

Teaching Tips

10 Ways to get organized

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Did you ever want to improve your teaching, but just didn't know where to start. Why not try one of these ideas?

1. Less is more.

This teaching point is far more important than it might look, you see, for any beginning student less is more because they have to internalize or digest the input they receive. It is not easy. It is better to understand and master one skill than four at the same time.

2. Keep it within reach.

Keep in mind that most students would like to leave the class with something tangible, something learnt that day. In order for them to achieve that, we, as language teachers, should give them something within their grasp, create the situation where they will see for themselves what they have learned. As little as it may seem, if a student only learned how to greet a person, he/she should be able to tell the difference between an informal greeting and a formal one. This will still be challenging, even if the only thing which came out was a simple "Hi". You see, students tend to use only one phrase for the occasion, without knowing or realizing there is more than one way to greet someone.

3. Make it simple.

There will be times in class when students feel a little reluctant to speak. A good thing to do is help them to express themselves through sign language (I do not mean the real thing), but help them to use their hands, body, eyes, mouth, etc. Gestures can be more than words, eventually your students will feel confident enough to speak. Create the need for them to speak.

4. Don't fight through the details.

Some students tend to block when learning a language; some want to know the whys, hows and whens. On the other hand, some teachers tend to give them exactly that, without their asking, thereby creating more confusion than was ever necessary. Keep it simple. Any language has exceptions. It might be a good idea to make sure that your students understand the grammatical point rather than the exceptions. Put yourself in their shoes...what would you rather learn? How to fix a car, or the places you can go?

5. Free your mind.

Teach with an open mind; listen to your students. There will come a time when you can't come up with the right idea to motivate your students on a rainy Friday afternoon when nobody wants to be in class fighting over the hidden secrets of the present perfect tense. On those days, ask them about the weather, what they would like to be doing, or ask them to close their eyes and draw a picture of what is happening outside, or what kind of sounds they can hear through the rain. This activity will interest your students in listening to the world around them rather than having a hard time with the present perfect.

6. Arm yourself.

Not necessarily with your teacher's guide, a bullet-proof vest and an eraser. This point is for you, the creative teacher who can come up with the five-minute activity before they leave the room. Always be ready for any surprises, like a black out or the tape being jammed in the recorder. First of all, do not panic, and most of all ask for help from your students--sometimes they really know what to do in these situations. You might be surprised.

7. Do a little every day.

Excess is not healthy, and your students won't be eager to be in class sitting for one hour or two trying to figure out the task in their textbook. If you know what kind of problems your students face when learning English, do a little every day, don't teach everything in the book and then expect your students to do the same thing. "Rome wasn't built in one day."

8. Start the day right.

This is a personal or self-motivation stage. Before going into that four-walled room with a bunch of shouting kids or a group of businessmen who had a bad day, think that they will look to you for help, and if you had a bad day in the bank queue, and act like it, the class won't be an enjoyable one. Some students look forward to a change of pace or just to forget their problems for a little while, and what better way than finding a smiling teacher who might help them to do that. And the only thing you have to do is smile. Won't this motivate them to learn?

9. Set your own deadlines.

There are two aspects which you, as a teacher, should consider: One is the grammatical structures or tasks you want your students to learn that day. It is better to set your own deadlines when starting a class. And the other is to let your students know what they should achieve at the end of the session. Write it on the board. In that way, your students will work out or find the ways to meet that goal with your help.

10. Work incentives into your tasks.

Most tasks are challenging for students, but is there a reward? Think about it: There comes a time when you, as a teacher, don't just drink a cup of coffee because you need it. You have it to reward yourself for your efforts and for the things you saw your students do. Sometimes you even brag about them in the teachers' room. But what's in it for your students, where is their reward? Sometimes it's not the grade, but it is to see their teacher or classmates agreeing with them. This motivates them to go on.