

# HOW TO TEACH GRAMMAR

## LIKE A PRO

60 TOP CHEAT SHEETS EVERY GRAMMAR TEACHER SHOULD HAVE

TAKE THE  
CRINGING OUT  
OF GRAMMAR  
LESSONS  
AND PUT  
SOME **FUN**  
INTO THEM



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# 5 Tips to Integrate Grammar and Writing More Effectively

**A PREVALENT IDEA IN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS TODAY IS THAT TEACHING GRAMMAR IN ISOLATION IS A "BAD THING."**

While our students do need to learn grammar explicitly, the language learning journey is more complicated than simple grammar rules. Students are good at doing grammar exercises, however, when it comes to applying this grammar in their writing, they fall short. Why? Most likely because **we as teachers tend to teach writing and grammar as separate concepts**. Below are some strategies to make writing more of a part of the grammar classroom.

**TRY THESE 5 TIPS TO INTEGRATE GRAMMAR AND WRITING**

## 1 TAKE TIME TO READ IN WRITING CLASS

Any time you can emphasize the crucial relationship between reading and writing will be beneficial for the students. When you introduce a grammar concept, show students a model paragraph or text which illustrates this concept nicely. For example, when teaching indirect/reported speech, you can take a news article and highlight the examples of indirect speech for the students to expose them to this new form. Ask students to study these bolded sentences, and ask why these sentences are written the way they are. For indirect speech, you could show two copies of the same article, one with direct speech and one with indirect speech.

Alternatively, you can show students a text after you have introduced the grammar concept and ask them to find all of the examples of the rule you have just taught. While teaching past perfect, you can give students a story to have students compare and contrast past simple and past perfect events.

Whether you use texts before instruction or after, seeing grammar concepts in their appropriate and realistic context is critical for learners. If they can't understand the patterns and situations in which this grammar is useful and applicable, they will not be able to move

beyond basic drills. Seeing the featured grammar in others' writing will empower students to be more confident in using the structures in their own writing.

## 2 A WRITING PER DAY KEEPS THE ERRORS AWAY

After introducing and practicing a grammar concept, give students a short informal writing to illustrate that grammar concept. Whether it is a paragraph or a full essay, immediate writing with a prompt aimed at eliciting the grammar structure will get students into producing the grammar more naturally than sentence drills. By writing more frequently, you are building their association between grammar and writing. Also, emphasizing writing more than grammar in the classroom enforces the idea that language learning is not simply memorizing rules.

## 3 DESIGN YOUR LESSONS WITH YOUR STUDENTS IN MIND

Each time you evaluate student writing, jot down a few sentences from each student's paper that contain errors. A good warm-up activity is to **make a worksheet based on student errors** and go over them as a class. Remind students that everyone makes mistakes, even the teacher, and that each student has one error represented in the worksheet. After students have practiced correcting these errors, they can return to their writing to revise and improve.

It is also beneficial to **keep an error journal** for your class. After you finish reading an assignment from your students, make note of the common frequent errors among your students. These lists that you make should help inform your daily lessons to target the grammar your students still have not mastered.

## 4 DESIGN YOUR RUBRIC WITH GRAMMAR IN MIND

Typically speaking, students will write formal papers using only the grammatical structures with which they feel comfortable. Rather than taking risks, stu-

dents **stay on the safe side and use simplistic sentences**. To push them to practice using the more complex structures that you've been teaching in class, design your rubric to include specific points addressing which kinds of grammatical structures you would like to see.

One approach is to tell students a **minimum number of structures for each writing**. For example, you might assign students a narrative essay in which they must use at least five examples of past perfect. Alternatively, you may wish to be less legalistic and implement a point system which **rewards students for using target grammar**. If you have been reviewing sentence variety, you can assign students to write a paragraph in which they get one point for every simple sentence they use, five points for every compound sentence they use, and ten points for every compound/complex sentence they use.

## 5 USE PICTURES TO ELICIT WRITING

Some grammatical structures are difficult to bring out in expository writing. For example, the present progressive is used quite infrequently compared with present simple. As a way to elicit a wide range of tenses, you can use pictures in your writing classroom. Depending on the particular grammar structure you are teaching, **pictures give writers the freedom to practice virtually any tense**. For present progressive, you can ask students to describe what is happening in the picture. For present perfect, you can show a picture of a person and ask students to write down life experiences of this person. For advanced students, you can ask them to predict that person's future using future simple and future perfect progressive.

**ONE OF THE BIGGEST DISSERVICES WE CAN DO TO OUR STUDENTS IS FAIL TO GIVE THEM PRACTICAL SITUATIONS TO APPLY THEIR GRAMMATICAL KNOWLEDGE.** Without successful writing strategies to use the grammar, grammatical structures are quite useless on their own. These useful strategies will encourage both you and your students that integrating grammar and writing is easier than it sounds.

# 5 New Fun Ways to Teach Grammar to ESL Students

**MENTION THE WORD “GRAMMAR” AND STUDENTS WILL CRINGE. IN FACT, MOST TEACHERS WILL CRINGE, TOO.**

Of course, teachers know correct grammar rules, but it's one thing to know them, and another thing to effectively teach them, and transmit them so that students not only understand the rules, but also apply them correctly.

The thing is, grammar shouldn't be taught “by the book”. At least not in teaching English as a second language. That's not what students are there for. They don't want to know all of these rules. They want to learn English. They want to speak, read, and write in English. So, how do we as ESL teachers teach them essential grammar and give them what we need, rather than boring them to death with “the rules”. It's actually quite simple: by teaching grammar in context. And in fun ways.

## 1 HOW TO TEACH THE EVER-ELUSIVE PAST PERFECT TENSE

Yes, it's hard to find an ESL student who spontaneously uses the past perfect tense. In fact, there are some “native” English speakers who don't use it either (along with other forms of “correct” English). But it must be taught, never overlooked, or your students will be lacking something that they need to take their English fluency to the next level. So, how can we teach the past perfect tense so that it may be fully grasped by our students? Here are the steps:

- Go to [OurTimeLines.com](http://OurTimeLines.com) where you may generate your personalized timeline and see when major historical events took place throughout your life. For example, if you were born in 1971, you'll see that the Internet was invented when you were 2.
- Show students your timeline (or anyone else's) and set up the past perfect like this: “*Sam, the Vietnam War ended in 1975. I was born in 1971. You were born in 1995. So, when you were born, the Vietnam War had ended 20*

*years earlier. When I was born it hadn't ended yet.*”

- Give as many examples as you like, go over briefly how the past perfect tense is formed and make sure they understand you're talking about two events that took place in the past, but one before the other. Then, have students come up with examples of their own using the timeline.
- Once they are comfortable using the past perfect in affirmative sentences, move on to examples with questions. Then have them ask each other questions: “*Laura, when you started primary school, had terrorists attacked the World Trade Center?*”

Save the timeline because it will come in handy to practice the past perfect in passive voice. Naturally, timelines are great for many tenses, like the simple past or the passive voice.

## 2 ACTION!

Nothing shakes them up better than **getting them out of their seats**. When you see your students daydreaming, not paying attention, or simply bored, tell them to get up and form a circle. Now, this simple exercise works great to teach numerous grammar points, but here's an example:

Say you want your students to practice the simple past of regular or irregular verbs. Grab a small ball or bean bag and say a verb out loud, toss the ball to a student who will have to say its past form. He or she tosses the ball back to you and you choose another student. Whenever a student makes a mistake, he or she has to leave the circle. The last student left standing gets a reward sticker or other prize. You can say a sentence in affirmative, and they have to supply a question, or vice versa... This activity can be adapted to any grammar point.

## 3 CELEBRITY PROFILES

An awesome way to teach and practice any verb tense is through **biographies**. Try this activity to contrast the

simple past and present perfect tenses. Find out which celebrities or sports stars your students admire. Then find a short biography or write one yourself summarizing a celebrity's main achievements. Read the bio with your students and make sure they understand the differences. Point out examples that clearly illustrate this: “*He starred in his first hit film in 1985. But he has worked in 20 hit films throughout his career.*”

## 4 CELEBRITY PHOTOS

Another way in which you can use your students' interest in certain celebrities. Cut out celebrity pics from entertainment magazines. Use these pictures to **teach comparatives and superlatives**: “*Katie Holmes is taller than Tom Cruise.*” “*Shakira is more talented than Ricky Martin.*” and it works great with comparative adverbs: “*Shakira dances better than Ricky, too.*”

## 5 A OR AN?

This activity works great with beginners, including small children. Cut up a list of several words that either take “a” or “an” and mix them up. For very young learners, you may use pictures instead of words. Then divide students into pairs of groups, and have them put the words in two piles, depending on the article. Once they have their piles ready, ask them if they can figure out the rule by themselves.

By far the best ways to teach any type of grammar is through the use of either realia or real life settings and contexts. Why would a student be motivated to learn the conditional tenses if he has no idea why he's learning them, in other words, he doesn't understand when and where he'll have use for them? When teachers use real life settings and objects students will know the grammar structures they learn will be useful for them.

**SO, TAKE THE CRINGING OUT OF GRAMMAR LESSONS, AND PUT SOME FUN INTO THEM. YOU'LL SEE THAT YOUR STUDENTS LEARN MUCH FASTER, TOO.**

# How to Do a Comprehensive Review of Verb Tenses for Intermediate ESL Students

ENGLISH GRAMMAR, PARTICULARLY ITS COMPLEX VERB TENSE SYSTEM, CAN BE CONFOUNDING FOR ESL STUDENTS. MANY INTERMEDIATE LEVEL STUDENTS WHO HAVE SOME LEVEL OF CONVERSATIONAL FLUENCY HAVE BEEN TAUGHT THE VARIOUS VERB TENSES BUT DON'T USE THEM BECAUSE THEY DON'T FULLY UNDERSTAND AND HAVEN'T INTERNALIZED THEM.

However, to reach a higher level of academic success, students have to control grammatical accuracy, including the verb tense system.

Often students have learned the verb tenses in isolation of each other, when in fact verb tenses interact and relate: if I'm telling a story about an accident I was involved in yesterday, for example, I'm likely to use simple past, past progressive, and past perfect tenses. It helps students to see there is some pattern and organization to our verb tense system, and that the verb tenses are related. It can be particularly helpful, for example, to show how all the verbs within one timeframe relate to each other because these are the verbs tenses that are most likely to occur together.

Teaching this can be accomplished through a careful review for those intermediate-level students who have been exposed to the major verb tenses but don't necessarily use them accurately.

## STEPS TO A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF OUR VERB TENSE SYSTEM: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

**1** Often students will not understand the pattern of our verb tense system, or even that there is one, although if they are at the intermediate level or higher, they may be using

many tenses with varying degrees of correctness. **Show students the pattern**, that verb tense can in fact be organized in terms of timeframe (past, present, and future) and of aspect, or the particular way of looking at that time frame, the simple or progressive aspect.

**2** Put a chart on the board or give out a handout, dividing the verbs up into present, past, and future tenses and then by progressive, perfect, and simple aspects.

**3** Offer examples. **Visuals are also helpful.** For example, a straight line connecting the past and present can indicate perfect tense:

*I have driven for ten years* \_\_\_\_\_  
2001      2011

**4** Teach the meaning and use of the verb tense along with the form. Contrast the tenses with each other: e.g., "I drive," simple present, means "I usually drive" or it is my habit to drive... "I am driving," present progressive, means I'm driving at the moment, right now.

## PROVIDE MEANINGFUL OPPORTUNITIES TO PRACTICE

Students must practice a skill like use of verb tenses **both in speaking and writing** for it to become internalized. Students have probably encountered many of these verb tenses, again, but have not acquired them in the sense of being able to recall and use them fluently in the correct situation. Additional practice will help that.

Give examples and practice in mean-

ingful context, the way the tenses would be used in a real-life situation, such as the use of future tenses in the context of a discussion about plans for the summer, for example.

## SPECIFIC VERB TENSE PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS:

**1** Call on students: e.g., "Jose, how long have you driven?" The teacher should call on students after handing out the chart for verb tense review and get them to practice using the various tenses. Students will then have to refer to their chart to form the sentence.

**2** Give out a paragraph with mistakes in the various verb tenses. Have students work together to proofread it.

**3** Have students interview each other using the various verb tenses. Provide the interview questions or have students brainstorm them.

**4** When doing a class reading, take note of the verb tenses used. Show how in the narrative past, for example, tenses shift between simple past to past progressive and past perfect.

**5** Give writing assignments that will focus on a particular time frame, such as the narrative essay that will call upon uses of the various past tenses. Have students write the essays, bring them in, and proofread each other's work.

# 6

Engage in class activities that will get students to interact in a meaningful way: “*Alibi*” is a fun activity for teaching the past progressive and simple past, for example. Tell students a murder was committed (“*The teacher was murdered last night at 7 pm. Students are suspected.*”) They must interview each other (“*What were you doing last night at 7 pm?*”) and decide who has strong and weak alibis. Setting up interactive activities like this in which students have to practice using the language **shows a meaningful context for it and helps students internalize its use.**

# 7

Do peer editing assignments that focus on verb tense: when turning in assignments, have students trade with a partner and check each other’s work, focusing on verb tense.

## **VERB TENSE IN ENGLISH IS COMPLEX, AND IT IS NOT EASY TO TEACH OR LEARN IT.**

However, teaching it and increasing students’ accuracy can be accomplished through a systematic presentation, clear visuals, focus on both form and function, raising awareness of verb tense in reading other’s work and in editing their own, and in plenty of opportunities to practice the verb tenses in meaningful activities to internalize their use.

# How To Teach Boring Grammar

## Points: 7 Quick Proven Tips

**MOST ESL TEACHERS AT SOME POINT HAVE COME ACROSS A CERTAIN GRAMMAR POINT THAT THEY STRUGGLE TO FIND ACTIVITIES TO LIVEN UP THE CLASS OR ADD SOME LIFE INTO IT.**

E.g. the dreaded 'Gerunds versus Infinitives' lesson that always seems to crop up. Most of us generally loathe the topic and would rather find ourselves watching an episode of *'Days Of Our Lives'* or a drama series of our local country, rather than teaching that horrible topic again. The bad news is, when we think like this, **it can negatively affect the vibe of class** without ourselves even realising it. When we find a topic boring, we can generally pass this vibe onto students. This is something that all teachers must look out for, as when a student loses focus, it is very difficult to gain their attention. The best approach is to keep the energy levels of your class high and vibrant. There are a number of tips and tricks that can be adapted for all lessons, grammar points and topics that will keep your students focused and in the right frame of mind for learning.

### HOW TO TEACH BORING GRAMMAR POINTS: 7 QUICK PROVEN TIPS

#### 1 SHOW OFF YOUR BEST ASSET

No, I'm not referring to your chiselled face, voluptuous curves, and especially not your bank account. I'm talking about your personality. When you're teaching a grammar point that you know is boring and the students will switch off over, lighten up, smile and become an 'Edu-tainer'. As an 'Edu-tainer', your task is to keep them interested and attentive. **Be funny, amusing and light hearted** while at the same time teaching the dry-as-hell topic. You can throw in jokes, be a little bit irrelevant at times, just turn on the charm and keep them from falling asleep on the desk.

#### 2 BE A LITTLE UNEXPECTED

One little gem I like to use in the classroom when teaching a boring topic, is to **keep them thinking**. Instead of feeding them the answers or elicit the

answer out of them, I like to keep them on their toes. One such method is to give the students an answer to a question that is incorrect, and see how long it takes the students to recognise the error. Being unexpected means that they must always be thinking, and they are not going to find themselves anticipating the answers.

#### 3 TELL A STORY

If you are explaining a grammar point, why not **keep your students amused and educated with a story**. This is a good way to keep their attention while explaining some of the more dull aspects of grammar. Great for children and lower-level adults, a well-known story such as The Hare and the Tortoise are the best choices. Using a short story that the students know provides the students with a picture and connect the grammar with an event in the story.

#### 4 TAKE THE TABLOID APPROACH

One nifty little way to liven up any lesson is to use the lives of celebrities to explain a grammar point. To do this, find out about a local celebrity in the country, find out who they've been dating, associated with, previously dated, been married to, been embroiled in some form of scandal, and create a time line while explaining the tense.

Example: Tom Cruise **was** married to Nicole Kidman (Past tense – Finished Action, They're divorced.) Tom Cruise **married** Katie Holmes after he **had divorced** Nicole Kidman (Past tense, finished action / Past Perfect – the first action to happen in the past).

No matter what the topic, taking a populist approach by using celebrities in a class is always bound to entertain while adding a sense of realism to your lesson.

#### 5 BE PRACTICAL

Teach English that students will find beneficial and useful in their jobs or their lives. One way to do this is to try to **use practical examples wherever**

**possible**. It is incredibly simple and can even be improvised on the spot. An example is explaining tenses by throwing a pen. By actively going through the motions, saying the sentences and explain the points while doing it, you can keep your students attention on you while teaching them the grammar point. For topic specific tasks, another great way for students to learn vocabulary is to **create a presentation**. One example is a **class Fashion Show** to talk about clothes and accessories or a role-play to practice vocabulary and phrases related to food and dining.

#### 6 USE THE NEWS

English language newspapers are fantastic for students to learn about English as they generally use simple words and provide an example of what's happening around the world that the student's may already know in their native language. This allows them to easily connect the times and even some of the more difficult vocabulary in the newspaper article, while the timing implications of a the events of the news article can be used to describe tense. **Newspapers are a good introductory activity for any class**, as they provide a real-life vocabulary source that can then progress into a discussion, before getting into the grammatical deep-end.

#### 7 PLAY A GAME

Have you ever been in class and noticed that the following exercise in the book was a typical 'fill in the gaps' or something that you knew would send the students far away into a dreamlike trance? Well, this is the point where you can tell the students to stop everything, put their pens down, close books and stand up. **Students love competition with each other**, and any activity where two teams can be created and scoring is involved is a sure-winner with any tasks. Instead of having the students complete the activity in the book, in silence and on their own, they can learn and have fun at the same time by working together as a group. **PRACTICALLY ANY GRAMMAR POINT CAN BE 'SPICED UP' WITH A LITTLE HELP OF FUN ACTIVITIES THAT WILL KEEP YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS FROM FALLING ASLEEP.**



# Quick Grammar Drills for Review and Practice

Learning a second language almost certainly includes having an ongoing relationship with unfamiliar grammar. Every ESL student needs practice with elements of grammar, and sometimes teachers want a quick activity to fill that need. Most classes find they have five minutes to fill here and there, so grammar review is a useful and beneficial topic to fit into those five minutes. Your reason for quick grammar drills may be because the class needs practice or it may just be because you have a few unscheduled minutes of class time.

## ENERGIZE YOUR GRAMMAR LESSONS WITH THESE QUICK LITTLE DRILLS

### 1 WRITE ONE

To review a specific grammatical structure or principal that you have been studying in class, ask each person in your class to write one multiple-choice question. You can specify what you want the question to test, or you can let your students choose from several topics you have already studied. Ask each person to turn in his or her question and then present one or two of them to your class. If you have more questions than you can go through in the time you have, keep the remaining questions to use the next time you have a few minutes you would like to fill. If you want to make the exercise a little more challenging, have each student specify on his paper which choice is the correct answer and why. **Having your students explain the rule behind the question will help to solidify it in their minds.**

### 2 TRANSFORM IT

Though most teachers of writing want their students to avoid the passive voice, the structure is one that ESL students must study and understand. A simple review of the passive voice, and a challenge for your students, is to take a short passage (two sentences up to a paragraph) and rewrite it changing active verbs to passive ones. If you have already taught your class how to write

the passive voice, this activity will serve as useful practice for the grammatical structure. If you have time, ask your students to notice how much information is lost when sentences are written in the passive voice.

### 3 HOMOPHONE MINUTE

Homophones are a topic that is always worth reviewing with your class. Students of all ages consistently confuse sets of homophones such as *to/two/too* and *there/their/they're* as well as many others. When you have a few minutes of free class time, **write a set of homophones on the board and ask each person to write a sentence using each one.** You may want to review which meaning goes with each word before your students write their sentences, or test to see how much they already know by saving definitions until after they have turned in their sentences.

### 4 REWRITE ME

As a review for verb tenses, give your students a paragraph from a reading book, a magazine or another resource. For paragraphs written in the past tense, ask your students to work in pairs or groups of three or four to rewrite the paragraph in the present tense, as if the events are happening at the present moment. You could also ask your student to **rewrite the paragraph** using future tenses. This will serve as a good review for verb tenses and also give your students some time to practice their speaking as they work in their small groups.

### 5 MINI MAD LIBS

You can review parts of speech with your students by completing *Mad Libs* as a class. You can find this type of interactive activity online on many web sites, but there are also printable versions available. You will ask your students to give you words with a specific part of speech, and you will fit them into a paragraph resulting in a silly story. Though some of the humor may be lost on your students, they will still benefit from volunteering words that fulfill spe-

cific parts of speech.

### 6 CLOZE ENCOUNTERS

A cloze paragraph is an easy way to see just how much grammar your students understand, but it does take some advance preparation. In this type of exercise, you should prepare a few sentences up to an entire paragraph for your students to work with. For the passage, replace every fifth, seventh or tenth word with a blank line that your students will fill in. The more advanced your students are, the more frequently you can include a blank. They must then fill in words that are grammatical and make sense contextually. **Since a cloze exercise does not test one particular skill but rather general grammatical knowledge, you should plan to use this exercise for review.** Simply prepare a few cloze paragraphs and have them copied and ready to pull out of your desk drawer when you have a few free moments to fill during your next class!

### 7 PUNCTUATION CHALLENGE

When you have time to prepare an activity in advance, giving your students a text in which they must place all punctuation and/or capital letters is another useful means of grammar review. Like the cloze exercise, this type of activity tests a general level of knowledge rather than drilling a specific skill. Having **some paragraphs ready to hand out at a moment's notice** will make good use of a few free minutes in class provided you take some time to get the paragraph ready ahead of time.

**A FEW FREE MINUTES AT THE END OF CLASS CAN TURN OUT TO BE A PRECIOUS OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW OR PRACTICE SOME GRAMMAR WITH YOUR STUDENTS.**

When you have these tools ready in your back pocket (or just in your desk drawer), you will always be ready to make use of your class time. Not only that, these activities may give you a new understanding of just how much English grammar your students really understand!

# Are You Tense About Tenses?

## 5 Tense Review Activities

**THERE IS NO NEED TO BE TENSE ABOUT TENSES. ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO ENSURE THAT STUDENTS ARE PROGRESSING IS TO PROVIDE OCCASIONAL REVIEW OF SEVERAL OF THE TENSES THE STUDENTS HAVE BEEN LEARNING.**

It can work really well to combine that review with other topics, themes or grammar points so that students can get the most out of a refresher lesson.

### TRY THESE 5 TENSE REVIEW ACTIVITIES

#### 1 FLASHCARDS

Flashcards are suitable for most any level of tenses or conjugations. They are valuable because once you have made them you can use them for all different types of drills, activities and prompts. Students appreciate the opportunity to work with cards as they are something hands-on that they can touch and manipulate. **You can generate all types of card activities, and remember that the point is to get the students working together.** You'll definitely want to have a selection of cards for irregular past tense verbs. You can create sets of cards for all the irregular verbs and then use them as prompts, to play matching games, or to do perform various drills. Then once you get to higher level tenses you can refer back to the past tense cards and combine them with helping verb cards or time markers.

#### 2 MAKING QUESTIONS

Students always struggle with question formation in any tense. Basing activities around this practice can be really useful in order to solidify one tense or compare several at a time. There is also the issue of creating *information questions vs. yes/no or closed questions*. It's a good idea to practice both types in a variety of ways. You could provide simple prompts like:

Mary/movies: See how many questions they can make with simple prompts.

You could do a mingling exercise like *Find Someone Who* and use all the

tenses they have learned recently. If you provide the prompt, the students will have to formulate the questions. For example, **Find someone who...** *Has had a tooth ache (what will they have to ask each other?) Had been a doctor in their country. Has been learning English for more than 4 years.*

#### 3 NAME ALL THE TENSES

**Finding fun and realistic ways to show learners how tenses operate and differ can be very informative.** A worthwhile way to review tenses is to bring in a variety of different kinds of passages. You can focus on your students' interests and provide an assortment of clippings from newspapers, magazines, use the internet, or even compose your own. **The best types of passages are ones that weave in several tenses, tell a compelling story,** and use some other element like humor or satire. That way the students aren't only analyzing the tenses, but they have a lot more to discuss and ask questions about.

Often it can be fun to create some kind of competition for these activities as well. You could give them a time limit and tell them that the person who finds 5 different tenses and identifies them is the winner. There are a lot of ways to use passages that don't simply require the students to read and answer questions. If you want to focus on tenses, another engaging way is to do a cut-up passage, in which you provide a passage that is cut up into sentences and mixed up. The students then have to figure out the order and identify the tenses used in each sentence. This is a way to practice sequence and to provide students an opportunity to use critical thinking skills.

#### 4 SING IT OUT LOUD

Using music in the classroom can be a great way to review tenses and shake up the routine. Generally when choosing a song you want to choose carefully to make sure the language is understandable and that the tenses being used are consecutive throughout the song. **If you can find a song that has two or three repetitive tenses**

**and also has a strong meaning that can be analyzed, you have found the perfect song.** The best way to present music in class is to first review the tenses that it focuses on. Then introduce the band or artist, and then jump into the music. With most songs, it is a good idea to have a cloze exercise ready to go and decide how you want to present the music. You can have them listen to it several times, you can give them the fill-in-the-blank worksheet the second time through, or you can even have them learn and sing parts of the song if you are so inclined. Any combination that takes your class and their level into consideration will be a welcome break from the usual grammar activities. Many teachers consult the artists like the Beatles, Whitney Houston, Michael Jackson or the Rolling Stones to find a song that is applicable. There are lots of resources online for the lyrics as well as for downloading songs.

#### 5 SENTENCE MATCHING

**There are a few ways you can do sentence matching to make it more or less interactive.** You can do them on a worksheet and have students match two parts of a sentence or match a sentence to its tense. Another way would be to do this in a card game format where each student gets multiple half sentences. They then walk around the room and find the missing half of their sentence by asking questions pertaining to their card. Combinations must be grammatically correct and logical. Remind students that they should pay attention to punctuation. You can also do this on the board and make it a race between two teams who can match the most sentences correctly. You'll definitely want to include challenging structures and have some halves that could have multiple answers.

#### GRAMMAR, ESPECIALLY TENSES, CAN SOMETIMES GET WEIGHED DOWN IN THE MUNDANE.

Every so often it is necessary to mix things up and prepare activities that the students don't do very often. It is also a good tool to observe how the students are putting their learning to practical use.

# Past, Present, Future: Teaching the Verb Tense System

**VERB TENSES RECEIVE A LOT OF ATTENTION IN ENGLISH INSTRUCTION — IN FACT, THEY RECEIVE PERHAPS MORE ATTENTION THAN ANY OTHER ASPECT OF GRAMMAR.**

And with good cause: there are thirteen verb tenses in English, if you look at tense as ways to discuss time. The English-speaking world is obsessed with time and its passage: clocks of various types are ubiquitous in most English-speaking countries, a watch is still considered a fine gift marking the passage into adulthood, tardiness is frowned on, and so forth. This value of time may be why so much attention is given to verb tense instruction: given our obsession with time, we need a way to talk about it. So the attention to verb tenses is not the problem. The concern is student papers coming in, even after weeks of drill in the simple present and past, missing all of the “-ed” “-s” endings. Teachers often shrug and say “*It’s developmental.*”

That may be so, but it begs the question of whether drills in verb tense make sense if students aren’t “developmentally ready” for the material anyway. I suspect, however, something else is going on — **there is a problem with the sequence of instruction.** Rather than plowing through simple present, then simple past, and simple future, because supposedly these are easier to learn, I suggest all of the present tenses be taught together, then all of the past, and then future. Why should the tenses be taught in this manner?

**THERE ARE MULTIPLE REASONS TENSES SHOULD BE TAUGHT WITHIN A TIME FRAME.**

## 1 PUT THE VERB TENSE IN CONTEXT

Language learning, like learning in general, occurs in relation to other learning. The simple present tense is best learned in relation to the present continuous: “*I drive a car every day, but I am not driving right now,*”

demonstrates the contrast between the simple present and present continuous: a habitual activity rather than one engaged in at the moment.

## 2 GIVE STUDENTS MORE LANGUAGE TO USE

**Students have a difficult time with a typical assignment like “My Likes and Dislikes” and “My Daily Routine” if they only know one present verb tense well.** Even if the assignment calls on the use of mostly the simple present, students can write more, and write more correctly, with other present tense verbs, like the continuous and the perfect.

**HOW TO TEACH VERBS ACCORDING TO THEIR TIME FRAMES**

## 1 ABOUT VERB TENSE IN ENGLISH

**Verbs in English actually have two parts: the time and the aspect, or way of looking at that time.** So, for example, within the present time frame, there are three aspects commonly used: simple, continuous, and perfect. In the present time frame, simple is used to show habitual activity: “*I drive every day.*” Continuous shows ongoing activity or activity in the moment: “*I am driving right now.*” Perfect in the present time frame shows activity that began in the past but continues into the present time frame: “*I have driven this car for ten years.*” The past and future time frames also have simple, continuous, and perfect aspects (and in some cases, perfect continuous tenses).

## 2 INTRODUCE STUDENTS TO THE SYSTEM

**Give students an overview of the entire verb system in the different time frames.** The purpose of this is not to get students to learn or memorize the material right away but to get

an overview of this variety of tenses and see how they relate to each other. I find it helpful to put the time frame across the top of the board or handout and the aspect down the side:

Past Present Future

simple

continuous

perfect

Students will get an overview of the various tenses with a chart like this. I keep it simple, just to introduce students to this complex system, not addressing for now variations of these basic tenses like the perfect progressive: I have been walking.

I also use a regular verb to model the tenses, such as “to walk,” whose variations and inflections are easier to teach and remember: “— ed” for past, for example. I also try to use intransitive verbs, or verbs that don’t require a direct object, like “walk,” when introducing the verb tense system, so focus can stay on the verb. If I used a verb like “to throw” to introduce verb tenses, students would have to focus on the irregular forms of the verb “threw,” “thrown,” and also consider a direct object that makes sense.

## 3 FOCUS ON ONE TIME FRAME AT A TIME

**It’s very helpful to students to learn all the present verb tenses together rather than switching from present to past to future because this is how we tend to use language:** when relating an incident that happened to me on the way to work yesterday, for example, I’m going to tend to stay in the past time for the duration of that story, perhaps switching between past progressive and simple past: “*I was driving to work yesterday, and this other car appeared out of nowhere...*”

I am not going to suddenly switch to present or future tense until perhaps

the end: *"Now I need to call my insurance company."*

## **4 FOCUS ON ONLY ONE TENSE AT A TIME BUT SHOW IT IN RELATION TO OTHER TENSES IN THAT FRAME**

**When introducing these tenses, stay in one tense at a time, practicing its form and meaning,** as you would have before, but keep showing the tenses in relation to each other, keep referring back to the chart. Meaning is learned best in context and how an item relates to the overall picture.

## **5 PRACTICE**

**Give plenty of authentic opportunities to practice:** have students tell a story, plan out a schedule, give a series of directions in writing, and so forth, all authentic writing tasks that highlight different verb tenses.

## **6 REVIEW**

**Understanding verb tense is indeed developmental, in the sense that it takes time and practice to really understand the tenses in English,** more than passing a test will show, so continually revisiting the tenses will help students in this process.

# Verb Talk: Conversation Activities to Practice Using Verb Tenses

**EVERY ESL STUDENT NEEDS PRACTICE WITH HIS OR HER VERBS, BUT SOMETIMES IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO MOVE THE PRACTICE OFF OF THE PAPER AND INTO SPOKEN ENGLISH.**

The following activities can be used to give your students practice with specific verb tenses in a conversational setting.

If you like, you can fit them into the thematic units you are teaching your class. Either way, your students will benefit from realistic situations in which to practice speaking.

## HOW TO PRACTICE USING VERB TENSES WITH YOUR CLASS

### 1 TAKE A POLL

Any opportunities you can give your students to have a conversation with native speakers will be beneficial to their language fluency. With this in mind, have your students do some research about current opinion by sending them out to survey the general population. Divide your class into small groups - four or five students in each group will work well. Then ask each group to think about the kinds of information they might like to have from native speakers. These speakers might be the general public or other students in their school. *Do they want to ask questions about how those native speakers feel about international students? Are your students interested in the activities others participate in or activities they feel are lacking in the school? Would your students benefit from learning more about the hobbies or personal interests of other students?*

Whatever they may be interested in, **have each group make a list of about five questions** that they want to ask the average person. After the questions are decided, have each group go out and administer their survey to a specified number of people. The more people they are able to survey, the more reliable their results will be. After their surveys are taken, have each group compile the information and then present it to the class. In this presentation, they will use

present tenses to describe the opinions their interviewees hold. You may also want to have your students make some suggestions based on their research. If so, they will use future tenses to make predictions or offer suggestions on how to resolve a negative situation.

### 2 INTERVIEWS

Not only are interviews a good scenario for speaking practice, they are a life skill that your students are likely to need in their futures. To practice verb usage in the present and past, have your students pair off **giving an interview as and being interviewed by a prospective employer**. The interviewer should ask questions of the other person about his or her past experience and education as well as his present interests and skills that he possesses. Your students can also practice their future tenses by making predictions about what duties they will perform in the job. The person being interviewed answers the questions using the appropriate tenses. Once the interview is over, have your students change roles.

### 3 PROBLEM SOLVING

Are your students familiar with the popular saying that hindsight is 20/20? If not, explain the term to them, and then ask them to think of a time in the past in which they wish they knew then what they know now. Ask them to try to remember as many details about the situation as possible. Then put your students together in pairs and have them share their experiences with each other. *What was the problem? How did they handle it then? How would they handle it now? What advice can the other person give now that would have been useful then?* Throughout the conversations, encourage your students to use verb tenses in the past to describe the situation and how they handled it as well as what they should have done.

### 4 DEBATES

Debates are a natural avenue for your students to get speaking practice. Though one person on each side is

the primary speaker, your entire class can participate by working as a group to support and help the formal speaker. Not only that, **debates can be tailored to a specific time period to practice the tenses you want to focus on**. When you want to give your students practice with past tenses, choose a topic with which your class is familiar or on which they can do research. The most common topics will be political or be events that had historical significance. Give your groups some time to gather information on the issue and then prepare their arguments. You can choose something like the following: *were the 1960's in the United States a decade of freedom or anarchy?* Your students will have to formulate their arguments in past tenses and describe past situations to support their arguments.

You can also have your students debate current issues. November can be a great time to do a debate on current events since elections are bound to bring controversial issues to the forefront. Again, give your class time to research the topic under discussion and then have them formulate their arguments in the present tenses giving evidence to support their opinions.

To practice future tenses with debates, choose a proposition such as this: *the world will be a better place in fifty years than it is now*. Your class will need time to discuss the issues and imagine what the world will be like in the future. As the teams debate, they will naturally find themselves using future tenses to discuss what life may be like in the future. Whatever topic you choose for your debate, you can be sure it will fit the specific needs of your class.

**ALL TOO OFTEN WHEN WE ARE TEACHING GRAMMAR, WE FAIL TO PRACTICE THE SPOKEN ELEMENT.**

The next time you are doing a verb review, try one of these conversation activities to get your class speaking their minds and practicing their grammar, out loud, in the process.

# How to Make Your Grammar Lessons a Little More Interesting

**UNLESS LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE IS A PASSION, MOST PEOPLE DESPISE GRAMMAR AND HATE LEARNING IT.**

Indeed, there are many different teaching methods which people today purport which do not focus on solely teaching grammar. It is important to realize, however, that students have different learning needs. Some will take a more logical approach, whereas others will be more inclined to simply use the language as they receive it. An effective teaching method is learning how to blend these two together. Some schools will focus entirely on language acquisition. They will forgo the use of teaching grammar techniques. However, when it comes to teaching in schools and other institutions this might be required. Sometimes the examinations which students are preparing for will focus solely on grammar and therefore it is essential to know how to get these points across to the students.

There are many different ways of making grammar a little more interesting. A variety of different games can be designed in order to help with this. The Internet is a brilliant resource when it comes to this, and is indeed a blessing to many teachers. Another important thing to remember is repetition. Repetition will often allow the words to sink into the students' minds easier.

## HOW TO MAKE YOUR GRAMMAR LESSONS MORE FUN

### 1 USING SONGS

Music is often a great way of getting students to learn. **By singing phrases, this will become embedded into the mind a lot faster.** This is particularly true if one is teaching children or even teenagers. In order to do this, find a song that uses several tenses or differing grammar points. Get the students to sing along, and then write up the lyrics on the board. Get them then to sing it together, get-

ting the tune into their head. After this, one can then quiz them on what tenses or grammatical points are in the actual text. Make this short and quick, and once they get the hang of it have them sing the song again.

After this, try and make a game out of it. Select individuals to say or sing a verse or phrase from the song, but change the tense. This way they will be able to practise with using the different tenses and verb forms, but in a much more light-hearted way.

### 2 MAKE IT INTO A GAME

There is no doubt that playing games will make learning a lot easier. Both adults and children love these. Perhaps even make it into a competition. This will often get the students motivated to get the answers right and therefore allow them to learn much faster. Amongst teenagers this can be particularly effective, whether the class is divided into two or more groups. By turning it into a competition, everyone will become a lot more active and a lot of fun can be had by everyone.

### 3 TELL A STORY

Another way to make grammar a little easier to digest is to teach it in the form of storytelling. Perhaps get the students to form a "story stick" whereby **everyone contributes a line to the overall story.** If there are any grammar mistakes in this, then leave it until the end.

When the entire story is finished and written out on the board, get a student to come up to it and make the appropriate corrections. With participation from the class, have the entire text corrected. Ask the students questions as to why certain tenses are the way they are. **Having something to focus on like this will keep the students' attention** and therefore allow for the understanding of grammatical structures to sink in a lot easier.

### 4 START SIMPLE

If you are preparing students for a college entrance examination or any other kind of test, then simply knowing grammar structures may be the key to passing it. If the learners have been doing grammar all along but still don't understand the mechanics, then it is important to make sure that they receive a crash course in it. **English grammar can be relatively simple when it is all laid out.** Start from the beginning, give them a few practice exercises and let them work their way up. It is also a good idea to create a "grammar book" whereby the students can write down the various sentence structures and tenses, class by class, so that they will always have a reference.

**In fact, having a comprehensive reference for grammar is probably one of the best things to do.** At the beginning of the course, it is a good idea to start simple and help the students to work their way up to the more complex forms. A reference will allow them to be more solidly grounded and can be good for doing exam revision with.

# Picture This: 5 Unique Ways to Practice Grammar Using Pictures

AS TEACHERS WE KNOW THERE ARE ALWAYS GOING TO BE TOPICS THAT ARE CHALLENGING TO MAKE FUN OR INTERACTIVE.

Grammar can be incredibly dry and tedious if you allow it to be, but with a little inventiveness, you can be sure that each and every time you approach a grammar lesson, you have an arsenal of engaging activities. One of the best ways to get inspired is to **let pictures do the work for you.**

## USING PICTURES TO PRACTICE GRAMMAR

The first thing you need to do immediately is **get your hands on a stack of twenty to thirty magazines.** Some of the best choices are those that use thick paper, vivid images, and approach a variety of topics. Magazines like: *O, National Geographic, Martha Stewart Living, Cosmo, Glamour,* etc. will serve you really well. Take some time and **compile all different categories** of pictures including: famous people, people doing things, pictures of the home, street scenes, animals, food, rooms in the home, odd cartoons, diverse people and groups of people, interesting and colorful objects, etc. I recommend gluing them to construction paper and laminating them if you have the option. You will get years of use of them and continue to add to them as time goes on.

### 1 PEOPLE PICTURES

People pictures should be number one on your list as you will use them the most for activities. There are so many ways you can use people pictures, there is no way to list them all. Here are some ideas to get you started.

*20 questions with famous people (is it a man? is he a singer?), describing people using picture, what are they doing, What happened or what is happening? Create a story from the picture, write the sequence of a story for the picture and share.*

Try out different activities with different levels to create your toolbox of go-to exercises.

### 2 CREATING CAPTIONS

You can also do a lot with cartoons, news pictures, or oddly-themed pictures. **Have the students write their own captions to create a punch line.** You can utilize news stories or current events and have them write short captions that tell what is happening in the picture using a reporter tone. You can even use Calvin and Hobbes by whiting out all the dialogue and ask students to fill in their own dialogue and/or captions. You can give them perimeters or you can leave it wide open. Think beyond what is happening in this picture. **Challenge their critical thinking skills and creativity for powerful results.**

### 3 CUT-UP STORIES

Cut-up stories can be a lot of fun with pictures. You can practice things like sequence, directions, story-telling, and various tenses with cut-up stories. Essentially it is a puzzle made of photographs. Have a stack of 8-10 photographs that are related so that they can be put in some kind of order (*sequence, what happened, solve a crime,* etc.). Put the students in small groups and have them examine the pictures. Tell them what the goal is. For example, **tell a story by putting these 7 pictures into an order.** Give the people names and don't just tell me the obvious, use your imagination and create a fictional story. For a lower level, it could be something like this: there are 10 pictures in your envelope. Each envelope shows a different activity being done and you need to put them in order and describe each of the steps. Examples could be *making a cup of tea, making a sandwich, how to take the bus,* etc. What you choose will be based on what topic(s) you would like them to practice.

### 4 PARTIAL PICTURES

This is a fun picture activity that can be approached for low intermediate or above. You can use more abstract pictures or artwork for this activity. Take a variety of photographs that are 8x10 or larger and paste them on either construction paper or cardboard. You will then want to **cover up most of the picture** using squares of paper.

Try to do this on the board with magnets, or you could also use double-sided tape. You'll want to be able to pull off each square easily. This is essentially a guessing game where they should be asking a lot of questions. You want them to determine what the picture or piece of artwork is with only a limited peek at the photograph. If students don't have any guess, reveal a little more and have them ask more questions. Continue until the entire picture is revealed or someone answers. You can vary this activity by doing it in smaller groups and by applying it to different language lessons.

### 5 PICTURE DICTATION

This activity is often a favorite of students. **It is Pictionary on steroids and much more challenging.** The best grammar activities to use this for are: there is/there are, prepositions of place or direction combined with house vocabulary, or what is happening in the picture. Put the students into pairs and give each student a picture, face down. Tell them to take a turn describing their picture to their partner with several sentences and descriptions. The partner has to draw what their partner tells them. For example, their partner says, *"This is a picture of a kitchen. In the kitchen on the right hand side there is a big refrigerator. Next to the fridge there is a long cabinet. On top of the cabinet there is a vase with flowers."* You'll want to monitor how much concrete information they are giving and let the partner know that they can ask clarifying questions. After a few minutes have them switch. At the end of the activity, you can debrief as a class by looking at the original picture and comparing it the one that was drawn. It is a terrific activity to combine lots of listening and speaking skills along with comprehension of vocabulary and grammar.

USING PICTURES CAN MAKE EXERCISES AND ACTIVITIES MORE INTERESTING AND MORE INTERACTIVE.

You can constantly improve your activities by looking at what went well and what fell flat. These 5 unique ways to practice grammar using pictures are a jumping off point, and can be expanded in lots of interesting ways.

# How to Drill: Drilling Activities for Your English Classroom

**AFTER INTRODUCING NEW VOCABULARY WORDS, GRAMMAR POINTS, OR SENTENCE STRUCTURES, YOU HAVE TO DRILL THEM WITH YOUR CLASS.**

There are many ways to drill new material. Using a variety of drilling methods in your classes will help make this portion of the lesson more interesting and keep students focused.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 CHORAL REPETITION

Choral repetition is a commonly used method of drilling. Students simply have to repeat words or phrases after you. This is a good method because it means that students are given excellent model pronunciation immediately before they are asked to respond. Going through vocabulary this way many times in a single lesson will be boring for your students and they will be less inclined to perform well.

Break up the monotony by *changing the speed or volume you use* and have students change their responses accordingly. Using this method, students are not called on individually to pronounce words therefore you will need to check individual pronunciation and comprehension separately. Integrating these checks into your drill activities will keep students alert because they will never know when you may call on them.

### 2 DRILLING WITH FLASHCARDS

Drilling using flashcards can be useful as well. In the introduction, show students both the image and word sides of each flashcard. When you start drilling words for the first time, show students the word side of the flashcard so they can practice reading and pronouncing it.

Later on, rather than show students the word you want them to pronounce, show them the image. This will help

check their comprehension of the material. With flashcards, you can also challenge your students when they become more familiar with certain vocabulary by flipping through the cards at a faster rate.

### 3 COMPREHENSION

Asking for volunteers or calling on students to give you a synonym, antonym, or translation of a new vocabulary word will check individual comprehension. **It is always nice to ask for volunteers as opposed to calling on students individually** but generally a volunteer will be more confident in his answer so this will not properly show whether or not the class understands the material.

When you find it necessary to single out particular students who are not participating in drill activities, calling on them for answers is an easy method of focusing their attention on the lesson. Doing comprehension checks is also a good way to break up the drill activities a bit.

### 4 DRILLING IN PAIRS

As material becomes more familiar, you may want to conduct short pair activities where a student's comprehension is tested by his partner. To do this with a vocabulary list for instance, have student A read the translation of each word in random order while the student B says the word in English. Student A can then place a checkmark next to all the words student B got correct and then the students can switch roles. With this method students can check each other and have visual proof of how well they performed afterwards which they can refer to when practicing material on their own or preparing for exams.

Conducting an activity such as this on a regular basis will help students review vocabulary often and should not take more than five minutes even with fifteen to twenty vocabulary words. **It may still be necessary to practice using choral repetition** before per-

forming pair activities so that students are reminded of the proper pronunciation of the vocabulary.

### 5 GAMES

Breaking your classroom up into sections where each section says one portion of a new structure is another way of drilling material. In small classes you can conduct some drilling activities in a circle. The more variation there is to an activity, the more students have to pay attention but it is best to start off with the simplest, easiest variation of a game and build on it as opposed to trying to explain a complex activity from the very beginning. Challenging students but not overwhelming them is important in maintaining their attention and participation.

**DRILLING IS GENERALLY NOT THE MOST FUN PART OF TEACHING OR LEARNING ENGLISH BUT IT IS AN ESSENTIAL STEP WHEN LEARNING NEW MATERIAL. VARYING YOUR APPROACH CAN MAKE IT MORE ENJOYABLE AND ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE MORE FULLY.**



# How to Teach the Verb “To Be” to Beginners

## THE VERB “TO BE” IS THE FIRST VERB STUDENTS LEARN IN THEIR ENGLISH STUDIES.

It is used extensively in the English language and will allow students to create simple sentences with the vocabulary they have learned to date.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 WARM UP

For this first lesson, it is best to focus on only the *I, You, He/She/It* structures which you can build upon in later classes. If students have not really done a lot of activities with the words *he, she, and it*, you may want to consider simply using names in the practice activities. Once you have determined what you would like to cover in the first lesson, use the warm up activity to review the vocabulary students will need later on in the lesson. A short simple drill activity would be ideal.

### 2 INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

During the introduction section of your lesson, introduce any new vocabulary you plan to use in this lesson. Some emotions and adjectives would be good because students will then be able to form complete meaningful sentences. Introduce words such as *happy* and *sad* if students have not yet learned them. **Use flashcards to drill vocabulary** and have students complete some simple worksheet activities for further practice.

### 3 INTRODUCE “TO BE”

Show students how to make sentences such as *“I am happy. You are happy. Jenny is happy.”* Ensure that students understand how the subject and forms of the verb are paired. You can practice this before introducing the full sentence structure you would like students to learn. Call on students to make sentences choosing a subject, verb, and adjective from columns on the board.

Without introducing the question form *“Is she happy?”* you can use such questions to test comprehension and students should understand what you are asking. Have them answer by saying *“Yes, she is happy.”* so that they continue to practice saying the target structure.

### 4 PRACTICE SIMPLE

You can use worksheets for practice. Have students complete a fill in the blank exercise where they must choose *am, is, or are* to complete sentences to ensure that they understand which form of the verb agrees with certain subjects. You can also have students match sentences with images or with translations for practice and to test comprehension. As a class check the answers before continuing on.

### 5 PRACTICE COMPLEX

Students can then complete an activity such as **Battleship for further practice. You can adapt this classic game for use in the classroom.** While it can be time consuming to explain, especially to beginners, your students will enjoy playing and it can be used to practice a wide variety of topics. To play Battleship students should work in pairs using a worksheet. For this class, the grids on the worksheet might have *I, You, He, She, Jenny, Ms. Smith* in the first column and *happy, fun, from Korea, sad, silly, from America* in the first row. Students then practice sentences such as *“I am silly.”* to try to locate and sink all of their opponents ships first.

There may not be enough time in the first lesson to begin this activity but devoting the second lesson entirely to Battleship would give your students lots of speaking practice.

For a third class, introduce the question that goes along with this target structure and have students play using the same worksheet but by making questions such as *“Is Ms. Smith*

*from America?”* The really great thing about this activity is that students essentially have to speak in order to play whereas with board games students may be tempted to simply roll the dice and move their pieces around the board without really practicing English.

### 6 REVIEW

As a general review activity you can divide students into groups and **play Hangman** with sentences or words from their textbook. It is perhaps not appropriate to play the original game in your classroom so you can just adapt it so that no one actually hangs. One adaptation is to simply have a very large fish where when students guess incorrectly, a little fish gets closer and closer to being eaten. This is not very accurate as you can either draw the game out or end it whenever you choose.

Another method of playing is to assign a point value to certain things. For example, if a group guesses the letter *a* and there are three in the sentence, the group would get three points. A correct guess of the entire sentence would be five points while there should be a penalty for guessing the entire phrase incorrectly but no penalty for guessing a letter that is not used. You can alter the scoring anyway you would like to make it more appropriate for your class.

**ONCE YOUR STUDENTS ARE QUITE CONFIDENT WITH MAKING THE SENTENCES PRACTICED IN THIS LESSON, YOU SHOULD INCLUDE THE PLURAL WE, YOU, THEY AS WELL. AS THE FIRST VERB THEY STUDY, “TO BE” IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR YOUR STUDENTS AND IT IS ESSENTIAL TO GET THEM TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE FORM OF THE VERB IS AFFECTED BY THE SUBJECT OF THE SENTENCE.**

# How to Teach Present Simple to Complete Beginners

At the outset new students are convinced that they cannot communicate in English at all, but by the end of this lesson they will hopefully be able to confidently introduce themselves to anyone they meet in a simple and yet meaningful way.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCTION

There is no warm up activity to introduce any grammatical term or vocabulary. Assume that your students have limited linguistic knowledge, or none whatsoever.

**Write the substitution tables on the board.** Get it right from the start. Make sure they have a model to practice and follow. Maybe they know the structures already but it's good to reinforce the grammar and if they are real novices they will need to follow your guidance. Keep it basic. You are teaching the verbs 'to be' and 'to do' only – which will form the foundations of their learning.

### 2 PRE-TEACH PRONOUNS

Ensure they know pronouns or you will be wasting a lot of valuable time. Use gestures, mime, pictures etc. to elicit or re-iterate grammar outlines.

There is often confusion with the masculine/feminine form. Teach 'I am. You are (singular). He/She/It is. We are. You are. They are (plurals).' Show contractions – 'I'm etc.'

### 3 ELICITING NAMES

You write your name on the whiteboard. First name only. Ask your students 'What's my name?' 'What is my name?' Repeat. You may get a whole host of answers 'Michael / You are Michael / You're Michael / Your name is Michael / Mr Michael / Teacher Michael etc. Correct the errors and write clearly on the board 'My name is Michael.' 'I am Mi-

chael. I'm Michael'

Teacher models Q & A. Ask all the students their names – going randomly around the class. Make sure that there is plenty of movement and friendly gesturing with an open hand. **No pointing.** Get your students motivated and animated. Stress that you need first names only. It's much more friendly.

Now introduce family names. Write your name on the board – Angelo. Then present the full sentence 'My name is Michael Angelo.' Advise your students that this is the standard format in English, as there are cultural differences e.g. in Japan the surname precedes the given name. Repeat the exercise with all the students - 'What's my name?' Get full and abbreviated answers. Repeat many times around the class.

### 4 PRACTICE TIME

'What's his name?' 'What's her name?' Get students up and doing a mingling activity. Get them to report back to you the names they have learned. This is fun, practical and breaks the ice in a new group. Can they remember the people they have been introduced to? This is the time to check. Practice for as long as you feel necessary.

Don't assume they have mastered this first step easily, as you will often find later that the elementary work is quickly forgotten.

### 5 REVIEW ON THE BOARD

Ensure you match your spoken practice with written examples. Do concept checking for your question practice. 'What's his name?' Show contractions on the board. 'His name is ...' or 'He's ....'

Ask your group to chorally answer/ move around the class and ask students randomly.

### 6 EXPLAINING JOBS

Ask the class 'What do I do?' 'What's my job?' As students answer, make sure you write the answer on the board for future reference. 'You are an English Teacher.'

Get them to repeat and point out the 'an' article if it has been omitted. Ask all the students individually 'What do you do?' You may not be able to elicit, so you will have to introduce the relevant vocabulary. It would be useful to have pictures, or flashcards of popular jobs to provide a point of reference especially for visual learners.

Get your students to answer correctly and move pairs around to incorporate group practice. Ask and report back their findings. Teacher asks group members as a whole and then calls randomly on specific students e.g. 'What does Manuel do?' Response – 'He's an engineer.' Practice/drill articles 'a' and 'an.'

### 7 DESCRIBING WHERE YOU LIVE

Ask your students 'Where do I live?' Use body language and drawings to show your home's location. The students probably don't know, so you want them to ask and therefore elicit the question 'Where do you live?' Demonstrate on the board the word order. The name of your street, etc. - the smallest place first – village/town/city. Get students to ask their partners and then practice by doing a mingling activity. Get feedback. Students report back where the other students live. 'She lives in ....' Be alert because the preposition is often missed or dropped

### 8 INTRODUCE HOBBIES

'What do you do in your free time?' Elicit hobbies vocabulary from students and write on the whiteboard. Have pictures/ flashcards etc. Use gestures and mime. **Have fun but focus on simplicity.**

Like/do/enjoy differences in nuance will pass over their heads at this level. Concentrate on the verb 'to be' as before only at this stage and give models through presentation. *'My hobby is tennis'* etc. Get students to ask their partners. Ensure there is feedback time to the group and the teacher.

## 9 CONSOLIDATION OF MATERIAL LEARNED

Write the 4 questions on the whiteboard and model answers.

1. What's your name?
2. What do you do?
3. Where do you live?
4. What do you do in your free time?

Drill the students chorally and individually. Questions followed by answers/alternate roles/ask randomly. Ensure that the students are quite clear on the 4 questions and there are no errors in their answers. Practice and repeat as necessary. Give feedback and rectify errors using examples on the whiteboard.

## 10 LIVE PRACTICE AND FEEDBACK

Students must introduce themselves to everyone in the class. Set the scenario with mime etc. – *'Imagine you are at a party and meeting for the first time. You must talk to all your class members.'* Teacher walks around monitoring and giving assistance when required. Error spotting/correcting. Focus on fluency rather than accuracy, unless mistakes are too blatant.

Final error rectification and exempling on the board before students must act independently.

## 11 BRIEF INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION AND CLOSURE

The students introduce themselves to the class using the 4 sentences learned and practiced. *'Hello. My name is ... I'm ...a/an ... I live in ... My hobby is ...'* Aim for fluency rather than accuracy, as this is a big step and a major accomplishment for absolute beginners.

Randomly ask students any of the 4 questions. Assign homework practice and advise that the next lesson will begin with the self-introductions covered. Stand at the door and ask students 1 of the 4 questions, as they exit to give them a sense of real achievement.

# How to Teach Present Simple

**WHEN TEACHING THE PRESENT SIMPLE THE ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO MAKE SURE YOUR STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THAT IT'S USED TO DESCRIBE ROUTINES, HABITS, DAILY ACTIVITIES, AND GENERAL TRUTHS.**

Also important is the contrast between the Present Simple and the Present Progressive.

This series of steps will guide you towards teaching the Present Simple and covers function, conjugation, and form.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE AN ACTION

Pick up a newspaper and pretend to read it. Ask your students what you're doing. They'll say, "You're reading a newspaper."

T: "What newspaper am I reading?"  
S: "You're reading *The New York Times*."

### 2 INTRODUCE PRESENT SIMPLE - FIRST PERSON SINGULAR

Tell your students, "I read *The New York Times* every day." Make a list of the things you do every day as a routine:

*I have breakfast at 7.*  
*I go to work at 9.*  
*I have lunch at 12.*  
*I go home at 5.*  
*I watch TV before dinner.*

Make sure your students understand that you do this on a daily or weekly basis - these are habitual actions. Go around the class and have students tell you what they do everyday or what some of their habits are. They should give more examples in the first person singular.

### 3 INTRODUCE PRESENT SIMPLE - SECOND PERSON SINGULAR

Say: "I read *The New York Times*. Sarah, you read *USA Today*". Go around the class giving examples like, "I go to work at 9. You go to school." Face each of your students and state a general truth:

T: "John, you live in Queens."

John (to teacher): "You live in Queens, too."

T: "Sally, you have a dog."

Sally (to teacher): "You have a cat".

Split your students up into pairs and have them give each other statements in the second person singular.

### 4 INTRODUCE PRESENT SIMPLE - THIRD PERSON SINGULAR

Say: "I read *The New York Times*. Sarah reads *USA Today*". Make sure students notice that you've added the s for the third person singular. Give more examples with other students, and introduce the irregular verbs: *John goes to work at 8. Sally has lunch at 1*. Students provide more examples from the information previously shared by their classmates.

### 5 DO THE SAME FOR THE PLURAL PERSONS

Ask who lives in Queens and ask them to stand up. Then point to yourself and those standing and say: "We live in Queens." Ask who lives in the Bronx and ask them to stand up. Address those who are standing and say: "You live in the Bronx". Point to your group and say, "We live in Queens". Ask who lives in Manhattan and point to that group and say: "They live in Manhattan."

### 6 INTRODUCE PRESENT SIMPLE - NEGATIVE

Make a statement in the affirmative, then make one in negative with don't.

T: I live in Queens, I don't live in the Bronx.

Ask students to do the same presenting first an affirmative, then a negative. Practice all persons except the third person singular.

### 7 INTRODUCE PRESENT SIMPLE - NEGATIVE (THIRD PERSON SINGULAR)

Make a statement about a student, then make one in negative form using doesn't.

T: *Alex reads the New York Times.*

*He doesn't read USA Today.*

Ask students to do the same by using the information previously shared by their classmates.

### 8 INTRODUCE PRESENT SIMPLE - QUESTIONS

Make a statement about yourself. Then ask a student a question to introduce do.

T: *I walk to school. John, do you walk to school?*

Walk around the classroom asking students questions and teaching them to answer, "Yes, I do" or "No, I don't". Do the same for all persons except third person singular.

### 9 INTRODUCE PRESENT SIMPLE - QUESTIONS (THIRD PERSON SINGULAR)

Contrast students' habits. Make a statement about one, then ask about another student:

T: *John walks to school. Does Sarah walk to school?*

Walk around the classroom asking questions with does, and teach students to answer "Yes, he does" "No, he doesn't".

### 10 EXPAND AND PRACTICE: PRESENT SIMPLE EXERCISES.

Practice all persons and forms. Ask open-ended questions. Introduce more verbs.

*Where do you live?*  
*Where does she work?*  
*How many languages do you speak?*

Now's also a great time consolidate everything that they've learned about the Present Simple.

**OBVIOUSLY, YOU DON'T HAVE TO FOLLOW ALL OF THESE STEPS IN ONE SINGLE LESSON. YOU CAN SPREAD THEM OVER THE COURSE OF A WEEK TO MAKE SURE YOUR STUDENTS HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO PRACTICE THE PRESENT SIMPLE EXERCISES IN ALL ITS FORMS.**

# How to Teach Present Perfect: Activities and Examples

**MOST ESL TEACHERS COME TO THIS HARD REALIZATION. MOST STUDENTS WHO HAVE LEARNED ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE, EFFECTIVELY USE ONLY THREE TENSES: PRESENT, PAST, AND FUTURE.**

And they will most likely make themselves understood, but only by resorting to these three. The Present Perfect is one of those tenses that is soon forgotten, easily replaced by past simple. But students don't realize just how important it is that they master it. To ensure your students will not let the present perfect slip into oblivion, it must be taught right. This article provides several clear steps that will help you teach the Present Perfect tense.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT PERFECT – REGULAR VERBS

Give examples in Past Simple: *Yesterday, I had a busy day. I received lots of emails.* Lead in to Present Perfect: *I have received only a few today.* Show students how the Present Perfect is formed: have/has plus the past participle. Tell them that the past participle of regular verbs ends in –ed, just as in Simple Past.

### 2 CONTRAST FINISHED AND UNFINISHED TIME

One of the best ways to ensure that students understand when the Present Perfect is used is to contrast finished and unfinished time. Ask students: *Is yesterday finished?* (They should say it's finished.) Ask them: *Is today finished?* (They should say it isn't.) On the board, draw two columns. On the left column write examples of phrases with finished time: yesterday, last week, last month, last year, 1990, etc...On the right column, write those that go with unfinished time: today, this week, this month, this year, etc. Make sure they notice the differences, then, give examples (only

with regular verbs) with both tenses: *Last month, I visited my grandmother twice. This month, I have only visited her once. But this month is not finished so I may visit her again before the month is over.* Provide examples in all persons, and then ask students to do the same with other regular verbs. Contrast the Simple Past and Present Perfect as much as necessary.

### 3 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT PERFECT – IRREGULAR VERBS

Proceed with the irregulars. Divide the board into three columns and write some irregular verbs in the first column, their Simple Past form in the second column, and finally the irregular past participle in the third. Give them examples as you go over each verb:

*I've had two cups of coffee today.  
I've spoken to John this week.  
I've read all four of the Twilight books*

Make sure students have a list they can use for reference. With the help of the list, they provide more examples with other irregular verbs.

### 4 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT PERFECT – NEGATIVE FORMS

Say, "I saw my grandmother last week. I haven't seen her this week." Give more examples alternating between an affirmative in Simple Past and a negative statement in Present Perfect: *I went to Rome last year, but I haven't been there this year.* Now, give each of your students just the affirmative statement in Simple Past and ask them to supply an example in Present Perfect negative:

*T: I was at the bank earlier today.  
S: I haven't been to the bank this week.*

### 5 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT PERFECT – INTERROGATIVE FORMS

Model questions with *have* or *has*:

*T: Have you seen Twilight?  
S: Yes./No.  
T: Ask me!  
S: Have you seen Twilight?*

Continue with more questions from students. Model questions with *where* and *what*, but make sure students understand that if they ask questions with *when*, *where* and *why*, they need to use the Simple Past because they are referring to a specific moment in the past. Write examples, make sure they ask questions in all persons, both singular and plural. If they are unsure as to how to ask a question, model it for them first.

### 6 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT PERFECT – SHORT ANSWERS

Ask Yes/No questions and teach students to give short answers:

*T: Have you seen my pen?  
S: Yes, I have./No, I haven't.*

Students ask classmates yes or no questions, and classmates reply with short answers.

### 7 PROVIDE EXTENDED PRACTICE

Tell your students that the best way to remember the past participle of irregular verbs is through practice, in both written and oral exercises. Naturally, students should be taught all of the other uses of the Present Perfect, with *already*, *just*, *ever*, *never*, *for*, *since*, etc. For practical purposes, in this guide we cover what should be the best way to introduce the Present Perfect for the first time, i.e., the distinction between finished and unfinished time. Once they grasp this distinction, they should be ready to grasp everything else.

# How to Teach Present Perfect: Alternative Approach

THE PRESENT PERFECT TENSE IS OFTEN TAUGHT AND PRACTICED OVER THE PERIOD OF SEVERAL MONTHS DUE TO ITS COMPLEXITY AND THE RANGE OF SITUATIONS IN WHICH IT IS USED.

This can make classes monotonous for students and challenging for you to plan as you have to think of new practice activities to use.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE SIMPLE STRUCTURES

First, introduce the very simple “Yes, I have. No, I haven’t.” structures. Drill these structures with students and ask questions such as “Have you played soccer?” to elicit the target structure from students. When you first used these types of questions it is not imperative that students understand exactly what the sentence means but they should be able to answer correctly. By asking students questions such as “Have you visited ~?” using a very obscure or far away place such as the moon, they should start to get a fairly good idea of what the question means. Check by asking for a translation at the end of the activity.

### 2 PRACTICE

To practice these structures, use an interview game where students have a worksheet with questions that they have to go around the room asking and answering. The goal is to have students write down other students’ answers and get signatures for each question. You can also design a board game where each student must answer the question he lands on during his turn. Another game, which takes an entire class period on its own, is called *Liar*. Students should first be given a worksheet with four to five questions such as “Have you ever seen a famous person?” and write down their answers. Try to choose questions so that some students will honestly write “Yes, I have.” as their

answer.

Next have students get into groups of about five and choose a student to change his answer for each question. One student can change all of his answers or students can decide that different group members change answers for different questions. When students have finished there should be one lie for each question in each group. Then the game can begin. Ask the students in the first group to read their answers to the first question and students who answered “Yes, I have.” should have a short story relating to the experience that can be told in their native language. Give students in the other groups about a minute to decide who they think is lying. Then ask the student who lied to raise his or her hand and record points for correct guesses. Move on to the next group and use the second question so that students get to hear different types of stories. When you get back to the first group, just be sure not to use the first question again.

### 3 INTRODUCE MORE COMPLEX STRUCTURES

Introduce students to more complex sentence structures using the Present Perfect tense and discuss when they would be used. Practice these extensively as a class through drilling and comprehension checks.

### 4 PRACTICE WITH WORKSHEETS

These practice activities will be more challenging for students than the ones they completed above. Have them complete some exercises practicing just the present perfect tense but as they progress, challenge them with more difficult exercises that combine previously studied material. One way to do this is to have sentences such as

- Yuki: “You live in Furukawa? How long \_\_\_\_\_ there?”
- Kino: “Oh, I’ve lived here about

five years.”

where students must choose an answer from “a. do you live b. are you living c. have you lived d. did you live”.

### 5 REVIEW

An activity such as Jeopardy which takes up an entire lesson period would be good for reviewing the Present Perfect tense because it will give students a break from worksheets and studying grammatical structures. When teaching a topic such as this for an extended period of time, it may also be a good idea to set aside one lesson a week for another activity such as writing letters to pen pals or keeping an English diary. These types of activities also allow you to combine a number of topics so that your students do not lose sight of the fact that this particular tense is just one small part of the English language.

### 6 ADDITIONAL REVIEW

As a general review activity you can divide students into groups and play **Hangman** with sentences or words from their textbook. It is perhaps not appropriate to play the original game in your classroom so you can just adapt it so that no one actually hangs. One adaptation is to simply have a very large fish where when students guess incorrectly, a little fish gets closer and closer to being eaten. This is not very accurate as you can either draw the game out or end it whenever you choose.

STUDYING THE SAME MATERIAL CLASS AFTER CLASS CAN BECOME TEDIOUS FOR STUDENTS BUT THIS IS ONE TOPIC THAT REQUIRES LOTS OF PRACTICE TO MASTER. MANY ESL STUDENTS STRUGGLE ON EXERCISES LIKE THE MULTIPLE CHOICE ACTIVITY SUGGESTED ABOVE BECAUSE THOSE ARE SOME OF THE MOST COMMON MISTAKES ESL LEARNERS MAKE.

# Present Perfect Mystery: How to Teach For and Since

## WHEN LEARNING THE PRESENT PERFECT TENSE, STUDENTS OFTEN STRUGGLE WITH USING THE WORDS FOR AND SINCE APPROPRIATELY.

To assist them with this aspect of the English language, dedicate some time and perhaps even an entire lesson to practicing the use of these two words. The more familiar students are with using these words, the better they will do at using them correctly.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 WARM UP

As you have probably been studying present perfect for several lessons, try not to make it the focus of the warm up activity. This will give students a bit of a break as well as a review of other topics. A short game or activity which engages students and requires them to move around the classroom would be an excellent idea. You can conduct an activity such as **Chinese Whispers** to start off. This will give students some basic pronunciation practice and encourage them to work more efficiently in groups.

Alternatively, you could play a game such as **Fruit Basket** where students have to make a sentence about their weekend or another similar topic which would again give students speaking practice and allow them to share a little bit about themselves.

### 2 INTRODUCE FOR AND SINCE

Perhaps in past classes you have only introduced and practiced a basic present perfect sentence structure such as *"I have played baseball."* In your introduction for this lesson introduce the longer structure using examples such as *"I have played baseball for three years."* and *"I have played baseball since fourth grade."*

Have students volunteer to give a translation of your example sentences and **ensure that they understand**

**the difference between the two.** Use diagrams on the board to explain that the word *for* is used when referencing a period of time such as *"three years"* while *since* is used when referencing a specific point in the past such as *"fourth grade"*.

This may be hard for students to grasp initially so practice activities are vastly important.

### 3 PRACTICE

Start out by completing some sentences on the board as a class. Ask for volunteers or call on students to decide which word is appropriate for each sentence and when appropriate have students translate sentences as well.

Next, have students work individually to complete a worksheet. The first section might have students choose which word best completes a sentence while the second section could ask students to match *for* and *since* with appropriate time phrases such as *"three years"* and *"fourth grade"*.

Check the answers aloud as a class to ensure that students understand when to use each of these words. If students are struggling be sure to provide them with further practice before moving on to the next section or perhaps ask another student to explain the use of each word to the class.

Sometimes simply giving another explanation can help students understand a new idea.

### 4 PRODUCE

Using the same worksheet, have a section which asks students to write a few sentences of their own using these two words. Perhaps during the writing section students could be asked to write pairs of sentences where the first one uses *for* and the second one uses *since* to say essentially the same thing such as the pair of sentences used in the baseball example above.

If this is too challenging for students conduct an activity that is more suitable to their level.

### 5 REVIEW

As a review activity you can start a present perfect sentence and ask students to finish them by supplying a phrase starting with *for* or *since*. With small classes, start this activity with all students standing up so that every student needs to complete a sentence before sitting down. For larger classes, you can start with all students standing up but allow each student who completes a sentence to choose either his row or column to sit down so that the activity is kept short.

**DETERMINING WHICH OF THESE TWO WORDS TO USE IN SENTENCES IS A COMMON ERROR MADE BY NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS, EVEN THOSE WHO ARE ADVANCED STUDENTS. PROVIDING PLENTY OF PRACTICE ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE COURSE WILL BE THE BEST METHOD OF TEACHING STUDENTS THE CORRECT USE OF THESE TWO WORDS.**

# Where Have You Been? 5 Perfect Tips for Practicing Present Perfect

## PRESENT PERFECT TENSE IS A BIG TURNING POINT IN A STUDENT'S LANGUAGE LEARNING.

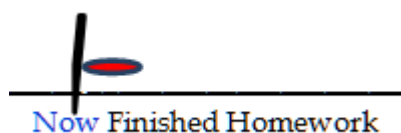
Once they have gotten to this grammar point, they have mastered a lot and are moving into more and more complex grammatical structures and tenses. That being said, teaching Present Perfect tense can be one of the most challenging and intimidating grammar points to refine. Follow these 5 perfect tips for practicing Present Perfect tense, and your students will glide through this transition with ease.

## HOW TO TEACH PRESENT PERFECT: 5 PERFECT TIPS

### 1 USE TIMELINES TO STRESS THE USES

Timelines are a great visual when introducing the different uses for Present Perfect. One of the best things about them is once you introduce them, you can continue to refer back to them and make it a point to have students do a timeline when they are struggling. It is one of the best ways to show the differences in usage that are usually so slight it can be hard to concretely define. A timeline shows the tense in a picture format for you, and once students get used to seeing them, they will begin to reference them for this point and other more advanced tenses. Be sure to provide several examples with your timelines, and using different colored markers will help accentuate your point. Also, timelines should always have a marker for now. Here are some examples of timelines that display their uses for Present Perfect tense.

The present perfect is used to discuss events that have just been completed at the moment of speaking: *I have just finished my homework.*



It is often used to suggest that a past action still has an effect upon something happening in the present. *He has been in a car accident.* (So now he is in the hospital)



It is often used to discuss events that have been happening over a period of time, but aren't finished yet. *Mary has worked as a teacher for 25 years.*



### 2 COMPARE TO PAST TENSE

The biggest issue students will have is the big decision between using Past tense and Present Perfect tenses. They will need constant comparisons, and the language you use will also help them to analyze what tense they need. There are lots of activities where students need to use both tenses accurately, and you can take that one step further by asking them to tell you why they have made which choice. Past tense is only used to express actions that are completed in the past with a time marker. That's it. Present Perfect tense has several uses depending upon what you are trying to express. You can compare sentences and discuss how the meaning has changed with the tense choice. You may also want to discuss the time markers associated with each tense. Examples to analyze: *I went to school yesterday. I ate dinner late last night.*

*I have been at school since 7 a.m.  
I have already eaten dinner tonight.*

### 3 HAVE YOU EVER...?

*'Have you ever done some-*

*thing'* is my favorite way to introduce and review Present Perfect tense. It can be used over and over again, in different formats, with different experiences. It also creates a natural way in which to use the tense and again offers some distinction between how it is different from using past tense.

This is also a good way to show the negative uses and short answers.

Here are some examples:

*Have you ever been to India? Yes I have. No I haven't.*

*Have you ever eaten sushi? No, I haven't ever eaten sushi. No, never.*

*Have you ever been angry at your brother? I sure have.*

The possibilities for this activity are endless, and you can use worksheets, do mingling activities or do simple Q and A in rounds.

### 4 YET, FOR, AND SINCE

The time markers for Present Perfect tense are very important and need not be overlooked. Yet, for and since can confuse learners, so provide good examples for each usage where it applies.

- **Yet is used to talk about an action that isn't completed, but it will be soon.**  
*I haven't eaten lunch yet.* (this implies that you will do so shortly).  
*I haven't seen John yet today.*
- **For is used to express the length of an activity.**  
*I have studied for 10 years.*  
*I have worked for 2 hours so far.*
- **Since is used to express the specific time an activity start.**  
*I have been a teacher since 1995.*  
*I haven't written a letter since last year.*

There are a lot of ways to practice this with conversational activities or with fill in the blanks.



## 5 VARY THE ACTIVITIES

There are numerous ways in which to practice Present Perfect tense, and this is in part to its different uses. You'll want to **take the tense step-by-step and introduce one usage at a time** and then practice it. Build upon that usage and introduce the next usage. Over a matter of weeks, you can practice the tense by providing a variety of activities that include conversation, writing, discussion, Q and A, and grammatical exercises. Use your creativity and incorporate activities that practice the tense as a whole when students are ready.

### PROVIDING A LOT OF EXAMPLES AND REPETITION MAY BE NECESSARY WHEN YOU APPROACH PRESENT PERFECT TENSE.

Take it in stride and move at the students' pace. You may also be surprised by how many challenging grammatical questions they will pose to you. Do your homework and make sure you have a firm understanding of Present Perfect tense. Using these 5 tips for practicing Present Perfect tense will deliver great results.

# How to Teach the Present Continuous Tense

WHEN TEACHING THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS TENSE, ONE THING USUALLY COMES TO MIND. THIS TENSE IS TAUGHT FOR THE FIRST TIME TO STUDENTS WHO ARE COMPLETE BEGINNERS, AND WHO HAVE HAD EXPOSURE TO A SMALL QUANTITY OF VERBS AND VOCABULARY, SO THE EXAMPLES YOU MAY GIVE, OR THE PRACTICE ITSELF, IS RATHER LIMITED.

They have, however, already learned the verb to be, which should be of tremendous help in teaching this tense.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS WITH AN ACTION

The present continuous tense is used to describe actions that are taking place at the time of speaking. So, the easiest way to introduce this tense is to carry out actions. Take a pen or pencil and start writing on the board. Say: *I am writing.*

Sit down and pick up a book. Say: *I am reading.*

Start walking around the classroom. Say: *I am walking.*

And so on with as many verbs as you'd like, but use verbs they already know, or introduce new verbs, but only a few at a time.

Go on with other persons. Remember they already know the simple present of the verb to be. Keep walking around the classroom and ask a student to join you. Say: *Juan is walking. I am walking. We are walking.* Show students that the present continuous is formed with the present of the verb to be + the present participle of the main verb (verb in -ing form).

Show as many actions as necessary, and use illustrations, photos, even videos. Have students tell you what each person or group of people are doing. Try some present continuous

cards for a fun game. Use a worksheet where students have to write **what the people in the photos are doing**. Eventually, get them to practice the contracted forms (*I'm, he's, we're*).

### 2 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS – NEGATIVE FORMS

Pick up a book and say: *I am reading a book... I'm not reading a newspaper.* Give more examples alternating between affirmative and negative statements: *Sarah, you're looking at me. You're not looking at Juan. Juan is listening to me. He's not listening to Sarah.*

And so on with all persons, singular and plural. Then have students do the same, always alternating between affirmative and negative statements.

### 3 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS – INTERROGATIVE FORMS

First, model yes or no questions, then, questions with *what, where, which*, etc.:

- T: *Are you listening to me?*
- S: *Yes!*
- T: *Ask me!*
- S: *Are you listening to me?*
- T: *What are you doing?*
- S: *I'm looking at you.*
- T: *Ask Juan!*
- S: *What are you doing?*

Continue with more questions from students. Encourage them to ask different types of questions in different singular and plural persons. If they are unsure as to how to ask a question, model it for them first.

### 4 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS – SHORT ANSWERS

Ask yes or no questions and teach students to give short answers:

T: *Are you reading a book?*  
S: *Yes, I am./No, I'm not.*

Ask students to ask each other yes or no questions in present continuous, and have them practice replying with short answers.

### 5 EXTENDED PRACTICE AND OTHER USES OF THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS

Be sure to provide plenty of exercises for extra practice, above all, because beginners need to not only practice this tense, but also acquire more vocabulary and verbs to do so effectively. At BusyTeacher.org there are dozens of Present Continuous worksheets to choose from. You may also choose to introduce other uses of the present continuous, as in future arrangements. **And if they've already learned the Present Simple, now's a good time to contrast both present tenses.**

**VIRGIL ONCE SAID, "ENDURE THE PRESENT, AND WATCH FOR BETTER THINGS" AND THIS DEFINITELY APPLIES TO BEGINNER ESL STUDENTS.**

Although they may be impatient to learn more, and feel frustrated by their lack of vocabulary, they must take things one step at a time, and soon enough they'll be speaking English more confidently. It is your job to guide them on this path.

# How to Teach Present Continuous: Alternative Approach

THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS TENSE IS ONE THAT STUDENTS WILL LEARN AFTER LEARNING THE FIRST THREE SIMPLE TENSES THAT IS SIMPLE PRESENT, PAST AND FUTURE.

When teaching additional tenses it is important to highlight what time period is referred to and also in what situations students would use each tense.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 WARM UP

Have students practice using the simple present tense as they volunteer to answer questions or play *fruit basket* to encourage students to make sentences of their own. When you have finished draw an image on the board illustrating the simple present tense as a reference point and ensure that students understand when to use the present tense.

### 2 INTRODUCE PRESENT CONTINUOUS

Give students some example sentences using the present continuous tense. By using pairs of sentences in your examples, you can show when to use the present simple tense and when to use the present continuous tense. A good example might be “*I play baseball every day.*” and “*I am playing baseball with Ben (right now).*” See if students understand the difference in meaning between the two and ask for translations.

It is important to illustrate on the board **the difference between this tense and other tenses your students have learned**. The best way to do this is by drawing a simple chart. On the board under your image illustrating the present tense, draw a similar image to illustrate the present continuous tense. You can also discuss the fact that the present tense is used when talking about daily routines while the present continuous tense is used when talking about specific non-routine actions and future plans.

### 3 PRACTICE PRESENT CONTINUOUS

Give students some basic practice exercises so they can get used to **changing present simple verbs into the present continuous tense**. This can be done in the form of a fill in the blank worksheet but this would also be an appropriate topic to use battleship for speaking practice. Students can use the *battleship grid* to change *I, You, play soccer, speak English*, etc. into the sentences “*I am playing soccer.*” and “*You are speaking English.*”

If students have played this game before, it might take approximately thirty minutes to explain and play twice.

### 4 PRACTICE MORE

Phone conversations would be a **real life situation** where the present continuous tense is used quite often so in order to give students practice with this tense as well as basic phone conversation, make a short model dialogue for students to practice in pairs.

This could be very simple where Student A asks Student B for someone and Student B replies “*I’m sorry. He’s not here right now. He’s playing baseball with Ben.*”

It could also be more complex. Adjust the conversation to suit your students’ ability level and encourage them to create part of the conversation, preferably the present continuous part of the conversation, on their own. Have students volunteer to present their dialogues to the class at the end of the activity.

### 5 PRODUCE

Ask students to **imagine a situation and then write three to five present continuous tense sentences** to describe it without saying the location. Students can then work in pairs or groups to guess the locations of different scenarios. An example may be “*I am sitting. I am listening to my music. I am looking out the window. I am moving.*”

It is very simple but students might then guess the location as in a car, on a bus, in a train, or on a plane.

### 6 REVIEW PRESENT CONTINUOUS

Any activity you have done for this topic can be used as a review activity at the end of the lesson. You may also want to **get students moving** if they have been sitting down for the entire class period, especially after a writing exercise, so you can have students form a circle. Students should take turns making present continuous sentences and then calling on students to make the next sentence. You can continue this activity until everyone has made a sentence or until the bell rings. If you want to ensure that everyone makes at least one sentence, you can have students start sitting down after their turns. This is not recommended for large classes because then lots of students will be sitting down with nothing to do towards the end of the activity.

**PRESENT CONTINUOUS IS A MORE COMPLEX TENSE THAT STUDENTS MAY INITIALLY HAVE DIFFICULTY UNDERSTANDING WHEN TO USE BUT THE MORE PRACTICE THEY HAVE USING IT, THE BETTER OFF THEY WILL BE.**

# How to Teach the Present Perfect Continuous Tense

If your students are currently living in a city that is not their hometown, would they say they've lived there or they've been living there for a while? Either tense will do if they wish to convey that they didn't always live there, but they're living there now. Which is why ESL students are often unclear as to when it is best to use the present perfect continuous tense. The present perfect continuous is the best choice when the action is still continuing, and you wish to emphasize its duration and not the result.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS

Ask students if they play any musical instruments and when they started playing them. Use the information supplied by them to introduce the present perfect continuous:

*T: Juan has been playing the guitar for 5 years. Mario has been playing the piano for a few months.*

Make sure students see the emphasis on the continuity of the action. Juan and Mario are still actively playing these instruments. Show students how the present perfect continuous is formed: Have/has + been + present participle

### 2 PRACTICE THE PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS

Ask students to give more examples through substitution.

*T: Carlos Tevez started playing football when he was a child.*

*Prompt students to say:*

*S: He has been playing football since he was a child.*

*T: Oscar started listening to opera when he was in Italy.*

*S: He has been listening to opera since he was in Italy.*

Continue with more substitutions. For extended practice try this fun worksheet where students have to guess what a classmate has been doing. More advanced learners or adults may be given a Present Perfect Continuous Game to play, where they have to tell classmates what they have been doing based on a specific job card.

### 3 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS – INTERROGATIVE FORMS

Ask students which sports they currently play.

*S: I play tennis.*

*Model questions with how long, where, etc...*

*T: How long have you been playing tennis?*

*S: I've been playing for about a year.*

*Use affirmative statements as prompts for student questions:*

*T: I swim twice a week.*

*S: How long have you been swimming twice a week?*

*S2: Where have you been swimming?*

Students make affirmative statements of things they are currently doing as prompts for their classmates' questions.

### 4 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS – NEGATIVE FORMS

Make an affirmative statement followed by a negative one: I have been swimming twice a week. I haven't been dancing twice a week. Use the information supplied by students to make incorrect statements, which they have to correct:

*T: Juan has been playing tennis for several years.*

*S: I haven't been playing tennis for several years. I've been play-*

*ing for almost a year.*

### 5 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS – SHORT ANSWERS

Ask yes or no questions and teach students to give short answers:

*T: Have you been studying for next week's test?*

*S: Yes, I have./No, I haven't.*

Students ask classmates yes or no questions, and classmates reply with short answers. Make sure they place emphasis on actions that are continuing.

### 6 EXPAND ON ALL OF THE SITUATIONS IN WHICH YOU'D USE THIS TENSE

Above all, make sure students are clear on which types of contexts or situations require the use of the present perfect continuous tense. Provide examples:

*To describe activities, routines, or habits which were recently begun: I have been taking French classes this semester.*

*To describe recent events or temporary situations: I haven't been sleeping well.*

*To talk about the temporary result of a recently finished activity: I've been cleaning the house for the party, that's why I'm so tired.*

*To talk about an action that started in the past but actively continues: I've been studying English for years.*

**IT IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED THAT YOU CONTRAST THIS TENSE WITH OTHER TENSES LIKE THE SIMPLE PAST, AND THE PRESENT PERFECT SIMPLE, OF COURSE.**

# How To Teach Past Simple VS Present Perfect

When using the Present Perfect you should call the students' attention to the consequences generated by an action, rather than just the action itself. The tense is always formed by conjugating the auxiliary verb 'to have' and then appending the verb's past participle form.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### - SIMPLE PAST

I bought a new bike – (just reporting what I did in the past).

### - PRESENT PERFECT

I have/I've bought a new bike – (expressing that I have a new bike now).

## 1 CONTRAST PAST SIMPLE VS PRESENT PERFECT

Students have probably had a gentle introduction to the Present Perfect before, but you are now trying to extend uses/meaning of the tense. Do not expect mastery by the end of the lesson – it takes a long time to be assimilated.

A theme of Fame is useful as it naturally lends itself to talking about people's experiences/opportunities for role plays/interviewing etc. It would be particularly useful to contrast 2 famous people/biographies, where 1 member is living and the other is dead, so that students can clearly grasp the difference vis-à-vis time in the sentence structures.

Check students know the Past Simple and past participle forms of common irregular verbs.

If your class is going to experience too much difficulty in comprehension then spend some time on the Grammar Reference Section in your textbook and definitely assign for homework after the presentation in class.

## 2 QUESTIONS AND COMMON MISTAKES

Ask students – 'Which countries have you been to?' Write the countries on the board. Then ask 'When' they went to determine a definite time scale. Once these sentences have been elicited you can distinguish the 2 tenses by 'has been' and 'went.'

Use timelines and concept questions to ensure they grasp the structures. Ensure lots of personalization and practice.

Check for common mistakes: e.g. I have watched TV last night, or I live here for 5 years.

## 3 EXPLAIN THE RULE

### PAST SIMPLE FORM:

- past form only.
- auxiliary 'did' + base form.

The past form for all regular verbs ends in -ed/ or -d: e.g. worked/loved. Check spellings and practice for short verbs with only one syllable, as the consonant is doubled i.e. stopped, planned. Verbs ending in a consonant + 'y', change to -ied e.g. carried/studied. The past form for irregular verbs needs to be learned by heart.

### PAST SIMPLE USE:

An action/situation – an event in the past, which can be short or long: i.e. millisecond, millions of years. The event is in the past – it is completed/finished. We say or understand the time and/or place of the event. When we tell a story we usually use the simple past – for 'action' and the past continuous to 'set the scene.'

### PRESENT PERFECT FORM:

This tense gives speakers of some languages a degree of difficulty, because the concept/idea does not exist in their L1 – it is expressed with a present tense. Tell students not to try and translate into their own language

– try to think in the tense itself.

### PRESENT PERFECT USE:

Limit the teaching uses at the Lower Intermediate Level:

- experience – not when you did something, but if you did it.
- change or new information – e.g. buy a car.
- Continuing situation – a state (not an action).

British speakers use this tense more frequently: i.e. 'Have you had lunch?' rather than 'Did you have lunch?'

Since – usually used with the Perfect Tenses only (point in past time).

For – can be used with all tenses (period of time).

## 4 EXPLAIN FURTHER DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TENSES

Don't get bogged down in grammar. Be selective.

- The Present Perfect is used when the time period has NOT finished - i.e. I have seen 3 movies this week (this week has not finished yet). The Simple Past is used when the time period HAS finished - i.e. I saw 3 movies last week (last week is finished).

- The Present Perfect is often used when giving recent news: i.e. Martin has crashed his car again.

- The Simple Past is used when giving older information: i.e. Martin crashed his car last year.

- The Present Perfect is used when the time is not specific: i.e. I have seen that movie already (we don't know when).

- The Simple Past is used when the time is clear: i.e. I saw that movie on Thursday (we know exactly when).

- The Present Perfect is used with 'for' and 'since', when the actions have not finished yet: i.e. I have lived in London for 5 years (I still live there).

- The Simple Past is used with 'for' when the actions have already finished: i.e. I lived in London for 5 years (I don't live there now).

- Simple Past – Completed actions, a series of completed actions, duration in the past, habits in the past (past facts or generalizations could be left to a later lesson).

- Present Perfect – Experiences, Changes over time (accomplishments of humanity and uncompleted actions you are expecting could also be introduced later in the study course).

- The Simple Past is used for action that happened in the past and is OVER/DONE/FINISHED

– stress this point. It is used with time words: e.g. yesterday, last Saturday, last week, three months ago, with specific dates – in 1990. If a time expression is used then it's Past Simple.

- The Present Perfect started in the past, but IT IS STILL TRUE TODAY or MIGHT HAPPEN AGAIN. It connects the past and the present, and we use since, so far, just, already, yet etc. If you are speaking about a specific time you cannot use this tense.

**'EVER' AND 'NEVER' DISTINCTION MAY CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR STUDENTS SO IT IS WORTH SPENDING EXTRA TIME DRILLING, EXERCISES AND MINGLING ACTIVITIES TO AID ASSIMILATION.**

Practice 'For' and 'Since' at length. Assign homework. Students have to find different buildings, shops, restaurants, etc that have a sign indicating when they opened i.e. since 1989. Ask family members/friends/fellow students questions 'how long' questions.

# How to Teach Past Simple – Regular/Irregular Verbs

**WE'RE OFTEN TOLD WE SHOULD PUT THE PAST BEHIND US, NOT DWELL IN THE PAST, ETC. HOWEVER, ESL STUDENTS MUST DO JUST THAT: TO LEARN THE SIMPLE PAST TENSE.**

As they learn that regular verbs simply need an –ed suffix, they jump for joy. 'This is not so hard!', they think. Then we hit them with the endless lists of irregular verbs to study, and their enthusiasm deflates like a balloon before your very eyes. Don't add to the confusion.

Follow these steps to teach the past simple and keep your students right on track:

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF REGULAR VERBS

Give an example in Present Simple: I talk to my sister everyday. Lead in to past simple: Yesterday, I talked to her. Write this on the board. Give more examples with regular verbs and write each verb in its past form on the board.

T: I visited her. We watched TV. She cooked lunch. We listened to music.

Make sure students understand that the past form is the same for all persons. Give as many examples with regular verbs as needed.

### 2 PRACTICE PAST SIMPLE OF REGULAR VERBS

Go around the class and make statements in present simple, which students must change to past simple:

T: I sometimes walk in the park.  
S: You walked in the park yesterday.

Now's a good time to practice the different pronunciations of the –ed past form. Try this worksheet where students are required to group verbs according to their pronunciation.

### 3 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF IRREGULAR VERBS

Give an example in present simple: I have lunch at 12 every day. Lead in to past simple: Yesterday I had lunch at 12. Write this on the board. Give more examples with irregular verbs and write each verb in its past form on the board.

T: Yesterday I spoke to a friend. We went to the movies. We saw Eclipse. My friend ate popcorn. I drank soda.

Make sure students understand that the past form is the same for all persons.

Give as many examples with irregular verbs as needed.

### 4 PRACTICE THE PAST SIMPLE OF IRREGULAR VERBS

Go around the class and make statements in present simple, which students must change to past simple:

T: I usually drink orange juice for breakfast.  
S: Yesterday you drank orange juice.

To help your students study these verbs, give them this worksheet. For extended practice, try this one.

### 5 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE – NEGATIVE FORMS

Say, 'Yesterday I talked to John. I didn't talk to Sarah.' Give more examples alternating between affirmative and negative statements:

Sarah had lunch at 12. She didn't have lunch at one. You went to the gym yesterday. You didn't go to the movies.

And so on with all persons, singular and plural. Write the negative form on the board. Then have students do the same, always alternating between affirmative and negative statements.

### 6 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE – INTERROGATIVE

## FORMS

Model questions with did:

T: Did you come to school yesterday?  
S: Yes./No.  
T: Ask me!  
S: Did you come to school yesterday?

Continue with more questions from students. Model questions with what time, where, when, why, etc. Write examples on the board. First, they ask you, then they ask classmates, then they ask a classmate about another classmate (What did Bobby do last night?), and so on. Make sure they ask questions in all persons, both singular and plural. If they are unsure as to how to ask a question, model it for them first.

### 7 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE - SHORT ANSWERS

Ask yes or no questions and teach students to give short answers:

T: Did you come to school yesterday?  
S: Yes, I did./No, I didn't.

Students ask classmates yes or no questions, and classmates reply with short answers.

### 8 PROVIDE EXTENDED PRACTICE

Tell students that the best way to learn which verbs are regular and irregular, and remember the past form of irregular verbs is through lots of practice and not necessarily memorization. You'll find hundreds of Past Simple worksheets at [BusyTeacher.org](http://BusyTeacher.org) that will help them do just that.

Keep in mind that there are endless options for practice. Ask them to write about their last vacation for homework. Have them give a presentation on what people did 100 years ago. **BUT NO MATTER WHAT YOU CHOOSE TO DO, JUST MAKE SURE YOUR STUDENTS PRACTICE THE PAST SIMPLE IN CONTEXT, AND NOT BY MEMORIZING LISTS OF VERBS. IT'S THE BEST WAY TO LEARN!**

# How to Teach the Past Simple Tense – Verb to Be

**“TO BE OR NOT TO BE?” IS THE QUESTION PONDERED BY THE MELANCHOLY HAMLET. ON THE OTHER HAND, AN ESL TEACHER MIGHT ASK: HOW DO I TEACH THE SIMPLE PAST OF THE VERB TO BE, WITHOUT NEEDLESSLY CONFUSING MY STUDENTS?**

It's all rather simple. Follow a step by step process, and don't move on to next step until you're sure your students have mastered the one you're currently on.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF THE VERB TO BE - FIRST PERSON SINGULAR

Begin by asking your students, “Where am I?” They should answer, “You're in class/at school.” Introduce the past simple of the verb to be like this:

T: Yesterday at this time, I was at home.

Go around the class, and have students take turns saying where they were the previous day in the first person singular.

### 2 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF THE VERB TO BE - THIRD PERSON SINGULAR

Go around the class and say where each student was, giving examples in the third person singular: Sarah was at home. John was at the gym. Bobby was at a friend's house. Etc... Students continue by saying where some of their family members were: My mom was at home. My dad was at work. My sister was at the park.

### 3 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF THE VERB TO BE - SECOND PERSON SINGULAR

Go around the class and now make

statements in the second person singular, addressing each student: Sarah, you were at home. John, you were at the gym. Each student points to one classmate and says where he or she was.

### 4 DO THE SAME FOR THE PLURAL PERSONS

Get all of those who were at home together and say, “We were at home.” Do the same for “you (pl.)” and “they”: John and Tom, you were at the gym. Bobby and his cousin were at a friend's house. They were there till 6 pm. Give as many examples as needed to make sure students grasp the conjugation.

### 5 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF THE VERB TO BE - NEGATIVE FORMS

Say, “Yesterday at this time, I was at home. I wasn't at school.” Give more examples alternating between affirmative and negative statements: Sarah, you were at home. You weren't at the gym. John was at the gym. He wasn't at school. And so on with all persons, singular and plural. Then have students do the same, always alternating between affirmative and negative statements.

### 6 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF THE VERB TO BE - INTERROGATIVE FORMS

Model questions like this:

T: Where were you at 10 o'clock last night?

S: I was at home.

T: Ask me!

S: Where were you at 10 o'clock last night?

Continue with more questions from students. Encourage them to ask what time, where, when, why, etc. First, they ask you (second person singular, then they ask classmates, then they

ask a classmate about another classmate (Where was Sheila last night?), and so on. Make sure they ask questions in all persons, both singular and plural. If they are unsure as to how to ask a question, model it for them first.

### 7 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF THE VERB TO BE - SHORT ANSWERS

Ask yes or no questions and teach students to give short answers:

T: Were you at school last night?  
S: Yes, I was./No, I wasn't.

If time allows, ask them to provide more complete answers.

T: Were you at school last night?  
S: Yes, I was./No, I wasn't. I was at home.

### 8 PROVIDE LOTS OF EXTENDED PRACTICE

Try giving your students this worksheet to review what they've learned. And here's another with several exercises, one of which asks students to complete affirmative, and negative sentences, as well as write questions.

**FOR PRACTICAL PURPOSES, THE EXAMPLES ABOVE ALL COVER LOCATION (AT HOME/AT SCHOOL), BUT YOU MAY ALSO PRACTICE THE SIMPLE PAST OF THE VERB TO BE WITH FEELINGS (I WAS HAPPY/SAD), THE WEATHER (YESTERDAY WAS SUNNY/HOT/WINDY), OR OPINIONS (THE MOVIE WAS GOOD/BAD/GREAT), JUST TO NAME A FEW OPTIONS.**



# Where Did He Go? How to Teach Question-Making in Past Tense

LEARNING PAST TENSE STRUCTURES IS IMPORTANT FOR STUDENTS, AND BEING ABLE TO CREATE QUESTIONS IN THE PAST TENSE IS JUST AS IMPORTANT.

Since past tense is often taught very early on, question-making can be particularly confusing. There are several ways to relieve the confusion and provide students with plenty of leeway for errors.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 YES/NO QUESTIONS FIRST

The first thing to approach is the use of helping verbs (HV). You need to explain when to use 'did' and when to use 'was/were'. Was/were is the past tense of the verb to be. It is used to talk about states of being, emotions, and senses. Did is used in conjunction with an action verb. The helping verb 'did' isn't used in the statement, only in the question and the short answer. The question word or helping verb always goes at the beginning of the question.

Statement: *I loved him.*

Question: *Did you love him?*

Explanation: There is no helping verb and there is action: Use did

Statement: *Mario was happy.*

Question: *Was Mario happy?*

Explanation: Reverse the statement to put the HV in the front

Statement: *James went out.*

Question: *Did James go out?*

Explanation: There is no helping verb and there is action: Use did

Statement: *They were in trouble.*

Question: *Were they in trouble?*

Explanation: Reverse the statement to put the HV in the front

### 2 INFORMATION QUESTIONS

Using question words like *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *how* and *why* will elicit a long answer. These are used to draw out information, not simply a *yes* or a *no*. They also combine with 'did' or the verb 'to be' for questions. Using the same examples from above, draw some parallels. Again, if you have the helping verb was/were in a sentence, it will appear in the information question. When there is action and no helping verb in the statement, you need did in the question. **A great way to get students thinking about information questions is alter the statements and then have them determine which question word to use, and the word order for the question.** Here are some examples:

Statement: *I loved him for ten years.*

Question: *How long did you love him?*

Statement: *Mario was happy in Mexico*

Question: *Where was Mario happy?*

Statement: *James went out early this morning.*

Question: *When did James go out?*

Statement: *They were in trouble because they were naughty.*

Question: *Why were they in trouble?*

### 3 ACTIVITIES

You'll want to incorporate a variety of activities to practice question making in past tense.

One useful way to practice past tense verbs along with question creation is any form of **memory games**. You can utilize pictures or word cards and have the students draw cards until they match. They then have to create questions and sentences using both the verb forms.

Another activity to practice question making in past tense is to do some form of activity based on memories. Have students interview one another or do a mingling activity that produces lots of questioning. One way to do this is to simply give the students a theme. For example: *childhood friends*, *vacations*, *past birthday celebrations*. Anything that will get them talking about past experiences. You could even put one student in the "hot seat." This is when students fire questions at the hot seat student until they can't think of any more questions. It's a wonderful way to get students asking and answering questions at a fast pace!

No matter what practice activity you choose for creating questions, you will inevitably have the students practicing past tense verbs, time markers and the difference between past and present tenses.

**A SOLID INTRODUCTION TO CREATING PAST TENSE QUESTIONS FOLLOWED BY VARIED PRACTICE ACTIVITIES WILL HAVE YOUR STUDENTS LOOKING BACK WITH EASE.**

Provide topics that are relevant to the class age group, level, and hobbies, and you can't go wrong.

# How to Teach 'Used To' and 'Would'

**STUDENTS CAN USE "USED TO" OR "WOULD" TO TALK ABOUT ACTIONS IN THE PAST THAT THEY NO LONGER DO.**

Since behaviors change over time, this is an excellent structure to use when reflecting on the past. This also gives students the opportunity to explain how they have changed as they have gotten older.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 WARM UP

Get students thinking about the past by asking questions such as *"What sport did you play when you were a child?"* and *"What did/didn't you like when you were a child?"*

You could also simply have students volunteer something that they remember from their childhood. Write some sentences on the board as well as the names of the students who provided them to refer to later.

### 2 INTRODUCE 'USED TO'

Introduce the structure "used to" by talking about one of the sentences on the board or using an example of your own. You can say *"When I was a child I lived in New York City."* and then show students the target structure by writing *"I used to live in New York City."* on the board. Have students repeat the sentence after you. Be sure to highlight the importance of the phrase "used to" by underlining it. Help students realize that it is important, for this structure, that you no longer live in NYC.

Now ask students to look at the sentences on the board. As a class rewrite these sentences using the target structure and for each one check that the statement is no longer true. For in-

stance, if Lisa said that she liked cake as a child and still likes cake then you cannot use that sentence. **Ensure that students understand this key point.**

### 3 PRACTICE 'USED TO'

For the first practice exercise have students read ten statements using the target structure and decide if the each sentence applies to them or not. For young students one such statement could be *"I used to be really messy, but now I am more organized."* while for adult students, statements such as *"I used to enjoy going to clubs, but now I prefer to do other activities."* might be more appropriate. You can then take a poll and collect your findings on the board. It may be interesting to see how many students used to do certain activities or behave in certain ways.

Next have students think of some other "used to" sentences that apply to them. You can have students volunteer to read sentences aloud to the class or work in groups to discuss the different sentences. After you teach this lesson once, you can use sentences that your students created as the ten statements for the first practice activity in later lessons so that they are better tailored to your students.

### 4 INTRODUCE 'WOULD'

Once students have become familiar with using "used to" on their own, introduce "would" and explain how it is used in similar sentences. *"When I was young, I would play soccer after school."* is a good example because you can also say *"When I was young, I used to play soccer after school."*

Not every sentence that uses "used to" can use "would" so be sure to give some examples and explain the difference between the two. "Would" can-

not be used in a negative sentence without altering its meaning and while you can say *"I used to dance."* you cannot say *"I would dance."* and mean the same thing either.

### 5 PRACTICE 'USED TO' & 'WOULD'

Do a practice activity where **students change "used to" sentences into sentences using "would"** and then in groups, pairs or individually complete a fill in the blank exercise. Check all the answers as a class to ensure that students understand these structures well before moving on to the next activity. In order to get your class moving and enthusiastic, you can do a team activity or play *Fruit Basket* for more practice.

### 6 REVIEW

Finish the lesson by asking students to tell you what they learned in the lesson. Prompt them to mention specific points and give examples. You can also use this time to clarify anything students do not understand.

**IN A LATER LESSON BE SURE TO INTRODUCE THE QUESTION THAT GOES ALONG WITH THESE STRUCTURES AND DISCUSS HOW IN THE QUESTION "DID YOU USE TO ~?" THE -D ENDING IS LEFT OFF AND USE IS CORRECT. YOU MAY ALSO CONSIDER INTRODUCING "USED TO" AND "WOULD" IN SEPARATE LESSONS IF YOU HAVE TIME. THIS MAY MAKE THE TOPIC EASIER FOR STUDENTS TO UNDERSTAND.**

# I Can Never GET USED

## to Using USED TO: Ideas on How to Teach the Difference

SOMETIME COLLOQUIAL LANGUAGE IS JUST PLAIN STRANGE, AND DOESN'T CONTAIN MUCH REASON AS TO WHY WE SAY THE THINGS WE DO. TEACHING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 'USED TO' AND 'TO GET USED TO' IS ONE OF THOSE ODDITIES.

It doesn't have to be confusing. Follow these ideas on how to teach the difference and your students will get used to using *used to* in no time!

### HOW TO TEACH THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN USED TO & GET USED TO

#### 1 USED TO

The best way to introduce these two terms is to first **explain them separately and then compare and contrast** them through some activities. Defining *used to* is fairly straightforward.

- *I am used to doing something.*
- *He/she/it is used to doing something.*
- *They/we are used to doing something.*

**To be used to doing something means we are accustomed to that thing.** It is a habit and provides information about our habits. When you are used to doing something, you are comfortable with it and it is usual for you. This explanation is very simple, and you can provide a lot of examples, getting input from the class.

*I am used to waking up early every day.*  
*Abby is used to working six days a week.*  
*My father is used to eating dinner with us.*

The negative is also simple and you can provide more examples:

*Gary is not used to getting up early*

*John is not used to having a job.*

*I am not used to sleeping in.*

#### 2 GET USED TO

To get used to doing something often takes a bit more explanation. This is a good lesson to show processes and how we don't automatically just acquire habits. We go through a process to make something habitual or usual. In this explanation, you can supply more scenarios to get to the end point and play off of the examples you used above or earlier in the lesson. **To get used to something is to become familiar with it**, to possibly go through a change to acquire a new habit. You can show the different forms through examples.

*I am getting used to waking up early because I have a new job. Before this job, I worked nights so I always slept late into the morning. It is not easy getting used to waking up so early, but in a few more weeks, I am sure I will be used to it.*

*John couldn't find a job for many months. Finally, his cousin got him a job at Home Depot. Now he works 35 hours a week. He's getting used to working almost every day and he is happy to have a job.*

*Abby is not getting used to working six days a week. It is very difficult after only working for three days a week for a long time. She misses her children and doesn't know how she will ever get used to her new hours.*

To get used to something shows a transition and sometimes even a larger transformation. Depending on your students' level you can provide more

substantive examples and have students talk about their own transitions.

#### 3 ACTIVITIES

You can do **sentence completions** for both *used to* and *get used to*.

You could also have students do **questions rounds** about their habits and routines. Students could share with partners information about their routines and then their partners could ask questions with *used to* and *get used to*.

One great way to elicit natural usage is to **have a discussion about a big change they may have experienced** like living in a different country, speaking a foreign language or changing schools. Questions could be: What do you have to get used to? What do you never get used to? How do you get used to new things? This way the students get more speaking practice and can analyze the difficulties of change.

#### TEACHING A TOPIC LIKE USED TO AND GET USED TO WORKS BEST WHEN IT IS PERSONALIZED.

Create activities that get students talking about their lives and their habits, and you will get used to teaching *used to* with ease.

# 3 Perfect Ways to Introduce Past Perfect Tense

**THIS TENSE IS RESERVED FOR ADVANCED LEARNERS FOR GOOD REASON. STUDENTS CAN PRETTY EASILY GET AROUND USING THE TENSE ALTOGETHER BY JUST USING TWO PAST TENSE VERBS WITH SOME TIME MARKERS. IT IS STILL VERY IMPORTANT TO TEACH IT AND TO PROVIDE SOME ACTIVITIES WHERE THE STUDENTS CAN SEE WHY IT IS A BETTER CHOICE THAN SIMPLE PAST TENSE.**

Try these three perfect ways of introducing Past Perfect tense, and you will be surprised by all the light bulbs that go on. You can also let students know that this is a good tense to recognize and utilize in writing.

## PAST PERFECT TENSE, A SIMPLE EXPLANATION

The function of the Past Perfect tense is to talk about an event or activity that was completed before another event, activity or time in the past. When using this tense, there will always be two past events or activities, or an event with a particular time in the past. You don't have to include both events in the same sentence when the one event or time is understood from the context of the conversation.

## HOW TO TEACH PAST PERFECT

### 1 WHEN I WAS BORN....

One of the best ways to practice Past Perfect tense is by looking back at history, either on a grand scale or a personal one and create some timelines.

A good one to start with is the students' birthdays. You can create some questions or prompts, having to do with *had xx activity/event happened when you were born?* Had the internet been invented, Had a new president been nominated the year you were born? You can turn this into a guessing game in which each stu-

dent is asked questions until the class can guess which specific year (and month if you want to make it really challenging) they were born.

You can then follow that up with other points in history or specific years and focus on what had and had not happened yet by that time. If there is a specific event happening near when you are teaching this tense you could use it to draw upon for a history lesson of sorts.

For example, the summer or winter Olympics, a presidential election, or something to that effect. Students can ask similar questions as to the year they were born or things more targeted to the actual event. For example: Had Russia participated in the last winter Olympics? Had you heard of Barak Obama before the election? Had anyone seen a presidential debate before last night?

### 2 USE REPORTED SPEECH

Reported speech is one of the few ways that Past Perfect is used frequently. Because reported speech is complex in and of itself you will want to focus on concrete second hand reporting.

For example: *John had called last night and he had asked me what time we should meet. When Mary had asked me if I wanted to go to dinner, I had told her that I was busy.* You can provide scenarios like *What had you and John discussed yesterday?* The students can then ad lib the conversation.

Another way to practice reported speech for Past Perfect tense is to have the students role play various scenarios and then the audience of students watching the role play have to report what happened, or what was spoken about. Then they can switch so everyone gets a turn either being the speaker or the reporter.

### 3 THE THIRD CONDITIONAL

The third conditional is basically the hypothetical past because we are talking about things that never happened.

*If only I had been a better father.  
If only I had studied harder for the test.  
If I had gone home early, I wouldn't have gotten into the accident.  
I wish I had gone bungee jumping when I had the chance.*

This conditional often displays regret or dissatisfaction with the past. You can also incorporate *I wish, if only, or if I had.*

A good practice activity is to **give students prompts that they then create sentences from.** After that they are to continue telling what happened, what hadn't happened, what might have happened. This ends up being a good review of several tenses, including Past Perfect.

## DON'T LET THE LIMITED USE OF PAST PERFECT TENSE DETER YOU FROM PROVIDING SUBSTANTIVE AND PRACTICAL LESSONS FOR THE TENSE.

It is always a good idea with an advanced tense to do some sort of book work in order to really discuss and dissect the tense. Students may have to prove their knowledge of the tense later on if they are doing any sort of TOEFL or college entrance exams.

# How to Teach the Past Perfect Tense

**“MY DAD GOT HOME LATE FROM A MEETING LAST NIGHT. BY THE TIME HE CAME HOME, WE HAD ALREADY HAD DINNER.” THE TWO HADS IN THE SAME SENTENCE IS NOT ONLY CONFUSING FOR ESL STUDENTS, IT’S ALSO DIFFICULT TO PRONOUNCE.**

The past perfect tense is formed by the past of the auxiliary verb have plus the past participle of the main verb. This may not sound too complicated, but it’s still difficult for students to grasp exactly why and when this tense is used.

Let’s explain it to them step by step.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE PAST PERFECT WITH A TIMELINE

The best way to grasp the past perfect is to understand that we’re dealing with two events that took place in the past, but one before the other, not simultaneously. Draw a timeline on the board. Mark lines for different hours and tell students this is what happened yesterday. Write down a series of events that took place yesterday and mark them in their corresponding place in the timeline:

*I left the school at 6pm.  
My husband started preparing dinner at 6 and finished at 7.  
I got home at 7:15*

Say, “When I got home, my husband had finished preparing dinner.” Show your students how the past perfect tense is formed, and make sure they understand one past event took place before another past event.

### 2 PRACTICE THE PAST PERFECT TENSE

To show your students more examples, go to [OurTimeLines.com](http://OurTimeLines.com), where you can generate your own timeline of major historical events. Give examples using any historical events your students can relate to. Now’s a good

time to introduce the use of already.

- *When you were born, the Internet had already been invented.*
- *When I finished high school, the Berlin wall had already been demolished.*
- *When I started teaching, George Bush Sr. had already finished his term as President of the US.*

Ask students to provide more examples, comparing historical or past events. Give them this worksheet, where they read about something that happened, and they have to guess what happened before.

### 3 INTRODUCE THE PAST PERFECT TENSE – NEGATIVE FORMS

Continue using the timeline or comparing past events, but this time make negative statements. Now’s a good time to introduce the use of yet.

- *When my grandmother was born, penicillin hadn’t been discovered yet.*
- *When I was born, the Internet hadn’t been invented yet.*
- *When I finished high school, I hadn’t started teaching yet.*

Ask students to provide more examples.

### 4 INTRODUCE THE PAST PERFECT TENSE – INTERROGATIVE FORMS

Use the same timelines to ask your students questions:

- *Had the Internet been created when you were born?*
- *Had you started learning English when you finished high school?*
- *When did you get your first job?*
- *Had you learned to drive a car yet?*

Encourage students to ask each other questions. If necessary, give them

prompts:

- T: The Internet was invented in 1973.*
- S: Had it been invented when you were born?*

### 5 INTRODUCE THE PAST PERFECT TENSE – SHORT ANSWERS

Have students ask you questions and introduce short answers:

- S: Had cell phones been invented when you were born?*
- T: No, they hadn’t.*
- S: Had penicillin been discovered when you were born?*
- T: Yes, it had.*

Students continue taking turns asking each other questions and replying with short answers.

### 6 CONTRAST PAST SIMPLE AND PAST PERFECT

Make sure that students understand which clause has the verb in simple past and which has the verb in past perfect. Usually the clause that starts with when or by the time has a verb in simple past. This is the perfect worksheet to practice this contrast.

**ONCE YOUR STUDENTS HAVE GRASPED THIS TENSE, GIVE THEM PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES TO USE IT ON A DAILY BASIS. THE PROBLEM WITH THE PAST PERFECT IS THAT STUDENTS TEND TO FORGET IT: THEY DON’T USE IT, AND SO IT SIMPLY SLIPS AWAY. THEY MUST UNDERSTAND THAT USING COMPLEX TENSES TAKES THEIR ENGLISH TO A WHOLE OTHER LEVEL.**

# What Were You Doing When?

## 3 Great Activities

### for Past Continuous Tense

PAST CONTINUOUS TENSE CAN BE INTRODUCED AT A FAIRLY LOW LEVEL OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION.

There is no shortage of great activities for practicing Past Continuous tense, but it may take some time and review to solidify the point with learners. Here are three great activities to practice Past Continuous tense to get your wheels turning.

#### REVIEW THE GRAMMAR

A quick review of Past Continuous tense will be helpful before you jump into any activities. Ask the students how to construct the tense and have some reminders up on the board. Remind them that the past tense clause expresses some kind of interruption into another activity which is the continuous clause. The interruption didn't necessarily stop the continuous action, and most likely the continuous action still continued.

Past tense clause      Past Continuous clause (It doesn't matter which one comes first.)

Your mom **called** while you **were taking** a shower.

The president **coughed** a lot while he **was giving** his speech.

I **drove** the car into the gas station just as it **was running** out of gas.

#### THREE ACTIVITIES FOR PAST CONTINUOUS

##### 1 WHAT WERE YOU DOING WHEN...?

Often you can use Past Continuous tense to **talk about memories**, or for **looking back on what was happening at a specific time**. With this activity students ask each other questions that they may or may not remember the answer to.

For example *What were you doing last Tuesday night at dinner time?* or *What were you doing when xx important thing happened?*

You can explain that some historical events or other news events leave such an impression on us, we will always remember what we were doing at the time that thing happened. Sometimes our memories are very clear and sometimes they are not. You may want to provide prompts so the students get the idea and then have them generate their own questions. Some ideas for prompts are:

*9/11*  
*The earthquake*  
*Last Thursday at dinner time*  
*Princess Diana died*

You can also make this into a bluff game by telling students who don't remember to make something up. For example, *I was doing laundry when my mom called* or *I was driving my car when I heard about 9/11*. Their partners can then guess whether the answer is true or not.

##### 2 ALIBI

This game is similar to the murder mystery *Clue*. You can set it up by having the students create the crime they are going to investigate. After that, students are divided into two groups -- *suspects* and *detectives*. You want to have more suspects and just 2-4 detectives. The suspects each have to create a story of where they were and what they were doing at the time of the crime. They are then questioned by one of the detective students. The detectives must ask questions pertaining to Past Continuous by only asking questions about the time of the murder. For example they could ask questions like: *What were you discussing?* or *Where*

*was the doctor eating?*

If you want you could set up a jury as well and have the class vote as to who is guilty and why they don't believe the alibi.

##### 3 WORD CARDS

Have a stack of cards with random words prepared. Each student will choose two. In rounds have them create a sentence for their pair of words — one word for the past tense clause and one for the past continuous clause.

For example, they draw the two words, *drive* and *monkey*. A possible sentence could be: *I was driving down the street when I saw a monkey in the road.*

Or you can tell them to be more creative and allow some nonsense sentences. It does make it more challenging and fun if each of the words has to be used in a different clause.

To make this activity even more involved you could have the students create sentences that somehow relate to the last person's sentence to create a silly sort of story of things that were happening at a given time!

PAST CONTINUOUS TENSE IS AN IMPORTANT ONE FOR LEARNERS AND IT MAY TAKE SOME TIME TO MASTER IT AS WELL AS FULLY UNDERSTAND HOW TO USE IT.

Providing variable practice activities and tapping into students' own experiences will provide an experiential way of practicing what could have been just another boring grammar point.

# How to Teach the Past Continuous Tense

**THE PAST CONTINUOUS IS ANOTHER TENSE THAT IS COMMONLY TAUGHT TO BEGINNERS, USUALLY AFTER THEY'VE LEARNED THE PAST SIMPLE.**

Although it has its nuances, we usually use it to talk about actions that were in progress at a specific time in the past. We also use it in conjunction with the past simple when talking about interruptions (*I was doing my homework when the phone rang*). As students should already be familiar with the present continuous, and the past of the verb to be, this tense usually doesn't pose great difficulties, and students are able to naturally incorporate it into their speech.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE PAST CONTINUOUS

Tell students what you usually do late at night, and lead in to the past continuous: I always go to bed at 11pm. So, last night at 11:30 I was sleeping. Write your typical schedule on the board with your usual everyday activities:

7:30 am – breakfast  
9 to 12 – classes  
12 – lunch  
1pm to 5pm – classes  
6pm – gym  
8pm – dinner  
11pm – bedtime

Now, give them examples of what you were doing exactly at a certain time yesterday: At noon, I was having lunch. At 1pm, I was giving a class. Ask students to tell you what you were doing, and have them answer in second person singular: You were sleeping at midnight.

Students jot down their own daily schedules, or what they did yesterday, and then take turns first saying what they were doing at certain time: I was having breakfast at 7am. Then, they switch schedules with a classmate and

say what he or she was doing: Juan was having breakfast at 10 am. Then, they make comparisons: I was studying. He was playing video games. Or find similarities: We were all sleeping at midnight.

Here's a great worksheet to give students so they can practice the past continuous.

### 2 INTRODUCE THE PAST CONTINUOUS – NEGATIVE FORMS

Use the same daily schedule of activities and make negative statements:

*I wasn't watching TV at 3pm - I was working.  
Juan wasn't having breakfast at 7am - he was sleeping.*

Use your students' schedules as well. Then, ask them to do the same, first with theirs, and then with a classmate's, but always alternating between negative and affirmative statements.

### 3 INTRODUCE THE PAST CONTINUOUS – INTERROGATIVE FORMS

First, model yes or no questions, then, questions with what, where, which, etc:

- T: *Were you watching TV at midnight last night?*  
- S: *No!*  
- T: *Ask me!*  
- S: *Were you watching TV at midnight last night?*

- T: *What were you doing at 7am this morning?*  
- S: *I was sleeping.*  
- T: *Ask Juan!*  
- S: *What were you doing, Juan, at 7am?*

Continue with more questions from students. Encourage them to ask different types of questions in different singular and plural persons. If they are unsure as to how to ask a question, model it for them first.

### 4 INTRODUCE THE PAST CONTINUOUS – SHORT ANSWERS

Ask yes or no questions and model the correct way to give short answers:

- T: *Were you watching TV yesterday at 10pm?*  
- S: *Yes, I was./No, I wasn't.*

Ask students to ask each other yes or no questions in past continuous, and have them practice replying with short answers.

### 5 EXTENDED PRACTICE AND CONTRAST WITH PAST SIMPLE

It is essential at this point, for them to not only practice with as many exercises as necessary, for example, those found at BusyTeacher.org's Past Continuous worksheets section, but also to learn the difference between the past simple and the past continuous. There are numerous worksheets that deal with this contrast specifically.

**REMEMBER THAT ANOTHER GREAT WAY TO PRACTICE THIS TENSE IN THE CLASSROOM IS THROUGH A VARIETY OF RESOURCES, LIKE IMAGES, PHOTOS, CARTOONS, SONGS, AND VIDEOS.**

**IF YOU PRACTICE ANY TENSE WITH MATERIALS THAT STUDENTS CAN RELATE TO, OR ARE INTERESTED IN, YOU'LL MAKE LEARNING NEW TENSES SO MUCH MORE FUN FOR THEM!**

# The Future May Bring...These Future Tense Activities for Your Class

**THOUGH WE ALL LIVE IN THE PRESENT, MANY OF US THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE ON A REGULAR BASIS.**

In fact, when we do think about the future, we usually make plans and set goals for ourselves. We have a sense of where we are going in life. Challenge your students to think about their personal futures and the future of the world around them with these activities that use the future tenses in English.

**TRY THESE FUTURE TENSE ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR CLASS!**

## 1 YOUR PERSONAL FUTURE

We all spend time thinking about our personal futures. *Whom will I meet? Where will I go? What will I do?* Most students who travel to a foreign country for language studies have a very clear picture of their futures. Pair your students together to talk about their future plans. **Have each student share any personal goals he or she might have.** Then ask each person to explain how he or she will accomplish these goals.

If your students are not familiar with the concept, explain to them what a *five-year plan* and a *ten-year plan* are. Then give your class some time to think about where they would like their lives to be in five or ten years and how they will go about getting to those places. Once your students have finished their plans, pair them together to share these plans. Each person should use future tenses to describe what his or her life will look like in five years and ten years. Then each partner should share some thoughts about the plan, ask questions or make suggestions.

Five and ten years are quite a while away. If your students are having trouble seeing their lives so far in the future, bring the future tense a little closer to the present by asking each person what he or she will do when he returns to his home country. *What are the first things you will do? Who are the first people you will see? Where are the first places you will go?* Using the

future tense, have each student write about his first day back in his native country once his English studies are complete.

## 2 THE FUTURE OF TELEVISION

Television has been popular in American culture for many years, but there are some television shows that are still popular after decades on the air.

One of these programs is the *Andy Griffith Show*. After its premier over fifty years ago, the program still has fans today and runs in syndicate on a daily basis. Challenge your students' listening skills by showing them an episode of the program available on tvland.com. Then ask your students what they think made the show so popular.

After a look at the past of television, ask your students to take a look at what is popular on television today. *What qualities do these shows possess?* Have your students share why they think these programs are popular with audiences today. Then using the *Andy Griffith* show as an example from the past and a popular program from today, have your students make a list of what makes a television program successful. Do they think that any of today's programs will still be popular in fifty years? Why or why not? What characteristics do they possess that will determine that success? How do these shows differ from ones that will not last or continue in popularity?

Now that your students have examined the past and present of television, have them **predict what television in the future will be like.** What characteristics will popular programs have? Why will they appeal to audiences? Then have your students work in groups to create a television show of the future. Each group should write a description of the program using future tenses. They should describe the premise of the show, the characters and the general content of the programs. Once the groups have written their descriptions, display them in your classroom and allow the rest of the class to vote on which

show they think will be most popular in the future.

## 3 THE FUTURE OF TECHNOLOGY

Over the past fifty years, technology has made some enormous leaps. Have your students think back to what life was like in the 1980's. How has technology changed since then? What modern advances could your students not live without? Have your students imagine a future without that one technological advancement, and then have each person write a paragraph using future tenses that describes that daunting future.

One of the greatest advancements in recent history is that of the Internet. Have your students make a list of **how the Internet affects their lives.** Then have groups work together to imagine what the next great advancement in technology will be. Students should be creative and practical. How will their invention change the future? Have each group share their ideas with the class by using future tenses to describe a world with their new advancement.

## 4 CREATING A TIME CAPSULE

**One of the most popular ways to touch the future is with a time capsule.** Group your students into teams of three or four to create a time capsule. Each group should specify the items that will go into the time capsule, where it will be placed and when it will be opened. Then each group should imagine the future population's reaction to their time capsule when it is finally opened. Have each group write a description of their time capsule being opened using future tenses. They should include the reaction that the people who open the capsule will have to the items inside.

**NO ONE CAN REALLY KNOW WHAT THE FUTURE WILL BRING, BUT THAT IS NO REASON TO AVOID THINKING ABOUT IT.**

With a look at the past and present, your students can make informed predictions about the future and get a little grammar practice while they are at it.



# How to Teach the Simple Future Tense

Who knows what the future will bring? However, it does look promising, particularly for our ESL students, because once they master the major verb tenses, they'll be better equipped to communicate in English. And while on the subject of the future - teaching the Future Simple tense ("will-future") is not as "simple" as it sounds. It actually involves teaching the future with "will" and the future with "going to", plus teaching students to understand when they should use each. Let's go over the procedure of teaching the Simple Future Tense step by step:

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE SIMPLE TENSE WITH WILL

Ask a student, "Who is the President of the United States?"

S: Barack Obama is the President.

T: That's right. He will be President until the end of 2012.

Tell students we use will to talk about the future in general. Make sure they understand the conjugation is the same for all verbs. Go over other uses of "will" and give examples.

**For instant decisions:** *You're hungry? I will make you a sandwich.*

**For promises or voluntary actions:** *I will call you tomorrow.*

### 2 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE SIMPLE TENSE WITH WILL – NEGATIVE FORM

Just as will is used to express voluntary actions, or things you are willing to do, its negative form won't is used to express something you are not willing to do, or even refuse to do: *I'm tired of trying to talk to Sarah. I won't call her again.*

Ask students to give you examples of things they refuse to do.

### 3 INTRODUCE THE SIMPLE FUTURE SIMPLE WITH WILL – INTERROGATIVE FORM

Model questions with will:

T: Will you help me with this?

S: Yes/Sure!

T: Will you go to tonight's concert?

S: Yes/No.

Ask students to ask each other questions with will that are either requests for help or assistance, or about the future in general. Model all types of questions first, with *what, where, when*, etc.

### 4 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE SIMPLE WITH WILL – SHORT ANSWERS

Have students ask you questions about future events and reply with affirmative and negative short answers:

S: Will you give us homework for the weekend?

T: Yes, I will/No, I won't.

Ask students to ask each other Yes/No questions with will, and have them practice replying in short answers.

### 5 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE SIMPLE WITH GOING TO

Unlike the future with will, where an instant decision is made, once you've made a decision, and it constitutes a plan, you use the future with going to to express it. Tell your students: *I have special plans for the weekend. I'm going to visit my grandmother.* Explain to students that the conjugation for the future with going to is the same as for the present continuous. Provide plenty of examples in different persons: *You are going to have a special class next week. A student from London is going to speak to the class. We are going to listen to his experience studying in the UK.* Ask students to give examples of things they are going to do next weekend (make sure they understand they must be things they have already planned to do).

### 6 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE SIMPLE WITH GOING TO – NEGATIVE FORM

The future with going to in negative form is used to express things we

have decided not to do. Give examples by alternating between negative and affirmative forms: *I am not going to give you homework for tonight. I'm going to give you some exercises for the weekend.* Ask students to do the same: *Bon Jovi is not going to come to town next month. They are going to be here in December.*

### 7 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE SIMPLE WITH GOING TO – INTERROGATIVE FORM

Model questions with going to: *Are you going to buy tickets for the concert tonight? Is President Obama going to cancel his trip? Are you going to study for the test?* Have students ask questions in different persons.

### 8 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE SIMPLE WITH GOING TO – SHORT ANSWERS

Have students ask you questions about future events with going to and reply with affirmative and negative short answers:

S: Are you going to give us a difficult final test?

T: Yes, I am/No, I'm not.

Ask students to ask each other Yes/No questions with going to, and have them practice replying in short answers.

### 9 CONTRAST BOTH FORMS OF FUTURE SIMPLE

Make sure students understand that either form can be used for the future in general, but in some cases only one is correct. When making a decision at the moment of speaking, we use will: *Where is John? He's late. I'll give him a call. But once the decision has been made, we use going to:*

S: Where are you going?

T: I'm going to call John to see why he's taking so long.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE IS SOMETHING BOTH YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS SHOULD ENJOY.

# How to Teach the Future Continuous Tense

**YOU DON'T NEED A FORTUNE TELLER TO TELL YOU YOUR FUTURE. IT'S RIGHT THERE IN BLACK AND WHITE IN YOUR APPOINTMENT BOOK!**

The Future Continuous tense is used when talking about fixed appointments and/or events that we've scheduled in the future, and also events that will be in progress at a specific time in the future. This may not be hard for ESL students to grasp, but some may ask: why not use the present continuous with future meaning? It's a good idea to tell your students that the future continuous also sounds more polite, and it's recommended especially in business contexts.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE CONTINUOUS

To introduce this tense use illustrations or pictures where there are lots of people carrying out different actions: the best places are those where there are fixed schedules, like an airport, train station, or movie theater.

For example, show the illustration of a busy train station and ask:

*T: Is Mr. Thompson boarding his train right now?*

*S: No, he's waiting at the platform.*

*T: That's right! He will be boarding his train at 7pm/in 10 minutes.*

Go on with more examples: He'll be taking the train to New York City. He'll be leaving from Track 2. He'll be arriving at 9pm. Show students another illustration and have them supply examples with the future continuous. Finally, ask students to give you examples based on what they will be doing the next day at a particular time, either events they've scheduled or actions that will be in progress.

*S1: I will be having dinner with my family at 8pm.*

*S2: I will be studying all day tomorrow.*

*S3: I will be visiting my grandmother for her birthday tomorrow evening.*

### 2 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE CONTINUOUS – NEGATIVE FORM

Use the information supplied by students about things they will be doing the next day, and make negative statements, alternating between affirmative and negative.

*T: Juan will be having dinner with his family at 8pm. He won't be playing football.*

Ask students to provide more sentences in the negative form by using their own examples or the illustrations used in class.

### 3 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE CONTINUOUS – INTERROGATIVE FORM

Ask students questions about what they will be doing some time in the near future:

*T: What will you be doing for the Christmas holidays?*

*S: I will be visiting my family in Mexico.*

*T: Ask a classmate!*

*S: Sarah, what will you be doing for the Christmas holidays?*

Ask students to ask more questions. Encourage them to use what time, when, where, who, etc. Make sure they notice that questions in future continuous sound more polite than questions in simple future.

### 4 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE CONTINUOUS – SHORT ANSWERS

Have students ask you questions

about future events and reply with affirmative and negative short answers:

*S: Will you be going somewhere for the holidays?*

*T: Yes, I will/No, I won't.*

Students now take turns asking each other questions and replying with short answers.

### 5 PROVIDE EXTENDED PRACTICE AND CONTRAST WITH OTHER FUTURE TENSES

If you wish to give your students more opportunities for practice, BusyTeacher.org offers several worksheets in our Future Continuous Section that should do wonderfully. What will your students be doing in 45 years? In the Teenagers of Tomorrow worksheet, your students will explore just that. Now's also a great time to review and contrast all of the future tenses learned so far, and there are also fabulous worksheets for this, like Whose Life Is It? and Tomorrow's World.

Another great activity you can do with your class is a time capsule, although it doesn't necessarily have to be as fancy as a capsule to be buried outside. Simply ask students to write down all of the things they imagine they will be doing in ten years time. Some will be finishing their studies, others will be changing diapers and raising children. Some may even be enjoying their retirement. Once they've written down their predictions, they put them into an envelope and seal it with this specific note across the front: DO NOT OPEN UNTIL 2020! They should keep these envelopes safely hidden at the bottom of a drawer or inside a book. Imagine their faces when they open them 10 years from now!

# How to Teach the Future Perfect Tense

## HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHAT WILL HAVE HAPPENED BY A SPECIFIC MOMENT IN THE FUTURE?

For example, by the year 2020, what kinds of technological devices will have been invented? Will teachers have stopped giving face-to-face classes entirely? The future perfect tense is rather hard for ESL students. Usually upper-intermediate to advanced students are taught this tense, which is not even used by native speakers most of the time. How can you teach this difficult tense in a way that is painless for both you and your students?

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE PERFECT WITH A TIMELINE

Several of the more complex tenses, are best understood when we place events within a timeline. And this is precisely the case with the future perfect. We use this tense to say an action will be finished at a certain time in the future. So, draw a timeline on the board, one that starts with today and extends towards the near future. Below write several examples of things that will happen soon, but before the Christmas holidays.

- Juan will finish a project.
- He will take some exams.
- He will plan a ski trip to Aspen.

Mark these events in your timeline in the right order. Say, "By the end of this year, John will have finished his project. He will have taken some exams. He will have planned a ski trip to Aspen." Make sure students understand these actions will be finished by a specific time (the end of the year). Illustrate how the future perfect tense is formed: will + have + past participle (for all persons)

### 2 PRACTICE THE FUTURE PERFECT TENSE

Ask your students to give you more examples of things they've planned for the rest of the school year:

*S: I will learn to drive. I will get my driver's license. I will drive to Disney World.*

*T: When you drive to Disney world, you will have known how to drive for only a few weeks.*

Ask students to provide more examples. It can be anything they foresee happening in the near future: *By the time, we finish this course, I will have turned 18. When I graduate from high school, I will have decided where to go to college.* You may also tell them they can make predictions for the future - they may get as bold as they wish:

*By the time I'm 40, I will have become CEO of an important company.*

Ask your students to make predictions about life in 2015.

### 3 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE PERFECT TENSE – NEGATIVE FORMS

Give examples of negative statements, based on the information your students have shared:

*Juan, by the time you finish this course, you won't have turned 20 - you will have turned 18.*

*Sarah, when you graduate from high school, you won't have decided where to apply for a job - you will have decided where to go to college.*

Ask students to provide more examples by predicting the future: *By the time I finish college, I won't have gotten married.*

### 4 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE PERFECT TENSE – INTERROGATIVE FORMS

Ask students questions about what they expect in their future:

*T: Will you have graduated from*

*college by the time you're 22?*

*S: No.*

*T: Ask a classmate!*

*S: Carlo, will you have graduated from college by the time you're 22?*

Model a few more questions, then, have students come up with questions on their own.

### 5 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE PERFECT TENSE – SHORT ANSWERS

Have students ask you questions and introduce short answers:

*S: Will you have retired from teaching in 2020?*

*T: Yes, I will/No, I won't.*

Students now take turns asking each other questions and replying with short answers.

### 6 PROVIDE PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXTENDED PRACTICE

If students are not given chances to extensively practice the future perfect tense, chances are they won't feel confident enough to use it. Try some of the exercises and activities found in our Future Perfect section. Here you'll also find worksheets that contrast the different future tenses to boost their confidence.

If possible, try to find real examples of how this tense is used. Some good sources are newspaper articles, blog posts, and advertisements that deal with the future effects of our present mistakes. For example, you may find articles that discuss the effects of global warming, and mention that by the year 2020, all of the snow on the peak of Mount Kilimanjaro will have melted. You will not only help them practice the future perfect, you will also teach them the importance of caring for the environment. Another valuable lesson, indeed.

# How to Teach Reported Speech

## - Statements

**ALSO KNOWN AS INDIRECT SPEECH, REPORTED SPEECH IS ESSENTIAL IN EVERYDAY SPOKEN ENGLISH TO BASICALLY "REPORT" ON WHAT ANOTHER PERSON HAS SAID.**

Whether we are relaying a message, or simply repeating what someone said, there are countless situations in which we may use reported speech, so ESL students must be taught and encouraged to master it. Still, we mustn't forget that it must be learned in context, so students understand both how and when to use it. For practical purposes, this article will cover only the cases in which the reporting verb is in the past (said, told, etc.) which leads us to take the verb in the reported clause one step back into the past.

### HOW TO PROCEED

#### 1 TEACH WHAT HAPPENS WHEN DIRECT SPEECH IS IN PRESENT

Ask students what they usually do on weekends.

*S1: I play football with friends.  
S2: I visit my grandmother.  
S3: I go to the movies.*

Show them how to "report": Juan said he played football with friends. Separate the board into two sides: write the sentence in direct speech (use quotation marks) on one side and sentence in reported speech on the other side. Make sure students understand that the verb in simple present was changed to simple past, and the reason is that the reporting verb is in past. Report on what several students said about their usual weekend activities. Then, ask students to continue reporting. Finally, report on what they said, but make mistakes: ask students to correct you.

*T: Juan said he played volleyball with friends.  
S: I said I played football with friends.*

#### 2 TEACH WHAT HAPPENS WHEN DIRECT SPEECH IS IN PRESENT CONTINUOUS

Ask students what they are doing for the holidays.

*S1: I'm going to Mexico.  
S2: I'm spending the holidays at my grandmother's.*

Show them how to report: Juan said he was going to Mexico. Write the sentence in direct speech on the board, and the reporting sentence right next to it. Make sure students understand that the verb in present continuous was changed to past continuous. Report on what several students said about their plans for the holidays. Then, ask students to continue reporting on what their classmates said. Finally, report on what they said, but make mistakes: ask students to correct you.

*T: Juan said he was staying in Ontario.  
S: I said I was going to Mexico.*

#### 3 TEACH WHAT HAPPENS WHEN DIRECT SPEECH IS IN PAST

Ask students what they did last weekend.

*S1: I saw "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows".  
S2: I went shopping for Christmas gifts.*

Show them how to report: Juan said he had gone Christmas shopping. Write the sentence in direct speech on the board, and the reporting sentence right next to it. Make sure students understand that the verb in simple past was changed to past perfect. Report on what your students said about their weekend. Then, ask students to continue reporting on what their classmates said. Finally, report on what they said, but make mistakes: ask students to correct you.

*T: Juan said he had gone shopping for groceries.*

*S: I said I had gone shopping for Christmas gifts.*

#### 4 TEACH WHAT HAPPENS WITH THE OTHER TENSES ONE BY ONE

In the same manner illustrated above for the simple present, present continuous, and simple past, teach students how to report each of these tenses:

*Past continuous – changes to past perfect continuous  
Present perfect – changes to past perfect  
Past perfect – remains past perfect  
Past perfect continuous – remains the same  
Will – changes to would  
Can – changes to could  
Have to – changes to had to*

It is recommended that you present a context, or specific situation, for each tense before doing the reporting. For example, for "can", ask students to give examples of things they can do. For the present perfect, ask students to imagine they're all working together in an office, and ask them to say what things they've already done and which they haven't done yet.

#### 5 PRACTICE ALL TENSES IN REPORTED SPEECH

Ask students questions, making sure you do so in different tenses. Once the student has answered you, ask another to report on what he or she said.

*T: Sarah, what do you want for Christmas?*

*S1: I want an iPhone.*

*T: Juan, what did she say?*

*S2: She said she wanted an iPhone.*

# How to Teach Reported Speech: Alternative Approach

REPORTED SPEECH IS USED TO TALK ABOUT THINGS OTHER PEOPLE HAVE SAID. INSTEAD OF INTRODUCING THIS TOPIC USING A RANGE OF DIFFERENT TENSES, STICK WITH A VERY SIMPLE STRUCTURE FOR THIS FIRST LESSON. "HE SAID HE LIKED SOCCER." WHERE BOTH VERBS ARE PAST TENSE, WOULD BE IDEAL. A LESSON ON REPORTED SPEECH IS THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW DIFFERENT STRUCTURES AND VOCABULARY.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 WARM UP

Use the warm up activity to get some simple sentences on the board. **You can elicit certain sentence structures** if students need more practice with something in particular. You can do this by asking students to make groups and giving each group a different question to answer.

This way you will get three to six sentences for each structure and can cover a range of topics. After giving students some time to discuss their questions and write individual answers, have volunteers read sentences aloud. Write some sentences and the names of the student volunteers on the board. Be sure to use at least one sentence from each group.

### 2 INTRODUCE REPORTED SPEECH

You may choose to have students stay in their groups or return to their desks for the introduction.

You can try to elicit the target structure by asking a question such as "*What did Ben say?*" Try to use a sentence that is written on the board. Most likely students will search for the name Ben and then read the sentence exactly as you have written it but you can then say "*You're right! He said he was very tired. Good job!*" You have now introduced the target structure.

Write the sentence: *He said he was very tired.* on the board next to Ben's original sentence *I am very tired.*

Use a few more sentences from the warm up as examples and **encourage students to make reported speech sentences.** Now play a short game such as Crisscross with the remaining examples to give students some practice.

### 3 PRACTICE

In their groups, students should trade sentences with group members and rewrite the sentences using the reported speech structure. Be sure to **allow time for the majority of students to present their sentences to the class** so that students can have lots of examples and some speaking practice. If students have questions, this is an excellent time to address them and review anything they are struggling with.

Next **use short video or audio clips** for an exercise where students listen to material and complete a worksheet testing comprehension and practicing reported speech. You could also use a written dialogue for this type of activity but it will be more challenging if students have to listen to the material even if that means reading the dialogue aloud to the class. Check the answers as a class after several repetitions. If there is time, you can also play the material once more after the answers have been checked.

### 4 PRODUCE

Reported speech is a great opportunity for students to **do interviews with classmates, teachers or family members** so this activity may be best as a homework assignment.

If students have never had the opportunity to conduct interviews before, it would be good to **provide them with several questions to ask.** It may also be helpful to provide the transla-

tions of these questions for the interviewees.

### 5 REVIEW

**What students present depends on the amount of time you would like to spend on this activity.** Students could either use the reported speech structure to talk about the response to one interview question or summarize their findings. This activity allows you to ensure that students are using the structure correctly. If students have difficulty with something, you can review and practice that in the warm up for the next lesson.

Being able to talk about things they have heard allows students to share more information. It is one thing to say what you think and totally different to talk about what other people have said.

This will definitely be practiced further when you talk about giving advice because often someone will prompt advice giving by saying something like "*I want to/think ~ but my parents said ~.*"

**COVERING THIS TOPIC THOROUGHLY NOW WILL GIVE STUDENTS THE CONFIDENCE TO CREATE THIS SECTION OF DIALOGUE IN GIVING ADVICE DIALOGUES AND ROLE PLAYS LATER ON.**

# What Did She Say? Tips on Teaching Reported Speech

**REPORTED SPEECH IS A VERY USEFUL AND SUBSTANTIVE TOPIC TO APPROACH FOR ADVANCED LEVEL STUDENTS. IT IS SIMPLY RELAYING OR REPEATING WHAT ANOTHER PERSON SAID. SOUNDS SIMPLE, RIGHT?**

Unfortunately, it is complicated to introduce and can be somewhat cumbersome to devise natural ways to practice it. Following these tips on teaching reported speech will benefit your students and provide some clear guidelines on how best to approach a notoriously sticky grammar point.

## TRY THESE TIPS ON TEACHING REPORTED SPEECH

### 1 GRAMMAR NUANCES

To use reported speech, we are in one instance having a conversation or overhearing something, and then repeating it or reporting it to a third party. In order to properly report what was said, we have to alter the tenses that were used. Here is a basic explanation:

- If the reporting verb (like *said*) is in the past, the reported speech will also be in past tense. The form is generally one step back into the past from the original.  
*Maria said the exam was difficult.*  
*George said the food tasted badly.*
- Quoted speech that is changed to reported speech changes tense according to this rule: simple past, present perfect, and past perfect all must change to past perfect for reported speech. Present tense sometimes stays as present tense if it is immediately reported, but often changes to past tense if it is reported later.
- Pronouns in quoted speech must also be changed in reported speech. If you are having a conversation with John, and John

says, "*I am hungry.*" It is reported as this: John says he is hungry.

Provide a lot of examples and scenarios throughout the grammar explanation.

Quoted Speech: John said, "*I live in Memphis.*"

Reported Speech: John said that he lived in Memphis.

Quoted Speech: Pat said, "*I am talking on the phone.*"

Reported Speech: Pat said she was talking on the phone.

Quoted Speech: Mike said, "*I ate dinner late.*"

Reported Speech: Mike said that he had eaten dinner late.

Quoted Speech: Tina said, "*I have never been to Paris.*"

Reported Speech: Tina said she had never been to Paris.

Quoted Speech: Mary said, "*I had already done the dishes.*"

Reported Speech: Mary said she had already done the dishes.

Quoted Speech: Juan said, "*I am going to go to the movies.*"

Reported Speech: Juan said he was going to go to the movies.

### 2 QUESTIONS

Another thing to point out about reported speech is that forming questions can be a little tricky. When reporting questions, it is especially important to pay attention to sentence order. When reporting yes/no questions then you can create the reported question using *if*. When reporting questions using question words (*why, where, when*) use the question word. Here are some examples:

Marla asked, "*Do you want to drive?*" = Marla asked me if I wanted to drive.

Kiko asked, "*Did John go to*

*school?*" = Kiko asked if John had gone to school.

Dave asked, "*Where did you put the bag?*" = Dave asked me where I had put the bag.

John asked, "*What are you studying?*" = John asked me what I was studying.

### 3 TRIANGLES AND NEWS

After some seriously involved explanation, discussion and comprehension checks, it is time to move into practicing this jagged little point.

Coming up with fun and engaging ways to practice reported speech will really help students remember what they have learned. This is also a grammar point that requires several lessons of practice and explanation, so don't feel that you have to pack it all into one day.

Start small and build upon a strong foundation. **The two best practice activities for reported speech are triangles and news reporting.**

### TRIANGLES

This is always an interesting one to set-up and there are a lot of ways in which you can vary it to your needs. You have three students: Student A is talking to student B and Student C will be the third party. Student B's job will be to listen to student A and turn to student C and report what student A said. You can come up with a number of scenarios if you want to increase the practice and turn the triangles into *mini role plays*.

A good topic is planning a party or outing of some kind. Student A is the organizer and calls student B and C on the phone and reports what the other two students have said. Another fun one is to do a lesson on gossip and use reported speech to show how it is that gossip can travel so quickly, and

also how the story will change when the reporters report incorrect information.

## NEWS REPORTER

This is a good activity to do once the students have gotten some amount of exposure to reported speech. It takes some creativity on the students' part and again, there are numerous ways in which you could set it up.

One way is to **have them read a news story and report the news to the class in a newscaster tone.**

Another way could be to **have a reporter doing an interview** on a particular topic. For example student A's house was broken into and student B is the newscaster there to get the story. Student B will then report the story back to the class.

Students can do this activity in small or large groups and then report back after practicing. They could also rotate around the room and each pair gets a chance to report and interview on multiple topics while taking turns with their roles.

**REPORTED SPEECH IS SOMETHING WE DO EVERY DAY, AND YOUR STUDENTS WILL HAVE A GOOD TIME WITH IT AFTER THEY HAVE WADED THROUGH ALL THE GRAMMAR SPECIFICS.**

Creating stimulating activities that contain practice they won't soon forget will soon have your students reporting on your every move!

# The Man Was Robbed! Tips on When Using Passive Voice is a Good Thing

**MOST OF THE TIME PASSIVE VOICE IS DISCOURAGED BECAUSE, WELL IT IS SO PASSIVE.**

The preference most of the time is for active speaking with the focus being on someone doing something. Passive voice most often stresses an action and nothing about who is doing it. If these tips on using passive voice are followed, your students will know the right time to step away from active voice and engage in the passive.

## HOWTO: USING PASSIVE VOICE

### 1 WHEN WHO ISN'T IMPORTANT

**One of the most common reasons passive voice is used is to put emphasis not on the who, but on the what.**

In active speech we are very concerned with who is doing what. Sometimes though for various reasons, the focus is about the action that happened, not who did it. Sometimes it is because we don't know who did the action. Another reason might be that we don't really care who did the action.

Some examples are:

*My car was stolen last night: don't care who did it.*

*The camera was manufactured in Korea: don't know the company who made it.*

*The Great Wall was built to protect China: not focused on who built it.*

**News is often delivered this way** in both written and spoken forms. It also may be used in discussing product information or reviews or in talking about landmarks and important places.

### 2 GENERALIZED STATEMENTS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Another instance where we are not concerned with who is doing something is when we are making general statements or announcements.**

Passive voice can be used in various tenses to communicate logistics, information, and changes in a generalized way. Putting these statements into passive voice is generally more polite than using active voice.

Some examples are:

*The class was cancelled due to snow.*

*A mistake was made in the program.*

*A change is being made to tomorrow's schedule.*

### 3 TO EMPHASIZE RESULTS

**This use of passive voice is often utilized in business writing to show results, conclusions, or emphasize results.**

One reason for this is if we put these sentences into active voice, we may end up stressing the wrong thing. Because we are not providing credit for the results or discussing who could have done something better, passive voice works very well.

For example:

*The project was managed successfully.*

*The building was erected under deadline.*

*The computer was repaired quickly.*

### 4 TO SOUND OBJECTIVE

**Similar to the above example, when we need to sound objective about a topic and not provide an opinion, we can use passive voice.** This can often be used when discussing research outcomes, or again in news reporting.

Here are some examples:

*John F. Kennedy was shot when he was very young.*

*Mars is being examined for life forms.*

*Life forms have been discovered on Mars.*

### PASSIVE VOICE IS BEING EXAMINED AS ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT GRAMMAR POINTS TO EXPLAIN AND TO USE.

Whether you are just introducing passive voice or are reviewing it for advanced levels, there is always more to learn on this ever-elusive grammar point. A good way to incorporate how different it is from active voice is to show a lot of examples of the uses and compare them to active voice.



# How to Teach Passive Voice Constructions

AT THE BEGINNING OF MOST ENGLISH COURSES, STUDENTS FOCUS ON LEARNING ACTIVE VOICE STRUCTURES. IT IS USUALLY THE EASIEST WAY FOR THEM TO PHRASE SENTENCES BUT AS STUDENTS PROGRESS IN THEIR STUDIES, THEY WILL ENCOUNTER PASSIVE VOICE SENTENCES.

Since this is an entirely new structure, spend plenty of time on the introduction and conduct several comprehension checks along the way.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 WARM UP

Asking questions such as “*What sport do you play?*” and writing both the response and the student’s name on the board will give you some material to work with during your introduction of passive voice. It will also give your students some quality speaking practice.

### 2 INTRODUCE

Using the example above, show students the difference between “*Andy plays basketball.*” and “*Basketball is played by Andy.*” Explain how in one sentence the subject is Andy who is actively doing something. In the second sentence the focus is shifted to basketball which is now the subject but is not actively doing anything. **In passive voice, the verb is done to the subject as opposed to the subject doing the verb.**

This whole concept will be completely different from what your students have studied so far so it is important to reinforce this concept as much as possible during your introduction and practice stages.

### 3 PRACTICE PASSIVE VOICE

As a class have students change responses given in the warm up from active to passive voice. If they are doing well, call on students indi-

vidually or ask for volunteers to do the same thing. This will give the class as a whole some practice and also test comprehension individually. You can ask for students to tell you the subject and verb of sentences and also ask for translations as part of this exercise.

### 4 PRACTICE PASSIVE VOICE MORE

Use a worksheet to give students further practice. In one exercise have students circle the correct form of the verb to complete both passive and active sentences. To do this they will have to understand the sentences well so use simple sentences and vocabulary they are very familiar with.

In another activity have students fill in the blank with the correct form of the verb. You can also include Scrambled where students have to rearrange words to form a grammatically correct sentence.

Lastly, students can do a writing exercise. The easiest way to do this is to write very short, simple, active voice sentences for students to rewrite using passive voice. A sentence such as “*He built the house in 1951.*” should become “*The house was built in 1951 by him.*” There are many activities you can include to give students further practice.

Mixing active and passive voice sentences into every section of the worksheet will challenge students and help to determine whether or not they understand the difference between the two.

### 5 DISCUSS PASSIVE VOICE

Now that your students have had some practice using the passive voice on sentences they will most likely not encounter in their English studies, talk about when passive voice would commonly be used.

**The passive voice is used to emphasize the object or when the person or thing doing the action is unknown.** Passive voice is often seen in newspapers, for instance “*Eight stores have been robbed in the past three weeks.*” politics, and science.

### 6 PRODUCE

Ask students to write three to five of their own passive voice sentences. Have volunteers read sentences aloud and give translations for further speaking practice and comprehension checks.

At the end of class, **collect these sentences to correct any mistakes and return to students another day.** This will give you a good idea of how well your students understand and use this structure as well as how to proceed with your lessons.

### 7 REVIEW

Ask your students to summarize what they learned in class. If they can explain passive voice to you, then they are probably doing quite well understanding it themselves.

If students struggle, **lead them to say at least a few major points regarding passive voice and make a note to review** everything further in a later lesson.

**MOST ENGLISH STUDENTS WILL NOT HAVE MUCH NEED FOR THE PASSIVE VOICE STRUCTURE AT THIS TIME BUT IT WILL COME UP EVERY SO OFTEN IN READINGS SO IT IS BEST TO COVER THE MATERIAL THOROUGHLY AND MAKE AN EFFORT TO INCLUDE IT IN OTHER EXERCISES.**

# How to Teach the Passive Voice – While Being Active!

## IT MAY SEEM LIKE A CONTRADICTION, BUT THERE'S NOTHING "PASSIVE" ABOUT LEARNING THE PASSIVE VOICE.

Students need to be as “active” as ever and fully engaged in their learning. But it is the teacher who must engage them. How do you get students actively engaged in learning something as tedious as the passive voice? With action, of course! By showing them that there is plenty of action involved, but that the focus is not on the actor, the one who is carrying out the action, but rather whoever or whatever is acted upon. Here is one of the best ways to teach the passive voice:

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 CARRY OUT AN ACTION!

Stand in front of your class. Drop a pen on the floor. Ask your students to tell you what has just happened and ask them to begin the sentence with your name. Someone should be able to say: “Ms. Rodriguez dropped a pen on the floor.” Write this sentence on the board. Ask students to identify the subject and the verb in this sentence: they should say the subject is “Ms. Rodriguez” and that the verb is “dropped”.

### 2 REPEAT THE ACTION - INTRODUCE THE PASSIVE VOICE

Drop your pen on the floor one more time. Tell your students that you’ll tell them what has just happened, but this time your sentence will begin with, “The pen” Go to the board and write, “The pen was dropped on the floor.” Ask your students to identify the subject: they should say it is the “pen”. Ask them to identify the verb: they should say it is “was dropped”.

### 3 COMPARE THE TWO SENTENCES

Point to the first sentence and ask if the subject is doing the action. They

should say it is. Make sure they understand that subject is active, the one responsible for carrying out the action. Point to the second sentence and ask if the subject is doing the action. They should say it isn’t. Make sure they understand that the subject is passive, the one who is being acted upon.

Compare what happens to the verbs. Ask students what tense they see in the first example. They should recognize the past simple. Show students what happens in the second sentence: the auxiliary verb “to be” is used in the past tense (“was”) with the past participle, in this case “dropped”.

### 4 GIVE AN EXAMPLE WITH “WERE”

This time drop several pens at the same time. Ask students to tell you what has just happened. Tell them to start the sentence with “The pens” See if students figure out they should use “were” instead of “was” this time.

### 5 PRACTICE WITH MORE PASSIVE VOICE EXAMPLES

Carry out more actions and encourage students to describe what has happened in the passive voice:

Teacher puts some books under a chair. *S: Books were put under a chair. Teacher closes a book. S: A book was closed.*

Teacher writes some words on the board. *S: Some words were written on the board.*

Give enough examples to make students comfortable with the use of the past simple in the passive voice.

### 6 PRACTICE PASSIVE VOICE WITH NEGATIVE STATEMENTS

Continue carrying out actions around the classroom, but this time challenge students to make negative statements followed by affirmative statements:

*Teacher drops some papers on the floor. S: Pens weren’t dropped on the floor. Papers were dropped. Teacher closes a door. S: A window wasn’t closed. A door was closed.*

### 7 PRACTICE QUESTIONS IN PASSIVE VOICE

Carry out actions and have students ask questions:

*Teacher opens a window. S: Was the dictionary opened? What was (just) opened?*

### 8 PLACE THE PASSIVE VOICE IN A REAL LIFE CONTEXT - DISCUSSION

Ask students to brainstorm the types of things that the government does for the population. The government repairs streets, cleans monuments, builds schools and hospitals, etc... Make sure students see that sometimes when we talk about actions, we’re not interested in the actor, either because we know who it is (in this discussion we are clearly talking about the government), or because we’d like to emphasize the results, in other words what was accomplished. Discuss what things were done in the last year by the local government. Encourage students to use the passive voice.

*S: Streets were repaired. A new hospital was opened. The park benches were painted. Trees were planted. Etc.*

### FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES, THIS ARTICLE FOCUSES ON THE PAST SIMPLE IN PASSIVE VOICE.

Introduce the passive voice in other tenses: actions work very well with the present perfect, too (“Some books have just been put away”) – and don’t forget modals!

# How to Teach the Real, Unreal, and Past Conditionals

The unreal and real conditionals (sometimes referred to as First and Second conditionals) are an important part of academic language: the conditional is the way we speak about possibilities or probabilities. The third conditional is used to discuss the past.

## EXAMPLES OF CONDITIONALS

**1** First conditional or “real” is used for situations that seem real, at least in the writer or speakers’ mind: “If it rains, I will stay home.”

**2** Second or “unreal” shows a less real possibility: “If it ever snowed in Los Angeles, I would ski.” The first discusses a real possibility for Los Angeles, while the second a highly improbable one.

**3** Third or past conditional portrays an unreal situation related to the past: “If I had known you were coming, I would have cleaned house.”

## REASONS TO TEACH THE CONDITIONAL

The conditionals are the language of possibility and probability. A lot of the use is dependent on the speakers’ or writers’ own perspective. For example:

**1** Hilary Clinton might say, “If I become president, I will end the war.” (Hilary Clinton has a real possibility of being president of the United States, at least in her mind at the time of speaking.)

**2** A student in your class might say, “If I became president, I would end the war.” (Your student doesn’t see becoming president as a real possibility.)

A lot of what we discuss, especially in academic language, is the hypothetical,

so it is important for students to know this how to use conditionals to discuss possibilities and probabilities.

**3** Conditionals also have different pragmatic functions, such as to give advice or warnings: “If I were you, I wouldn’t do that.” (second conditional)

**4** Conditionals can also be used as politeness markers: “Would you be so kind as to shut the door?” “I would appreciate it if you wouldn’t smoke.”

**5** Finally, they are used to express regret: “If I had finished work earlier, I would have gone to the movie.”

All of these uses of the conditional — to discuss possibility/probability, give advice, express politeness, and show regret — are highly relevant to language learners.

## HOW TO TEACH CONDITIONALS

**1 AWARENESS:** Start by raising consciousness of conditionals. Notice the use of conditionals in an academic reading. Call students’ attention to them and discuss why the author used the conditional there.

**2 MATCHING EXERCISES:** Match the first part of a conditional sentence with its logical mate: “If it rains—” and “I will take an umbrella.”

**3 STUDENT SURVEYS:** Students can survey each other about what they will and would like to do in the future, contrasting two kinds of conditionals.

**4 WISH LISTS:** Emphasizing the unreal conditionals, students can interview each other

and make up wish lists for their partners.

**5 REQUESTS:** Students can practice making polite requests of each other and role-play them, using the conditional. For effect and practice, they may exaggerate the politeness: “Would you be so kind as to lend me your pencil?”

**6 ADVICE COLUMNS:** Students can write letters of advice to each other or famous figures, such as the president, using the conditional.

**7 JOURNALS:** Students can write journal entries about plans and dreams for the future, using both the real and unreal conditionals.

**8 PROBABILITY DISCUSSIONS:** Guess the probability of certain events, using the conditional: whether or not it will rain on the weekend, if the war will end, for example.

**9 MUSIC:** Play the song “If I Were a Rich Man” from the musical “Fiddler on the Roof” or show a video clip. Discuss what the character Tevye would do if he were rich. Have students interview each other and write about what they would do if they were rich.

**10 MY REGRETS:** For more advanced learners, introduce the third conditional, the past conditional. Have students discuss their regrets to practice.

**TEACHING THE CONDITIONAL CAN BE LABOR-INTENSIVE BUT WORTH THE INVESTMENT OF TIME AND EFFORT BECAUSE IN LEARNING IT, STUDENTS NOT ONLY DEVELOP ACADEMIC WRITING ABILITY BUT ALSO THEIR PRAGMATIC ABILITIES IN EXPRESSING POSSIBILITY, POLITENESS, AND REGRET.**

# 6 ESL Activities for Reviewing the Conditional

## THE CONDITIONAL FORM IN ENGLISH CAN BE A CONFUSING STRUCTURE FOR ESL STUDENTS.

Since it is used to discuss situations that may or may not be true and can be situated in the past, present or future, your students will have to remember many details before they are able to master the conditional.

Here are six activities you can use to teach or review the conditional form with your students. They cover the 6 general situations in which the conditional can be used, and will give your students a chance to practice speaking, reading, listening and writing if you complete all of the activities.

## WHAT TO DO WITH THE CONDITIONAL

### 1 A PRESENT SITUATION THAT IS POSSIBLE

**Wishes are great context** for practicing the conditional. Remind students that when using wish, the past tense is used to represent a present situation. With that in mind, have your students **do a genie in the bottle role play** to practice. Have one person play the genie who starts by saying, *"I will grant you three wishes."* The other person then makes a wish using the conditional form of the verb. For example, he might say, *"I wish I had a puppy."* The genie answers, *"Your wish is my command."* Once the person has made all three wishes, have your students reverse roles and repeat the role play.

### 2 A FUTURE SITUATION THAT IS POSSIBLE

*If clauses* are another natural context for practicing the conditional tense in English. For an *if clause* discussing a future situation, the verb is in the present tense. Ask your students to imagine their lives five or ten years from now. What would they like their lives to look like? Have your students write 10 sentences about their futures starting with an if clause. For example, someone may write *"If I work in the United States in fifteen years, I will live in New York City."* Remind your students, too, to place a comma after the

first clause in each sentence.

### 3 A PRESENT SITUATION THAT IS UNLIKELY OR IMPOSSIBLE

**What would your students do** if they were not studying English? Have each person imagine what it would be like if he or she was completely fluent in the English language right now. Then, have your students write about what their life would be like. *"If I were fluent right now, I would write a bestselling novel,"* might be an example. Remind your students that when using *be* as the verb in the if clause, any subject takes *"were"*.

### 4 A FUTURE SITUATION THAT IS UNLIKELY OR IMPOSSIBLE

Worst case scenarios can range from outrageous to probable, and in his book *The Worst Case Scenario Survival Handbook*, Joshua Piven gives the reader plenty to think about. If you are able to get a copy of the book, use these situations to practice using conditional statements for future unlikely events, or come up with some worst case scenarios of your own. Give each student one of the scenarios to read about. In each segment, Piven compiles advice on how to overcome the worst case scenario. Your students will read his advice and then determine how to write the same information in a conditional statement. She will then share her advice with the rest of the class. For example, if she reads about being trapped in quicksand, she might say, *"If you are trapped in quicksand, you should try and float on your back."* In this case, the if clause should be in the present tense and the main clause should use *should* with the main verb.

### 5 SOMETHING THAT IS ALWAYS TRUE IF SOMETHING HAPPENS

As different as your students might be, they do have one thing in common: they are learners of English. Have your students tap into that experience by writing a brochure giving advice to future stu-

dents of English. In the brochure, your students should give advice to the reader in an imperative statement and follow it with the reason for the advice. They should use the conditional to express results that are always true when a student performs a certain action. For example, your students might advise their readers to speak with native speakers every day, and they would follow that advice with this explanation. *"When a student speaks with native speakers every day, he or she has better pronunciation."* In a sentence with this structure, both verbs are in the present tense.

### 6 SOMETHING THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN TRUE IN THE PAST IF SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED

Give your students a chance to get to know one another better while they practice the conditional by sharing stories of their past. In pairs, have one student share something that happened to him at some time in the past, for example, that he got an A on an exam. Then have the second student ask a question beginning with *"what if"* and using the conditional form of the verb to pose an alternative past. For example, the second student might ask, *"What if you had not studied?"* The first student would then answer with a conditional statement. *"I would have failed."* For a past situation that might have been true, the verb in the first clause should use the past perfect and the verb in the second clause should use *would have* plus the past participle form of the verb.

## IT IS EASY TO GET CONFUSED IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE WHEN YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT THINGS THAT MAY OR MAY NOT BE OR HAVE BEEN, BUT THAT IS WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO REVIEW THE CONDITIONAL WITH YOUR STUDENTS.

These activities are not for beginning level students, but by the time you are ready to teach and review the conditional with your students, they will be well suited to these activities which review the conditional tense that they already know.

# How to Teach Modal Verbs:

## 4 Simple Steps

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS ARE OFTEN CONFUSED BY MODAL VERBS BECAUSE THEY ARE USED DIFFERENTLY THAN OTHER VERBS AND IN A WIDE VARIETY OF SITUATIONS SUCH AS ASKING FOR PERMISSION AND GIVING ADVICE.

There are a couple methods you can use to teach students modal verbs. One is to introduce only a few words at a time and complete several practice activities before attempting to introduce additional vocabulary. Another way you can teach modal verbs is to structure your lessons around their uses. You could leave all the modal verbs written on the board for the whole chapter but use only the ones appropriate for giving advice in one lesson and asking for permission in another for instance.

Let's look at the second method in more detail.

### HOW TO PROCEED

#### 1 INTRODUCE ALL MODALS

Start by introducing all the modal verbs you wish to talk about. This may include *can, could, may, might, must, will, would, shall, should, and ought to* but, depending on the level of your class, you can narrow it down to those you feel are most important.

Obviously there are no images that can help students understand the meanings of these words so you can do pronunciation practice simply by pointing to the words on the board. In your introduction you can cover some rules that apply to all modal verbs. Unlike most verbs, no -s is needed to form the third person singular.

For example "*He should ~.*" is correct, while "*He work.*" is incorrect. Adding *not* forms the negative structure. Additionally they always require another verb because they cannot act as the main verb in a sentence and they only have present tense forms so unlike the word *swim*, there is

no past tense form for modals. This may seem like a long and confusing introduction but it is best after the pronunciation practice to simply write the modals and their rules off to the side of the board for reference.

#### 2 ABILITY / INABILITY AND POSSIBILITY / IMPOSSIBILITY

**Modals are often used to talk about abilities and possibilities or lack of them.** Some of the words you want to focus on in this section are *can, could, may, and might*. Talk to your students about things they can do and practice using *can* in the target structure because this will be the easiest word to start off with.

Next you should talk about *might* because it is also commonly used when talking about present possibilities such as "*We can't play music in class because the other classes might be taking tests.*" which nicely combines the two words in one sentence.

Building upon that, talk about how *could* and *may* are used to discuss future abilities and possibilities and also how *could* can be used to talk about the past in a sentence such as "*When I was a child, I could climb trees.*"

So as you can see just this one section on modals can take awhile. It is best to introduce structures gradually and to plan lots of practice activities for each.

#### 3 OTHER USES

You can center another lesson on asking for permission or making an offer or request. *Can, could, may, shall, will, and would* can all be used so you might want to break this up into pairs by introducing *can* and *could, will* and *would*, and finally *may* and *shall*.

In other lessons you can cover using

modals to make suggestions and give advice, to talk about obligations and prohibitions, and lastly cover using *ought to* and *should* to say what the correct action would be for instance "*She ought to see a doctor.*" or "*We should be quiet while the teacher is talking.*"

For some classes it is not necessary to cover all the different uses of modal verbs so feel free to choose what is most important and then cover those items thoroughly before moving on to the next topic.

#### 4 COMBINATION

If you cover many different uses of modal verbs in your class, be sure to have a lesson which combines them again. It makes sense to start with all the words you plan to cover in the first class and finish the same way. Since students have been focusing on just one use at a time, this lesson will bring to their attention the range of uses these words have and really challenge them. **Fill in the blank and multiple choice worksheets** may be appropriate and of course you can conduct role plays based on the different uses of modal verbs too.

**MODAL VERBS HAVE MANY USES. TEACHERS SHOULD REVIEW THE USES OF MODALS CAREFULLY BEFORE INTRODUCING THEM AND THINK ABOUT WHAT STUDENTS WOULD MOST BENEFIT FROM STUDYING SO THAT PLENTY OF TIME CAN BE DEDICATED TO THOSE ITEMS. LEAVING OUT SOME MODALS OR SOME USES OF MODALS IS NOT THE END OF THE WORLD AND MAY JUST GIVE YOUR STUDENTS A BETTER CHANCE OF UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS COVERED.**

# 10 Teacher Tested Tricks to Teach Modal Verbs

TEACHING MODAL VERBS CAN BE A CHALLENGE, ESPECIALLY TO BEGINNING TEACHERS WHO DON'T HAVE ENOUGH EXPERIENCE.

Before teaching them, however, be sure to know what a modal verb is. It is a verb that cannot work without another verb. These include *can, will, must, ought to, may, would, could, should* and *shall*.

It can be tricky when attempting to get the message of these particular verbs across to the student, so it is important to plan the class carefully. Always remember that it is important to keep the students engaged. They need to be able to keep focus (since grammar, for the most part, isn't considered to be fun for most students). Learning intricate rules can be boring and time consuming for many, so a lot of teachers tend to disregard this method of teaching.

Of course, in some cases, it might be easier to explain how something works grammatically and then give an example. There are many possible options available, and it is also important for the teachers themselves to remember that with a little bit of imagination, any activity can be made to serve a purpose.

## 10 TRICKS THAT WILL HELP YOU TEACH MODAL VERBS

### 1 ENCOURAGE USE OF MODALS

Getting the students to use modal verbs in speech shouldn't be too difficult. Pose various questions such as, "What will you do tonight?" The student will then be likely to answer with, "I will watch TV." Retort with, "What should you do tonight?" The appropriate answer should then be, "I should do my homework."

Simple questions like this will allow the students to use them more and get them into their heads more easily.

### 2 POINT OUT MISTAKES

When speaking or writing, it is always important to point out mistakes. For small ones, this is easy to forget. Particularly for beginner teachers, one might not want to do this for a number of reasons. Perhaps they feel bad about constantly interrupting the student when he or she is speaking. Regardless, it is important to make sure that they are **aware of where they went wrong** in order for them to improve.

### 3 PRACTICE AND REPEAT

When it comes to language learning, repetition is definitely the key. Telling a story or reading an article will probably help in this regard. Post questions as to why a specific modal goes in one place, rather than another. This will **get them thinking about the logic that goes with it**.

### 4 FILL IN THE BLANKS EXERCISE

Often a very simple way of teaching any form of grammar structure. The students will then have to think about **why a specific verb goes in certain places**. Try and get them to construct their own sentences as well.

### 5 ADVICE COLUMN

This can be a very effective method. Try and print off articles from the Internet which come from magazine advice columns and agony aunt pages. By reading this, one will be able to highlight the importance of modals and point out where they are used most frequently.

### 6 TELL A STORY

Another great method is in the **art of storytelling**. Allow the students to make up their own story. Get them to put the character in specific situations, whereby they will have a choice between, for example, what they should do and what they can't do.

### 7 TRAVEL TIPS

Another exercise would be to **read an article or travel document about a specific area**. This will often be filled with plenty of modals for students to practice on.

### 8 ASKING FOR DIRECTIONS ROLE PLAY

A directions role play often helps. When the students are proficient enough, get them to construct their own using the modals. This will give them a chance to show off their production skills.

### 9 CONCLUSIONS

Putting a sentence on the board, such as, "*Larry walked into the warehouse and found a dead body.*" Get the students to find a conclusion e.g.: "*There might have been a killer on the loose.*" "*Someone may have had an accident.*" Etc.

### 10 SONGS

Song is of course another great way of teaching language. Have a look for some catchy tunes on the Net, as there are plenty that are rife with modal verbs. Teaching them to students will add a little bit of fun to the class and allow them to practice using the modals as well!

**ALL OF THESE LITTLE TRICKS CAN HELP YOUR STUDENTS BECOME A BIT MORE INTERESTED IN THE SUBJECT AT HAND.**

Turning something into a challenge or a competition usually works well and helps the students to flex their mental muscles. As always, remember to tailor them towards the specific age group you are teaching.

# I Should Have Known: Teaching Modals of Regret

WE USE MODAL VERBS IN SO MANY DISTINCT WAYS IN ENGLISH, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO SPREAD OUT THE LESSONS OF VARIOUS USAGES AND REALIZE THAT STUDENTS MAY BECOME OVERWHELMED.

Modals of regret aren't particularly difficult to convey, but they are an advanced grammar point with several nuances to be certain to include. You can also have very meaningful conversations that arise out of the activities for modals of regret.

## TEACHING MODALS OF REGRET

### 1 WHAT IS REGRET

The best way to introduce modals of regret is to first define and discuss regrets and what they are. The key element to stress with regret is that *you are looking back upon a past event and reflecting upon it*.

The feeling of regret is not positive, and it comes from strongly wanting to change your actions, your behaviors, your reactions, etc. In the present you are thinking back to a past event, and expressing your regret which may make you feel apologetic, sad, or shameful. These are big emotions so you will want to provide good examples.

Tell your class about a personal regret and give them the story of a past event. Have them analyze your story for issues like how you may have felt during the event compared to how you feel now. Have them ask questions like what did you do after the event? Do you still feel badly? What did you do to resolve your regret? You'll want to get **personal** if you expect your students to share their personal stories as well.

### 2 TEACH THE GRAMMAR

You will have used the grammar in your example above, so all you need to do is lay it out for them and

provide more examples. **Regrets are often preceded by wishing things could be different.** Also, be sure to illustrate for them how to make a negative statement, and stress that regrets are often geared toward things you didn't do, but wish you had.

*- I wish I hadn't said those awful things.*

*- I should have known that my brother was in trouble.*

*- I could have been a better daughter.*

Modal Verb + Have + Verb  
3 (Past Participle)

Should have known

Could have been

Would have said

### 3 COMMON USES

There are some modals of regret that are very common in spoken English. Often we use these conversationally and they can be heard quite frequently. Some of those are:

*- I should have known better.*

*- I could have done better.*

*- I wouldn't have dreamed of...*

*- I should have been there.*

*- I shouldn't have said that.*

*- I should have taken it more seriously.*

*- I would have done it differently.*

These are great opportunities for more concrete examples and storytelling. You could have students complete each of these thoughts with an example from their lives or have them create hypothetical ways each could be used.

### 4 PRACTICE

There are many great ways that you can practice modals of regret. Here are a few ideas.

You can provide the students with a list of scenarios of people discussing regrets. Have them detail what the regret is and how they themselves would deal with it. You could also have them compose questions that they would ask the narrator. You can also do this, but within the story leave out what the actual regret is and have them deduct it from what is being discussed.

Another practice activity is to put students in pairs and have them detail and discuss some of their biggest regrets. For example 'What are your regrets when you think back on your life? Make a list of three regrets and tell the story to your partner'. Have them take turns sharing.

After any of these activities you could also debrief with the entire class and discuss the ramifications of having regrets and how to cope with them. Are there solutions to regrets, and what are some things you could have done differently?

TEACHING MODALS OF REGRET IS CHALLENGING BECAUSE IT IS A VERY PERSONAL AND INVOLVED TOPIC.

From the grammar description to the practice, there is a lot for the students to absorb and share. You might find that advanced students really enjoy these lessons because it provides an opportunity for some self-reflection. It can also be very meaningful as it can lead to students sharing things they may not have ever verbalized.

# How to Teach the Imperative Form

**IN YOUR CLASSES, YOU HAVE PROBABLY USED THE IMPERATIVE FORM WHEN GIVING DIRECTIONS TO YOUR STUDENTS SO THEY WILL BE FAMILIAR WITH AT LEAST ONE OF ITS USES.**

This lesson will make students more aware of the imperative form and give them the opportunity to practice using it.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 WARM UP

It has probably been a long time since your students played *Simon Says* so give them a review of body parts while practicing the imperative form by playing this game. Rather than have only one person give instructions, have students stand in a circle and take turns being Simon. This way when you give your introduction, students will have already had some practice using the imperative structure.

### 2 INTRODUCE

Introduce the imperative form using both positive and negative examples. *"Please, stand up."* would be a positive form that students should be familiar with from class while the negative *"Don't text in class"* is hopefully not needed very often.

Elicit other imperative sentences from your students and write down further examples of your own. Explain that this structure is used when **giving directions** and orders and give students some speaking practice by having them read the sentences you have written on the board aloud.

### 3 PRACTICE

Have students match images with sentences. The images should depict either scenarios or actions where use of an imperative sentence would be appropriate. A good example would be to match the universal

"no smoking" sign with the sentence *"Don't smoke."* You can also have students complete a fill in the blank exercise where the missing words are listed for them to choose from. Check the answers as a class and review why certain choices were correct by asking questions about the images or sentences.

### 4 DISCUSS

Students have already been given many examples and completed a worksheet so they should have a good idea of when to use the imperative.

At this point, talk about **being polite** while still giving orders and lead by example using please when giving instructions to your students. Discuss situations where use of the imperative form would be appropriate. Shouting for someone to *"Stop!"* if he is about to cross the street when a car is coming would be fine. On the other hand, if someone is simply making lots of noise or distracting you, shouting *"Stop!"* would be considered impolite.

Tell students that directions in the form of a recipe or an instructional manual would also commonly use the imperative form.

### 5 PRACTICE

Prepare passages which include several imperative sentences and write the individual sentences on strips of paper. These can be conversations, sets of instructions, or recipes.

A conversation could start off like this *"Be quiet! I think I hear something. Come here. I heard it again! Listen carefully."* Have students work in groups. Each group should be given the strips of paper to complete one passage and work together to place sentences in the correct order. Since each group has a different passage, it may be fun to have students share them with the class when the activity has been completed.

### 6 PRODUCE

Directions lessons will give students lots of practice using the imperative.

At this time, instead of practicing giving directions, **focus on cooking vocabulary and recipes** instead. Have students write recipes for their favorite dishes using the imperative form. They can practice reading the instructions as well but it may be necessary to make corrections before asking students to read their recipes aloud. In order to challenge students, you may have to specify how many sentences are required to complete this activity. Giving students an example on the board, will help them immensely.

Encourage students to ask you questions as you move around the class monitoring their progress.

### 7 REVIEW

Ask for volunteers to give you imperative sentences. Once a student has volunteered, he can sit down while the rest of the class thinks of sentences. Continue this activity until all the students are seated or the bell rings and do not accept duplicate sentences.

**THE IMPERATIVE FORM IS SOMETHING STUDENTS WILL HAVE A LOT OF PRACTICE WITH ESPECIALLY WHEN STUDYING DIRECTIONS. ENSURING THAT STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THIS STRUCTURE NOW WILL MAKE FUTURE CLASSES MUCH EASIER FOR BOTH YOU AND THEM.**



# Do This! Don't Do That!

## 8 Interactive Classroom Activities for Using the Imperative

**DO THIS! DON'T DO THAT! EAT THIS, NOT THAT. STAND UP. SIT DOWN. FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT! THE IMPERATIVE IS ALL AROUND US, AND AS NATIVE SPEAKERS WE MAY NOT EVEN REALIZE WE ARE HEARING OR USING THE IMPERATIVE.**

The imperative is probably best considered a mood rather than a tense in English, since it does not signal when any given action is performed. But even though it is not a tense in the traditional sense of the word for ESL students, understanding the imperative is important. They will encounter the imperative in English when giving or receiving instructions, commands or calls to action. When giving or receiving advice, your students will also need to use and/or understand the imperative.

Here are some fun ways you can bring the imperative into your classroom that are creative, too. Have fun with the mood and you will find that your students and you will be in a good one.

### TRY THESE 8 INTERACTIVE CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES FOR USING THE IMPERATIVE

#### 1 READ RECIPES

**Recipes are a great example of the imperative mood in authentic English text.** The step-by-step directions for creating a culinary masterpiece, or at least lunch, are written in the imperative. In the case with recipes, the writer is giving a set of instructions to the reader with the hope that the reader will be able to reproduce the same results in his or her kitchen.

Start your imperative cooking lesson by giving your students some recipes to look over. You will want to match the complexity and content of the rec-

ipe to your students' language level. Copies from cookbooks or printouts online are great, but do not overlook simple instructions that come with a food product, like cooking directions on how to make pasta or rice. Point out to your students that the instructions in the recipe use the imperative mood and that the verbs take the second person present conjugation on a sample recipe.

Then have your students find examples of imperative verbs in their own recipes. You may want to make a list of all the verbs your students find and review their definitions, especially cooking specific verbs, as a class.

#### 2 FOLLOW RECIPES

**If you have the classroom resources, or your students have adequate resources at home, give them a recipe to follow.** If possible, have the ingredients for a no-cook recipe on hand, and have your students follow the directions in class.

Myrecipes.com has tons of great ideas for no-cook recipes from the very simple to the very complex! Either individually or with a partner, have your students follow the directions for the culinary delight. (Be aware of any allergies your students may have and plan accordingly.) If your students follow their directions correctly, they should end up with something that looks very similar to the finished product shown in the recipe, and it should taste good, too. Celebrate your students' accomplishments by having a social time and sharing each group's creation!

#### 3 WRITE YOUR OWN

**Now that your students have followed directions given to them in the imperative, have them write their own imperative instructions for making a favorite food.** Ask your students to write instructions for

an item that they know how to cook. It might be a dish from their native culture or something local and more familiar to everyone in class. Even small children can do this activity though they may not actually know how to cook. Their instructions will be charming and even funny and might be worth posting on a bulletin board in class.

#### 4 DO YOUR OWN COOKING DEMO

**Besides written recipes, many cooking demonstrations use the imperative to communicate with their viewers how to make a particular dish.**

There are hundreds of cooking demos available on YouTube, so choose one that your students may like and show it to the class. Point out that as the actor/chef makes the recipe, he or she is giving instructions with the imperative mood to the viewer. Watch the video again and challenge your students to make note of any imperative verbs the chef uses. Follow by having your students do their own cooking demo in front of the class. You can request a serious tone and perhaps even ask your students to bring the food in and make the dish in class.

Alternately, you may want your students to take a lighthearted approach and demonstrate how to make a fictional dish with real or fictional ingredients they might find in the classroom. Either way, your students will be putting the imperative to good use as they speak in front of your class.

For fun, end your lesson with one or more videos of the famous *Muppet the Swedish Chef*. His comical kitchen exploits will elicit laughter no matter what native language your students speak!

## 5 DO WHAT SIMON SAYS

Your students have other options when it comes to following directions and practicing the imperative. For beginning students or just for a change of pace, play a game of *Simon Says*. Start by leading yourself, but once your students have a feel for the game let them take turns being Simon. They will get the chance to practice using the imperative and the rest of the class will get to practice following the directions Simon gives.

## 6 BUILD SOMETHING

Another great option for following directions is putting together a model. Kits are great, containing complete sets of instructions and materials, but they can be expensive.

As an alternative, try supplying your class with a collection of building blocks and give them a set of directions for building various items. You can find thousands of directions on *Lets Build It Again*. Have your students choose the item they would like to build or just make a few sets of directions available in class and let them get to their constructions. Your students will have fun with their building block creations, and they will not even realize they are practicing the imperative in the process!

## 7 TELL ME HOW

Your students will also need to use and understand the imperative mood when giving advice.

Give your class a chance to share about something they are good at and give advice to classmates who might be trying that activity for the first time. Give each person five minutes in front of the class to explain how to do something that they know how to do. It may be something recreational like skateboarding or something professional like examining a specimen under a microscope or even something silly like how to become a superhero.

Ask each person to give advice to a person who may just be starting out learning the activity. What should he do? What should he not do? Allow your students to ask questions after each presentation.

## 8 GIVE ADVICE

Advice giving can be creative, too. Role play a call in radio show where the host gives advice to the caller.

To set the scene, show your students a small clip from the television show *Frasier*. Then recreate the scene in your classroom. Instead of showing the whole clip, you could show part of the television clip where the caller presents his problem, and then pause the video. Ask your students to offer advice using the imperative. Take several answers from your students before playing the rest of the clip and seeing what Frasier actually says.

### THE NEXT TIME YOU BRING THE IMPERATIVE INTO YOUR CLASSROOM, THINK ABOUT WHAT INTERESTS YOUR STUDENTS.

Once you have found that, look online for instructions or directions or make some yourself for an activity related to that interest. Your students will have fun engaging in the activities and you will get the satisfaction of a lesson well taught.

# Following and Giving Directions: Using the Imperative

*In any language, a person must give and follow directions whether it is in a cab, when explaining a process, or giving instructions.*

The following activities will give your ESL students an opportunity to practice using the imperative form in English.

## FOLLOWING AND GIVING DIRECTIONS

### 1 WHAT IS THE IMPERATIVE?

In English, the imperative form is the command form of a sentence. The imperative is most often used when giving directions or giving instructions. *“Do your homework. Study for the test. Pay attention in class.”* Forming the imperative is very simple. Verb conjugations follow the normal pattern, but the subject of the sentence (you) is dropped. *“You do your homework”* becomes *“do your homework.”* For negative sentences, do not is added to before the verb. *“Do not sleep in class. Do not hit your brother.”* Often, sentences in the imperative can seem very forceful and often rude, so point out to your students that the use of “please” will soften the feeling of an imperative sentence. *“Please pass out the papers”* will sound more courteous than *“Pass out the papers.”*

### 2 RULES TO LIVE BY

If your classroom has rules, start your lesson on the imperative by reviewing those classroom rules. *“Raise your hand before you speak. Be courteous to other students.”* Point out to your students that these rules have an implied subject (you) but that it is omitted in the sentence. Encourage your students to think creatively about wishes or rules they would like to see people follow. They can be rules for school or rules for life. They may want to have rules such as *“Be kind to someone every day. Smile when you pass people in the street.”* Whatever they are, have your students make a list of five rules they want people to follow in life. Then encourage your students’ creativity by letting each student create a poster with his or her life rules. If you assign this as homework, students can purchase their own poster board, but if you want to spend time in class creating

the posters simply use butcher paper or bulletin board paper. Once your students have finished their posters, display them around your classroom or in the hallway.

### 3 A LITTLE HELP PLEASE

If you are looking for a fun way to practice the imperative with your students, take them outside for a little excitement with this directional game. Before starting the game, spend a little time reviewing directional words with your students. Make sure they understand *right, left, turn, go straight, turn around* and any other directional words you can think of. Then divide your students into pairs, and take them outside to an open play area. Have one person in each pair put on a blindfold. This person will be the mover. The other person in the pair will be the direction giver. Once each pair has one person blindfolded, place an object at the other end of the playing area. The direction giver must then shout directions to the mover who will proceed to the object and retrieve it. All of the pairs give directions at the same time, so the mover must focus on his partner’s voice. The first mover who reaches the object wins that round. Then have the pairs switch roles and place the object in another area. Award points to the team who reaches the object first in each round. Play as many rounds as you like and award a prize to the winning team.

### 4 THE HOSTESS WITH THE MOSTESS

English speakers also use the imperative when politely offering something to a guest. *“Have a slice of pie. Have a cup of tea.”* A little role playing is a fun way to practice this form of imperative. Put your students into groups of four to **act out a dinner party**. Two of the students will be the hosts and the other two will be the guests. In front of the class if possible, have the students act out a polite dinner party where the hosts offer different options to their guests. They can offer drinks, food and desserts. The guests can accept or politely decline. Then reverse roles and have the guests be the hosts. Encourage your students to use their imaginations and use the imperative as much as possible. Depending on the

creativity (and attitude) of your students, this activity can be quite entertaining, and the rest of the class will take inspiration from the previous groups making their own demonstrations even more entertaining.

### 5 ALWAYS TRUE

For imperatives that are universally true, have your students begin their imperative statements with *always* and *never*. *“Never put your finger in an electrical socket. Always bring your passport when you travel to another country.”*

To practice this structure with your students, cultural norms are the perfect context. As a class, start a discussion about the culture shock they felt when they first arrived in their host country. What did people do that your students did not expect? What did people not do when your students expected them? After each of your students has been able to share from her experiences, have each person make a list of universally true imperatives for someone visiting their home countries and then explain why those imperatives are true. In the U.S., these imperatives might include *“Never ask a woman her age. Never tell someone she looks fat.”* These statements are offensive. They may write *“Never give white flowers to your host. White flowers represent death.”* Or *“Always bring a gift when you go to a business meeting. It is considered polite.”*

After all your students have written their lists, encourage discussion among your class. Ask all of your students if the statements would be true of their home cultures or what the appropriate behavior in their home countries would be. In so doing, you will raise the cultural awareness among your students and hopefully avoid cultural conflicts in the future.

**THE IMPERATIVE IS A SIMPLE STRUCTURE TO FORMULATE IN ENGLISH, AND YOUR STUDENTS WILL HAVE FUN GIVING DIRECTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS TO THEIR CLASSMATES.**

Try these activities the next time you want to stress with your students how to follow directions.

# America is THE Free Country?

## Teaching the Article System

*Sometimes about mid-semester I realize I'm really tired reading sentences like "America is the free country." (Actually, they usually read "America is the freedom country," but let's focus on one issue at a time.) "Really?" I say to the offending student writer. "The only free country, huh?"*

He usually looks confused. "No. It's the free country. Not the only free country." "Oh, but the free country actually means the only free country," I explain.

His continued look of puzzlement tells me it's time for instruction in the article system in English. Mistakes like "America is the free country" indicate a confusion with articles, or words like "a," "an," and "the." This confusion is common among ESL students, largely because many languages have no article system or one radically different from the one in English.

It is often this confusion over the use of articles that clearly distinguishes a native from nonnative speaker - even if the nonnative speaker is perfectly intelligible. Native speakers almost never make mistakes in article use. In addition, articles are so hard for nonnative speakers to learn. Therefore, the use of articles clearly distinguishes native from nonnative speakers who are otherwise strong speakers, so this is an area that should be focused on to build the competency of our ESL students.

**SO WHAT ARE SOME IMPORTANT FEATURES OF THE ARTICLE SYSTEM TO TEACH? SOME POINTERS FOLLOW:**

### 1 TEACH THE ARTICLES IN ENGLISH:

"a," "an," "the," and "0" (or no article).

### 2 TEACH HOW ARTICLES ARE USED:

they almost without exception precede a noun.

### 3 . TEACH ARTICLE MEANINGS:

"a" and "an" actually mean "one," so they are never used with plural nouns. They are also nonspecific or general:

a) "A teacher walked in the classroom," for example, does not identify the specific teacher and also suggests that the teacher in question may not be the specific teacher for that room.

b) "The" indicates specificity or second mention of the topic of discussion: "A teacher walked into the classroom. The teacher picked up a marker," suggests that only one teacher is under consideration: the use of "the" highlights the second mention of the same topic.

c) "A teacher walked into the room. A teacher picked up a marker," suggests two separate teachers are involved because "the" is not used for the second mention of a teacher.

d) Finally, "The teacher walked into the room" suggests some specificity with the use of "the": "the teacher" is a specific teacher, probably the teacher for the room.

e) Finally, sometimes no article is used, for plural and generic topics: Teachers work hard. The speaker here means teachers in general, not a specific teacher or group of teachers, so no article is required.

**These are some good overall rules about articles. Now how do you teach them?**

### METHODS FOR

## TEACHING ARTICLES

### 1 TEACH WITH NOUNS

Generally speaking, any learning occurs best in its authentic context, and this is especially true of language learning. Language does not occur in isolated individual words and should not be taught that way.

Articles occur with nouns, so when teaching new vocabulary that includes nouns, these nouns should be taught with the articles they are used with: e.g., in the living room are an armchair, a coffee table, and the new television.

### 2 TEACH A LIST

I would usually discourage teaching language in lists, but some lists, like a shopping list or list of items to pack for a trip, are authentic uses of language and an opportunity to practice articles: "a carton of milk," "light bulbs for the downstairs lamp," and so forth.

Give students a topic for their list: e.g., "You are shopping for a dinner for someone you want to impress, like the president of your book club. What do you absolutely need to buy for the party? Discuss with your peers."

As students discuss and write their lists, they will be using articles.

### 3 NOTICE ARTICLES

Read a paragraph from your textbook aloud to the class. Have students follow along in their books. Then together note the use of articles. Discuss why the author made the choices he or she did with articles. How would the meaning change if another article were substituted?

## 4 DELETE THE ARTICLES

Give out a paragraph with the articles deleted. Have students work in pairs to decide which articles should be filled in. Reading aloud often helps because often students who are at the intermediate level and higher have developed a sense of the “sound” of the language, of what sounds right and what doesn’t.

## 5 DISCUSS A TOPICS

Have students discuss in small groups a topic that will demand multiple uses of different articles: “An Ideal Vacation,” for example, will call upon both uses of articles in both the general for abstract discussion of vacations and the specific article for more specific places.

Circulate as students talk, mentally noting any common problems, and then at the end pull the class together for a brief discussion.

## 6 PRACTICE IN WRITING

Have students write a short essay whose topic will call upon article use: the topic “A Good Leader,” for example, is likely to call upon multiple uses of articles as students discuss both leaders in general and specific leaders.

## 7 PROOFREAD

Have students edit their own or their peers’ work. When handing back an essay, for example, have students look over their own papers, or trade with peer, focusing just on the articles. Again, have students read parts aloud, marking in pencil areas of concern.

Circulate and answer questions as needed.

**TEACHING ARTICLES IS OFTEN NEGLECTED FOR MULTIPLE REASONS: THEY ARE HARD TO NOTICE AND ADDRESS AS STUDENTS COME FROM LANGUAGE BACKGROUNDS WHERE ARTICLES ARE NOT USED; IN ADDITION, STUDENT SPEECH AND WRITING IS USUALLY COMPREHENSIBLE DESPITE ARTICLE MISUSE, AND THE SYSTEM FOR ARTICLE USE IS RATHER COMPLEX.**

However, incorrect article use does tend to mark the speaker as a learner of English, and more correct usage shows someone who has nativelike speech, so article use is an important area to address with students.

# I Dream Of... Three Strategies for Teaching Wishes and Hopes

TEACHING HOPES AND WISHES TO VARIOUS LEVELS OF ESL LEARNERS CAN BE ENJOYABLE AND ENLIGHTENING. THIS IS SOMETHING THAT CAN BE INTRODUCED IN A HIGH BEGINNER CLASS AND THEN EXPANDED UPON AS THEIR LANGUAGE SKILLS INCREASE.

It's a great way to get them talking about aspirations, dreams and possibly even hidden desires. Here are some strategies for teaching wishes and hopes that you can revisit and re-vamp in many different ways for various levels.

## HOW TO: TEACHING WISHES AND HOPES

### 1 WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

**First off, what is the difference anyway?** There is a difference in both structure and meaning. 'I wish' refers to lofty or unrealistic dreams. Most of the time when we use 'I wish', we want something that is impossible, or that doesn't seem likely. We may even feel sorry that things are not different.

**Some 'WISH' examples are:**

- I wish I had a million dollars.
- I wish I could fly to the moon.
- I wish my sister could be here now.

Hopes are a bit different. When we use 'I hope', we want it to happen, but are uncertain that it will. It is also often out of our control whether it happens or not.

**Some 'HOPE' examples are:**

- I hope Jane gets better.
- I hope it stops raining soon.
- I hope my son comes back from the war.

### 2 THE STRUCTURES

Ask the students what they no-

tice about the structural differences from the examples above. If you are starting this lesson with a lower level, you could opt to only focus on the simpler tenses. Discuss it with them and provide the following points as you go:

#### WISH STRUCTURE 1:

**Subject + Wish**  
**+ Subject + Past Tense**

Example: I wish I was better-looking. I wish I spoke Italian. I wish I had better news.

#### WISH STRUCTURE 2:

**Subject + Wish (that)**  
**+ Subject + Past Perfect**

Example: I wish I had gone with John. I wish I had studied harder for the test.

#### HOPE STRUCTURE 1:

Hope is commonly used with **– ing + for + object**

Example: I'm hoping for some good weather today.

#### HOPE STRUCTURE 2:

**Hope + an infinitive (a bit formal)**

Example: I hope to study in Europe next year.

#### HOPE STRUCTURE 3:

**Hope + that-clause.** Example: I hope that there is cake at the party.

### 3 PRACTICE

There are a lot of different ways you could choose to practice both wishes and hopes. You could do a "Find Someone Who" activity in which the students need to mingle and ask questions to each other.

Examples of the topics could be things like: Find someone who ... wishes he/she was in Hawaii, hopes to learn how to ski, wishes he/she was more beautiful, wishes that they could win a gold medal, etc.

Another way to practice wishes and hopes is to do some creative fill-in-the-blanks exercises combined with discussion.

The students could complete any number of statements like:

- I wish I was more \_\_\_\_\_.
- I hope I can \_\_\_\_\_ this year.
- I wish that my family \_\_\_\_\_.

These are great to do in pairs or even as a group to get students talking. Be sure to include all the variable structures shown above and give them opportunities to practice using them as naturally as possible!

WHEN APPROACHING HOPES AND WISHES, YOU WILL WANT TO KEEP THE CLASS FOCUSED ON THE POSITIVE.

SOMETIMES THIS KIND OF ACTIVITY CAN LEAD TO STUDENTS GETTING EMOTIONAL OR OVER-ANALYZING THEIR SITUATIONS. BE SURE TO PRESENT THESE ACTIVITIES WITH SENSITIVITY AND BE PREPARED TO DEAL WITH BOTH THE ENTERTAINING PIECES AS WELL AS THE MORE EMOTIONAL!

# Amazing Animals: A Super-Engaging Elementary Lesson on Adjectives

**YOU HAVE COVERED NOUNS AND VERBS, AND THE GRAMMAR CURRICULUM HAS YOU MOVING ON TO ADJECTIVES WITH YOUR ESL STUDENTS.**

Still, you want them to have fun and make a personal connection with the material you teach even when you are teaching grammar. Here is an activity you can do with your elementary level ESL students that will get them thinking creatively and using adjectives appropriately, and they will have fun, too!

## **HOW TO TEACH A SUPER-ENGAGING ELEMENTARY LESSON ON ADJECTIVES**

### **1 WHAT IS WINTER?**

Start by asking your class to describe the weather in winter. What clothes do people typically wear in the winter? Why do they wear these clothes? If your students are willing, allow some of them to share a personal story of when they were outside in winter weather and how it felt. If they do not have a story to share, you might want to share a story of your own, perhaps the first time you saw snow or an experience sledding or skiing.

### **2 READ 'THE MITTEN'**

After your discussion, read your class *The Mitten* by Jan Brett ([http://janbrett.com/bookstores/mitten\\_book.htm](http://janbrett.com/bookstores/mitten_book.htm)). This charming story tells the tale of how a mitten left behind became a cozy place for several animals to hide from the winter cold.

### **3 RETELL AND IMAGINE**

Ask your students to retell the story of the mitten as you show them the pictures. As they retell the story, ask what it might have felt like when each animal crowded into the mitten. As you do, your students will naturally offer descriptive words for each of the animals. You should point out that words which describe things or people are adjectives.

### **4 LIST ADJECTIVES**

Close the book and ask your students which animals crowded into the mitten. Write each animal on the board as they say it. Then, taking one animal at a time, ask what words they can use to describe that animal. You should allow your students to use their dictionaries as they offer adjectives that can be used to describe each animal. Make a list of adjectives under each animal on the board. You will want to include words like *fuzzy, soft, prickly, sharp, warm, little, big, lumpy* and others on your list.

### **5 AN ACTIVE ADJECTIVE GAME**

You can review some of these adjectives by playing a game with your students. On her website, Jan Brett has pictures of the animals in her book, which are designed to be used as masks: [http://www.janbrett.com/mitten\\_masks\\_main.htm](http://www.janbrett.com/mitten_masks_main.htm). Print enough of these so each student has a mask to use during the game. Allow students to cut out their masks and then attach a tongue depressor to the bottom. Now ask your students questions using the adjectives you listed on the board. "*Who is fuzzy?*" If their animal is fuzzy, the student should stand.

Repeat with a different adjective. Your students should notice that some adjectives can be used to describe more than one of the animals from the book.

### **6 CHOOSE AN ANIMAL**

After playing the game, ask your students to think about their favorite animal. This can be an animal from the story one that was not in the book. Ask your students, "*What words on the board can be used to describe that animal?*"

Put your students into groups of three and ask them to describe their animal to the group. Encourage students to think of other adjectives that can describe their animals and their friends' animals.

Each student should make a list of these

adjectives that describe the animal he chose.

### **7 DESCRIBE YOUR ANIMAL**

Now that your students have thought about their animals and made a list of the adjectives to describe it, have your students write a paragraph describing the animal they chose. In their paragraph, they should use several adjectives to describe their animal.

### **8 MAKE A CLASS BOOK**

Once each student is finished with their paragraph, give them time with your classroom computer or take them to the computer lab to type out their paragraphs. Using the paint program on the computer, they can draw a picture of their animal. Have students spell check their paragraphs and print them out. You can then compile the paragraphs and pictures into a classroom book.

Make this book available to your students during independent reading time.

**WHETHER YOUR STUDENTS ARE STUDYING ESL OVERSEAS AND ARE NEW TO THE IDEA OF WINTER OR YOU ARE TEACHING ABROAD AND HAVE NEVER SEEN SNOW YOURSELF, YOUR STUDENTS WILL LOVE THIS CHARMING TALE OF HOW WINTER BRINGS ANIMALS TOGETHER!**

Not only that, they will learn how to use adjectives to describe these winter animals and their own favorites, too. The end result will be a book that your class will treasure for the entire year!

# The 3 Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig: Teaching Opposites

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF A BIG, BAD PIG TRIED TO BLOW DOWN YOUR LITTLE BRICK HOUSE?

Run away as the bricks tumbled, just like the three little wolves did in Eugene Trivizas' story *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig*. As strange and as entertaining as it sounds, this book might be just what you need to liven class up the next time you teach opposites! Here's how you can use it in your ESL class.

## HOW TO TEACH OPPOSITES

### 1 THE THREE LITTLE PIGS

Do your students know the story of the three little pigs (<http://www.archive.org/stream/thestoryofthethr-18155gut/18155.txt>)? As a class, allow students to share anything they already know about the story and retell it if they already know it. If no one knows the story already, ask them what they think might happen based on the title. Once your students have offered some ideas, read the story to them. Ask your students to notice any words that describe the pigs and the wolf as you read.

After you finish the story, work with your class to make a list of these descriptive words on the board.

### 2 RETELLING

To make sure your students have the story clearly in their minds, ask your students to retell the story in their own words. If your students would like, allow them to illustrate their stories. You might want to let students type up their retellings and illustrate them on the computer.

You can print them out and display them on a wall of your classroom.

### 3 ANTONYMS

Next, explain to your class that you are going to talk about antonyms

or opposites. Give them several examples of antonym pairs. Take one pair, big and little for example, and write them on opposite ends of the board. Now draw a symbol at each end, one big and one little. Show your students that antonyms are words at opposite ends of a spectrum. Draw several of the same symbol along the spectrum getting increasingly big or little. Point out to your students that the antonyms are the words farthest from one another. As a class, brainstorm as many antonym pairs as you can think of. When you are finished, you may want to have your students illustrate one or more of the other antonym pairs you listed on their own spectrums.

### 4 THE BIG, BAD PIG

Now that your students know the traditional tale and are familiar with antonyms, it is time for the fractured version. Read Trivizas' *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* to your class. Ask them to listen for two things as you read. First, challenge them to note any differences between this story and the original version. Second, ask them to note any descriptive words used for the wolves and the pig.

### 5 COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Explain to your students that a Venn diagram is a way to look at the similarities and differences between two things. Show your students how to create a Venn diagram by drawing two overlapping circles on the board. Label one circle "3 little pigs" and the other "3 little wolves". Ask your students to write the similarities between the two stories in the overlapping section.

Then ask them to write the parts unique to each story in its circle.

### 6 WHAT OPPOSITES CAN YOU FIND?

Looking at the lists of descriptive words, can your students find any

opposite pairs among them? Give groups of two to three students some time to work together to find opposites in and between the two stories. You will want to have copies of each text for each group of students. If students are unable to find a pair of opposites for the descriptive words within the text, ask them to think of word that would be the opposite to the ones that were used.

### 7 OPPOSITES PERFORM

Now that your students have seen and worked with the opposite version of the three little pigs, challenge your students to write their own fractured fairytales! Supply groups of three to five students with some traditional children's tales. Ask each group to choose one traditional tale and to plan a skit that tells an opposite story. They should write their skit as they prepare. Reassure them that not every element in their skits will be opposite of the original, just as Trivizas' version of the three little pigs was not a complete opposite. Each skit should, however, have at least one major opposite from its original version. After the groups have planned their skits, have them perform for the rest of the class.

### PLAY DAY MAY BE A GOOD OCCASION TO HAVE OPPOSITE DAY IN YOUR CLASS AND CELEBRATE THE IDEA OF ANTONYMS.

Do your classes in reverse order! Face your desks to the opposite wall! Read a book from the last page forward or do any of a number of opposite things! Your kids will have fun and they will really understand the concept of opposites!



# How to Teach Degrees of Comparison

TEACHING DEGREES OF COMPARISON WILL TAKE SEVERAL LESSONS. YOUR STUDENTS SHOULD HAVE A GOOD GRASP OF COMPARISON RELATED VOCABULARY SUCH AS TALL, SHORT, BIG, SMALL, FAST, SLOW, ETC AND INITIALLY, YOUR LESSONS SHOULD REVOLVE AROUND ONLY ABOUT TEN OR TWELVE OF THESE.

If students perform well using the set of words you have chosen, you can add more vocabulary later.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 WARM UP – REVIEW

It has probably been a while since your students have thought about the vocabulary you plan to use for this lesson so it is important to review their meaning and pronunciation. You can do this by conducting a warm up activity such as crisscross or by asking for volunteers to give you the definitions of words, spell words on the board, or use words in a sentence. At the end of this activity there should be two columns of words on the board. With the sample vocabulary above, the columns would look like this.

*tall*      *short*

*big*      *small*

*fast*      *slow*

The two columns should have enough space between them for you to write their comparative and superlative forms.

### 2 INTRODUCE – COMPARATIVE

Introduce comparative structures to your students without explaining them first. Play a short true or false trivia game saying sentences like “Russia is bigger than England.” Use hand gestures to suggest the meaning of each new word and try to have a student translate the sentence before asking whether it is true or false. Use the com-

parative form of each vocabulary word in a trivia question and write it down next to the word as you go. At the end of the game, underline the –er ending of each comparative form and explain the comparative structure. Your students already have most of it figured out at this point so after some pronunciation practice or drilling, let them give it a try.

### 3 PRACTICE/PRODUCTION - COMPARATIVE

Worksheets can help your students practice but a more enjoyable way to practice degrees of comparison is to play a card game. Students should play in groups of three to five. You can make decks of between thirty and fifty cards where each card has an animal, for instance, and statistics for that animal such as height, speed, etc. There are many games you can play with a deck such as this one. Have students shuffle and deal all the cards. Explain that the student whose turn it is should choose a category such as height, he and the student sitting to his left should each play a card, and the student whose animal is taller should say “The ~ is taller than the ~.” or more simply “My animal is taller than yours.” That student now gets to keep both cards and the student with the most cards at the end of the game, is the winner.

### 4 INTRODUCE – SUPERLATIVE

Usually the following class would focus on superlative forms. They can be introduced in much the same way you introduced the comparative structure. Emphasize the –est ending and conduct some choral repetition as pronunciation practice. Continue to use the same set of vocabulary.

### 5 PRACTICE – SUPERLATIVE

Practice activities such as worksheets or card games would be appropriate for the superlative form too. Worksheets could include fill in the blank, matching, and write your own sentences sections. The card game above could be adapted to practice superlative. Students could all put

down a card after the category is announced, the student with the highest number in that category would make a sentence and keep the cards, and the winner would be the student with the most cards at the end of the game. You could also change the game entirely or use one card game in the first superlative class and change it for the second class if students are really enjoying them.

### 6 PRODUCTION – COMBINE!

After doing some short practice activities of both comparative and superlative forms that have already been covered, introduce one or two vocabulary words that use more and most to create their comparative and superlative forms. Make sure all the vocabulary words as well as their comparative and superlative forms are written on the board before conducting a combination exercise. A board game of boxes leading from start to finish would be ideal for groups of three or four. A turn would consist of a student rolling a die, moving her piece, and creating a sentence based on the image in the square she landed on. This game should use both the comparative and superlative forms of each vocabulary word. The first student to reach the last square wins.

### 7 REVIEW

The card game and board game require your students to do a lot of speaking so they have practiced extensively by the time they have finished. A short quiz will check your students’ understanding of the degrees of comparison and determine if further review is necessary.

DEGREES OF COMPARISON ARE OFTEN EASY TO INTRODUCE AND FUN FOR STUDENTS TO PRACTICE.

Since students already understand the meaning of the vocabulary they are using in these lessons, it is much easier for them to grasp than other structures where new vocabulary is introduced. Including comparative or superlative forms in later activities will help keep them fresh in your students’ minds.

# How to Teach Comparatives and Superlatives

“COMPARISONS ARE ODIUS” SAYS THE OLD PROVERB, BUT IN AN ESL CLASS THEY ARE ALSO VERY NECESSARY. AND AS THERE IS NOT SET RULE FOR ALL ADJECTIVES, WE MUST MAKE SURE STUDENTS LEARN EVERYTHING THEY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES. **COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES ARE READY. ARE YOU?**

## 1 INTRODUCE THE COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE FORMS FOR ONE SYLLABLE ADJECTIVES

Show your Ss an illustration of people of different heights, or ask three students to stand up. Introduce the comparative of one syllable adjectives:

T: Juan is tall, but Mario is taller than Juan. Juan is shorter than Mario.

Make sure Ss understand that for these adjectives the comparative is formed by adding -er. Ss compare their heights. Point to the three Ss who are standing and introduce the superlative:

T: Mario is taller than Juan, but Sam is taller than Mario. Sam is the tallest of the three. Make sure Ss understand that the superlative is formed by adding -est. Ss say who is the tallest and who is the shortest in the class.

## 2 INTRODUCE THE COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE FORMS FOR ONE SYLLABLE ADJECTIVES ENDING IN “E”

Show your Ss pictures of different types of furniture. Introduce the comparative:

T: This brown sofa is nice. But the red one is nicer than the brown one. It's also wider than the brown one. Make sure Ss understand that the comparative is formed by adding an r. Students compare the other pieces of furniture.

Point to three different sofas and introduce the superlative:

T: The red sofa is nicer than the brown one, but the blue one is the nicest of the three. Make sure Ss understand that the superlative is formed by adding -st. Ss say which pieces of furniture they think

are the nicest, or the widest.

## 3 INTRODUCE THE COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE FORMS FOR ONE SYLLABLE ADJECTIVES ENDING IN CONSONANT-VOWEL-CONSONANT

Show your Ss picture or photos of different seasons and weather conditions. Introduce the comparative:

T: The weather in May can be hot, but the weather in June is hotter than in May. October is a wet month, but November is wetter than October. Make sure Ss understand that the comparative is formed by making the last consonant double and adding -er. Ss compare the weather in different cities and countries with the aid of a weather chart. Encourage them to use other one syllable adjectives.

Point to the weather charts and introduce the superlative:

T: November is the wettest month of the year. July is the hottest. Make sure Ss understand that the superlative is formed by making the last consonant double and adding -est. Ss say which months are the hottest, the wettest, the coolest, the warmest, etc. in your city and others.

## 4 INTRODUCE THE COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE FORMS FOR TWO SYLLABLE ADJECTIVES ENDING IN “Y”

Discuss feelings to introduce the comparative:

T: I am happy when I visit a friend, but I'm happier when it's her birthday. Make sure Ss understand that the comparative is formed by replacing the “y” with an “i” and adding -er. Ss compare their feelings in a variety of situations. Encourage them to use everything they've learned so far about comparisons.

Introduce the superlative:

T: I am happy when I'm on vacation, but I'm the happiest when travel to a new place. Make sure Ss understand that the superlative is formed by replacing the “y” with an “i” and adding -est. Ss say when they are the happiest, the sorriest, the saddest, etc.

## 5 INTRODUCE THE COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE FORMS FOR TWO OR MORE SYLLABLE ADJECTIVES

Show Ss pictures of popular vacation destinations and famous cities. Introduce the comparative:

T: Berlin is a beautiful city, but Paris is more beautiful than Berlin. Make sure Ss understand that the comparative is formed by using “more” plus the adjective. Ss compare cities and countries trying to use long adjectives.

Introduce the superlative:

T: Paris is a very beautiful city, but in my opinion Rome is the most beautiful city in the world. Make sure Ss understand that the superlative is formed by using “the most” plus the adjective. Ss say which they believe are the most beautiful, the most expensive, and the most interesting cities in the world.

## 6 INTRODUCE THE COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE FORMS OF IRREGULAR ADJECTIVES

Continue with the comparison of cities and countries:

T: The traffic in London is bad, but the traffic in Rome is worse. The traffic in London is better than the traffic in Rome. Make sure Ss understand that “good” and “bad” are irregular adjectives and their comparatives are “better” and “worse”. Ss make more comparisons.

Introduce the superlative:

T: They say the traffic in Rome is the worst in the world. But it's the best place to visit in Italy. Make sure students understand that “the best” and “the worst” are the superlative forms of “good” and “bad”. Students say which they believe are the best sights to visit around the world, and which have the worst problems.

Remember that if students are unsure about the comparative or superlative form of some adjectives, the best way to help them overcome this doubt is by offering lots and lots of practice.

# 4 Fascinating Ways for Teaching -ED and -ING Adjectives

THE TOPIC OF -ED AND -ING ADJECTIVES CAN BE A REFRESHING ONE AS IT GIVES YOU THE CHANCE TO INTRODUCE A HIGHER LEVEL OF NEW VOCABULARY AS WELL AS OPEN UP A WHOLE NEW WORLD OF EXPRESSING OPINIONS AND FEELINGS FOR THE LEARNER.

The strategies below can be used at varying levels of language acquisition and can be adapted to many different types and lengths of activities.

## INTRODUCING -ED AND -ING ADJECTIVES

### 1 CLEARLY DEFINE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN -ED AND -ING ADJECTIVES

Teaching these adjectives can be challenging from the start because students can easily get confused about the differences between the -ED and -ING endings. This confusion often results in humorous mistakes such as “I am exciting.” or “The movie was excited.” Before jumping into too much vocabulary, the first thing you want to explain and show is the differences in use.

The best way to explain -ED and ING adjectives is with a diagram on the board or a handout.

**DESCRIPTION:** Something (noun) is/are interest-ING... [*Politics, Barak Obama, Lord of the Rings*]

**FEELING/OPINION:** I am/I feel interest-ED in... [*Politics, The President, The Lord of the Rings*]

Question the students using examples of adjectives they already know. For example: *what is something that is interesting?* Have the class make a list under interesting and use a simple sentence structure like above. Then follow that with what are you interested in? You can go through this a few times with adjectives they know

(*amazing, boring, and exciting* are good ones).

The point you are making is that

**-ED adjectives are used to talk about a person's feelings or opinions. (These are the receivers of feelings)**

**-ING adjectives are used to describe things, people, places, activities. (These are the sources of the feelings)**

Also point out that often -ED adjectives are also usually followed by small prepositions like in or by.

### 2 ENGAGE THE CLASS WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMPREHENSION CHECKS

Define the difference again and do several comprehension checks with students. Other ways to do that are, for example: I am interested vs. I am interesting. The first one means I like it, I want to hear about it. The second one means that I am being described as something people find interesting. You can now do some questioning about people/things in the class and also have students create questions to one another.

**Here are some examples:** *who is amazing, what is boring* (usually gets a lot of laughs)? *Who is challenging? Why are you bored/tired/annoyed today?* You can add to this to exercise to have either partner activities or the whole class together doing it in rounds..

### 3 INTRODUCING NEW -ED AND -ING ADJECTIVES

Now that they have had some fun figuring out the difference, it is time to draw out a list of the -ED and -ING adjectives they know and then start introducing the ones that they don't.

**Be mindful of their skill level.** Do not give them too much new vocabulary too quickly. You can think ahead

of time how you are going to define the new words, and **generally 10 new words at a time should work really well.**

HERE IS COMPREHENSIVE LIST TO GIVE TO THEM IN CHUNKS THAT YOU CAN ALSO EXPAND UPON:

#### -ED

Amused  
Exhausted  
Embarrassed  
Pleased  
Surprised  
Thrilled  
Annoyed  
Confused  
Depressed  
Disgusted  
Frightened  
Horrified  
Shocked  
Relaxed  
Fascinated  
Troubled  
Puzzled  
Irritated  
Devastated  
Overwhelmed  
Disappointed  
Intrigued  
Discouraged  
Soothed  
Moved  
Humiliated  
Satisfied  
Touched

#### -ING

Amusing  
Exhausting  
Embarrassing  
Pleasing  
Surprising  
Thrilling  
Annoying  
Confusing  
Depressing  
Disgusting

Frightening  
Horrible  
Shocking  
Relaxing  
Fascinating  
Troubling  
Puzzling  
Irritating  
Devastating  
Overwhelming  
Disappointing  
Intriguing  
Discouraging  
Soothing  
Moving  
Humiliating  
Satisfying  
Touching

Define the words using very concrete examples and examples from real life. After you have done an explanation of a group of words you know they don't know, then you can move on to doing the more interactive comprehension exercises and focus also on grammatical structure. Often –ED and –ING adjectives relate to one another and may have differing degrees of intensity. For example, how would you differentiate between terrified and frightened? Is there much of a difference?

## 4 PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

Create a stack of cards that have one –ED or –ING adjective per card. Have each student choose three cards and make sentences in rounds. You can alter this by having them make questions with their cards, giving them a theme to do with the cards (actors, movies, current events), or having them make a list of five to ten things that have to do with the word on the card. The cards can be used for quick warm-ups or turned into longer, more drawn out class activities.

**Create an opinion survey that the students can do in pairs or groups.** The questions don't need to be too forced, but make sure you tell them the point of the activity is to practice –ED and –ING adjectives. For example: What is something that really annoys you? What kinds of movies do you find interesting? Tell us about a time when you were embarrassed.

You could also make these statements or questions into cards and use for warm-ups.

**Make a list of varying items: people, places, things, events, activities.** Have students tell/write a story about the topic using at least five/ten –ED or –ING adjectives. Examples could be: *Madonna, soccer, the beach, a birthday party, my boyfriend/girlfriend*, or anything from pop culture, news, or local culture. Have them share their stories.

## TEACHING –ED AND –ING ADJECTIVES CAN BE ENJOYABLE FOR BOTH THE TEACHER AND THE STUDENTS.

You can come up with innumerable ways for students to practice, and they will keep learning new words to add to their ever-growing vocabulary. Don't forget to correct their mistakes and always remember to include humor, patience and encouragement in all of your activities!

# 3 Tremendous Techniques for Teaching Gerunds and Infinitives

THE TOPIC OF GERUNDS VS. INFINITIVES IS A NOTORIOUSLY CONFUSING ONE AMONG STUDENTS OF ALL LEVELS.

To native speakers it comes naturally, and we don't really ever think about why we use one instead of the other. For ESL students getting it right may take some time and patience and hopefully these 3 techniques for teaching gerunds and infinitives will bridge the gap.

## HOW-TO: TEACHING GERUNDS AND INFINITIVES

### 1 I LIKE TO SWIM OR SWIMMING IS FUN: DEFINE THE DIFFERENCES

At the basic level you will need to start out just by distinguishing the difference and doing this while keeping your language pretty simple. Here's an example that has been quite successful. The most confusing part in choosing either a gerund or an infinitive is that they have similar jobs and perform many of the same functions.

#### THEY BOTH:

- *Look like verbs, but are actually nouns.*
- *Can be the subject of a sentence: Jogging is good exercise. To jog is good exercise.*
- *Can be the object of a verb: I like reading books. I like to read books.*

#### ONLY GERUNDS:

- *Can be the object of a preposition, for example: We are talking about swimming in English class. We discussed quitting smoking for good.*

So when do we know when to use one or the other? That can be difficult to define. In general, the rule to follow is:

**Gerunds are used to express actions**

**that are real, concrete and completed.**

**Infinitives are used to express actions that are unreal, abstract or may be in the future.**

You can provide some examples and then discuss which category they fall into. **For example:**

- I forget locking the door.
- I forgot to lock the door.
- I stopped smoking.
- I stopped to smoke.

### 2 LIST OF VERBS

Because gerunds and infinitives have this difference discussed above, one way to help them remember is to provide a list of verbs. The list of verbs followed by gerunds is more concrete while the verbs followed by infinitives are more abstract. **Here is a short list for each:**

#### VERBS FOLLOWED BY GERUNDS

*Admit Deny Miss Discuss Dislike Mind Enjoy Suggest Practice Quit Understand Consider*

#### VERBS FOLLOWED BY INFINITIVES

*Agree Learn Wish Ask Manage Happen Forget Prepare Demand Need Want Deserve*

#### VERBS FOLLOWED BY EITHER

*Begin Hate Like Love Plan Prefer Intend Remember Can't stand*

With these lists obviously comes a lot of vocabulary explanation. Introduce possibly 5-10 words in each category and take the time to provide definitions, do comprehension checks, and then present examples with the difference. **Here are some examples:**

*I want to go, do, see, play—same for*

*negative—I don't want to (go, do, see, play)*

*I enjoy skiing, swimming, reading not I enjoy to ski, to swim, to read.*

This will take some time for student to absorb and may also take some extra studying on the teacher's part as distinguishing between gerunds and infinitives does not come easily to any one of. You can practice the above simply by having them perform a fill in the blank exercise in rounds. You can also have them plan some type of event and have the students incorporate the specific verb usage into their discussion. **For example,** plan a birthday party for John. What will you need to remember to do? What will you need to prepare? What does he like/love/enjoy/hate/etc.?

### 3 GIVING OPINIONS

Combining gerunds and infinitives practice with expressing opinions can be a good start. Because this grammar point is so involved and students need to learn it in chunks, devising ways they can practice parts of it realistically will help to solidify the usage. Give the students a list of topics that they can discuss using the words from the verb lists they are working on. Some of the topics could be current event-related or more general issues. **For example:** What do you think about: The presidential election | The earthquake in Japan | The World Cup.

Another way to do this is to give them prompts to complete regarding tastes, and have them agree or disagree with another. I can't stand... | I hate... | I prefer... | I enjoy... | I wish...

TEACHING GERUNDS AND INFINITIVES IS QUITE INVOLVED AND STUDENTS WILL HAVE A LOT OF QUESTIONS.

Remember to start out simply and build upon what they know. Combine hands-on discussion and activities with fill in the blanks, quizzes and competitions.

# Gerund vs. Infinitive:

## How to Explain the Difference

### STUDENTS OFTEN HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME KNOWING WHEN TO USE GERUNDS AND INFINITIVES.

Even at the intermediate level, this is typically not covered extensively and lesson plans instead focus on very specific structures such as “*I like playing ~.*” or “*I like to play ~.*”

For the majority of students this simple approach is enough and much less confusing than trying to understand when one is more appropriate than the other because in many situations, although there is a slight difference in meaning, gerunds and infinitives are used interchangeably. A lesson teaching gerunds might focus on “*I like playing/eating/reading ~.*” and the question “*What do you like doing?*” When students create sentences that are incorrect, for instance “*I like playing ski.*” you can address the fact that *ski* does not follow the same rules as sports such as soccer, baseball, and basketball.

An introductory infinitive lesson could use the same approach in order to give students some easy infinitive practice without overwhelming them with various structures and uses.

With more advanced students or if the difference between gerunds and infinitives is covered in your textbook, you will have to address them in more detail.

### HOW TO EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GERUNDS AND INFINITIVES

#### 1 GERUNDS AND INFINITIVES

Gerunds and infinitives are nouns formed from verbs. Gerunds are formed by adding *-ing* to the end of a verb. Some examples are *eating*, *playing*, and *listening*. Infinitives use *to* before the verb so the examples above would be *to eat*, *to play*, and

*to listen*. Both can be used as the subject or object of a sentence. The negative version of both gerunds and infinitives is made simply by adding *not*. With this information alone, you can create lesson plans that focus on the various uses of gerunds and infinitives and give students some practice using them in sentences. Certainly looking at how the two are similar is the easiest method of introducing the topic.

#### 2 GERUNDS

Gerunds can also be used in prepositional phrases like in the sentence “*They talked about swimming yesterday but decided it was too cold.*” Additionally there are certain words that should be followed by gerunds such as *avoid*, *enjoy*, and *dislike* and there is no great way to remember which words except through considerable amounts of practice using them.

A mistake learners often make is saying a sentence similar to “*I go to swim everyday.*” when the correct sentence is “*I go swimming everyday.*” or even “*I go to the gym to swim everyday.*” When certain words, such as *swim*, follow the verb *go*, they must be gerunds. This applies to many activities such as *swimming*, *scuba diving*, *skiing* etc.

#### 3 INFINITIVES

There are also some words such as *demand*, *hope*, and *pretend*, that must be followed by an infinitive. As with gerunds, it takes a lot of practice to recognize which words this applies to and there is no rule to help.

Additionally, when the main verb of the sentence is a form of *be* followed by an adjective, an infinitive often follows. One example is “*They were anxious to leave.*” There are other structures that use infinitives as well. Trying to address all of them in a single class period will simply confuse students. It would be better to select

what key points you want to cover or spread these lessons out over the course of the year so that students do not become bored studying just one aspect of the English language.

#### 4 MEANING

Once your students have had some practice using both gerunds and infinitives in separate lessons, combine them. You can give the class pairs of sentences where one sentence uses a gerund and the other uses the infinitive.

Then as a class or in groups discuss the slight to substantial differences in meaning the sentences have. This is a challenging activity and should only be done with advanced students.

### WITH ANY LUCK YOUR TEXTBOOK WILL NOT ADDRESS GERUNDS AND INFINITIVES DIRECTLY BUT WILL STILL GIVE STUDENTS LOTS OF PRACTICE USING THEM.

This method generally works best it is more similar to how native speakers learn English. It is hard to explain why “*I go to swim everyday.*” is incorrect while “*I go to work everyday.*” is correct. Native speakers never question that because they are introduced to words, phrases, and sentence structures gradually by listening to people around them.

### THE BEST WAY FOR STUDENTS TO LEARN ENGLISH IS NOT TO MEMORIZE RULES AND EXCEPTIONS TO RULES BUT TO HEAR SENTENCES MODELED CORRECTLY AND PRACTICE THEM.

# 3 Top Strategies to Alleviate Confusion About HOW MUCH and HOW MANY

TEACHING COUNTABLE AND UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS IS A GRAMMAR POINT THAT BEGINNERS WILL LEARN EARLY ON AND IT CAN TAKE MULTIPLE ACTIVITIES TO SOLIDIFY THE CORRECT USAGE.

I have taught this topic hundreds of times and each time I learn something about how I could do it better.

Here are 3 strategies to alleviate confusion about using How Much and How Many.

## MAKING IT CLEAR: HOW MUCH OR HOW MANY

### 1 CONSTANTLY REITERATE COUNTABLE/UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS LESSON

Once you have introduced what countable and uncountable nouns are, you will need to constantly refer back to your explanation.

**COUNTABLE** nouns are things with quantities that you see with your eyes. They can be counted easily.

**UNCOUNTABLE** nouns are things that are more general and cannot be counted. **Great examples for each are**

**Countable:** *markers, pens, apples, hats, or anything you can point to in the classroom, pick up and count*—countable nouns usually have an “S” at the end.

**Uncountable:** *Water* (my favorite example). How can you count water? *Rice* - Can you count each piece of rice? *Time* - another favorite - because you cannot clearly see it to measure it.

When students come across the *How Much* or *How Many* question and it baffles them, refer back to these examples. “*Is it like water or bananas?*” What

sounds right to you, “*How much shoes* or *How many shoes?*”

### 2 USE FOOD AND SHOPPING AS YOUR MAIN PRACTICE TOPIC

The best way to teach and to reinforce the How Much/How Many grammar point is to **use food**. Everyone loves food and the food lessons bring with them lots of new vocabulary.

You can do any range of activities from shopping in the grocery store, to taking stock of what’s in the kitchen, to creating recipes. Because the students will naturally have to incorporate *how much* or *how many* into questions and answers, food is the way to go.

Another way to do this is with shopping or restaurant role plays that introduces ‘how much is it’ and ‘how many do we want/need’.

There are innumerable food and shopping lesson ideas that can be dispersed into your lessons to practice how much or how many.

### 3 GIVE CONCRETE EXAMPLES

One of the problems with practicing *How Much* and *How Many* is that it often feels so forced or unnatural. Utilizing classroom objects, pictures and everyday situations can help you get around that and expose students to naturally using *much* and *many*.

You don’t always have to force it with this point because we use much and many so often. We use it in telling stories, “There were many people at the mall.” We use it to talk about our time “I have too much homework tonight. I can’t go to the movies.” We use it to talk about money, “How much is the bill?” Look for ways that the students can draw their own conclusions and use error correction as a way to remind them why it one way and not another.

TEACHING THE GRAMMAR POINT OF HOW MUCH OR HOW MANY IS ONE OF THOSE POINTS THAT COMES UP AGAIN AND AGAIN.

Just keep giving great explanations and providing opportunities to refresh and practice! Soon students will begin using it without so much trouble!

# Turn Right, Go Left: Practicing Prepositions of Place

**PREPOSITIONS OF PLACE IS ONE OF THOSE TOPICS THAT CAN REALLY OPEN UP A NEW WORLD TO LEARNERS.**

It is also a topic with lots of details and possibilities for practice and implementation. Below are some strategies for practicing prepositions of place focusing on location..

## HOW TO PRACTICE PREPOSITIONS OF PLACE

### 1 USE MAPS

To introduce uses for prepositions of place, it is essential to show students the many functions it has in their daily lives. One way to do that is to present students with an overview of a map of their city or town. You can introduce compass directions, prepositions for giving directions as well as prepositions of place and movement. Maps are practical resource to first discuss locations, distances and placements. Then later students can put maps into action. Another topic that can arise out of using maps is landmarks. Students generally know the landmarks of their city, and it can be great fun to utilize those landmarks for direction-giving activities. There are so many possibilities with maps. You can give students the map of one neighborhood and have them practice going to and from one of the popular landmarks. You can have them fill in maps with local landmarks, street names, and popular places like hotels, grocery stores, libraries, etc. Once they have the maps filled in, they can then begin asking for and giving directions. This is a terrific review of all the terminology for prepositions of place and movement! Here is a list that you could include for students to reference:

**MOVEMENT:** Go straight/move forward | Turn right or left | On the highway | Exit to the left | Go through the light.

**PLACE:** On the corner | at the light/ stop sign/train tracks | Across from | Next to | Behind/in front of.

### 2 CREATE AN OBSTACLE COURSE

If you have a fairly spacious classroom and you take care to make sure this activity stays safe, then by all means go ahead and create an obstacle course. First pinpoint a point A and a point B. Point A is where students will begin and point B is where students want to end. Take a few chairs and spread them out so the path from point A to B is obstructed. Then put a blindfold on one student, who will be turned around a few times. Have another student direct the first student from point A to point B through the obstacle course. You can vary the obstacle course for each different student or you can make it a team event. This is an enjoyable activity that is safe provided students take their time and listen to the directions. It is also a worthwhile activity to debrief afterwards to discuss the importance of understanding directions, navigating difficulties, and asking the right questions.

### 3 DIRECTIONS FROM MEMORY

Close your eyes and think about the route that you follow to get from your home to your office. Could you tell someone every step of that drive or walk? This activity is a lot of fun simply because giving directions purely by memory really isn't that easy. One way to make it even more engaging is if students who live close to each other can work together to try to get every step in movement absolutely correct. You could also have the students try to trip each other up, or find the gaps in the directions. Another variation on this one could be, for example, from the classroom to the bathroom or from the parking lot to the classroom. You can dream up many ways to have students give directions from memory. An extension

of this could be an assignment to draw a map along with the written directions from school to home or home to work.

### 4 GPS AND GOOGLE MAPS

In this technological world, perhaps many of your students are using a GPS system to get around (and to get lost). If they are not familiar with a GPS and you have access to one on your phone or otherwise, introducing the device to students could be very enlightening. Take out the city maps you provided them with earlier and punch in an address close to the classroom. Have students follow where the GPS tells them to go on their map to find out if it is accurate. You could come up with several ways to provide the class with examples, and have students experiment with the GPS.

You could also introduce Google Maps or Map Quest. This is a handy resource that students could use in their daily lives. It also gives them the capability to look at a map while simultaneously getting written directions. You can do activities with your local city or have some fun choosing famous landmarks throughout the world and locating them on a map. You can also introduce them to the other features of the maps (like search nearby or street view) and open up a whole new world to them. The possibilities with these technological tools are endless, and they could generate entertaining and informative ways for students to explore their area and the world around them!

When it comes to getting around and functioning out in the world with limited language, giving and following directions can be a key piece for students to gain some independence and confidence. Take these ideas and make them as hands-on and relevant as you can for students immediate circumstances, and they'll navigate themselves right into self-reliance.



# How to Teach Prepositions of Time

**PREPOSITIONS OF TIME, LIKE PREPOSITIONS OF PLACE, CAN BE CHALLENGING FOR STUDENTS WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY RECOGNIZING WHEN TO USE CERTAIN WORDS.**

These little words are so important when speaking English because the difference between “He’ll go to Italy in March.” and “He’ll go to Italy at March.” is the difference between an intermediate and an advanced student. While English learners will not notice how incorrect their sentences sound, it is so apparent to native speakers who most likely do not even know the rules for when to use these words.

**SO, HOW DO I TEACH PREPOSITIONS OF TIME?**

## 1 WARM UP

The warm up should focus on time. Students should get some practice telling the time and also talking about months and dates so that they are reminded of all this vocabulary before introducing the new topic. You can bring out the clock you used when teaching your students time or just draw clock faces on the board to give them some quick practice. You can also get the month vocabulary cards out and play a quick round or two of Go Fish. Whatever activities you did when introducing these topics can be repeated as long as your students found them enjoyable the first time around.

## 2 INTRODUCE PREPOSITIONS OF PLACE

Next, introduce the words at, in, and on which should be the focus of this lesson. Your students have probably already used these words when talking about prepositions of place so there should not be any need for pronunciation practice. Write three sentences on the board and ask students which word correctly completes each sentence. This should give you an idea of how much

your students already know about using these words. Briefly talk about how at is used when talking about precise times such as “3:00 PM”, in is used when talking about months, years, or other long periods of time for example “in July”, and on is used for sentences with days or dates like “on Tuesday” or “on March 6th”. It is all well and good to discuss these points however in addition to thinking about these rules students will need practice using prepositions of time in sentences.

## 3 PRACTICE PREPOSITIONS OF TIME

Have students complete a worksheet to practice using prepositions of time. Perhaps in the first section students circle the correct word to complete the sentence and are given only two choices. In the second section have students fill in the blank. The third section could just have a list of phrases such as November, my birthday, and 7:15 PM that they have to choose the correct preposition for. This type of worksheet will help students by building up their confidence with an easy section at the beginning and then challenging them with a lot of phrases at the end.

## 4 PRACTICE MORE

Now that students have spent some time focusing on prepositions of time, remind them that these prepositions have other uses too. You will need three very short passages for this section. In the first passage delete at whenever it occurs without creating blanks and then tell students how many times at occurs in the text. Students can then insert the word wherever they think it has been deleted. Complete this activity for in and on as well. Students can complete this activity individually, in groups, or as a class. Review the answers as a class and then talk about when these words are used as prepositions of time and when they are used as something else.

## 5 PRODUCE

You can easily play Fruit Basket in this lesson to give students the chance to make their own sentences. Have students arrange their chairs in a circle and then remove one so a student has to stand in the middle. The standing student should make a sentence, for instance, “My birthday is in July.” and all the students that have birthdays in July must change seats leaving a different student in the middle. If students have difficulty coming up with sentences, you can say one so that the game continues and does not come to a complete standstill for an extended period of time. Sentences such as “I start school at ~” should get everyone moving.

## 6 REVIEW

At the beginning of the next lesson, you can have students complete a few sentences using prepositions of time to briefly review the material. If students understand everything well, you can move on to the next topic, incorporate prepositions of time whenever possible, and have a solid review of this material before an exam.

**SOMETIMES IT’S THE LITTLE WORDS THAT REALLY TRIP STUDENTS UP. BE SURE TO COMPLETE PLENTY OF PRACTICE ACTIVITIES TO ENSURE THAT STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THE APPROPRIATE USE OF EACH OF THESE WORDS.**