

Handout: Teaching Reading

Components of Reading

There are four basic skill sets that good readers have and use when they read.

Alphabetic

Alphabetic is a term used to describe a collection of reading skills needed to decode words effectively. It consists of:

- **Phonemic awareness:** the ability to recognize sounds of the language and manipulate those sounds
- **Word analysis skills**, including:
 - **Phonics:** connecting letters and letter combinations to language sounds
 - **Word patterns:** recognizing and manipulating patterns in words, like *cat*, *hat*, *sat*, *fat*...
 - **Word parts:** using parts of words—like syllables, prefixes, and suffixes—to decode words
- **Strategic decoding:** the ability to use one or more of these skills to decode a word

Students who are not literate in their native languages, or who come from languages that are not alphabetic or do not use the Roman alphabet, will need a lot of instruction in alphabetic. However, even students that are literate in native languages that are similar to English will need some instruction in alphabetic.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is important to reading comprehension in two ways. First, and most obvious, readers need to know what individual words mean to get meaning from the larger text. Second, readers need a good vocabulary to be able to read a broader variety of materials and materials at higher levels. As they read increasingly complex materials, good readers encounter new words, expanding their vocabularies and allowing them to read new things.

There are different types of vocabulary and different levels of understanding. We have an oral vocabulary—the words we use and understand in listening and speaking, and we have a reading vocabulary—the words we recognize and understand in print. We know some words very well and can use them flexibly, taking advantage of the nuances of their meaning. We know other words at a simple level, but we don't recognize their nuances. And then there are words we don't recognize at all. All of this is affected by the background knowledge we bring to reading.

Finally, there are different tiers of vocabulary. The tiers help us identify what to focus on during instruction:

- Tier 1 words are typically nouns, verbs, familiar adjectives, and common sight words. These are the words we focus on first in ESL instruction because they are the words that

will help students communicate their basic needs. Examples of Tier 1 words are food words, colors, days of the week, and simple action verbs.

- Tier 2 words are found in higher level, more sophisticated texts across a variety of content and genres. They typically have multiple or nuanced meanings and are used to provide description and detail. **Once ESL students are able to communicate in English and get their basic needs met, begin focusing on Tier 2 words in reading.** Building ESL students' Tier 2 vocabulary gives them the foundation they need to read higher-level, more sophisticated texts, exposing them to more English. A larger Tier 2 vocabulary will also help them express themselves better when writing and speaking. Examples of Tier 2 words include *exertion, unanimous, rickety, benevolent, and masterpiece*.
- Tier 3 words are specialized vocabulary related to specific topics such as health, finance, technology, or occupations. We will work with ESL students to learn these words as the need arises. Instruction should focus on word meaning for comprehension, not integrating the words into the students' everyday vocabulary. Examples include *abrasion, liability, lease, and excavator*. Note that Tier 3 words may change according to a student's occupation or hobbies. For a construction worker, *excavator* becomes a Tier 1 word – a common noun used every day.

Fluency

Reading fluency is reading quickly, accurately, and with inflection. Fluency affects reading comprehension in several ways. First, fluent readers can dedicate more of their reading effort to comprehension because they aren't focused on decoding words and putting them together into meaningful phrases and sentences. Fluent readers are also able to read with proper emphasis and inflection (*prosody* is the technical term), which adds meaning. Increased fluency makes reading more pleasant. This means students are likely to read more and become exposed to more English. If they can read more easily, they are more likely to enjoy reading. Finally, when students read aloud during fluency activities, they are able to hear their improvement, and this motivates them to continue learning.

Reading Comprehension Strategies and Skills

Research indicates that readers must actively engage with what they are reading in order to comprehend it. Good readers are able to apply broad strategies and specific skills to access their existing knowledge, set a purpose for reading, check comprehension, extract important information, and apply what they learn.

Adapted from Applying Research in Reading Instruction, Susan McShane, 2005

Teaching Phonics

Phonics instruction helps students make the connection between the sounds of English and the letters that represent the sounds. Students need this skill to be able to decode the words on a page. Below are the basic steps for teaching a phonics element or principle.

Steps

1. Identify the letter for the phonics lesson and write it in lower case. Begin by teaching students to recognize the small letter because the majority of letters they see will be in lower case. Students repeat the name of the letter.
2. Selects words from the lesson that begin with the letter and sound. The number of words you pick should be enough to provide students with several examples but not overwhelm them. Start with 3–5 words, then adjust accordingly. Explain that these words begin with the sound the letter makes and model the sound. Say the words and have students listen for the sound. Write the words on the board and read them again.
3. Ask students to read the words. Do this 2–3 times. Always ask students to “read” words, not “say” words to reinforce the fact that they are reading.
4. Ask students to pick a key word. Explain that they will use that word to model and produce the sound of the letter. Ask students to model the sound of the letter.
5. Ask students for examples of other words that begin with this sound. Write these words on the board. Ask students to read these words.
6. Review the name, sound, and key word for the phonics element.
7. Students write the letter, key word, and other words they want to learn.
8. Write and explain the capital letter.

Suggestions

- Keywords to use as examples of phonics elements and principles can come from anywhere: oral vocabulary from the lesson, a published story, a picture, real world materials, and a student’s own vocabulary. Use materials from the lesson.
- When teaching vowel sounds, you may find it necessary to focus more on recognizing the letter and sound in the middle of the word. Use short, single syllable words as examples.
- The sounds and letters do not need to be taught in alphabetical order. Begin with sounds that are easier for the student to hear and make – such as continuant consonants like /m/ or /s/.

Word Patterns

Index Cards

Use index cards to teach students to use word patterns to create new words.

Steps

1. Choose 1-2 word patterns to practice. Write each pattern on an index card, left aligned on the card.
2. Brainstorm all of the consonant sounds (including blends and digraphs) the student can use to create a word with the word pattern. Circle the ones the student already knows. Write each one the student knows on an index card, right aligned on the card. If you want to teach the student new sounds, you can write each of the remaining ones on an index card, right aligned on the index card, but keep them in a different stack. It’s helpful if you write the consonants in a different color than the word pattern.

3. Show the student the word family. Read the word family to the student, or ask the student to read it if it is a word family the student already recognizes (such as *-at* or *-it*).
4. Show the student the first consonant sound she will recognize. Ask the student to say the sound the consonant makes.
5. Place the sound in front of the word family. Explain that you would like the student to read the new word by blending the beginning sound with the sound of the word family. Model the first one for the student. In the example below you would say /m/ /at/ /mat/.



6. Model more if the student continues to need help. When the student is ready, give the student the stack of cards with initial sounds she knows and have her form new words.
7. After a student is able to create words independently, you may introduce 1-2 new initial sounds from the remaining cards.

Concentration Game

This game provides practice in both sounding out words using patterns and recognizing patterns in print.

Steps

1. Create pairs of words that share a word pattern, and write each word on a separate index card. Examples: *cat/mat*, *had/mad*, *love/glove*.
2. Determine how many pairs you will use for the board. Eight pairs make a good-sized board.
3. Turn the cards face down and shuffle them. Put them into a grid—for 16 cards the grid would be 4 x 4.
4. The first player turns over two cards. If they do not use the same word pattern, the player turns them back over and it is the second player's turn.
5. If they use the same word pattern, the player must read each word correctly to pick up the cards. It is then the second player's turn.
6. The second player turns over two cards. If they do not use the same word pattern, the player turns them back over and it is the first player's turn. If they use the same pattern, the player must read each word correctly to pick up the cards. It is now the first player's turn again.
7. Play repeats until all of the cards have been picked up. The player with the most cards wins.

Word Slides

Word slides are great hands-on learning tools for working with word patterns.

Steps

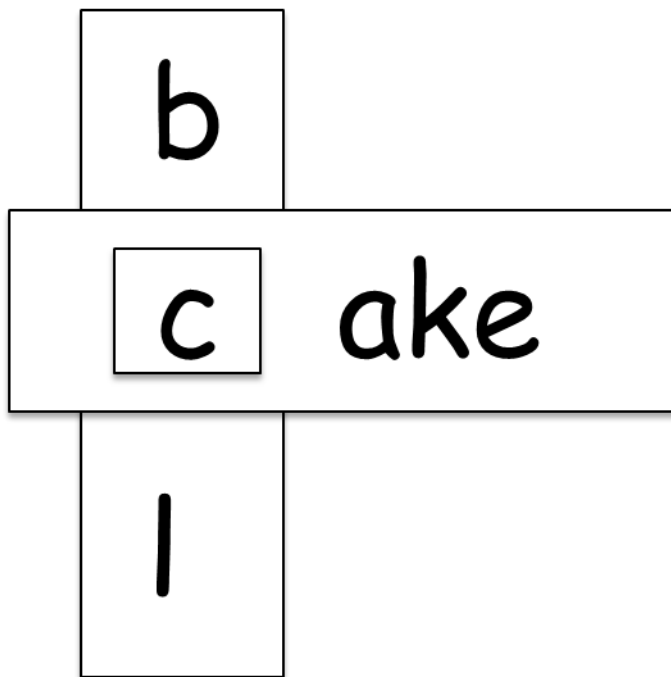
1. Select a word pattern or patterns to review.
2. Place students in pairs or small groups.
3. Give each set of students a word pattern. Have students brainstorm all of the words they can form using that word pattern.
4. Give each student two 4" x 6" index cards

5. Have students fold one index card in half lengthwise.
6. Have students print the word family on the right hand side of the card.
7. Have students cut a window for the missing initial sound, and then cut a slit in the fold of the index card.
8. Have students fold the second index card lengthwise.
9. Have students write the initial consonant sounds from the words they brainstormed onto the second index card.
10. Insert the second index card into the slot of the first index card.
11. As students pull the index card, the consonant sounds will appear in the window.
Students can practice reading each word.

Variations

1. Instead of cutting a window at the beginning of the word, you can cut a window in the middle of the word. Write the vowels on the pull strip and practice substituting them to create words.
2. Write one word pattern on the front of the strip and another on the back of the strip.

Example



Sight Word Flashcard Practice

Flashcards are one of the best and easiest ways to practice recognizing words by sight. And you may already have them—many other ESL practice activities involve writing words on flashcards, so they are often readily available for practice.

Steps

1. Choose six to ten words the student wants to learn. They may already exist on flashcards. If not, have the student write each word on an index card.
2. Shuffle the stack of index cards. Flip the top one over and ask the student to read it. If the student reads it correctly, put it to the right.
3. If the student misses the word, put it to the left. If a student has trouble, read the word aloud and ask him or her to use it in a sentence. Put the card to the left.
4. Once a student has gone through the stack once, pick up the cards on the left that the student missed. Shuffle these cards and review them again following the same procedure. Continue this until the student reads all of the words correctly.
5. Shuffle the entire deck and review all the words again. Continue until the student is able to read the entire deck, or until you sense that the student is becoming frustrated.

Variations

1. Once the student is able to read the entire stack correctly, focus on reading the word quickly and accurately. Using a stopwatch, begin timing as you flip over the first card. Work your way through the deck. Record the time and any misses. Repeat the process 2–3 more times, recording the time and number of misses. Discuss any improvement the data shows.

Teaching Reading Vocabulary

Here are some strategies for teaching reading vocabulary. Some of them enhance the strategies you will use for teaching oral vocabulary.

Teach print vocabulary when you teach oral vocabulary. After student learn new oral vocabulary, introduce the same vocabulary words in print. Write the words on the board. Read the words, then have students read the words. Finally, have students write the words.

Have students create vocabulary journals or flashcards. Have students write new vocabulary words in vocabulary journals or on flashcards. For lower level students, have them write the word on one side of a flashcard and draw or paste a picture on the other side. As students become more fluent, have them write simple definitions in their own words and use the word in a sentence.

Review vocabulary before reading. The reading passage in your lesson should be connected to the topic, so it will likely contain some of the same words students learned in the vocabulary section of the lesson. Before reading, review these vocabulary words. Point to the words on the board or in a student's set of flashcards or journal. Ask the student to read the word. Next, point to the word in the passage and ask the student to read the word. Do this for other difficult words the student may not know, including a simple definition after reading the word. Reviewing vocabulary before reading will help with comprehension.

Ensure multiple exposures. Students will learn new words when they see the words often, in different contexts, and use them in speaking and writing. Choose reading passages

that reinforce important vocabulary words. Also design practice activities that allow students to use the words in writing and speech. This ensures that the words will become part of the students' vocabularies.

Teaching Reading Fluency

Reading fluency is the speed and ease with which we read. It has three components:

- Speed
- Accuracy
- Expressiveness (technically, *prosody*)

The following techniques are good strategies for improving students' reading fluency.

Echo Reading

Echo reading provides support to students because they hear fluent reading modeled before attempting to do it themselves.

Steps

1. Select something to read that is short and at a level slightly higher than what the student can read independently.
2. Review vocabulary the student may not know.
3. Read the first sentence aloud, modeling proper pace and phrasing.
4. Ask the student to read the same sentence aloud after you.
5. Continue this pattern to the end of the passage.
6. When you've finished the passage, go back to the beginning and follow the same pattern again. As the student improves, expand the amount of text you read before the student "echoes" you. For instance, increase to two sentences and then to a paragraph.
7. Encourage the student to read independently as soon as he or she is comfortable.

Variations

- To adapt this activity to a classroom environment, you might read through the passage once with the entire class echoing in unison, then go back through the passage using the same technique and calling on individual students to read. Remember to read the sentence aloud before each student reads to model proper pace and phrasing.
- Encourage students to use smart phones or other digital recorders to record you as you read so they can practice at home. Or, you can make a digital recording of yourself reading the passage and load it onto student phones.

Modeled Reading

Modeled reading gives students an opportunity to hear reading done with good expression and good phrasing. It also provides a change of pace in instruction and allows students to practice listening skills.

Steps

1. Choose fiction materials that are of interest to students. Since students are not reading aloud, the text may be a reading level above the students' instructional reading level.
2. Provide students with copies of the passage.
3. Ask the students to relax and listen to the reading as they follow along in the text.
4. Read aloud and model expressive and fluent reading for the students.
5. The reading need only be about 5 minutes in length.

Variations

- The model does not have to be the teacher. It can be a recording or another student.

Dyad/Choral Reading

Dyad reading involves a teacher and one student; choral reading is a teacher and a group of students. For both activities, the students and teacher read the same passage aloud together. Both provide an opportunity for students to read fluently and independently, knowing that support is available from the teacher or other classmates if needed.

Steps

1. Begin by selecting something to read that is short and at an independent reading level for the students. As in echo reading, your role is to model proper pace, phrasing, and emphasis.
2. If the students are reading comfortably, you will simply stop and allow them to continue on their own.
3. If students encounter a word they do not know, provide it quickly so the pace is not disrupted.
4. If students start to struggle with the selection, begin reading again to provide a model.
5. Repeat the process until students are able to read the passage aloud independently, with proper pace and phrasing.

Variations

- This is a good activity for students to practice at home with a recording of the passage.

Guidelines for Fluency Instruction

There are two rules you should follow when doing reading fluency practice.

4. **Practice fluency after the students have read the passage and you've checked for comprehension.** At that point students have reviewed the vocabulary multiple times and are more familiar with the passage, having read it once already. This sets them up for success.
5. **Don't practice other things when practicing fluency.** Don't ask comprehension questions or ask a student to stop and decode a word. Reading fluently takes all of a student's concentration.

Reading Levels

As you identify teaching techniques you can use to help students develop fluency, you may see the terms *independent reading level* or *instructional reading level*. This is what those terms mean.

Independent Reading Level

This means a student can read a passage alone with ease, without making errors, and with good comprehension. Typically, the student would be able to quickly and accurately decode 95% or more of the words, and understand almost all of the text.

Instructional Reading Level

This means the passage will be challenging for a student to read, but not frustrating. The challenge allows the student to stretch and develop decoding, fluency, and comprehension skills. Typically, a student would be able to quickly and accurately decode 90-95% of the words, and understand approximately 80% of the text.

Frustration Reading Level

With reading material at this level, the student has real difficulty. As a result, he or she becomes frustrated rather than challenged. Typically this characterizes any passage where the student is able to accurately decode less than 90% of the words and understands less than 80% of the text.

Levels of Reading Comprehension

When checking to see if students understood what they just read, we want to probe at three different levels: literal, inferential, and critical thinking.

- **Literal comprehension** is the ability for readers to recognize and recall specific facts mentioned in a story: the name of the character, where he or she lived, or who the character visited. Check students' literal comprehension by asking them to summarize the story and by asking specific questions about the story where the answer is clearly stated in what they read. For beginning-level ESL students, this is the comprehension level to focus on.
- With **inferential comprehension**, information is not specifically given in the text. Readers combine textual clues with their own experience to make inferences about what happened. "How" and "Why" questions can help you check inferential comprehension. Students who are literate in their native languages will likely have some of the comprehension skills needed for this level and will be able to demonstrate this level of comprehension when their English language proficiency is high enough. Students who are not literate in a native language will need instruction in specific comprehension skills and strategies.
- **Readers who use critical thinking** understand what they read well enough to use it in other contexts. For instance, they might:
 - Apply: take what they learned by reading and apply it to a different situation
 - Analyze: explore the moods and motivations of a story's characters
 - Synthesize: develop an opinion based on information from several sources
 - Evaluate: compare and contrast elements in a text and make judgments

Again, students who are not literate in a native language will need instruction in these specific comprehension skills. This instruction isn't a focus until students have reached a low- to high-intermediate level. Students who are literate in their native languages may already have some of these comprehension skills, depending on their literacy proficiency or education level in the native language.

Before, During, and After Approach to Comprehension

When working with ESL students, it helps to think of reading comprehension instruction in three stages:

- what we do to prepare students before they read
- what we do to support comprehension while students read
- what we do to check for comprehension after students after read

Before Reading

Before reading, tutors can

- **review new vocabulary** that students will see in the text. Reviewing vocabulary before reading improves comprehension;

- **preview the story** by directing students to look at pictures, titles, headings, and subheadings, and to use them to make predictions about the story;
- ask questions that help students **access prior knowledge and experience** relevant to the story;
- help students **set a purpose for reading**. Ask questions that help them think about what they want to learn about the topic or a character in the story.

During Reading

While students are reading, tutors can

- **provide reading support** by supplying words when students have trouble decoding them or even reading the story to the students first;
- encourage students to **read in small chunks, ask questions, and reread** things that didn't make sense.

After Reading

After students have finished reading, tutors can

- **ask questions** about the story to check for comprehension
- ask students to **summarize** the story in their own words
- do a **writing activity** based on the story. This can be a cloze activity (fill in the blank) that summarizes a story; sentence completion based on information in an article; or a summary paragraph, depending on students' writing abilities.

Handout: Teaching Writing

Writing in Daily Life

List the types of writing you have done this week.

Teaching Letter Formation

Here are some teaching strategies you can use when teaching handwriting.

1. **Keep a handwriting chart available** and visible to students when they are working on any writing activity, and make sure each student has a copy for home. Preferably, the chart will show the direction of the pencil as the letters are formed. You can find many examples of these charts by searching for “handwriting charts” online.
2. **Progress from large motor to small motor skills.** Students who haven’t done a lot of writing may not have the fine motor skills needed to write legibly in a small space while holding a small pencil. Begin by having students use their arms and hands to write the letters in the air. Next, have them write the letters on the top of a desk using their fingers. Or put salt into a rimmed tray and have them draw the letters in the salt. From there, have students use pencils to write the letters on unlined paper. Finally, have them trace the outline of the letters on lined paper, and then write them independently.
3. **Focus on printing.** Print closely resembles the text students see in books and online.
4. **Start with the letters the student needs or wants to learn.** Written letters do not need to be taught in alphabetical order. Letter formation is better taught in the context of what the student needs to learn to write or by grouping letters that are formed with similar motions.
5. **Copy.** After a student can form letters, have the student copy words and sentences. The student can copy vocabulary words, sentences from the story, or a story that he or she dictated and you wrote down. Copying activities should be short and should be related to student needs or learning goals.

Copying

When students can write their letters comfortably, you can encourage them to copy words and sentences. This will help them learn the proper spacing to use between letters and words, when to use capital letters, and where to place punctuation marks. Asking students to copy all or part of their own Language Experience stories is an excellent way to start.

Copy Words

Have students copy words that they need to use often or that they have difficulty spelling.

daughter

sick

Copy Similar Words

It can be difficult for students to notice small differences in words in a second language. Have students practice copying words with one different letter (minimal pairs).

pet bet pet bet pet bet _____

lip lid lip lid lip lid _____

mate mat mate mat mate mat _____

Copy Sentences

Copying phrases or sentences helps students with the spacing of letters and words as well as spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Sentences can be written on worksheets or copied from the board. Have students copy a sentence multiple times.

Copy the sentence below three times.

I like apples and bananas.

Complete and Rewrite Sentences

Have students complete a fill-in-the-blank sentence, then rewrite the entire sentence.

Write Rewrite

My name is _____ . _____ .

I am from _____ . _____ .

Practice Punctuation

Have students begin by identifying punctuation. When they are comfortable identifying punctuation and can describe where to look for it, have them move on to the more challenging task of adding punctuation.

Identify Capitals

Circle all of the words that use capital letters.

Every morning in the Hernandez family mom and dad drink coffee with cream and sugar, and Rachel and Robbie drink hot chocolate. The family eats sweet Mexican bread, eggs, and fruit. They love to eat sweet food! Do you like sweet food? The family eats Doritos, sandwiches, and apples for lunch on Mondays and Tuesdays. They like to eat Italian food on Wednesdays and Chinese food on Fridays.

Identify Punctuation

Circle each period in red. Circle each question mark in blue.

Every morning in the Hernandez family mom and dad drink coffee with cream and sugar, and Rachel and Robbie drink hot chocolate. The family eats sweet Mexican bread, eggs, and fruit. They love to eat sweet food! Do you like sweet food? The family eats Doritos, sandwiches, and apples for lunch on Mondays and Tuesdays. They like to eat Italian food on Wednesdays and Chinese food on Fridays.

Add Punctuation

Add a punctuation mark, period or question mark, to the end of each sentence.

The Cruz family eats muffins donuts and other sweet bread for breakfast. They like to drink orange juice They eat fried chicken sandwiches apples and French fries for lunch The dad likes to drink an energy drink and the mom likes to drink iced coffee The kids drink juice water or soda They love soda For dinner they eat pizza with extra cheese and meat They drink soda again They eat ice cream or cake after dinner.

Supporting Transitioning Writers

As ESL students become more comfortable copying sentences and start to produce phrases and sentences on their own, they often begin to worry about making grammatical mistakes, misspelling words, or writing something that no one will understand. They may come to view writing as an agonizing act of creating something for the teacher or tutor to correct. As a result, they become overly concerned with the technical aspect of writing and lose sight of the fact that writing is a tool for communicating ideas. The activities below provide the support students need so they can focus on small aspects of writing composition or grammar and not become overwhelmed with either.

Sentence Frames

Sentence frames or sentence starters provide part of the sentence and the student completes the rest. They are different from fill-in-the-blanks in that the student has more control and can be more creative in how he or she completes the frame.

Examples

Here are some examples of single sentence starters.

On the weekend, I like to _____.

My favorite food is _____ because _____.

When I _____ I like to _____.

You can also use sentence frames to help a student write paragraphs.

My favorite city is _____. I like this city because _____.

One of my favorite things to do in this city is _____.

Questions

Another way to foster the transition to more independent writing is to have students respond to questions. You can teach students to incorporate the words and phrases into their responses.

Examples

Question

Student Response

Where do you work?

I work at the hotel.

What do you do at work?

At work, I clean the rooms.

When do you go to work?

I go to work at night.

If this is initially too difficult for students, you can provide sentence frames as part of the student response.

Question

Student Response

Where do you work?

I work at _____.

What do you do at work?

At work, I _____.

When do you go to work?

I go to work _____.

Writing with Photos

If students have difficulty coming up with things to write, or you have difficulty coming up with topics, you can combine the supports above with pictures to spark the writing.

Writing with Photos and Sentence Frames

1. Select a picture or photograph. The picture should depict vocabulary that students know. For example, if students have recently learned color names or names of clothing items, the picture might feature various people in a city wearing different types of colorful clothing.
2. Create sentence frames that will encourage students to write about the picture. Put the sentence frames along with the picture on a handout, or write the sentence frames on the board if you want students to practice writing whole sentences.
3. Tell students that this is a writing activity. Explain that you will start to say sentences about the picture and they will complete the sentences. You can make the sentence frames as easy or as difficult as you feel is appropriate.
4. Ask students to share their stories when they are finished.



This is _____.

The woman looks _____.

The dog looks _____.

They are going to _____.

When they get there, they will _____.

Writing with Photos and Questions with Groups

1. Divide students into groups of 3-5. Collect different magazine or newspaper pictures that depict just one person. Each person in the group will need a different picture. Note: the pictures should be of one person, not a group of people.
2. Give each student a picture with a blank sheet of paper stapled to the back of it.
3. Ask the students to look at their pictures and imagine who the person is and what the person's background and life are like.
4. Write the first set of questions on a chalkboard where each member of the group can see them. Read the questions aloud.
 - What is his/her name?
 - How old is he/she?
 - What does he/she do?

5. Ask the students to turn their pictures over and write the answers to these questions (using complete sentences) on the attached piece of paper. Tell them not to worry about correct spelling or grammar. Encourage them to be as imaginative as possible.
6. When they have finished writing, have them pass the picture to the person on the right.
7. Ask each student to look at the new picture, turn it over, and read the sentences written by the previous student.
8. Write the following set of questions on the chalkboard. Read them aloud.
 - Where does he/she live?
 - Who does he/she live with?
9. Ask the students to write answers to these questions on the sheet of paper on the photo they are now holding.
10. When they finish writing, ask them to pass the picture to the person on their right.
11. Continue to do this for the following questions.
 - What does he/she like to do?
 - What doesn't he/she like to do?
 - What did he/she do yesterday? Why?
 - What is he/she going to do tomorrow? Why?
12. When the students have answered all the questions, ask each person to pass the picture to the right one more time. At this point, ask students to read the story about the photo to the other students.

Using Models and Templates

Another way to support emerging ESL writers is to provide them with a model they can imitate in content and style or a template that provides the basic structure for what they want to write and for which the student provides the details. This technique is especially useful for practical everyday writing, but can also be used for creative writing.

Steps

1. **Read.** Select 2-3 models of the type of writing the student will do. For example, find 2-3 examples of absentee notes for children in school. Have the student read each note independently or with your help.
2. **Discuss.** Discuss the content of the model: What content was similar across models? How did the models differ? Make a list of content areas found in each model. For example, an absentee note might contain the date, the teacher's name, the student's name, the day the student was absent and the reason for being absent. Some notes might include a request to send homework while others may not.
3. **Decide.** After discussing the differences, have the student decide which content he or she thinks is important to include.
4. **Identify words and phrases.** If there were specific words or phrases that were used that the student liked, have the student identify those and write them down.
5. **Brainstorm.** For each content area, have the student brainstorm his or her own information. An information grid is useful for this step. In our absentee note example, the student would brainstorm the names of his or her children, the names of the teachers, the days and months, and reasons for being absent.

6. **Create a template.** Use the model that most closely resembles what the student wants to write as a starting point. Create a draft template by copying the model, removing the content areas and replacing them with blanks (as if you were creating a sentence frame). Next ask the student what he or she would like to add to the template. Recopy to create the final draft of the template.
7. **Use.** If a student has an immediate need for the template, have the student use the template to write what he or she needs to write, replacing the content placeholders with their information. If the student doesn't have an immediate need, practice using the template by giving the student different scenarios and having him or her write an appropriate note based on the scenario.

Suggestions

Models and templates may be useful for items like these:

- Permission notes
- Party invitations
- Craigslist ads for items or services
- Information flyers
- Lost pet notices

High-Beginning/Low Intermediate Writers

As students become more confident and competent writers, you can gradually take the supports away. For example, you might replace an activity like the photo and sentence frames with a guided writing activity like the one below:

My Favorite Person

Prewriting

Think about a person you know and really like. Draw the person here.



How do you know this person?

What words would you use to describe this person?

Give an example of when this person did something special.

Write about this person.

Write a paragraph about this person. First, tell how you know this person. Next, describe this person. Last, give an example of something special this person did.

Rewrite

Reread your paragraph. Work with your tutor or another student to improve one thing about your paragraph. Rewrite your paragraph below.

The Writing Process

Having a consistent process to use when writing helps students become more confident writers. It provides them with a structure to follow when they are unsure of where to start. It relieves the pressure of being perfect because it allows time to go back and fix mistakes. It provides enough structure for them to write independently. And ultimately, it results in a final product they can be proud of. Follow the process below when writing with students.

Prewriting

This is the first step in the writing process. Here, students decide what to write about and brainstorm their ideas. This is probably the most important step in the writing process, but it is also often the step that teachers and students pay the least attention to. The more time spent in the prewriting step, the easier the remaining steps will be. Ideas may come from conversation between you and the student, a practical need, or thoughts generated from reading. If a student wants to do practical writing—such as writing a resume and cover letter or birthday invitations—you might start by analyzing examples of that type of writing. Mind mapping is a good way to capture and organize the ideas generated in this step.

First Draft

The first draft is a student's first attempt to give structure to his or her ideas. For the first draft, the focus is on the message rather than on punctuation, spelling, grammar, or handwriting. It is not even necessary for the first draft to contain complete sentences. A student who has difficulty with a word or phrase can guess, draw a symbol, or ask for help.

Revise

This is where the student works to clarify and expand the content. When revising, the student should focus on the overall organization of information, adding and removing information, description and detail, and word choice. You can help by asking the student to read his or her first draft and then asking questions about it. Read the piece aloud yourself, and ask the student to listen critically.

Edit

This is where the student makes improvements in the mechanics—spelling, punctuation, and grammar. The amount of editing will depend on the student's level and the purpose of the piece. For beginning writers, focus on editing to correct one or two reoccurring problems rather than trying to make the piece perfect. For example, you might have a student edit a piece specifically for noun/verb agreement, proper use of apostrophes, and the spelling of words that have double letters because you know these mechanics give that student the most trouble. Create a customized editing checklist for the student to follow that includes what he or she is looking for as well as common mistakes and ways to fix them.

Final Draft

This is where the student publishes what they have written. Publishing means creating a clean copy of a piece and then using it or sharing it with others. Publishing might mean sending off a resume and cover letter to a potential employer, or putting envelopes with birthday party

invitations in a daughter's backpack to deliver to her friends at school. Publishing is very important because it represents the end of the writing process. Students may go through the revise and edit cycle several times. Without publishing, revising and editing can become an endless loop. If a student has written something he or she is especially proud of, consider ways of publishing the writing to enhance that pride. This might involve submitting the writing to be published in the literacy program's newsletter or on their website, or taking a collection of the student's writings to a printer and having them bound and published. This can go a long way toward changing a student's attitude about writing from negative to positive.

Mind Mapping

Mind mapping is a great tool to use during the prewriting step of the writing process. Mind mapping allows writers to quickly capture thoughts and connect those ideas in ways that make sense to them. Students can then use their mind maps as starting points for creating first drafts.

Steps

1. Write a word or topic in the center of the page and circle it.
2. Ask the student what comes to mind when thinking about the topic.
3. Write what the student says. Group related ideas using circles or lines to show connections.
4. Talk about the finished map and make additions or revisions.
5. Ask the student to choose which parts of the map to include in the writing.
6. For beginning students, do all the mind map writing, and read the results back to the student. More advanced students may be able to create their own maps.
7. To help a student get comfortable with maps, you might want to make a map of a reading selection.
8. As an intermediate step, you can ask a student to brainstorm thoughts about a topic and dictate them to you. You write them in a list. Go over the list with the student and ask which ideas belong together. Write these ideas in clusters, and use them to prepare a map.

The Unnamed Food

This activity is good for helping students improve their use of description and detail in writing. Use a mind map or other graphic organizer to help students brainstorm during the prewriting step.

Steps

1. Ask students to think of a food. Explain that they shouldn't tell anyone what their food is. Ask them to write the name of the food in the center of a piece of paper and draw a circle around it.
2. Ask students to write the word "ingredients" off to one side, draw a circle around it, and connect it back to the circle with the name of their food. Now ask students to think of the ingredients in their food and write them around the circle.
3. Follow Step 2 with the following topics:

- a. How the food is prepared
 - b. How the food looks, smells, feels, sounds, and tastes
 - c. Why the student enjoys this food.
4. Now ask each student to take a fresh sheet of paper and write a paragraph describing his or her food without naming it. When students have finished, have them give their paragraphs to their partners. The partners try to guess the foods correctly. The goal is to describe the food well enough for a partner to identify it.

Variations

This activity can be done with holidays, modes of transportation, clothing, sports, places to eat or visit, or any other common student experience.

Dialog Journals

Dialog journals give students the opportunity to use and appreciate writing as a form of communication and to consistently practice writing.

Steps

1. Give each student in class a notebook to use as a dialog journal.
2. In the class session, ask each student to write something for you to read in his or her notebook. Tell them that they can choose the topic. For example, students can explain something to you, ask you a question, tell a joke, tell you what they did last weekend, or describe a fond memory.
3. Tell students not to worry whether their grammar or spelling is correct or whether any wording sounds funny. The important thing is writing something that they want to write and want to share with you. By not having to focus on correctness, students will appreciate writing as a way to communicate their ideas to someone else and not just as another exercise that they have to do. This may encourage them to use writing to meet their daily communication needs outside of class. Plus, as you work on correcting and improving their writing with other exercises in class, you will likely see those new skills also applied to their journal writing.
4. Explain that you will not correct or change anything they write and that the writing will be confidential. No one except you will see it. You can review the writing as soon as they finish. Tell your students that this is the first of many written exchanges you will have in the form of a dialogue journal. Tell students that the next time they write in their journals, they will do it at home.
5. Give students time to do the writing. If a student is having difficulty getting started, talk with him or her and ask questions. For example, you could suggest that the student write about what he or she did the previous weekend.
6. When you've read a journal entry, put the current date below the student's entry and write your response. If the student asked questions, try to answer them. If not, make comments triggered by what the student wrote. By responding to what students write, you will help them understand that their ideas are worthwhile and meaningful. You will also help them gain a better sense of how to write for a specific audience—you!

7. Although you will not make any corrections to a student's entry, model correct English in what you choose to write yourself.
8. Since your goal is to keep the dialogue going, consider ending each of your entries with a question. This can make it easier for a student to get started on a new entry. But explain to your students that they don't have to limit themselves to answering your questions. They can also choose to write about an entirely different topic.
9. Continue this process through subsequent weeks, except have students take their journals home and write in them there. (Alternately, all of the writing could take place via email or in a word processing program, and students could email you their entries.) Students will write during class only in the session in which you first introduce dialogue journals. You might want to require one entry from each student each week. You'll probably find that students are initially reluctant to do much writing: They will still be trying to figure out what the assignment "really" is. Eventually, a true dialogue will develop.

Activity: Bag of Writing

Bag of Sentences

Cut out the story strips below. Put each story in a separate bag. Give each participant one bag to create a story.

America is my new country.
Portugal is my home country.
I make new friends here.
I miss my old friends.
We came to America from Vietnam, Poland, and China.
We want to learn English and become good citizens.
America is like a small United Nations.
I have a big problem in my community.
It is about a mother.
She has six children.
She is not mentally well.
She must go to the hospital to get special medical attention.
We have the problem of the children.
What shall we do with them?
I am like a lot of people.
I have dreams.
I dream of a good life for my family.
That dream is finally coming true.

Bag of Words

Cut out the words below and put them in a bag. Give one bag to each participant.

the	the	the	the	the	the	the	the	the	the
a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a
an	an	an	an	an	an	an	an	an	an
of	to	in	for	on	by	about	over	after	but
I	me	we	us	you	she	her	he	him	it
they	them	dog	cat	bike	car	tree	woods	park	swing
did	ran	said	went	made	knew	took	saw	came	used
ball	game	desk	phone	cup	sun	moon	grass	city	heart
gave	told	said	tried	asked	felt	left	put	kept	let
red	orange	yellow	green	blue	purple	gray	black	white	pink
with	at	from	into	until	upon	including		during	
against		among		throughout		despite		towards	
brother		sister		mother		father		house	
mailman		grocery		hospital		mountain		people	
information		family		computer		music		reading	
pizza		problem		movie		location		school	
wanted		thought		found		worked		called	
needed		became		found		began		heard	
adorable		clean		fancy		old-fashioned		plain	
careful		easy		famous		important		expensive	
brave		calm		delightful		angry		grumpy	
worried		loud		ancient		modern		melted	
accidentally		deliberately		eagerly		frequently		gracefully	
lazily		happily		silently		poorly		honestly	

ESL Teaching Methods: Teaching Grammar Creatively

Stephanie Long, Reach to Teach: Teaching Adventures Abroad Blog, April 13, 2015,
<https://www.reachtoteachrecruiting.com/blog/ESL-teaching-methods-grammar>

Grammar probably ranked pretty high on your list of least favorite subjects as a student. As a teacher, it can seem just as boring. When it comes to teaching ESL, though, you're going to be spending a lot of time getting very familiar with the minute points of grammar, and then figuring out how to communicate those to your students.

Does that mean the grammar portions of your lessons always have to be a drag? Nope. It's a huge part of your lessons, and you can definitely find ways to make it fun and interesting for you and your students. Teaching grammar creatively isn't nearly as tricky as you might think!

Teach Grammar in Context

One of the most important things to do if you are looking for more interesting ways to teach grammar is to teach it in context.

For example, let's say you are introducing conditional sentences to your students. You could start your lesson by writing a big title on the board: "Conditional Sentences", followed by an example: "If I don't study for a test, I get a bad grade," followed by a lengthy explanation: "This type of conditional sentence means that every time the first thing happens, the second thing happens, too. So, every time I don't study for a test..." Are you falling asleep yet?

On the other hand, you can start your lesson by tossing out some sentences for the students to finish: "If Jerry falls asleep in class, he..." "If I don't study for a test, I..." "If I eat too much, I feel..." You might need to coax the answers out of them at first, but usually there will be one or two students who will catch on right away, even if they've never heard that particular sentence structure. The other students, after hearing a few answers, will get the gist pretty quickly, too. Let some zany answers come up, and have fun with it.

Once they've seen the grammar in context, take a few moments to clarify and point out the structure and usage. Make sure everyone understands, knows what it's called, and can identify and give examples of this particular sentence structure. Return to the game or activity briefly after the lesson, too. It will take on a new meaning and drive the grammar point home now that they have a solid understanding.

When students see grammar in context first – through a game, a story, an activity, or just frequently hearing it used – it lets their brains work a little bit to intuit the meaning before you formally explain it. That's how we naturally learn a language: by being exposed to it and picking up on the meaning. It's more engaging, it develops an understanding that's grounded in context, and it also develops their critical thinking and comprehension skills.

Don't Over-Explain

Even though it's useful to have a quick lesson where you explain the formal name of the grammar pattern and go over its structure and usage, don't over explain. The less you can possibly talk about grammar and the more you can actually use and practice that grammar, the better.

Often, your students' textbooks will have explanations of new grammar points. If it's a very complex or advanced point, reading through that explanation and answering any questions can be helpful. But, for the most part, grammar explanations are very, very confusing, and trying too hard to explain a grammar point is just going to confuse you and the students. A few concrete examples are almost always better.

Incorporate Grammar into Other Activities

Grammar is something that runs through just about every aspect of language. Even the simplest sentences have grammar. Your curriculum may require you to teach stand-alone grammar lessons, and it's important to introduce various grammar points and topics so that the students have a richer understanding of the mechanisms of language. But don't let that be the only time you think about grammar in the classroom.

Games and activities are the perfect time to revisit and emphasize grammar points with very little effort on your part and a lot of fun for the students. For example, mad libs are a perfect way to revisit the difference between nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives, without feeling like a dry review.

Stories are amazing teaching tools, too. After reading a story, challenge students to identify examples of grammar points that you have recently taught, or to pick out sentence structure and patterns that are used frequently throughout the story.

The most important thing to remember when you are coming up with ways to teach grammar creatively is that grammar doesn't have to be dry and boring. If you teach it in context and incorporate grammar into stories, games, and other fun activities, your students will pick up on grammar usage and structure relatively painlessly – and they will probably even have a lot of fun doing it.

Handout: Grammar Activities

Total Physical Response for Grammar

Total Physical Response (TPR) is a teaching technique for beginning ESL students that enables them to learn new vocabulary and grammar structures by listening to and carrying out spoken commands. Students are less likely to feel pressure because in TPR activities they are not required to speak.

When using TPR to teach grammar, choose grammar concepts that can be easily demonstrated, such as prepositions of place: *in, on, under, beside*.

Steps

1. Select the grammar concept and five to seven phrases to teach.
2. Before the teaching session, make a list of all the phrases in the order you plan to teach them. (The list will serve as a record of what you have taught and will help you plan review activities for later lessons.)
3. Gather any equipment, props, or pictures you will need to set the context or illustrate the meaning of the commands. For example, if you are teaching prepositions of place, you will need several objects that can be placed *in, on, under, and beside* each other. A pencil, a book, and a cup would make good props. It is good to select items for which students already know the English vocabulary. Then they can focus on the grammar structure being taught.
4. Teach the grammar.
 - a. Model the grammar phrase as you say it. Speak slowly and clearly. For example, place the pencil on the book as you say, "*The pencil is on the book.*" Model 2-3 times.
 - b. Use the grammar phrase as a command to the students. Perform the action with them several times, and give the command each time. For example, you would say to students, "*Please put your pencil on the book.*"
 - c. Give the command without performing the action yourself. Encourage the students to indicate comprehension by performing the action.
 - d. If a student has difficulty carrying out the command, model the action again as you say it. Always be ready to help out if necessary.
 - e. Repeat steps a–d for each grammar phrase you plan to teach. Before introducing each new command, review the commands you have already taught. Review them in the same order that you taught them.
 - f. Finally, review all the commands in random order.
 - g. If you are working with a small group, have selected students practice giving the commands.

Suggestions for Topics

Information Grids

An information grid is a table that students use to collect and organize information around a particular topic. Information grid activities use all aspects of language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This makes them useful tools for ESL instruction. You can teach grammar with a grid by having students report information from their grids back to the class using different grammar structures. Here's an example:

Steps

1. Select a topic for the grid and a grammar structure the information will allow you to teach. For example, you might have students collect information about what time they do everyday things and use the reporting to teach noun/verb agreement.
2. Create an information grid on a chalkboard so everyone can see it. Write the headings along the top. In the far left column, write a number for each student in the group. If you have a large class, limit the number of students on the grid to five or six.
3. Enter your information in the grid on the first line. This will allow you to model the grammar structure.
4. Choose a student. Write the student's name on the second line as you repeat the name aloud. Ask the student questions to find out what information you should put in the columns. Write the student's responses in the grid, and then read aloud what you have written.
5. Repeat this process with a few other students.
6. Once the grid has been completed, model reporting information about yourself and other students using the correct grammar structure. For example, here is an information grid for the activity described above:

What time do you...?				
Name	go to bed?	get up?	eat breakfast?	leave for work?
Mr. Evans	11:30 p.m.	7:00 a.m.	7:15 a.m.	8:00 a.m.
Maria	10:00 p.m.	6:30 a.m.	7:00 a.m.	7:30 a.m.
Wong	11:00 p.m.	6:00 a.m.	6:10 a.m.	7:00 a.m.
Ivan	9:00 a.m.	4:00 p.m.	8:30 a.m.	10:30 p.m.
Frieda	9:30 p.m.	6:00 a.m.	no breakfast	6:30 a.m.

7. Begin by reporting your own information, stressing the verb: "*I **go** to bed at 11:30 p.m. I **get** up at 7:00 a.m.*"
8. Then report on someone else: "*Maria **goes** to bed at 10:00 p.m. She **gets** up at 6:30 a.m.*"
9. Do this 2-3 more times, first modeling your own information and then modeling reporting on someone else.
10. Next, ask one of the students a question. "*Maria, what time do you eat breakfast?*" Maria's response should be "*I eat breakfast at 7:00 a.m.*" (only correct the noun/verb agreement if she has trouble). Now, ask Maria a question about someone else. "*Maria, what time does Wong get up?*" Maria's response should be "*Wong gets up at 6:00 a.m.*"

Grammar Chants

Grammar chants are short, rhythmic, jazzy chants designed to help students remember specific grammar rules, structures, or principles.

Steps

1. Select the grammar target. What grammar point will the students practice?
2. Write a short chant that teaches this grammar point. You don't need to teach everything. A few good examples are enough for the chant.
3. Practice saying the chant alone. Pay attention to the rhythm. The chant should have a strong rhythm, but not too fast or too slow.
4. Hand out copies of the chant to students.
5. Read the chant to the students.
6. Have the students read the chant with you.
7. Perform the chant so that students can hear and follow the rhythm.
8. Have students join you in the chant.

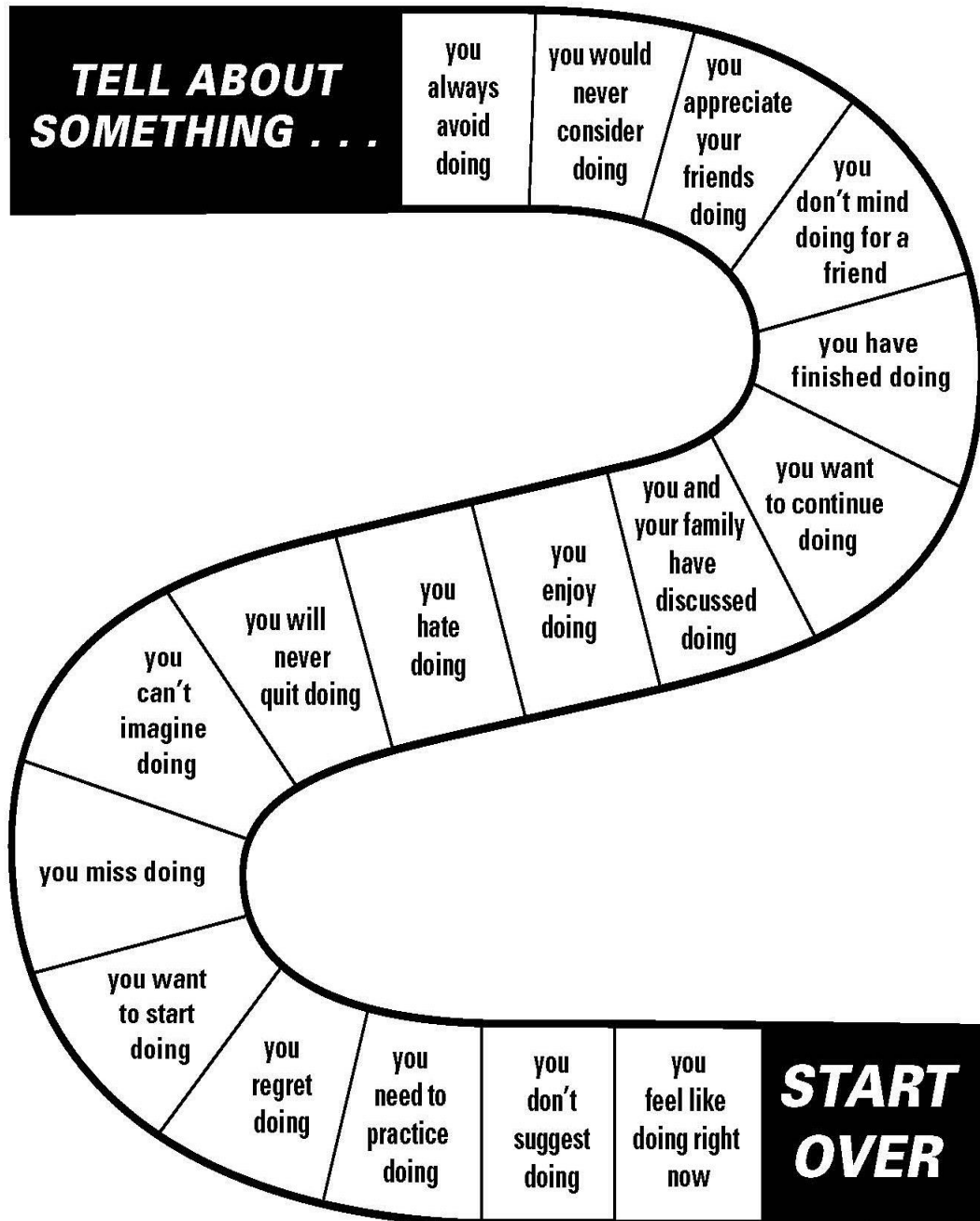
Suggestions

- Some chants may be done in call and response style. For example, you say a sentence and the student's response is to change the noun to a pronoun, or form a contraction, or change the tense of the verb.

Chants from Workshop

Grammar Board Game: Tell about Something

Use pieces of paper, M&Ms, or something else for markers. Roll a die and move forward. Follow the instructions in the box. Use gerunds in your response. For example, if you land on *you always avoid doing*, you might say “I always avoid washing the dishes.” Ask each other questions. Use the statements as an opportunity to practice conversations.



English—No Problem! Level 3

Handout: Information Grids and Grammar Activity

Directions

Work in your group to create your own information grid grammar activity. Once you have an idea, draw the grid below. Gather information from your partners (if needed) to complete the grid and test the activity.

Steps

1. What is the topic for your grid? _____
2. What grammar points will you teach? Be specific _____
3. What column headings will you use? _____

Draw Grid Here

Tutoring Videos:

Reading and Writing

[USING LEARNER-GENERATED TEXTS WITH ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS - YouTube](#)

This series shows how to use the text generated from a Language Experience Approach activity for reading and writing lessons. Each featured student is an adult English learner who does not have literacy in any of their languages.

[Alphabetics: Phonemic Awareness - YouTube](#)

[Alphabetics: Decoding and Phonics - YouTube](#)

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