be hard to find or they may be around every corner. For example, Allegheny County in PA, USA has over one thousand bridges, and the city of Pittsburgh is second only to Venice in number of bridges. Of course, as ESL teachers we are building bridges all the time, bridges between cultures and peoples as our classrooms often reflects the influences of a global society. Though your students may or may not find themselves building bridges of understanding, you can have them build bridges that test engineering and strength. Explain to your class that groups of students will compete in class to build the strongest bridges. Each group of four students should come up with a design to build a bridge between two desks or tables in your classroom. After positioning the desks two feet apart, give student groups some time to design a bridge that fits between them. You may want to provide some time for in class research on different types of bridges before the building session, and you may invite students to bring materials from home or limit them to the items that can be found in the classroom.

Once the bridges are complete, ask your students to think of an objective way to measure their strength. They will have to discuss different options and work together to choose the best one. Then the

class should choose one or more people to conduct the strength tests. The bridge that is the strongest wins.

After the bridge building and judging are complete, have your class reflect on the activity and their bridges by writing a short reflection. What was the most successful part of the bridge? What part was unsuccessful? What would they do differently the next time they build this type of structure? Have each person give his or her bridge an overall grade in the evaluation.

2 TOSSING PUMPKINS

No, it is not the name of an alternative music group, it is a fun and energetic activity for your ESL class if you have the room and the resources to pull it off! If you live near a farm or have a farmers market nearby, the fall is probably filled with pumpkin sellers from September 1st through the end of October. When Halloween is over, though, most farms no longer have a need for the pumpkins they have been selling. If you can connect with an owner or operator of a farm or market, he or she may be willing to donate all the leftover pumpkins to your class or your school for an unforgettable class activity and test of strength.

With the extra pumpkins, challenge your students to create a device that will shoot a pumpkin as far as possible. To get their creativity flowing, give your class some time to explore the site pumpkinchunkin.com where they can find pictures, videos and articles about the annual event that happens the first Saturday of November. The Science channel broadcasts the annual event at which some pumpkins fly as many as four thousand feet. Your students should not expect to build anything as sophisticated and technical as what those professional pumpkin chuckers do, but they can use their imaginations and ingenuity to cast the gourd as far along a football field as possible. Working in groups, have your students challenge their physics knowledge and ingenuity and create a pumpkin tossing device. Make sure that on test day you have proper safety measures in place so no one gets hurt, and then let the pumpkins fly awarding the team with the farthest flying pumpkin the title of kings (or

queens) of the gourd.

Like with the bridge building exercise, have teams write an evaluation of their pumpkin chucking devices. What worked on the device? What did not work? What would they change next autumn? Have each group give their invention an overall grade in the evaluation.

3 DROPPING EGGS

Perhaps the most commonly performed physics test is the rooftop egg drop! In this contest, individuals or groups of students build structures intended to protect an egg when it is dropped from the school roof. You will need to supply your class with some raw eggs as well as the rules for the egg drop, and you can find several examples online. In your rules, you should specify the height from which the egg will be dropped, the weight and size limit of the structure (if you choose to have any), and what criteria will be used to judge the structure. You should give these rules to your students along with a copy of this article (www.wikihow.com/Participate-in-an-Egg-Drop), which gives advice on how to construct a rooftop egg drop mechanism.

Having your students work in pairs will challenge them to communicate with one another but allow each person in the pair to give significant input to the design and construction of the egg drop. Give your pairs around a week to complete their structures and then ceremoniously drop the eggs from the roof! As with the other activities, have each team evaluate their mechanism. What was most successful about the device? What part, if any, failed on the device? What would they do differently if they were to build the machine again? What would they give as an overall grade?

LANGUAGE IS A DYNAMIC, CREATIVE CREATURE, AND LANGUAGE TEACHERS CAN INCLUDE JUST ABOUT ANY CONTENT IN THEIR CLASSROOMS AND STILL HAVE STUDENTS LEARN.

These activities are adventures in (and outside) the classroom and should only be undertaken with enough planning, but if you give them a try your students will never forget the days in your classroom!

Getting Serious About Fire Safety: Essential Activities for ESL Class

Fire prevention week happens each year in October, but there is no need to wait until the fall to help your students stay safe when it comes to fires. The winter season is just as likely a time for fires since candles, fireplaces and heaters can all cause house fires. Make sure your students are safe by dedicating some of your language learning practice to fire safety.

ESSENTIAL FIRE SAFETY ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR ESL CLASS

1 TALKING ABOUT FIRE SAFETY

How much do your students already know about fire safety? Find out by breaking your class into discussion groups to talk about household fires. Ask one person to take notes for each group, writing the answers that they come up with together. If your students are unfamiliar with some of the vocabulary in the questions, allow them to use an English/English dictionary to look the words up in their groups. You can give your groups these discussion questions, or use questions of your own.

1. What should you do if you hear a fire alarm? What does one sound like? What does a smoke detector sound like? Are they the same thing?
2. What should you do to keep your smoke detector in proper working order?
3. Does your family have a fire escape plan? Describe it. Why is this type of plan important?
4. What fire safety mechanisms do you have in your house? Do you know how to use them? What fire safety mechanisms do we have here at the school? Do you know how to use them?
5. What do you think a fire sprinkler is? Where are they usually located?
6. What is a fire extinguisher? When should you use one?

After the groups have had a chance to discuss all the questions, bring the class back together to share their answers.

2 LISTENING ABOUT FIRE SAFETY

Once your students have started thinking about fire safety, give them some specifics on how to be safe in case of a fire. Start by pointing out the fire safety elements that are in place in your classroom and your school. These might include sprinklers, smoke detectors or fire extinguishers. Part of being safe in a fire also includes having two exits from every room. You may have safety ladders on the windows, and you probably have an evacuation plan posted in the classroom. Show each of these elements to your students and allow them to ask questions or make comments.

After pointing out what you have in place in the school, show your class a completed home fire escape plan. A fire escape plan is a diagram of a home which points out fire safety elements. It should show all the windows and doors in a home as well as the location of fire extinguishers, smoke alarms and exits to each room. The plan should also designate a family meeting place in case of an emergency. You can find a completed home fire escape plan online, but if you do not have one for your own residence, now is a good time to put one together.

As you review the home fire escape plan with your class, this may also be an opportune time to review some vocabulary used for items inside the home. You should go over the names of different rooms (kitchen, living room, bedroom, dining room, etc.), types of furniture (couch, sofa, table, recliner, bunk bed, etc.), and directional words for talking about an escape route (e.g. go left out the front door to the corner, or at the end of the hall go out the window and use the fire escape). This can also be a good time to review prepositions of place as you explain the layout of the home.

3 PERSONAL FIRE SAFETY

You have walked your class through another family's fire escape plan, and now each person should create his own. Supply your class with graph paper for their diagrams. You

may want to discuss how the squares on the paper should be proportional to the size of their rooms at home. (You may need to give your class a chance to measure their houses and/or get help from their parents to make the fire escape plan.) For the fire escape plan, each person should label the rooms, the fire safety features in the home, and if you choose, the furniture in the house. Each plan should also include a meeting place outside the home in case of an emergency. Then, have your students take their completed plans home to review with their families.

4 READING COMPREHENSION AND GRAMMAR PRACTICE

What should you do if you find yourself in a fire? This is a good question to start a review of the conditional tense with your students. Before practicing this type of advice giving, review with your class the basic rules of fire safety. You can find a straightforward list of fire safety rules on firesafetyforkids.org. Make a copy for each of your students and give them some time to read and review the rules. Then partner your students together to practice the conditional structure using the rules they have in front of them. The first person should ask a question whose answer can be found in the list of rules. The question should start, "What should you do if ...?" The second person should then find the answer among the rules and answer, "If ..., then you should ...". Then have students change roles for a second question. Continue for as long as students are able to think of questions and find their answers in the fire safety rules.

TO CLOSE YOUR LESSON, HAVE YOUR STUDENTS RETURN TO THEIR ORIGINAL GROUPS AND DISCUSS THE SAME FIRE SAFETY QUESTIONS AGAIN. What have they learned from the talk about fire safety? What does each person know now that he or she did not know at the start of the lesson? Have each group share some of the things they learned with the rest of the class. Then everyone can go home knowing that they will be safe and knowledgeable in case of a house fire!

Good Luck and Bad: Secure the Former With These ESL Activities

You spill coffee on your shirt getting ready in the morning. You miss your bus and then realize you have forgotten your lesson plans when you finally get to school. Not only that, it is class picture day and your hair refuses to behave. Sounds like you may have hit a spell of bad luck. However, whether it is because you walked under a ladder or just woke up on the wrong side of the bed, your day can still turn around. Try these activities based on the idea of luck and see if you and your students turn out to have a luck day after all by the time you go to sleep!

HOW TO TEACH SUPERSTITIONS IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY

Start the lesson with a class discussion about superstition. Ask if anyone in your class is familiar with that word and, if so, ask them to share what they know. If not, offer them an example of a superstition, for example, that carrying a rabbit's foot will bring good luck or hanging a horseshoe over your doorway will bring good luck. Ask them if they think these superstitions are true or untrue, and make sure you encourage your students to share the reasons behind their responses. Once your class is thinking about superstitions, give them the following list of superstitions that are supposed to bring bad luck.

- Breaking a mirror
- Walking under a ladder
- Opening an umbrella inside the house
- Having a black cat cross your path
- Friday the 13th

In groups of three or four students each, give your students some time to discuss each of these superstitions. Where do they think the phrases could have originated? Why might they bring bad luck? Do your students agree that these might be true? Once your students have examined each of these American superstitions, challenge them to think of superstitions from their native cultures which foretell bad luck. Are there any similarities between the superstitions

they have grown up with and these in English? What do students from other cultures think about their classmates' superstitions?

2 WHAT DO YOU THINK?

People fall at every point along a spectrum when it comes to superstitions. Some believe whole-heartedly and follow the advice these phrases have to give as much as possible. Still others disregard the whole idea of luck, whether good or bad. Ask your students to think of a time in their lives when they think luck played a part in a success or a failure. If your students not to believe in luck, ask them to think of a time that luck should have played a part in a situation but did not. Have each person write their narrative using chronological order and giving as many details as possible. Encourage each person to include a paragraph at the end of their piece explaining why they do or do not believe in luck. Then post the stories on a bulletin board titled "Do You Feel Lucky?" To add visual impact to the board, divide it into two sections with a strip of paper or wide tape and define one side for those who believe in luck, one side for those who do not. Post each person's story on the side for which he argues in his piece.

3 AN UNLUCKY DAY

In Judith Viorst's book "Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day" she tells the story of Alexander who has a series of bad things happen to him on school picture day. Share the book with your students, and then point out the type of organization Viorst uses in the book. She starts with the beginning of the day when Alexander gets out of bed and finishes the story at night when he goes to bed, that is she organizes by time. Organization by time is called chronological, so explain this word and concept to your students to make sure they know what it means. In addition to chronological organization, Viorst repeats two phrases throughout the story to add to its structure. The title of the story and Alexander's sentiment that he might move to Australia. Share the story with your students a second time and

ask them to raise their hands when they hear either of the repeated phrases.

After reading the book a second time, ask if any of your students remembers having a school picture day. What was that day like? What did they have to do? Was there anything bad that happened to them on that day? Working in small groups, have your students brainstorm a list of all the bad things that could happen to someone on school picture day. Let them know that they can include the troubles Alexander ran into, but challenge your students to be creative and think of other events that could happen. If anyone has tales of things that did happen to them or someone they knew on a school picture day, include those too. Then come back together as a class and share your answers. Your students will get a kick out of the creativity their classmates display in their lists of terrible, horrible, no good, very bad events.

4 WILL YOU PRESS YOUR LUCK?

Some people seem to have good luck when it comes to games and gambling, but do your students? The simple dice game Farkle is a fun, risk taking game that tests just how far its players will press their luck. Provide groups of four or five students with the rules for this game, and have your students read them and discuss in their groups until they are clear on how to play the game. Each group will need six dice to play, and you can purchase these quite inexpensively at a drug store or dollar store. Now let your class play and see just how far they will press their luck. If you like, arrange a tournament where, for each group of four players, the two winners move up and the two losers move down until the best of the best have played and determined the ultimate winner.

WHAT IS THE QUESTION FOR TODAY? DO YOU FEEL LUCKY?

Some of your students may answer yes and others no, but either way they will have fun with these lessons that challenge their idea of luck and get them talking about how it has, or hasn't, played a role in their lives!

Let's Go Try a Kite

MOST EVERYONE HAS FLOWN A KITE, BUT HOW MANY STUDENTS HAVE PUT THEMSELVES INTO THE HIGH IN THE SKY POSITION OF A KITE?

You class will be able to say that they have after this lesson on writing from a high in the sky perspective.

HOW TO HAVE A 'KITE' LESSON ON WRITING FROM A 'HIGH IN THE SKY' PERSPECTIVE

1 LAY THE FOUNDATION

Before you jump into the high sky view of a kite, **read your students some books about kites.** You may want to use *Catch the Wind! All About Kites* by Gail Gibbons or *The Great Kite Book* by Norman Schmidt.

Ask your students if they have ever imagined what it might be like to be a kite high up in the air. Introduce the term "*bird's eye view*" to your class. What might they see from a bird's eye view outside? In the classroom? At home? Give your students an opportunity to share times they have seen the world from a bird's eye view. These times may have been *on a ferris wheel, in a plane, from the top of a building* or some other time they were high in the air. **You may even want to have your students stand on their chairs or desks to see how the room looks different based on your point of view.** What are the similarities when they view the room from a high position? What are the differences?

Artists also use the term "*worm's eye view*" to describe looking at the world from a position on the ground. You may also want to have your class lie on the floor on their stomachs and observe the room that way. What are the similarities? What are the differences?

If you like, have your students make notes about the similarities and differences they saw from a bird's eye view, a normal view and a worm's eye view of the classroom.

2 TAKE FLIGHT

Now that your students are thinking about the world in different ways, **have them close their eyes and imagine what it would be like to be a kite up in the sky.** What would they see? What could they observe?

Give your students five to ten minutes to *freewrite*. **Freewriting is an exercise in which the goal is to never let your pen or pencil stop moving.** If your students know the term *stream of consciousness*, freewriting is similar. For the allotted amount of time, they should keep writing absolutely anything that comes to mind. They should not worry about grammar, punctuation, spelling, getting off topic or organization. This activity is simply to **get ideas on the paper.**

Once time is up, have your students go back and read what they have written. They may want to highlight any phrases or ideas they wrote that they find particularly interesting or inspiring. They should then **use these ideas to write an organized and descriptive piece on what it is like to see things from a bird's eye view.** They may write about what they see from their high position. They may write what it feels like to be so high in the air flying on the breezes. They may want to imagine that they themselves are a kite and write about their dreams and fears. Anything is okay as long as they are taking a high above the world view. While your students write, you may want to *play some light and airy music to set the mood.* Flute music or the sounds of birds in nature would be good choices.

Once your students have completed their pieces on kites, you may want to **repeat the activity taking the perspective of an ant on the ground.** You can display the kite pieces in your classroom suspended from the ceiling or clipped to a clothesline strung in the classroom. If your students write the ant pieces, designate a bulletin board for displaying them and cut out a simple anthill from brown paper to decorate the board and post their pieces in the burrows.

3 SOAR

To follow up the writing activity, you may want to **launch message balloons as a class.** Have each student write a note to the person who will find their balloon stating their name, the date, the school's name and a brief message including a request to write the postcard and place it in the mail. Then have your students attach a prepaid postcard addressed to themselves. They should each attach their notes to a *helium balloon*, and as a class release the balloons together. See how many people in class receive the postcards from people who found the balloons and make a display to show where the balloons were found.

Another way to round out your high in the sky unit is to get out of the classroom. **If you are able to take a field trip, schedule a visit to a high place near your school.** It may be a tall building, an observation tower or a mountaintop. Encourage your students to write about what they see and how they feel as they observe the world from so high up. You can also ask them if they have changed their ideas since writing the kite piece. Any thoughts or feelings that they share should be encouraged.

EVERY TEACHER WANTS HER STUDENTS TO SOAR IN THEIR EDUCATION. WHY NOT GIVE THAT FLIGHT A LITTLE BOOST BY LOOKING AT THE WORLD FROM A KITE'S PERSPECTIVE.

Your students will enjoy using their imaginations, and doing so may just help them look at the world in a new and interesting way.

L: LOL – Have Some Laughs

While Learning English

There is nothing wrong with having a little fun as we learn. One of the advantages with teaching English is there are many different fun and funny things you can do with the language as you teach.

LET YOUR STUDENTS HAVE SOME LAUGHS WHILE LEARNING ENGLISH

1 TONGUE TWISTERS

Tongue twisters are tough. Tongue twisters are tough. Tongue twisters are tough. Can you say that quickly? The point of tongue twisters is to challenge the pronunciation of the speaker, native speaker or second language speaker. Giving your class some time to practice tongue twisters should help them get a few laughs out of their studies. There are many tongue twisters you can use with an ESL class. If you choose to, you can **select a specific tongue twister to supplement activities on a particular sound you are teaching.** For example, if you are stressing the difference between /r/ and /l/ here is a simple tongue twister. *“Red leather, yellow leather.”* If you are stressing the pronunciation of the *w* sound that many ESL students struggle with, use *“How much wood would a wood chuck chuck if a wood chuck could chuck wood?”* How about *“rubber baby buggy bumpers”* when teaching /b/ or *“Sally sells sea shells at the sea shore”* when distinguishing between /s/ and /sh/. If you want a real challenge, try having your students read portions of Dr. Seuss’ book *Fox in Socks*. Whatever you use, make sure your students understand that these are challenging phrases even for native speakers, and assure them that it is okay if they struggle or make mistakes with these silly sayings.

2 JOKES

Even among native speakers of English, **humor often does not communicate across cultures**, but that is no reason you should not give your class time to share English jokes with one another. The best jokes will be those that tell a story and have an unexpected punch line. Whether your stu-

dents understand the jokes you have to offer or not, ask them to share some of their favorite jokes from their native languages. They may need to explain the humor to you as you may need to explain English jokes to them, but you will all have fun even just trying to explain the humor to one another.

A whole genre of jokes that work well with ESL students are *knock knock jokes*. Usually the punch line is a play on words, or a pun. For example, *Knock, knock. Who’s there? Olive. Olive who? I love you.* In this case, olive sounds like *I love*. After introducing this or another knock knock joke, introduce your students to the concept of *puns*. You may use *egg-cellent* or *“I think a job as a shoe salesman would be your best fit.”* There are websites available whose entire purpose is for puns. Look there for limitless ideas. Then allow your students to share examples that they may have encountered with puns or even share some from their native languages.

3 LIMERICKS

Limericks are another funny activity you can do with your students. These may tie into a unit of poetry or some other topic you are teaching, or you can use them in class for a change of pace. Explain to your students that **limericks are usually lighthearted and often silly, and that they follow a specific structure and rhyming pattern.** If you like, use the following. *There once was a girl with a camel
The camel was made of enamel
She ate it up quickly
Then felt rather sickly
And never again ate a mammal*

Ask groups of your students to count the number of syllables in each line, and see if they can explain the rhyming scheme. After they have had enough discussion time, come together as a class and review the structure of a limerick: *lines one, two and five have nine syllables each and rhyme with each other while lines three and four have six syllables and rhyme with each other.* Then challenge your students either individually or in groups to **write their own limericks.** Give them time to share with the class and, if age

appropriate, to illustrate their poetry.

4 GAMES

Games always bring fun to the classroom, and here are two that are sure to have unexpected results. The first is one that has been very popular historically – *telephone*. Sit your students in a circle and whisper a sentence to the first. That student should then repeat what he heard in a whisper to the next student. The pattern continues around the circle until the last person. The first person should tell the class the original sentence, and then the last student should say aloud what she heard. Students will be amused at the change the sentence underwent as it travelled through the class.

The second game is *a writing game* but also produces unexpected results. Arrange your class in sets of four. You may want to have them sit in circles or just in the rows of desks or tables. Each person starts with a blank piece of paper and starts a sentence at the top. The sentence should start with “If.” For example, a student might write, *“If I could fly...”* She then folds over the top of the paper so the next student cannot see what she has written. Each student should then pass the paper to the next student and write the next phrase starting with “then.” A student might write *“then I would be king...”* Students fold over the tops of their papers and again pass them to the next student who writes a phrase starting with “and.” She may write *“and eat lots of ice cream...”* Students fold over the tops of the paper for the last time and pass to the final student who concludes the sentence with an “until” phrase: *“until the sun goes down”.* Now collect the papers or have each group collect their own and read the sentence as it is written. The result will be nothing you would expect, but may sound something like this: *If I could fly, then I would be king and eat lots of ice cream until the sun goes down.* The silliness of the completed sentence will entertain your students while giving them practice with the composition of clauses.

EVERY STUDENT BENEFITS FROM OCCASIONAL HUMOR IN THE CLASSROOM.

Mail Call! Turning Your Classroom into a Life-size Post Office

Want to get your students to write more but afraid it may be forced or boring? Did you ever pass notes in class? (Getting caught doing it is another story.)

If you answered yes to either of these questions then turning your classroom into a life-size post office may be the perfect solution for you and your students. It is fun, engaging and gets them writing without them even realizing it. Read on to find great ways to do it.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 P.O. BOX BOX

You will want to start this classroom transformation by assigning each student a mailbox. You will have a choice to make from the beginning, and it will probably be influenced by your classroom space. Will you need to stack mailboxes, or do you have room to lay them out in one layer? If you need to stack them, you may need to purchase boxes or collect them yourself to make sure they are uniform in size and shape. If you have more space, you can have each student bring in his own box (a shoe box is a good size) since they will not have to stack together. If you are responsible for art classes, too, you can use that period to decorate and design the P. O. Boxes. Each box should be securely closed with the front panel able to open. Do this by cutting the bottom and both sides parallel to the end of the box. Keep the top intact so the mailbox will close with a flap front. Most likely, you will have to cut the boxes yourself since an Exacto or box cutter will be easiest to use. Make sure you do this the day before the kids decorate their boxes. Then on the day the students will decorate, make available to them paints, markers, glitter and any other art supplies you have hanging around your classroom. This is a great way to use up leftover odds and ends from other projects. Also, keep in mind that if you are stacking the boxes, you will want to encourage your students to decorate the front of the box because

other boxes will be stacked next to and on top of their box. If you are not going to stack the boxes, have your students decorate the entire box. You can also modify how it opens if you won't be stacking by cutting a slot into a removable lid and then accessing the mail by removing the lid and then replacing it.

Many teachers do this kind of activity around Valentine's Day, but there is no need to wait until then to get your students writing. The mailboxes will be even better and useful for a longer period of time if they are not decorated with only hearts and red paper. If you do this activity early in the year, the boxes will be available for valentines when the time comes. You can also use your school's colors to decorate the boxes if you want some uniformity among the boxes, but mostly let your students use this opportunity to make their boxes their own, to show their personalities and to feel like they have a permanent place in their own classroom.

You will also need a collection of envelopes for your students to use when they are writing their classmates. Ask your students to bring in envelopes from home whenever they have them, and let your fellow teachers also know that you are collecting envelopes. Most people will have a collection of mismatched envelopes and cards (you can have them donate the cards, too, if you like) that they are all too willing to get rid of for a good cause. You could also include a box of envelopes on your beginning of the year supplies list for each student. Your class will likely go through envelopes rather quickly, so be on the lookout for scrap or recycled envelopes throughout the year.

2 WRITE ON

During writing workshops, allow students to work on pieces they are writing for other subjects, but give them the option of writing letters to one another as well. This will break up the potential monotony of writing

classes, and they will not even realize they are practicing their writing. These letters are not going to be the time or the place for grammar grades. Think of them more as free writing, encouraging your students to write about their thoughts and feelings without fear of repercussion. Though there may be grammatical errors, there is value in the writing itself, and many of the grammatical issues will work themselves out when your students get feedback from other, formal writing assignments. Having a classroom post office also gives you, the teacher, the opportunity to recognize your students in special ways. When one of your students has done particularly excellent work, drop her a note in her mailbox. Be warned that you may find some popularity issues cropping up among students if some of them do not get mail on a regular basis. Nip this in the bud by periodically assigning specific topics to specific occasions and students. Your students can write their letters "to whom it may concern" and then you can distribute accordingly. You can even give your students a chance to respond to what the first student has written in a letter of his own. Then review with your students how to address an envelope (you can be as informal as writing a first name and a box number or as formal as full name, P.O. Box, and the address of the school) and have them drop their letters into a classroom mail box. You can use a decorated waste paper basket or other container for this.

3 SPEEDY DELIVERY

Each day, give one student the task of delivering the mail. This is great to add to a responsibility chart if you keep one on a regular basis. You will most likely want to do deliveries at the beginning of the day. The assigned mail carrier for the day should read the student's name and mail box number from the envelope and then deliver it to the right P.O. Box. You can let students collect their mail at that point or wait until later in the day when they have free time. You will be

less likely to have popularity issues if you make your students wait until lunch or a free period before checking the mail. Each student should understand, though, that it is his or her responsibility to check the mail every day. In this way, your students are not only increasing their reading and writing skills, they are also learning life skills and responsibility.

4 A FORMAL EVENT

Take the classroom post office a step further by teaching your students how to write letters. Make sure they understand words like addressee, address, return address, date, signature, greeting, closing and any other parts of a letter you want to cover. You can take one day to explain how to write personal letters and another for business letters (if your students are old enough to distinguish between the two). Most of the information required for each type of letter is the same, but the format is slightly different. And of course, the writer's voice is different in the two. If you are teaching voice to your students here is a great place to practice it.

A CLASSROOM POST OFFICE CAN BE A GREAT RESOURCE THROUGHOUT YOUR SCHOOL YEAR FOR ENCOURAGING WRITING AND READING IN A PRACTICAL MANNER. IT IS ALSO GREAT FUN FOR YOUR STUDENTS AND GIVES MOMENTUM TO THEIR WRITING.

A little forethought will go a long way, and your students will reap the benefits all year. It is never too late for a mail call, so try it out with your students today!

No Pain, No Gain: Goal-Setting Activities that Get Results

GOAL-SETTING ACTIVITIES CAN BE PARTICULARLY USEFUL AND NECESSARY IN HIGHER LEVEL GROUPS.

Successfully presenting goal-setting and engaging students enough to really have them do some self-evaluation is challenging but also very worthwhile for everyone. Give these strategies a try and your students will be climbing mountains in no time!

GOAL-SETTING ACTIVITIES FOR HIGHER LEVEL STUDENTS

1 BRAINSTORMING

Start off with a brief discussion of what goals are and why they are important. Provide an example or two from your own life or some other general example. Using examples that you can then use to state a specific goal are best. You could talk about practicing a sport, learning an instrument, or getting a degree. Get them to ponder some questions like, why is goal-setting important to us? Why do we need to be very specific about our goals in life? Do you have goals that you are working toward right now?

From the initial discussion you'll want to have students do some brainstorming. First brainstorm as a group, and get a list going of goals or types of goals that exist. From that list, ask the students if any of their goals for themselves are up on the board. Then ask each student to brainstorm about three of their personal, professional or academic goals. Have a discussion beforehand about the difference between long and short term goals, and let the students choose which ones they would like to brainstorm on. It is a good idea for the teacher also to do this, either ahead of time or along with the students. You'll want to reference your goal brainstorm before anyone else's.

Once they have done some brainstorming and there is some chatter happening, share your brainstorm with the class. Perhaps your topics include a trip to Switzerland, buying

a new home and losing ten pounds. You can supply some of the information that you brainstormed. This is a perfect jumping off point for discussion because all three of the goals listed are very different goals with varying degrees of potential. Have the students ask you questions about your goals. When do you want to do this? How will you pay for that? Why Switzerland? Let them be their own best example because very shortly all the questions they are asking you, will in turn be the same ones they ask themselves as well as one another. You'll want to be aware that goals are very personal. If students are shy about what their goals are, be sure to respect that and don't force the issue too much. Choose students who are willing to discuss their goals and go through the model that you provided with your goals. You want to facilitate discussion, questions and enthusiasm.

2 PLOTTING OUT A COURSE OF ACTION

The next step in goal-setting is going beyond talking about goals with generalities. It is now time to pick one of the three goals and settle on it very seriously as the one to plot out. The focus should stay positive and be sure that students choose attainable goals. Introduce the acronym SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely):

SMART

Specific: If a goal is too general, it is also too hard to pin down. I want to travel is too general. Focus your goal, and answer the who, what, when, where, why

Measurable: Measuring a goal is very important because it answers the questions of: how much/many, how often?

Achievable: Is the goal achievable for you and how long do you estimate it will take?

Realistic: Is the goal relevant and realistic to your life? Will you be able to

follow-through with the goal? Will you need help to accomplish your goal

Timely: Is it a timely goal for you right now, and also will you be able to achieve your goal in a timely way. Is it a long term plan or a short term plan?

Discussing SMART goals in detail can help students hone in on the goal they really want to work on if they are unsure, and it can also provide some very real guidelines as to what is realistic. At this point, there is a certain amount of self-reflection and probably lots of questions. Let the students work out which goals they are going to focus on, and have them write down a goal statement. Provide some good examples that include a specific goal with a timeframe.

3 WRITING DOWN FEARS AND ROAD BLOCKS

Once students have worked out the kinks in their goal statements, the last step is to look at the possible roadblocks, fears, and anything else that might get in the way of completion of the goal. This is important to do because goals aren't always easy to achieve and if the students can analyze prospective problem areas, they may be able to head them off instead of getting derailed. You can have students do more brainstorming about this, or group work where they ask each other very important questions. Then students can take some time to write out things that might hinder the completion of the goal. With this, they can then work out solutions to their roadblocks and also think about how they will be held accountable to the goal. Do they plan to hold themselves accountable or do they have some kind of support system that will help them when they reach those roadblocks?

GOAL-SETTING IS A VERY MEANINGFUL LESSON FOR STUDENT TO EXPERIENCE.

It may present challenges along the way, but it will enhance the classroom dynamics and provide a wealth of support and enthusiasm.

Putting the Shoe on the Other Foot: ESL Activities with Sole

Another year has rolled around and it is time once again for a unit on clothing. You have reviewed the vocabulary and practiced the typical role-plays. Your students know about the difference between a button down shirt and a blouse as well as socks and stockings. You have reviewed accessories from head to foot, but you are still looking for something different to do with your students. Yes, the topic is clothing and accessories, but is there not something different you can use to educate and inspire your students? The answer is yes. For those not so typical clothing and accessories lessons, try one of the following activities with sole.

HOW TO TEACH ESL ACTIVITIES WITH SOLE

1 REGIONAL LANGUAGE

Do you wear trainers? How about tennis shoes? Or are you someone who prefers sneakers? The truth is, all of these words describe the same things. The difference between them is not with the product but with the speaker. These three different words all of which are used for athletic shoes are just one example of the regional differences between speakers of English. Introduce the idea of regional language differences to your students by using this example, and then ask if they are aware of any other examples of regional vocabulary differences. If your class is able to offer any, write them on the board and discuss them with your class. Then you may want to add some of your own examples. You can include the set of words which refer to a long sandwich (hoagie, hero, grinder, torpedo and submarine) as well as any others that come to mind. Probably the most popular word choice controversy centers around the pop versus soda versus coke debate. In fact, there is an entire web page (popvs soda.com) dedicated to the topic. If you have the resources and the time, encourage your students to explore the web page and then write a reaction to what they

found there.

If you want to take the idea a step further, the 1988 documentary *American Tongues* explores several regional differences in English throughout the United States. Though the documentary in its entirety may be difficult to get a hold of, there are several clips available on YouTube.com that you may want to show your students. After viewing the clips which show how different areas of the country speak, encourage a discussion among your students about this phenomenon. How might these regional differences influence each of your student's ability to communicate in English? How does it make them feel knowing that such differences exist in just one country? What are some strategies that your students can use if they find themselves in such a situation? Encourage honest expression throughout the discussion.

2 WHAT A SHOE IS GOOD FOR

If you were to ask your students what shoes are good for, you would probably get one answer: to wear on your feet. Surprisingly, though, shoes have far more uses than just foot protection. Give your students a chance to read what <http://sneakers.pair.com/offlabel.htm> has to say about unusual uses for shoes. Some information that the site has to offer may be expected, but others may seem very out of the ordinary. Encourage your students to let their imaginations run wild by thinking up some additional unusual uses for shoes. Could they be used for potted plants? How about using shoes as a means to drink champagne in a wild celebration? Have groups of about four or five students work together to make a list of as many unusual uses for shoes as they can think of. Then have each group choose one of their ideas and present it to the class in a creative way. They may want to write and perform a skit, a song or some other method of delivery. You can close out the activity with a clip from

Get Smart in which the hero has a telephone hidden in his shoe.

3 WHAT DO WE REALLY NEED

In 1776 during the American Revolutionary War, the leaders of the revolutionary forces told the Continental Congress that there were only nine hundred pairs of shoes for more than twelve thousand soldiers. This message was delivered at the beginning of December when soldiers were facing a long winter of war ahead of them. With this in mind, ask your students what people really need in order to survive. What can they personally not live without? What would they do if they did not have the basic necessities of clothing and shelter? Give your students some time in small group conversation to talk about what they really need to live from day to day. After the discussion, ask each person to make his own list of the top ten items he needs to survive. Most people will probably include items like clothing and shelter, but what other things does each person think she needs to survive? An internet connection? Music? Relationships? You may be surprised at what your students think they cannot live without. If you like, post each student's list on a bulletin board titled "All We Need Is ..." You may also choose to share the Beatles song "All You Need is Love" with your students. Give each person a copy of the lyrics to read as he listens to the song. Then ask each person to share with a partner whether he agrees or disagrees with the famous song.

STARTING WITH THE IDEA OF SHOES, YOU CAN OFFER YOUR STUDENTS SOME UNUSUAL AND INTERESTING ACTIVITIES THE NEXT TIME YOU DO A CLOTHING UNIT WITH YOUR CLASS.

These activities will challenge their understanding of language, survival and everyday life as each person thinks about bigger issues associated with his foot coverings. When you do, each person in your class will walk the road of discovery though these activities!

S: Savvy Senses - It's All About Observation

THE KEY TO BEING A GOOD WRITER IS HAVING GOOD OBSERVATION SKILLS.

How can you write about the world around you if you do not first notice it? By encouraging your students to heighten their observation skills, you are half way to improving the quality of their writing.

HOW TO HAVE A 'SAVVY SENSES' ESL LESSON

1 THE FABULOUS FIVE

Most people know that humans have five senses, but for ESL students trying to express what they take in from these senses can be a challenge. **Start by writing the five senses across the top of your white board (hearing, touch, smell, sight, taste) and ask your students to explain what each one is.** Now that they know the vocabulary for the senses themselves, list under each one words that relate to that sense. Ask your students to volunteer words that they already know.

For example, under *smell* you might write *sniff, nose, odor, scent* or other related words. Under *sight*, your students might volunteer the words *vision, look, appearance, watch* or *stare*. Write down whatever words your students offer, and then add some more of your own. It is always beneficial when you can introduce new vocabulary in some tangible context, and learning groups of words is one way to do that, so take advantage of this vocabulary activity to **teach your students some new sensory words.** Think along the lines of different textures or obscure colors when coming up with the words.

You might also want to **read your class some books about the five senses.** You can use *My Five Senses* or *The Five Senses* or any number of others. After reading these books, allow your students to add more words to their vocabulary lists. You can keep these lists posted in

your classroom or ask your students to copy them into a notebook and add to them throughout the year. Either way, they will have an increased vocabulary bank to draw from and know where to look when writing sensory details.

2 SPIN THE DETAILS

Now that your students are familiar with what the five senses are and they have some specialized vocabulary to talk about them, it is time to start using them for observation. Tell your students that they are going to **do an observation exercise.** As part of the exercise, they will **create a sensory web.** They should begin by *selecting an object to observe.* It can be something in the classroom or something at home.

An apple is a good object to use, but your students can also use items such as *their hand, their desk* or *a book.* Whatever object they choose, they should write that object in the center of their page.

Next, your students should *draw five spokes* coming out from what they have written in the center of the page. At the end of each spoke, they will draw a circle in which they will write their sensory observations. They should label the circles "*looks like, feels like, tastes like, sounds like* and *smells like.*" Then give them plenty of time to make their observations and write notes in the circles. You may want to set a minimum of ten observations for each spoke. However, warn your students that they should not taste anything without permission since putting foreign objects in their mouths could be harmful. After completing the web, you may want students to share with partners the observations that they made. This will give them speaking practice as well as help them formulate complete thoughts before they write their complete descriptions.

3 ILLUMINATION

Now is the time for your stu-

dents to write their descriptions. Encourage them to use as much detail as possible but not to name the object that they are describing. They can use the word "object" whenever they need to refer to what they are describing in their writing. Also, challenge them to use some of the vocabulary that you listed on the board earlier. They should try to use variety in their word choice as well as give thorough descriptions.

When your class is done writing, collect their pieces and **take turns reading the descriptions in front of the class.** Challenge your students to **guess what the object is that is described in the paper.** Award a simple prize to anyone who guesses correctly and the one who wrote those details.

Wrap up your observation lesson by playing a game with your students. **Have them eliminate one of their senses and try to guess objects using the other senses.** You can place objects in paper bags for them to *feel*, play sound clips for them to *listen to*, or provide simple liquids dabbed on cotton balls for them to *smell* (vanilla extract, hand soap, vinegar or milk just to name a few). See who can get the most answers right among your class. This will provide a whimsical conclusion to your observation challenge.

OBSERVATION IS KEY TO PRODUCING STRONG WRITING. IF YOUR STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO OBSERVE THE WORLD AROUND THEM THEY WILL BE ABLE TO BETTER ELABORATE THEIR WRITING. IF THEY CAN BETTER ELABORATE THEIR WRITING, THEY WILL KEEP THE READER'S ATTENTION AND MAKE THEIR AUDIENCE WANT TO READ MORE.

Taking some time to focus on observation is a first step to getting your students to write strong, descriptive language. Have fun while you do so, and your students will be more likely to write descriptively in the future.

Conversations and Activities for the ESL Classroom

For citizens of the United States, our freedoms are an important characteristic of our lives. Most everyone knows that the freedom of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are part of the American dream, but not everyone thinks of freedom in the same manner.

Cultural perceptions about what it means to be free vary, but teachers of ESL have an opportunity to turn those cultural values into productive language lessons. ESL classes, which often have students from every corner of the globe, are sure to have interesting conversations when it comes to talking about freedom.

HOW TO TALK ABOUT FREEDOM IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 WHAT IS FREEDOM WORTH

What is freedom worth to you and to your students? Would you give a year of service to your country for your freedom? Would you give a lifetime of service? Would you give your very life? Put your students into discussion groups, trying to have as many different nations represented in the group as possible. Give your students these questions and challenge them to have an open discussion with one another. What have members of the group already given for their freedom? See if the group can write a definition of the word 'freedom' on which everyone can agree keeping in mind their answers to the discussion questions.

2 ROOSEVELT'S FOUR FREEDOMS

Taking the discussion a bit further, introduce your students to what Franklin Roosevelt talked about in his State of the Union address in January of 1941. He said that every American has four basic freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want and freedom from fear. Ask these discussion groups to talk about how each of those freedoms affects

their lives both in the United States as well as in their home countries. If your students are studying in places other than the United States, what do they think those freedoms might look like in the U.S.? After groups have discussed the freedoms, ask each group to choose one of them and create a poster in which they draw a representation of the freedom in their lives. They may choose to a poster with one message or create a mural with many ideas depicted. In either case, display those posters around your classroom when they are complete and allow your students to see how their classmates portrayed freedom.

3 SYMBOLS OF FREEDOM

In the United States, some of the most popular symbols of freedom are the eagle, the flag, the Statue of Liberty and the Liberty Bell. Send your students to the internet, either individually or in groups, to research how each of these objects became symbols of freedom in the United States. Then challenge students to list some objects that are used in their home countries as symbols of freedom. Are there similarities? Why or why not? After each person has enough information, have him write a piece explaining what symbolizes freedom to him. It may be some of the objects he researched, or it may be something completely different. Ask your students to illustrate their compositions and then post them together on a bulletin board with the title "What Freedom Looks Like".

4 RUNNING FOR FREEDOM

The Underground Railroad was used in the United States by southern slaves who ran away seeking freedom in the north. Free individuals would provide food and shelter to these runaways on their journey to freedom even though if the runaway slaves were caught those that harbored them would have been punished by the authorities. Give your students some information about the Underground Railroad or send them to the library or internet to do their own research.

Once they have a better idea about what it meant to help these escapees, ask your students to think about this question: would you risk your freedom and break the law to help a person you did not know find freedom from slavery? Give each person some time to prepare his thoughts and support for his point of view and then ask willing students to speak in front of the class, sharing their thoughts.

5 FREEDOM TO LOVE

Another topic which some people say questions the freedom of an individual is the idea of prearranged marriage. Many people today feel that a man or woman should be able to choose his or her own spouse, but that was not always the case. In times past, prearranged marriage was the dominant method of the day. Put your students into discussion groups to make a list of pros and cons about prearranged marriage. Do your students think that prearranged marriage is an infringement on an individual's freedom? Ask each person to imagine that he or she has been found a mate through arranged marriage. He has never met her and she has never met him, but they are allowed to write letters to one another before they meet on the wedding day. Ask each person to write a letter to a future spouse that he or she knows nothing about. In the letter, each person can decide to go through with the marriage or try to call it off. Either way, challenge your students to be creative in what they write and careful about how they write it.

FREEDOM IS AN IMPORTANT ISSUE THAT TOUCHES OUR DAILY LIVES, THOUGH WE MAY FORGET THAT FROM TIME TO TIME.

Challenge your students to think about what freedom means to them and what freedom is worth to them. Through these exercises and activities that focus on freedom, your students will have to think again what their freedom means to them.

Trick or Treat: How to Teach Giving and Making Choices

People make choices every day. We choose what to wear, what to eat, what to do with our time. We choose where to go and who to talk to. When you want to offer your students some choices of their own, you can use the following role-playing activities. Which one will they like best? Try them all and then choose.

TRICK OR TREAT: HOW TO TEACH GIVING AND MAKING CHOICES

1 MENU CHOICES

If you are doing a unit on food, a restaurant role-play is a great way to practice choices with your students. Have your students use the vocabulary you are learning to write a menu. They can use an online menu as a model as they write their own. Tell your class to make sure each menu item offers a choice. They may give a choice of salad dressing, a choice of bread, or a choice of side dishes, for example. Then have two students work together to role play – one as the waiter taking the order and one as the patron placing an order. The patron should select a menu option, and then the waiter should offer the choice that comes with that item. After the order is complete, switch roles and play again. To make the activity more challenging and to expand your students' vocabularies at the same time, bring in a collection of take out menus from restaurants in your area and have them use those menus for the role-play.

2 TAKE A TASTE TEST

With Halloween coming closer every day, why not share the love and the chocolate with your class by orchestrating a taste test with mini candy bars? Of course if anyone in your class has food allergies, this is not the activity for you, but if not the change of pace and the shot of sugar are a good way to change things up for the end of October. To run a taste test, divide your class into two groups. Have each group of students prepare small squares of

two different types of candy bars. (The bite size samples are a good size to use for this activity.) Students should unwrap the candy bars so the tasters do not know what type they are tasting and label one A and another B in a small cup or on a plate or napkin. Then each group of students should have the other half of the class try both types of candy. Have the testers ask which type of candy the taster prefers. The taster should give his or her answer and say why he prefers one to the other, and the testers should record the answers. Then switch roles. Once everyone from both groups has had a chance to taste test some sweets, have the groups of students tally up which of the candies was preferred by their class overall. You may also want to have each group write a short report on which candy was more popular and why.

3 HEALTHY CHOICES

Anyone who has studied nutrition knows that the choices you make on a daily basis can contribute to your good health or your poor health. Spend some time discussing with your students how important it is to make healthy choices. Then take some time to brainstorm as a class what some healthy choices might be. Make sure your list includes things like eating fruits and vegetables, getting enough exercise, getting enough sleep and taking time to relax from work. Then brainstorm a list of unhealthy choices. With partners in class, have students role play a situation where one person offers a choice and the other person gives his preference. You may want to have speakers play the role of peers, parents, doctors or teachers. The speaker may offer a choice between one item on the healthy list and one item on the unhealthy list, or he may choose two items from either of the same lists. The second student should then make a choice between the two options. Students can then switch roles. You can also encourage your students to offer choices that do not appear on the list to see what their classmates would choose. Then ask your class if the answers changed when they were talking to different peo-

ple (doctor, parent, peer). Why do they think that was the case?

4 THREE CHOICES

We often hear of stories in which a genie offers three wishes to the person who rubs his lamp. If your students were given three wishes, what would they choose to wish for? Start this activity by playing a clip from Disney's Aladdin in which the genie explains the three-wish policy to Aladdin, and then pose this question to your class: if you were given three wishes, what would you wish for? Allow students to think about their answers and then have pairs of students role-play the genie and the one who rubbed his lamp. Encourage your students to think of wishes they might make for themselves, wishes they would make for the people that they love, and wishes they would make for the world as a whole. After giving ample time for the role-plays, ask each student to share with the class one of the wishes he or she would choose.

5 LET'S MAKE A DEAL

If you and your students have had your fill of serious discussions, why not bring a little levity to class by watching excerpts from Let's Make a Deal? In this game show, contestants are often offered a choice of prizes, but those prizes are hidden behind doors, behind curtains or in boxes. After watching enough of the program to understand the concept, have your students create their own "Let's Make a Deal" game show. In groups, have students think of prizes that a contestant might win and the tasks he or she may have to do to win them. Then let your class role play the host of the show and contestants and see who wins big for the day.

EVERYONE MAKES CHOICES EVERY DAY.

These choices may be what type of candy bar to eat or they might be which prize curtain to take a chance on. Whether your class is choosing little things or big ones, role-playing may be the activity to choose for practice.

X-Ray Vision: What Will You See?

If you have ever read a Superman comic, you will probably understand some of the appeal x-ray vision has for people of all ages. We are intrigued by the idea of looking inside something or someone and seeing what is really going on beyond the mysterious outside barrier. These x-ray themed activities will give your students a chance at x-ray vision, both imagined and authentic, and it will give them lots to talk about.

X: X-RAY VISION LESSON FOR YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

Depending on the age of your students, they may have had little experience with x-rays. Especially for younger classes, x-rays may seem like a frightening thing, and you will want to help them understand the process of taking an x-ray so they can appreciate the science behind the unusual photos. You can get some books about x-rays from your library and make them available for your class to read during free reading time. They won't be as knowledgeable as an x-ray technician but good enough for class. You might want to include *Bones* by Stephen Krensky or the *Mysterious Rays of Dr. Rontgen* by Beverly Gherman.

Then before starting the other activities in the unit, read these stories aloud to your class. If possible, you can also bring in actual x-ray films for your class to look at. When your students see that they are pictures of the bones inside a person, they may feel less frightened. Viewing x-rays as a class is also a good opportunity to review some body part vocabulary. For more advanced students, especially those at the college level, you may want to teach them some words for the major bones in the body. You can include the skull, ribs, sternum, humerus, pelvis, radius, femur, patella, tibia and fibula. You can find a diagram of these bones on the Internet. If you give your students the new vocabulary words and a bone diagram, see if they can guess which bones belong to which words. After this introduction to x-rays, move on to talking about them.

2 TELL ME ABOUT IT

There may be some students in your class who have had x-rays done for various reasons. Encourage those students to share their stories with the class and allow their fellow students to ask questions. Then start a discussion

among the class. Asking questions like the following, you can help your students use their imagination and also see the advantages to scientific advancement like the x-ray.

- If you could look inside the body, where would you want to look?
- Why would you want to look there?
- What do you think you would see?
- Have you ever had a medical test that looked inside the body? Tell your group about it.
- How can these tests help doctors help their patients?
- What would you like to know about the human body?
- Why do you want to know that?
- What are some questions you would ask a doctor who could tell you about those places?

This activity would work well with partners or in groups. After the discussion time, you can ask someone from each group to share some of the answers that group discussed. This may be a good opportunity for you to learn about your students and their families. Someone may share some personal information you did not know, and this information might be important especially if someone in the family is having a medical struggle.

3 I'M PUZZLED

Now that your class has some shared knowledge, make a game of this new science by showing your students portions of x-rays. Then challenge your class to name the body part in the x-ray. Since you reviewed the major parts of the body and specific bone vocabulary earlier, this exercise will give your students a chance to use the worlds they recently learned. You may also want to extend this activity by showing pictures of organs in the body (illustrations are preferable to actual photos for younger children) and have your students guess what the body part is. This may provide an opportunity to introduce even more vocabulary to your class.

For a more fun alternative, give your students a laugh by playing the classic game *Operation*. In this game, students use tweezers to carefully lift out "bones" from the body of a patient. If they hit the edge of the body, a buzzer goes off. The game does not use real names of bones, but uses puns that include body parts. Some of the bones in *Operation* include the funny bone, the adams ap-

ple, the spare rib, and the Charlie horse. You can use this game as a jumping off point to talk about puns that include body parts. See which ones your class already knows and introduce them to a few more. You can also ask for expressions in their native languages that use body parts. If students know, have them share the origins of those expressions.

If you are really looking for something entertaining for your students to change up the normal class routine, provide a screening of *Osmosis Jones*. This animated movie starts Bill Murray and tells the story of a white blood cell trying to save Murray from a virus. Please note, this movie may not be good for all classes, so your best bet is to preview the film before showing it to your class.

4 FURTHER RESEARCH

You can take the idea of looking inside the body further with a research assignment for your students. Have groups look up information on the different types of tests that allow doctors to see inside a patient's body. They should include x-rays, CAT scans, ultrasounds and MRI's. Have a group of four investigate one of each of the tests. Then take one person from each group and put them together to share the information their group learned. Your students should make a chart that compares and contrasts the different medical tests.

For a final treat, bring someone in from the outside. This unit is a logical place to invite a guest speaker to class. If you can, have a medical technician or doctor come and speak to your class about the advances in medicine and how these tests help patients. You may want your students to take notes on the presentation and then ask prepared questions of your guest. If you really want to challenge your students, give them a true/false quiz on the information your guest speaker presents to test their listening skills.

THE HUMAN BODY IS AN AMAZING AND MIRACULOUS CREATION THAT SCIENCE ENABLES US TO UNDERSTAND MORE AND MORE EACH PASSING YEAR. YOUR STUDENTS ARE SURE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THEIR OWN BODIES AND HOW MEDICAL SCIENCE IS WORKING TO KEEP THEM HEALTHY AND SAFE THROUGH THESE X-RAY THEMED ACTIVITIES.

You may even inspire one of your students to explore the world of medicine in his or her future.

Star Light, Star Bright, Seeing Stars in Class Tonight

HOW MANY PEOPLE ON HOW MANY NIGHTS HAVE GAZED UP INTO THE ENDLESS NIGHT SKY AND BEEN TAKEN IN BY THE STARS?

We humans are fascinated by the gaseous wonders whose light may take years to travel from their places of origin to earth. Under the stars, some find significance, their places in the universe. Others feel overtaken by the vastness of space. Whether we feel large or small, close or distant, stars may be that spark you need to brighten up your ESL class. Try these activities based on the stars above us all and see your students improve their language skills down on earth.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 GET THE CONVERSATION STARTED

If you were going to travel through the stars, what would you pack? It is an interesting question since life in space is so much different from life on earth. Have your students think about what possessions are most important to them, and then ask them to share with a partner what items they would bring into the outermost regions of the universe. Also, remind your students that as the speed of travel approaches the speed of light, time slows. This phenomenon has been portrayed in many popular movies. Ask your students to imagine what the world on earth would be like after they had travelled for one hundred years in space and they return to earth the same age as they are now! You may want to ask groups of students to create posters showing what the future of earth might be like when they return from their space travel.

2 CONSTELLATION MYTHOLOGY

For thousands of years, humankind has been seeing pictures in the stars. Though the pictures that ancient man saw are almost certainly different from those we see today, the stars have inspired humanity to see heavenly beings

for years. Talk with your class about constellations, and see how much information your students already have about the stories in the skies. Can they identify any constellations? If so, do they know the names of those constellations? You may challenge their non-text reading abilities by providing diagrams of the night sky, both in summer and winter. Challenge your students to a scavenger hunt to find certain pictures or names of specific stars. Then use those constellations as a jumping off point to learn some of the mythology behind the beings we imagine up above. You can direct your students to read the mythology behind the constellations. To take the exercise a step further, ask each person to write a story featuring one of these mythological beings either in its constellation form or as its mythological character.

3 STAR LIGHT, STAR BRIGHT

One of the most popular children's poems is *Star Light, Star Bright*.

*Star light, star bright
First star I see tonight
I wish I may, I wish I might
Have the wish I wish tonight.*

Some children recite this poem every night as the first star becomes visible in the sky. Using this poem, you can do two different activities with your class. First, challenge each person to write his own poem about the stars. He should follow the same format and rhyme scheme as this poem though he should feel free to write about anything that has to do with the stars. Second, ask each person to think about what she would wish for if she said this poem to the evening's first star. You may want each student to discuss her answer with a partner or have her write a short paragraph explaining what she would wish for and why. You can make a spectacular display on a classroom bulletin board to coordinate with the star theme. Take one or two strings of holiday lights and carefully staple them to a blank bulletin board, bulbs pointing out. (To do this, situate your staples so they fall on either side of the wire and do not puncture it.) Then, take

dark blue or black paper and carefully cover the bulletin board. As you do, poke small holes in the paper for the light bulb to stick out. Then, when you are ready to light up your own night sky, plug the lights in and watch them twinkle in the darkness of night. If you like, allow your students to recite their poems in front of this display, and record their presentation. You can use this film later to review pronunciation during a one on one conference.

4 HOLLYWOOD STARS

Another popular use of the word star comes in reference to celebrities in the entertainment world. The stars of Hollywood seem to change every day, but those who get their own star on the walk of fame will be remembered. Have your students imagine that they were each going to receive a star on the walk of fame. Ask each person to write an explanation of why he or she deserves the star and what accomplishments he or she has made to earn it. Of course, these will be fictional pieces, but your students should feel free to use their imaginations and dream big. If you like, give each person a star template to decorate and make your own walk of fame around the classroom. If you are lucky enough to live in the Los Angeles area, take a walk to the stars and do some rubbings of your favorites! Using a piece of paper large enough to cover the star, rub the side of a crayon over the engraving and see it replicated on your paper. If you like, display them in your classroom.

WHETHER YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT THE STARS OF HOLLYWOOD OR THE STARS OF MYTHOLOGICAL LEGEND, THE SKY'S BRIGHT LITTLE LIGHTS HAVE BEEN A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION, CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION TO THOSE WHO GAZE UPON THEM.

Your students will enjoy thinking, learning and writing about the stars in the sky when you invite them into your classroom.

The Keys to Teaching Your Students to Give Directions

Getting from one place to another is not always easy. Very rarely can a person travel on a straight path from one point to another, so it is important for ESL students to learn how to give directions.

In this activity your students will gain the tools they need to successfully direct someone from point A to point B and maybe enjoy the scenery along the way.

HOW TO TEACH DIRECTIONS IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 WHERE WOULD YOU GO?

Most international students take special pride when talking about their home countries. Ask your students to suggest some points of interest to a visitor to their home countries. Make sure your students know the grammatical structure for giving advice. "If you go to [my home country], you should see [point of interest]." Students can suggest locations tied to sports, history or entertainment. Encourage your students to give whatever details they can about the locations.

To further the idea of visiting a new place, provide some travel brochures for your students to look at. You can find these types of brochures at rest stops along the highway or at visitor centers for cities. Give your students time to look through the brochures and think about what they would say about one point of interest in their country. Have your students make some notes on information they would give to visitors using the brochures as an example.

2 HOW WOULD YOU GET THERE?

Once your students are thinking about interesting places to visit, start a conversation about the different modes of travel. As a class, brainstorm as many different modes of travel as possible. Note that this activity will likely leave your students in need of specific vocabulary, so you may want to allow dictionaries during the discussion. Make the

list as detailed as possible. Do not forget less popular modes of travel including burrow, submarine, roller skates, dune buggy and any others you can think of. To elicit these travel modes from your students, you may want to mention settings in which those types of travel would be most appropriate, the Grand Canyon for example. After you have exhausted your list, pair your students and have each person tell the other what means of transportation he would use to get to that point of interest in his home country. Encourage your students that a one-word answer is not enough. Before you take the plane overseas, what mode would you use to get to the airport? After the plane landed what mode of transportation would you use?

3 CAN YOU GIVE ME DIRECTIONS?

Finally, have your students give specific directions from your classroom to their place of residence. Before starting the directions, compile a list of vocabulary words that are necessary when giving directions. Include right, left, go straight, turn and stop. Then have each student write out very detailed and specific directions how to get from your classroom to the place that he lives. It should be so specific as to include instructions like, "Stand up from the desk. Turn right and walk around the desks to the classroom door. Turn the doorknob..." Pair your students together and let them read each other's directions. If a student has questions or is unclear about the directions, the writer should clarify or revise his directions.

As a final project, have each student write directions from your classroom to the school library, cafeteria or other location nearby. Again, have your students write the directions, but this time they should not write the final destination on the paper. The final sentence in each set of directions should be, "You have arrived." Then collect and redistribute the papers to your class. Take some time and allow each student to follow the directions on the paper exactly. When each student has finished

following the directions, have him write down his location on the bottom of the paper and then return to the classroom. The writer of the directions should then look to see if the person following his directions ended up in the correct location. If all goes well, the intended destination will be the actual destination.

For more activities on giving and asking directions, visit BusyTeacher's section 'Directions: Giving And Asking'

4 DID I HEAR YOU CORRECTLY?

If you are feeling especially adventurous and your students are willing to accompany you, you can make a game out of giving directions. Once again, pair your students together. Have one student stand at one end of a playing field or the classroom (though a larger area is better in which to play). The other member of the pair should stand at the other end of the location with a blindfold on. Once all the teams are ready, you should place an item somewhere in the playing area between the team members, just be sure it is not too close to any one player. Each seeing player should then shout directions to his teammate across the field leading that person to the item you left for them. The first player should remain stationary throughout the game. The first player to reach the item and his direction-giving partner are the winners. You can then repeat the game with the players' roles reversed. This time move the object to a new location. This activity will challenge your students' ability to both give and understand directions.

WHAT WOULD WE DO IF WE HAD TO FIGURE OUT ON OUR OWN HOW TO GET FROM PLACE A TO PLACE B? MOST PEOPLE WOULD PROBABLY STAY IN ONE LOCATION FOR THEIR ENTIRE LIVES.

Empower your students to give and follow directions by teaching them the necessary vocabulary and then giving them practice with directions. You never know where they may end up if you don't.

Once Upon a Time: Teaching ESL with Fairytales

ONCE UPON A TIME IN A LAND FAR AWAY LIVED A BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS. SHE WAS UNHAPPY BECAUSE HER PARENTS WOULD NOT LET HER OUT OF THE CASTLE, AND SHE WANTED MORE THAN ANYTHING TO EXPLORE THE WORLD. ONE DAY A LITTLE MAN CAME TO HER IN THE CASTLE GARDEN...

This is not a traditional fairy tale, but whether you use stories your students have heard a thousand times or you write your own, fairy tales can be an fun and engaging way to teach English. With the following exercises, you can teach a unit on fairytales and have your students write their own as part of the process.

HOW TO TEACH ESL WITH FAIRYTALES

1 ONCE UPON A TIME

Kids love to listen to fairytales. There are stories upon stories starting with, "Once upon a time ..." and ending, "and they lived happily ever after." Starting your class by reading some familiar fairytales will engage and entertain your students. After reading these stories, ask your students what each of them has in common. You should look for answers such as they are make believe, they all have good characters and bad characters, they all use similar words at the beginning and the end of the story, and often the characters receive magical help. Working as a class, brainstorm fairytales they might know from either reading or watching movies. Encourage students to share any fairytales they know from their home cultures and languages as well. You can ask students to give a one-sentence summary of the fairytale during brainstorming but encourage them to give a more detailed explanation of those fairytales in the next activity.

2 THERE LIVED A BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS

Now that you and your students have a list of fairytales, break your class

into groups of four to five students each. Ask each group to look at the list of fairytales and choose one for their group. This is when students who have mentioned unfamiliar tales should give a more detailed description those fairytales. Each group should then plan to act out the fairytale in front of the class. You can give your class as little or as much time to plan the skit as you would like. If you have the time, encourage your students to discuss the story, getting in speaking practice, and then write a script for the skit, getting in their writing practice for the day. You can then have them perform the fairytale in class that day or give them more time to get costumes and other elements in place.

3 HER PARENTS WOULD NOT LET HER OUT OF THE CASTLE

Now that your students have brainstormed several fairytales and worked with one fairytale in depth, it is time for them to write their own. Help your students plan what they will write by asking these questions before writing.

- Who are the good characters in your story?
- Who are the evil characters in your story?
- What problem(s) does the main character have?
- What kind of help will the main character get?
- What magic is involved?
- How will the story end?

After getting these ideas together, your students should write their fairytales beginning with, "Once upon a time ..." Students can work in pairs to give feedback throughout the writing process. If a student is still unable to create his or her own tale, allow him to rewrite a tale he already knows. If this is the only tale your student can write, ask him to choose a fairytale in his native language so that he gets more language practice as he translates it from the original. You may want to

have your students read their original stories in front of the class as well.

4 THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Once your students have completed their fairytales and illustrated them (though this is optional), compile all the stories into a class book. You can make it look old fashioned and fanciful by using a simulated leather cover and a gold paint pen to write the title and class authorship on the front. Make this book available to your students during their free reading periods so they can read what their classmates have written.

You can do further activities with these fairytales by assigning a compare/contrast paper to your students. They can examine two of the original stories or compare one original story to one classic fairytale. You can also make an interclass activity by bringing younger students into the class for a fairytale themed day. Your class can dress in fanciful costumes if desired and then read their original tales to the younger students. You could also decorate your classroom to look like a castle, if you are feeling especially ambitious, and provide snacks for your visitors.

TEACHING WITH FAIRYTALES IS FUN AND ENGAGING AND GIVES YOUR STUDENTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE A LITTLE OF THEIR CULTURAL HISTORY WITH THE REST OF THE CLASS AS WELL AS THEIR IMAGINATION.

Encourage your students' creativity by teaching with fanciful tales and letting them tell their own. You may just live happily ever after, too.

10 Tips to Teach Collocations

COLLOCATION, OR HOW WORDS OCCUR TOGETHER IN SPEECH AND WRITING, IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF SPEAKING AND WRITING FLUENTLY. TO BE ABLE TO PRODUCE NATIVE-LIKE SPEECH AND WRITING, STUDENTS NEED TO KNOW WHICH WORDS WORK TOGETHER WELL.

For example, in English I “do exercise” not “make exercise”: “do” collocates with “exercise.” Words are learned and stored in memory in groups, not in isolation. Handing out traditional vocabulary lists of isolated words is of little value if students don’t know and haven’t practiced the context in which the word may occur. For example, teaching the word “regard” is more powerful if taught with the collocations and phrases that go with it: “in regard to,” for example. “Contrast” should be taught with its collocate, “in” as in “In contrast.”

Knowing the collocates a word occurs with like this will make students less likely make mistakes in grammar, word choice, and use of idiom and also contributes to fluid speech and writing as students are less likely to need to stop to search for the correct word.

PROBLEMS ENGLISH LEARNERS HAVE WITH COLLOCATION

One of the biggest problems with collocation is its arbitrary nature: there is no “rule” or reason that it’s “in regard to” and not “on regard to”—it just is.

1 LACK OF AWARENESS:

students need to have a problem brought to their attention before they even know it is a problem. They may be unaware that some words go together better than others, especially as this doesn’t tend to be emphasized in language instruction.

2 FIRST LANGUAGE TRANSFER

is another ESL problem with collocation — students transfer the appropriate collocation from their first language. “Make” and “do” confusion is common, for example, among students of Latin language backgrounds: e.g., “make my homework” rather than

“do my homework.”

TEACHING COLLOCATION

Vocabulary instruction in general, and certainly the instruction of collocation, is not much emphasized. However, there are some general principles for teaching collocation:

1

Teach students the term “collocation” and the rationale for learning it. Once they know the rationale behind instruction, they become more motivated to learn.

2

Notice which words go together when giving out a new reading. Call students’ attention to key words and the words that “go” with them, and have them underline collocations. On any given page, for example, there is likely to be numerous collocates. Spend some time practicing and interacting with these collocations with each reading.

3

Focus on “salient language,” language students may use a lot or that is related to the curriculum: for example, the phrase “on the other hand” is used a lot in academic language, and students often make mistakes in it: “in the other hand,” “on the other hands,” etc. Explicitly teaching the phrase and practicing it is a valuable investment of course time.

4

Contrast two words:
make do
list their collocates

5

Extend it: Have students make a list of things they need to accomplish that week, using “make “ and “do.” This establishes some of the differences between the two words (which are largely collocational).

6

Matching exercises/completion exercises: have students complete a sentence with the correct collocation or match words to their collocates: do homework, give a presentation.

7

Surveys: have students survey their classmates about their activities, including verbs and their collocations, for example.

8

Have students practice the phrases you’ve targeted. Once students been explicitly taught “in contrast to” and “on the other hand,” for example, have them practice these collocations in journal and essay assignments.

9

Write a sketch/dialogue. Put some collocates on the board learned from reading over the last week: e.g., “regular exercise,” “healthy diet,” “small portion size” and have students create a dialogue in pairs and practice it.

10

Write poetic descriptions of beloved person or place with adjective+noun combinations or adverb+adjective combinations. Again, give students some of the language for the task on the board or in a handout: “dear friend,” “old friend,” “passionately embrace,” “fond farewell,” etc. Then have them create a poem with it.

VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION CAN BE CHALLENGING AS WE HAVE NOT RECEIVED MUCH GUIDANCE IN IT AS ESL TEACHERS, AS LANGUAGE TEACHING HAS TRADITIONALLY FOCUSED ON THE TEACHING OF GRAMMAR.

The traditional vocabulary list may be of little value as words are not learned and used in isolation but rather with the phrases they occur in. By first raising students’ awareness of collocation and then practicing it, students can develop their vocabulary, grammar, and use of idiom in their second language.

10 Language Activities that Can Make Everyday Better

IN TODAY'S WORLD, INNOVATION IS KING.

People everywhere are continually making things better, faster, smaller and easier whether their products are computers or refrigerators. King Gillette was one such person whose idea to make a disposable razor blade changed the industry. Following in his footsteps, challenge your students to invent something that will make everyday better with this step by step process that makes use of their English skills with every activity.

TRY THESE LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR CLASS

1 THINGS WE USE

Start the process by having your students make a list of everything they use on a daily basis. This will be an activity that works better in groups since your students will be able to sound ideas off one another as well as spark each other's memories. Starting with the blanket that goes on their beds in morning and working their way to the slippers they kick off their feet at night, have these groups list every item they use in a day.

2 ALPHABETIZE

Gillette made a list like this as well, and then alphabetized it, using it later to identify the everyday item that he would improve. Challenge your students to alphabetize the list of items that they made. If your students have not had a lot of practice with alphabetizing, review with them how to do it and then have students work independently to arrange the list their groups compiled. Once everyone is done, have students regroup to check and see if their items are in the same order. If there is any discrepancy with the alphabetizing, review the lists and give students the correct answer.

3 CHOOSE & IMPROVE

Now that each person has a list of what people use every day, challenge each person to choose one item she would like to improve. This way, rather than inventing something completely

new, she can use an item that is already popular and useful as a starting point and think of a modification that will make daily life better. Encourage your students to make some notes of their ideas. You can also encourage students to write a stream of consciousness to help them formulate their ideas and then choose the best idea to develop further.

4 SHARE

Bringing the groups back together, give each person a chance to share her idea with the group. She should say what item she will improve, why she wants to improve it and how she will improve it. Group members should feel free to ask questions for clarification.

5 WRITE A PLAN

Next, each student will write a manufacturing plan. Ask each student to pretend that he runs a manufacturing plant for the item that he has chosen to improve. He should write a letter to his factory supervisor explaining the changes he wants to make to the product. He should include his reasons for the change as well as a plan for how to make the improvements which may be anything from changing the material it is made from to changing the design or function of an item.

6 THINK OF A SLOGAN

Now that each student has her product, she should write a slogan to promote that product. Make sure your students understand that a slogan is a short phrase which is associated with a product. To get them thinking creatively, work as a class to brainstorm as many slogans as you can think of. You might want to include Nike's "Just do it" and Mountain Dew's "Do the dew" in your lists. With these and other examples for inspiration, have each person write a slogan for her product.

7 DESIGN AN AD FOR YOUR PRODUCT

The next step is to design an advertisement for the product. Each person

should design a magazine ad for his or her product making sure to include the slogan on the page. You can provide magazines for your students to use as inspiration. Some may want to include a lot of text, explaining the benefits of the item. Others may prefer to let the product's image be more prominent. You may even want your students to transfer their designs to poster board and display the ads around your classroom.

8 DISCUSS

Bring the original groups back together to discuss the products once more. Have each group imagine that they are the top leaders of the manufacturing company. This time, each person should share about his product again, but the group must choose only one of these products to manufacture. After each person has made his case, the group should discuss the advantages and disadvantages to each product and then choose one for manufacturing.

9 ADVERTISE

With the product chosen, now it is time to advertise. Each group should work together to write a commercial for the new product, and they will perform it in front of the class. Each person should have a part in the commercial, and groups should be as creative as they dare!

10 DEVELOP A PRODUCT ANALYSIS

Finally, each group should work together to develop a product analysis. In this analysis, they should project how the product will change the market and how the general population will react to the product. You can also ask that they project profits once the item is ready to sell.

SOME OF THE BEST INVENTIONS ARE ACTUALLY REINVENTIONS. BY IMPROVING THE PRODUCTS WE USE EVERY DAY, OUR LIVES BECOME MORE EFFICIENT AND MORE ENJOYABLE.

As your students think about the items that they use every day, challenge them to imagine the world as a better place by making changes to the little things in their worlds!

Survival Time: Working Together to Overcome

FOR YEARS, 'SURVIVOR' HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR PROGRAMS ON TELEVISION.

It redefined, and some might say created, reality television giving us a perfect blend of action and drama. You can bring some of that same dramatic feel into your ESL classroom without sacrificing the time and energy you put into language teaching and learning. The following Survivor-style activities will require your students to communicate with one another in situations which have positive or negative effects that directly affect them. The next time you are looking to liven up your ESL class, try one of these activities and see just who survives!

SURVIVOR-STYLE ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 ON THE UP AND UP

One of the popular types of challenges on Survivor and other reality programs is building a tower out of certain types of materials. You can use this same type of challenge to get your students communicating with one another as they come up with a strategy to build their own tower. Divide your class into groups of three or four to plan for the challenge. In this activity, your students will use simple plastic cups to build a six-foot tower. Give each group a package of plastic cups to work with. You will also need to mark a spot on the wall at the six foot mark (you can use a piece of masking tape) so you will know when the first group has reached the target height. Give each group five to ten minutes to plan their strategy for stacking the cups. They will have to plan how to build a sturdy structure and stay within the number of cups they have. They will also have to build quickly and may want to discuss who do what once the challenge begins. Once the groups have planned their strategies, sound the start of the race and see which group can reach six feet first. After the activity, have each group evaluate their strategy. What

worked? What did not work? What would they change if they were to do it again? If you like, have each group work together to write their evaluation after they discuss the results.

2 CROSS THAT BRIDGE WHEN YOU COME TO IT

If you are teaching English as a second language in the content classroom, this activity may be just what you need to fulfill your science requirement. Start by brainstorming a list of all the bridges your students can think of. They can be located anywhere around the world. Depending on where you live and where your students come from, your list may not be very long, but you can expand it considerably by going to famous-bridge.com. This site lists famous bridges around the world and includes facts and pictures about many of the bridges. Your students should work in groups of about three students each as they look at these famous bridges and how they are constructed. Once the groups have had time to do some research, present the challenge. Each group will have to build a bridge across two desks which should be placed exactly two feet apart. In addition, the class will have to come up with a method of testing the strength of each bridge. Give your students at least a few days to make their plans and build their bridges. They will need to communicate with one another the strengths and weaknesses of the different bridge styles they could use and then choose the best one and construct it. On the day that the bridges are due, give your students some time to set up their bridges. Then test the strength of each one according to the method your class decided upon earlier in the week. Be sure to take pictures throughout the activity and then display the winning bridge on a bulletin board in your classroom.

3 ATTEMPTING THE THEORETICAL

You can take the challenges to an

even higher level by asking your students to develop a plan to scale a local building. This building might be the school building or a skyscraper in your city or any other building that might work for your class. In this activity, groups of students will make detailed plans for a strategy to scale the building, though they will not actually put their plan into action. Working in groups of three or four, have your students come up with a written plan for how to scale the building. They should include the materials that the climber would need as well as any other resources (human, safety, etc.) that should be included. Then each group should build a model or create a detailed diagram explaining their strategy and equipment. If you like, you may want to have an expert rock climber or someone who trains in parkour visit your class and determine which group has the best plans. While your guest is visiting, ask him or her to share a little about their sport and, if possible, give a demonstration.

WORKING TOGETHER TO ACCOMPLISH A DIFFICULT TASK IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS FOR YOUR STUDENTS TO USE THEIR ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS IN A REAL LIFE AND PRACTICAL SITUATION.

These reality program style challenges will do just that, challenge your students' speaking as well as problem solving skills. The bonus is they will be able to see the effectiveness of their communication in this real setting. Try one in your class and see just how good your students are at surviving these challenging activities!

5 Ways to Help Students Start Improving Academic Vocabulary

MANY ESL STUDENTS, PARTICULARLY YOUNG ONES, COME TO CLASS WITH FAIRLY STRONG CONVERSATIONAL ENGLISH SKILLS, WHICH THEY HAVE LEARNED FROM INTERACTIONS WITH THEIR PEERS ON PLAYGROUNDS, IN PARKS, AND OTHER AREAS OF PLAY AND SOCIALIZING.

What many young ESL student lack is academic English, the language used for academia, the professions, and business. Academic English is what is used in college classes and professional work, and research shows that a strong vocabulary leads to higher educational gains, higher-paying jobs, and improved life quality overall. With so much at stake, it is clear we should be concerned about our students' academic vocabularies. But how specifically do we address it? And what exactly is it? How does it differ from conversational vocabulary?

QUALITIES OF ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

1 MULTISYLLABIC

Academic vocabulary tends to be multisyllabic, comprised of morphemes, or word parts, each of which carry meaning. Conversational vocabulary, on the other hand, because it is more contextualized, relies less on the words carrying meaning than academic vocabulary. Conversational English is contextualized, and the context carries the meaning. For example, a recent conversation with my daughter went something like “What time should I pick you up?” “Five, Mom.” “I’m sorry, what time?” “Five!” Not one word in that exchange has more than one syllable because of the context and the ability to clarify: I was able to check with my daughter about what time she had said. The context, of a mother dropping her daughter off in the morning and asking about the pick up time, is also familiar to most readers and requires little elaboration.

Look at this similar exchange in aca-

demic vocabulary:

To: Parents

From: Principal

Re: Departure Time

In order to depart in a timely manner, please arrange to have your child at the school by eight a.m. Please ensure that he or she is prepared with appropriate clothes and lunch. Failure to follow these directions will result in the child’s inability to participate in the trip.”

Note the numerous multisyllabic words here, the long and detailed sentences, and the impersonal tone—all are features of academic vocabulary in contrast to the personal, immediate, and monosyllabic nature of conversational.

2 LATIN ORIGIN

Many words in academic vocabulary are of Latin origin because institutions of higher learning in England used Latin while English, a Germanic language, was used in more every day settings. This is one reason students have difficulty with academic language — its vocabulary is very different from that of the English they already know. For example, in academic/medical vocabulary, it is “obese female” as opposed to the more familiar conversational (and rude as opposed to impersonal) “fat girl” or “fat woman.”

3 ABSTRACT

Academic vocabulary tends to be abstract, dealing with ideas rather than the concrete, as with conversational vocabulary. “Capitalism,” “violence,” “educational system,” “legislation,” “law enforcement” — all of these are abstractions I have seen in the news recently, and more suited for news reports or academic essays. More commonly, in conversational English, they are “money,” “fighting,” “school,” “law,” and “police” or “cop.”

Students already know the conver-

sational version, - what they need to learn is the academic equivalent or “translation.”

4 TECHNICAL

Academic vocabulary is technical and precise, meant to convey specific ideas, often when the context is reduced. So while a parent may tell his child to “Get down from there, now!” from an amusement ride, the sign on the ride may read “Please demount the amusement ride when finished.” The academic version, for example replaces the familiar “Get down!” with “Dismount” and the nonspecific “there” with “amusement ride,” demonstrating the difference between the two forms due to context.

5 IMPERSONAL

Finally, again because of the reduced context and distance between addresser and addressee, academic language is impersonal. While a parent might tell her child “Hurry up, or I’ll leave without you!” a letter from the bus company, because of the lack of relationship between the two parties, might say “Those who do not arrive promptly at 7 am are in danger of being excluded from the trip.” Although the basic idea is the same, the language is very different.

5 METHODS TO IMPROVE STUDENT ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

1 READ

One of the major methods to improve students’ academic vocabulary is to read extensively — academic essays, reports, and excerpts from content textbooks. In this way, students will be exposed to a number of different academic words, some of them from their future majors.

2 KEEP A WORD JOURNAL

Studies show that students not

only need to be exposed to higher-level vocabulary, but they also need to work with it in order to acquire it and make it a part of their own vocabularies. One way to do this is the use of a word journal, in which students record at least three new words they have encountered in each reading, a definition, the part of speech, and a new sentence with the word. This provides some extra processing to help students assimilate the new word into their own vocabularies.

3 TEACH MORPHOLOGY

Learning morphology, or the parts of words, is an excellent way to help students decode new academic words. Again, academic vocabulary is multisyllabic, and most of these syllables, or morphemes, carry their own meaning. As a simple example, words that end in “— ment” in academic English are almost always abstract nouns: government, employment, containment, etc. In another example, “morphology” is comprised of two morphemes, “morpho” or shape, form, and “— ology,” meaning “study of.” So “morphology” is the study of (word) forms.

4 SET UP DISCUSSION GROUPS

To further acquire academic vocabulary, students can be assigned groups, given a specific academic topic, such as gun control and the United States, and some academic vocabulary to go with it: “legislation,” “Congress,” “(Second) Amendment,” and so on. They can then discuss what they think about how gun control is practiced in the United States, using the vocabulary assigned.

5 ESSAYS

Finally students can write essays on academic topics, like the difference in the legislative process, or how laws are passed, between the U.S. and other countries. This topic, unlike more common topics like “My Favorite Place,” is more likely to draw on academic vocabulary because even to discuss such an abstract process as passing laws I will need abstract, multisyllabic words, unlike those used in describing specific places.

ACQUIRING NEW VOCABULARY, AND AN ACADEMIC ONE, IS A DIFFICULT PROCESS, REQUIRING COMMITMENT OVER A PERIOD OF TIME.

However, the rewards in increased educational and employment opportunities make the effort worth it.

Conversational & Academic Phrases to Fake Your Way to Fluency

I currently am teaching an ESL student who has a great deal of proficiency in conversational English, and he has expressed interest in learning the language for conversation, specifically commonly used phrases for conversation.

Students at the higher levels often express interest in phrases, perhaps because they have control over a certain number of words already, but also because they understand that language really exists in ready-made phrases, and that learning these might be a better investment of their time than trying to memorize a series of grammar rules and then trying to apply them in the correct situations. It is much easier to bring out the correct phrase than search for the correct individual words and grammar rules. Likewise, students in college writing classes find a strong need for academic phrases for writing fluency and “sounding academic.”

PHRASES FOR ACADEMIC WRITING

Phrases in academic writing function to contrast two propositions or items, to emphasize a point, to negate it, to show cause and effect, and to exemplify—all the tasks of academic writing, which are demonstrated in its language.

1 FOR CONTRAST

All of the following phrases demonstrate some sort of contrast, which is often done in academic writing because of its reflective, analytical nature, where one might contrast the economic situation of two countries, for example, or the education system today and in the past.

*in spite of

*in contrast to

*despite the fact that

*even though

*on the other hand

*Not only ... but also (This phrase works in much the same way as “on the other hand” although it may not seem so at first: however, “Not only is she beautiful but also smart,” sets up a contrast of two

qualities in applying them to the same person).

2 EMPHASIS/NEGATION

Each of the following phrases is used to negate some previous proposition, and do it emphatically.

*By no means...

By no means should our support of this proposal be taken as lack of support for the president, who does not support it.

Used in much the same way are the following phrases:

*on no account ...

*under no circumstance ...

3 CAUSE AND EFFECT

*as a result of ...

4 EXEMPLIFICATION

*an additional example is...

PHRASES FOR CONVERSATION

Phrases in conversation also perform specific functions. These are to emphasize, to negate, to clarify, to deny knowledge of, and to give a directive or suggestion. There is more “clarifying” language in conversation than in writing as it takes face-to-face where the parties can clarify meaning.

1 EMPHASIZING

*I’ll tell you what...

This can be used for emphasizing a point: “I’ll tell you what is so important about this plan...”

It can also be used as a directive: “I’ll tell you what you’re going to do.”

2 NEGATING/DENYING KNOWLEDGE

*I don’t know what ...

This can be simply a denial of knowledge: “I don’t know what that means.” It can also be used as a brush-off: that is, as a means of ending a conversation

with an individual: “I don’t know what to tell you,” thereby signaling the speaker’s inability or unwillingness to help.

*I haven’t got a clue...

3 CLARIFYING

*That’s what I’m saying...

*I mean you know...

*Do you know what I mean?

*I thought I would (With this phrase, the speaker clarifies some internal intent that might not be clear to others: e.g., “I thought I would get up really early to see the sunrise.”)

4 DIRECTIVES/SUGGESTIONS

*You might as well ...

*Hang on a minute...

*Let’s have a look ...

METHODS TO TEACH CONVERSATIONAL AND ACADEMIC PHRASES

There are a number of methods to teach these phrases that can help students with their fluency in English. Some of them follow:

1 MATCHING

Various matching exercises can be done with these phrases, in which students connect part of the phrase with another: “On the — other hand.” Phrases can also be matched with their meanings or functions. These exercises give students practice with the form and meaning.

2 FILL IN THE BLANK

Fill in the blank exercises, in which students fill in a missing word in the phrase, which has usually been placed in the larger context of a paragraph or sentence, gives students intense practice with the form while at the same time seeing how the phrase is actually used in authentic writing.

3 SHORT ASSIGNMENTS

After the practice with matching and fill in the blank exercises, students are now more equipped with understanding of the function and form to practice using these phrases in short writing assignments, such as paragraphs or journals on familiar topics like “A Life Lesson” or “My Favorite Teacher.” The teacher can specify how many phrases students should use, perhaps three to five.

4 ROLE PLAYS

Students can also do short role plays after giving students a situation: e.g., “You are lost in a mall parking lot. Talk to each other and try to find your car.” Again, students should use a certain amount of phrases, e.g., for directives and denying knowledge: “Hang on a minute... wasn’t it back there?” “I haven’t got a clue...”

5 LONGER WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Finally, students can do longer writing assignments, such as essays on the causes of war. Again, adding academic phrases will give their writing a more academic sound as well as increase connections between ideas.

TEACHING STUDENTS ACADEMIC AND CONVERSATIONAL PHRASES IS TIME-CONSUMING BUT PAYS OFF ENORMOUSLY IN TERMS OF THE INCREASE TO STUDENT VOCABULARY AND FLUENCY.

Do you see the value of teaching academic and conversational phrases? If so, how would you teach them?