HOW TO TEACH VOCABULARY LIKE A PRO

65 TOP CHEAT SHEETS EVERY VOCABULARY TEACHER SHOULD HAVE



TRY THESE FRESH VOCABULARY IDEAS

WORDS REALLY ARE FUN

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

TOP MOVES FOR INTRODUCING & PRACTICING VOCABULARY AT ALL LEVELS

UNIQUELY FUNCTIONAL VOCABULARY CHEAT SHEETS YOU'LL BE USING EVERY DAY

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What Do You See? 8 Steps to Teaching Basic Vocabulary

Picture books are a useful tool for the ESL teacher, especially when she is teaching younger students.

Picture books can be a great help in reading and writing lessons and can even be the basis of a conversation class. For vocabulary lessons, simple books with repeating phrases are particularly useful. One such book is Bill Martin's *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do You See?* which teaches basic colors and animal vocabulary.

If you have beginning students who need a lesson or a review on colors and animals, here are some activities you can try. Your kids will have fun, and they will learn as they play with Martin's prose.

HOW TO TEACH BASIC VOCABULARY

1 GET READY

Start by reading the book to your class. It is best if you can introduce the book before you plan to do the rest of the activities so your students have some familiarity with it.

2 MAKE MASKS

On the day you plan to start the activities, read the book to your class again. After you read, give each student a picture of one of the animals in the book, and ask them to color the animal like the one in the book.
Make sure you have at least one of each animal represented in your class, and having multiples of the animals is okay, too. Have each student cut out his or her picture and glue it to a paper plate. Then, have them glue or tape a tongue depressor to the plate. Each person now has a mask which shows one of the animals in the book.

3 ROLL CALL

With your students holding their masks, read the book again and have each person stand when his animal is speaking. Have your students sit down again when the next animal speaks. After you read the entire book, say each animal again and have your students stand for their animal.

4 REVIEW THE ROLES

On the following day, repeat the activity. Then have student exchange masks and read the story again. They should stand when the animal on their mask is speaking. If any of your students have learned the chant, encourage them to say it along with you.

5 LOOK AND SEE

Then rearrange your students so they are sitting in the same order as the animals in the book. Starting at the beginning of the line, ask each student what he sees. *"Sam, what do you see?"* for example. The student should answer with the name of the animal next to him. He can say either the animal's name (e.g. *red bird*) or the entire phrase (*I see a red bird looking at me*).

To make sure everyone has practice with more than one animal, have your students exchange masks and repeat the activity. Continue until every student has had the opportunity to be each of the animals in the book.

6 REVIEW

On the third day, prepare for your color and animal lesson by hanging poster paper in the front of your room, one page for each of the animals, and glue a picture of each animal to a poster.

Distribute the masks again before reading the book one more time, and encourage your class to chant along with you. Many of them will be good at it by now.
Like the previous two days, have each person stand when his animal is speaking.

7 WHAT DO YOU SEE?

Tell your students that now you are going to play a game. You will say their name and ask them what they see. They should respond by naming an object in the room as well as its color. For example:

"Hyun, Hyun, what do you see?"
"I see a brown desk looking at me."

Give each of your students at least one turn.

8 A CLASS COLLAGE

Then, make available to your students some old magazines. Tell each person that she should find one picture among the magazines for each of the animals, and the color of the object should match the color of the animal. When a student finds an appropriate picture, have her come to the front of the room and point out the poster where her picture belongs. She should also tell you the color of her object. Then have her glue her picture to the correct poster.

Give your class enough time so everyone can find one picture for each of the animals. When you finish, you should have a collage of magazine pictures for each color in the book. You should also have a good read on how well your students have learned their colors.

THESE ARE SIMPLE ACTIVITIES THAT TEACH SIMPLE VOCABULARY, BUT IF YOU ARE TEACHING YOUNG ESL STUDENTS, YOUR CLASS WILL LOVE IT.

Once your students know their colors and animals, there are many follow up activities you can do to reinforce their new vocabulary.

10 Out of the Ordinary Places Students can Pick up New Vocabulary

LEARNING ANY LANGUAGE IN AN IMMERSION SITUATION BY ITS VERY NATURE OFFERS ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES TO PICK UP NEW VOCABULARY. In fact, sometimes the volumes of new vocabulary can be utterly overwhelming. Other times, language students practically hunt for new words to learn. Paying attention in the following places may just expose your students to some vocabulary they may not hear in other, more traditional, settings.

HERE'S WHERE YOUR STUDENTS CAN PICK UP NEW VOCABULARY

1 TELEVISION

Television may be a go to for most ESL students when it comes to vocabulary learning, but television has more to offer than the standard sitcom lexicon. For students with access to cable television, they might just be able to find a channel about any subject in which they are interested. Encourage your students to watch more obscure channels or programs, especially those that relate to their field of study. Animal Planet, Science, even QVC are all channels that will expose your students to a specific set of vocabulary they may not find in other places.

2 WAITING IN LINE

Ask.com suggests that the average person spends 45-62 minutes waiting every day. All those moments your students spend in line at the cafeteria, in a coffee shop, or for an elevator can be put to good use when it comes to vocabulary learning. Encourage your students to do a little innocent eavesdropping. Listening in on natural, native speaker conversations will challenge and expand their vocabularies as well as aid their listening comprehension skills!

3 CHAT ROOM

What better place to learn casual, conversational vocabulary than a chat room? Like television, the topics of chat rooms are limitless, and if your students find one that interests them, they will have the benefit of seeing the words typed out. This makes a dictionary look-up easy and may smooth the vocabulary learning process.

4 SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media affects our lives in so many ways in today's world. Following people on Twitter, linking with friends on Facebook and following blogs are all ways modern technology can bring good, unfamiliar vocabulary to ESL students, even on the go. Your students will also get to know some of the real language people are using in casual situations, but be warned. You may end up explaining alternative spellings and abbreviations for words that your students do not find in the dictionary.

5 ADVERTISING

For the most part, ads can be annoying, frustrating or disinteresting, but that does not mean they cannot be another great source for vocabulary. Point out to your students that billboards, magazines and commercials all give them an opportunity to learn new English words.

6 THE GROCERY STORE

Can the grocery store really help your ESL students learn new vocabulary? Yes! Looking at packages and product descriptions on boxes and bags will increase sensory and value vocabulary for the students who take the time to pay attention.

7 SONG LYRICS

Of course, music is a great place to learn new vocabulary provided the listener can distinguish what the person is saying. If the singer comes through a little muddled, though, a simple search on the title of the song will yield the lyrics that are not quite annunciated. Not only that, after your students have the lyrics, they will be able to sing along which might also improve their pronunciation.

8 I-ANYTHING

Do not discount iPads, iPods or smart phones, either, when it comes to building vocabulary. Free apps like Word a Day will present new vocabulary in small doses, one per day, plus the definition to go with them. Take a look at it yourself and your vocabulary may expand, too!

9 MENUS

Everybody has to eat, and most people nosh three times a day. By reading a menu carefully, your students can learn words to both expand their vocabularies and their pallets. So next time they have a meal out, challenge your students to find at least one word on the menu that is unfamiliar and add it to their lexicon.

10 SCRABBLE

For a real challenge, try playing Scrabble or another word game with a native speaker. If they purchase the app available for a minimal price, your students can use the teacher function, which points out the highest scoring word the player could have played on each turn. Though your students will still have to look them up in a dictionary, they will be using words like za, jo, qi and id before they know it. Be warned, though, the scrabble will give any player a run for his money, native speakers included.

VOCABULARY IS ALL AROUND US. BY PAYING ATTENTION TO THE LANGUAGE AROUND THEM EVEN IN UNEXPECTED PLACES AND AT UNEXPECTED TIMES, YOUR STUDENTS CAN ACQUIRE AN ADMIRABLE SET OF WORKING VOCABULARY. All it takes is a little effort and a great dictionary.

4 Fresh Ways to Introduce New Vocabulary

ARE YOU TIRED OF READING LISTS OF VOCABULARY WORDS AND THEIR DEFINITIONS TO YOUR CLASS? DO YOU WANT A MORE INTERESTING WAY TO PRESENT NEW VOCABULARY? TRY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING TECHNIQUES TO MAKE NEW VOCABULARY MORE FUN FOR BOTH TEACHERS AND LEARNERS.

HOW TO INTRODUCE NEW VOCABULARY

1 WORD ROOTS

Teaching word roots can help your students learn not only current vocabulary but future vocabulary as well. When students understand the meanings of the building blocks, unfamiliar words can be dissected into familiar elements. You can sometimes find lists of word roots and their meanings in dictionaries or do a search for them online. Word roots can be divided into two categories. You can teach roots that supply content meaning like ant- (against such as antonym, antithesis), -phobia (fear of such as xenophobia, triskaidekaphobia), or mal- (bad such as malnutrition, malcontent). You can also teach word roots that give information as to the grammatical function of the word like –ly (adv. such as slowly, gracefully), -tion (n. such as administration, frustration), -or (n. person, such as professor, councilor) and –ful (adj. such as wonderful, beautiful). Along with educating your students on word roots, you may want to review the concept of prefix (a unit of meaning added to the beginning of a word that changes the meaning or grammatical function) and suffix (a unit of meaning added to the end of the word that changes the meaning or function).

As a teacher, you should also be aware that some languages contain infixes (a unit of meaning added to the middle of a word that changes the meaning or function) though English does not use infixes.

2 WORDS IN CONTEXT

Another way to introduce new vocabulary is to give your students sentences or a short paragraph using the new vocabulary words. Then see if they can guess the part of speech and the meaning of the word based on the context. This is a strategy that even native speakers use unknowingly when encountering new words. You can also use the following technique to teach the skill of inference. Give students a paragraph that uses one word multiple times. When preparing the handout for them, replace that word with a symbol or XXXX or some other representation. Without the actual word, and without help from a dictionary, students will have to infer the meaning of the missing word. This is an important skill to learn in any language. Stress to your students that if they can learn to infer meaning they will be learning language more like a native speaker and will be more comfortable the next time they encounter unfamiliar vocabulary.

3 MATCHING TO DEFINITIONS

After giving them some context and familiarity with the words, present the definitions. Give your students a blank crossword puzzle with the definitions as the clues. This is the first time your students will see definitions for the words they are learning. Your students will probably be able to match most of them to the correct definitions if you have already presented the word roots and the words in context.

The advantage to using a crossword puzzle over a simple list of definitions is the added information about the correct answers. If students are unable to determine some of the correct matches for the supplied definitions, a crossword puzzle gives them additional clues: how many letters are in the target word and, after filling in some other answers, what some of the letters in the answer are. This will decrease anxiety and increase students' sense of accomplishment and linguistic independence.

4 MATCH TO SYNONYMS AND ANTONYMS

Finally, provide your students with a random list of synonyms and antonyms for the vocabulary words. This activity is best saved for last because you want your students to develop an understanding of each word's meaning rather than just matching it to a word they already know. (For more information on this see how the brain acquires language.) Teaching synonyms and antonyms also gives your students further vocabulary development and an idea of the relationships between words.

VOCABULARY LEARNING CAN BE FUN.

If you just use a little imagination and your students exercise their gray matter, students can do far more than just memorize a list of words and their definitions. Try one of these activities the next time you have a vocabulary unit to teach and it's sure to please both you and your students.

5 Best Ways to Introduce New Vocabulary

NEW VOCABULARY IS ONE OF THE BASIC BUILDING BLOCKS IN YOUR STUDENTS' LEARNING.

But have you ever put much thought into how you introduce new words? Learning long laundry lists of words can be very tedious for students. On the other hand, introducing words in students' native language and then translating them into English or vice versa is not very effective, either. You have to start training them to think in English right from the start. Needless to say, the language you are teaching should be spoken at all times, even if students are absolute beginners.

So, how do you introduce new vocabulary without resorting to translation or long lists of words? Here's your answer!

HOW TO INTRODUCE NEW WORDS

1 POINTING

Pointing is probably the technique of choice when teaching real beginners. The teacher shows students illustrations or flashcards and points to the items they wish to teach. You can also use posters, Power Point presentations, or different types of computer software where illustrations are presented in electronic format. Google Images is a real life-saver! Pointing works best with nouns which include food, clothes, animals, professions, sports, classroom objects, office supplies, etc. but also colors, actions, and any adjective that can be clearly illustrated (like facial expressions, for example to teach feelings). The main advantage of pointing is that words may be introduced in blocks, and you may easily and effectively introduce several in one lesson. Works well with visual students.

2 SUBSTITUTION

This technique can be used with students of all levels and works best with concepts and ideas that can't be easily seen or touched, like abstracts, or anything that is not a real object. There are different ways to use substitution:

- Synonyms – You substitute one word students are familiar with for another new one. *When you call someone, do you sometimes have to wait? You have to hold. Do trains usually run on time? They are on schedule.*
- Antonyms – You substitute one word they are familiar with for its opposite. *Is a Ferrari a cheap car?(No) It's an expensive car.*

Substitution works very well with phrasal verbs, which usually have a one-word equivalent: Do you put off going to the dentist? You postpone seeing your dentist.

However, you should be careful when using words that are not exact synonyms or antonyms. Remember to imply that the connotation may be different in some cases.

3 NAMING

This technique is similar to substitution, but in this case, you set a scene or situation and then substitute it with a new word or phrase, thus effectively naming the scene.

- *Do you usually eat pancakes, eggs, and bacon for breakfast? (No) So, you have a light breakfast.*
- *The hotel accepted too many reservations. The hotel is overbooked.*
- *The steak I ordered last night was not cooked enough. It was undercooked/rare/bloody.*

4 MIMING AND TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE

This technique works great with kinesthetic learners, namely those who learn best by moving their bodies. Most teachers believe that mining works best with children, particularly when it comes to exaggerating emotions and facial expressions, but adults may also enjoy miming.

Most teachers are also aware of the advantages of Total Physical Response in the ESL classroom. TPR works well with parts of the body (I'm touching my nose! Touch your nose!), actions (I'm walking to the door), and the imperative mood or commands (Sit down! Stand up!)

The main advantage in miming and TPR is that you can get students physically engaged in the lesson. It gets them out of their seats and shakes things up. So make sure you maximize opportunities to get them moving!

5 REALIA

The use of realia, or real-life objects in the ESL classroom can make a huge difference in student learning. It engages them and motivates them to learn. It's fun and sets a more natural learning environment. Some realia you may use to introduce new vocabulary includes:

Maps

Tea sets, dishes, and utensils

Clothes

Toy planes, trains, cars, animals, furniture, etc.

Family photos

Holiday items (pumpkin, Easter eggs, Halloween or Christmas decorations)

Plastic fruits and vegetables

THERE ARE LOTS OF WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN EFFECTIVELY INTRODUCE NEW VOCABULARY AND NOT HAVE TO RESORT TO TRANSLATION.

Make sure you introduce new words in context and give students plenty of chances to practice.

6 Absolutely Essential ESL Games for Vocabulary Review

Well, it is that time again. You have finished your unit on (insert topic here) complete with vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading and writing activities, but you are not entirely done. The test is coming in just a few days, and your students need some review. When vocabulary is on that agenda, try one of these fun games to review the words your students have recently learned!

TRY THESE FUN ESL VOCABULARY REVIEW GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

1 CHARADES

Charades is a fun and lively game for your ESL class to play when reviewing vocabulary. Your students will be energized and enthusiastic when their acting skills are put to the test for their classmates. It is easy to have a charade vocabulary review ready for your class at almost any time and on a moment's notice with minimal advance preparation. The easiest way to be ready at any time is to keep a collection of vocabulary cards for the words your class has studied. When you are ready to play, divide your class into two teams. Individuals will take turns acting out one of the words from the cards that you have prepared. They will choose this card randomly on their turns and will have 2 minutes to get their team to guess the word without using books or notes. The actor cannot use any sounds but must communicate only through actions. The rest of the team should shout out any answers that come to mind. If the team is able to guess the word within the designated time, they score a point. If after two minutes the team has not guessed the word correctly, the other team gets one chance to guess the word. If they are correct, they score a point and then continue with their turn. Continue playing until you run out of time or you run out of words. The team with the higher score at the end of the game wins.

2 PICTIONARY

Pictionary is a similar and just as entertaining game to play for vocabulary review. The rules are similar to those of charades except that instead of acting out the word, the clue giver is permitted only to draw on the white board in front of the class. He cannot use any symbols, numbers or letters in his drawing. Again, give each person two minutes to try to get his team to guess the word. If he is unsuccessful, give the other team a chance to guess. Score the game the same way that you would score charades and announce the winning team at the end of the game.

3 CLAYMATION

How creative are your students? How daring are they? If you think they would have fun with this activity, modify the same general idea that you used in charades and Pictionary with clay or play dough. Again, the rules are generally the same but in this version your students will not be acting or drawing. They will be molding clay to communicate the target word to their teams. Follow the same general rules, but this time you may want to give each person three to five minutes before turning it over to the opposite team for their guess. Scoring is done the same.

4 ALL OF THE ABOVE

If you want to energize your students even further, add a little element of chance to the festivities. Using a six-sided die, have your students roll to see whether they will give a charade, draw a picture or form their clues out of clay. For rolls of one or four, the student will give a charade. For rolls of two or five the student will draw his clues. For rolls of three or six, your students will use clay to give their clues. In all cases, no letters, symbols or numbers are allowed when giving clues. The element of surprise will make the review even more exciting and entertaining for everyone!

5 BINGO

Bingo can be another good game for vocabulary review though perhaps not as lively. Give your students a blank bingo boards and ask them to put the review words into the squares randomly. You should have some strategy for choosing the words to call and then which your students will mark on the cards. You may want to choose words randomly from a list. You may, instead, write the words on cards and choose them randomly from the deck or simply put small slips of paper into a hat to draw randomly. Whatever method you think will work best for you, once you have chosen the word do not read it. Instead, give the definition of the word to your class. Each person must then determine if he has the word that corresponds to the definition on his bingo board. When anyone gets five squares in a row, he should shout, "Bingo!" Warn your students not to clear their boards until you have checked the winner's words to make sure they did not have an incorrect answer. Give the winner of each round a prize or allow him to call the words for the next round though you may need to supply the definitions.

6 MEMORY

A memory style card game can be another effective way for reviewing vocabulary, but you or your class will need to do some advanced preparation before you play. You will need a set of cards for the vocabulary you want to review. For each word, one card should have the target vocabulary word and another card should have the definition of the word. The players should then shuffle the deck and lay all the cards in a grid pattern face down on a large playing surface. Each person turns over two cards each turn trying to find a match. If the cards do not match, he turns them over again and the next person takes a turn. If they do match, he keeps the cards and gets an additional turn. The player with the highest number of cards at the end of the game wins.

You can modify this game to practice matching words with their synonyms or their antonyms, too. For each, instead of using the definition card to match the vocabulary card, use a card with either a synonym or an antonym printed on it. Play continues the same as above. Just be sure you keep the sets of cards separated so you are ready to play at any time.

VOCABULARY IS A PART OF EVERY ESL CLASS, BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN IT HAS TO BE BORING.

These games are both fun and educational and are never boring. The next time you have vocabulary to review, change things up with a game and help your students see that fun can be effective learning, too!

How to Elicit Vocabulary: Top 6 Techniques

ELICITING VOCABULARY IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF TEACHING ESL.

When introducing new vocabulary, students might be able to provide the word as well as a simple definition. The vocabulary may be new to the class, but individual students often have varying degrees of exposure to English. They can make it easier for their peers to grasp new concepts or ideas especially if they can give an accurate translation. When eliciting old vocabulary, it is simply better for students to try to recall the appropriate word than for you to provide it. Requiring student participation throughout your lessons also keeps students more engaged, gives them more practice opportunities, and reduces your overall talking time.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 MIMING

Miming is a common method of eliciting vocabulary. You can say "The elephant was very..." with outstretched arms and your students should say "Big!" If your students guess other words first, such as long or tall, simply shake your head or gesture for them to continue guessing words while exaggerating your hint. It is a lot like Charades and it requires much more effort on your students' part than you completing the sentence. It also serves the purpose of checking to see what they know or can remember from previous lessons.

2 DRAWING

Drawings can also jog a student's memory. In the example above, you may want to have a picture (flashcard) in order to describe the difference between other words students suggested. For example, long describes the distance from the tip of the elephant's trunk to the end of his tail, while tall describes the distance between the ground and the top of the elephant when what you are looking for is an overall description. Indicating what descriptive word you are looking for on the image can help students understand what word you are trying to elicit from them. Drawings can also be a way of engaging students who have strong artistic abilities. It is not always appropriate to spend time having students draw on the board, however if you can prepare for your lesson or get groups organized while a few students come to the board and draw images that you plan to use in your lesson, it can be a good way of getting certain students involved. You can then use their drawings to elicit vocabulary.

3 LISTS

Often when introducing a new topic, such as directions, there will be a lot of new vocabulary too. For a directions lesson you will want to review places so simply ask your students to name places and make a list on the board. You can start them off by listing one or two and students should be able to list quite a number of related vocabulary words such as post office, school, park, and any other place related words you have taught them. This should only take a few minutes but if there are specific words that you need on the board for the purposes of your lesson you can say "What about zoo?" and write 'zoo' on the board. You could also give hints to lead your students to say certain words. In about five minutes you and your students will have compiled a fairly comprehensive list of words they know which you plan to use in the lesson and they can refer to for the rest of class.

4 SYNONYMS

Using synonyms is a good way to maintain students' vocabulary. It is common for students to use the word fast much more often than the word quick so it may be appropriate to say "The cheetah is fast. What is another word for fast?" Eliciting synonyms will help students recall words that they use less frequently.

5 ANTONYMS

Another way of eliciting certain types of vocabulary is to give the opposite word of the word you are searching for. You can say "He's not sad, he's..." and your students should say "Happy!" Combining this with miming will give your students a really solid hint.

6 HINTS

If students have difficulty producing the word you are looking for, assuming it is an old vocabulary word and not a new one, giving them the first letter or syllable may assist them further.

OVERALL IT IS BETTER FOR STUDENTS TO PRODUCE MATERIAL THAN FOR YOU TO GIVE IT TO THEM.

It will keep them more engaged in your lessons because they will never know when you may ask them something and it will help them maintain a broader set of vocabulary.

Helping Students Build Their Specific Academic Vocabulary

Years ago when I was an undergraduate, another student greeted me as I entered class with, "Hey, Stacia! Did you bring the stuff for the thing?" "Yeah," I said. "It's in the you know." And the frightening part is we were both native speakers of English and were discussing a class presentation we were preparing. Of course, this was not how we talked during the presentation but rather in a more informal situation where both of us understood each other's cues perfectly: my classmate did indeed know where I meant by "the you know" and went there to fetch "the stuff for the thing." So communication was indeed taking place, but this was with someone I had known for many years and in a context we were both very familiar with. Would such language, however, succeed with an unfamiliar audience and in a more formal, written communication? Of course not. However, it seems with some writers this kind of vague and empty communication that leaves a lot for the audience to fill in occurs although perhaps at a more academic level. Instead of "stuff," and "thing," for example, writers use equally vague although more academic-sounding "elements" and "items."Instead of "a bunch," writers will use the more academic-seeming "several," which I always took to mean three or four, but for many writers today seems to mean somewhere in between three and a thousand. And instead of using "you know," directly, writers will proceed as if the audience does indeed know what they are thinking. So what's a teacher to do? How do we teach more specific and academic vocabulary?

1 AWARENESS: CIRCLE ALL OF THE VAGUE LANGUAGE

Addressing almost any problem begins with becoming aware of it. Students don't know they are being vague unless you tell them they are. Circling problem areas in student writing with "this is unclear to me" begins to raise awareness on the issue.

2 CHANGE THE PERSPECTIVE

Sometimes student writing stays on this vague, noncommittal plane because students believe that specific writing is somehow more elementary and less formal. They should be disabused of this notion and shown, through example, that specific writing is best. Pull out examples of writing by Joan Didion, E.B. White, and Martin Luther King and show these great writers are almost unfailingly specific. King, for example, does not make vague references to "some guys" suffering "a lot of different abuse" in a "certain place and time" but rather writes compellingly of the suffering of African Americans in 1963 Alabama – and it is only compelling because he writes specifically. The reader doesn't care so much about unspecified "people" but might care deeply about specific fellow countrymen and women.

3 CONTRAST SPECIFIC AND VAGUE

Telling students to "Be Specific" isn't very... specific. Often they have no idea what you mean. Take a paragraph of a great and well-known piece of writing, like the Gettysburg Address and add as much vagueness to it as possible: Instead of the familiar and fairly specific Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal, read aloud "Sometime ago some people brought forth in some place some nation conceived in something and dedicated to some set of principles." Don't be surprised if students start giggling as they recognize the Gettysburg Address and realize how bad the revision is. This is a good sign: they are beginning to understand good writing.

4 QUERY THE WRITER

When asked specific questions, the writer is forced into giving specific answers. So when the vague, pseudo-academic vocabulary pops up in writing, pencil a question: "How many, exactly, is 'several'?" or "What, exactly, are 'elements' here?" Then take the students' responses and show how they can be stated in an academic manner.

5 SUGGEST ACADEMIC WORDS

Students often fall back on vague, nonspecific language because they simply don't know the specific terms. Suggest language they may use instead: "By 'water' here do you mean a lake? Or a lagoon?" Is 'machine' here a tractor?"

6 DECLARE VAGUE WORDS TABOO

Create and give out a list of "taboo" words that usually add nothing to writing and can be replaced with better words: "thing," "nice," and "cool" are likely suspects. Have students brainstorm similar words that to add to the list: this creates further buy-in and makes students more likely to search for better words as they helped create the list.

7 WRITERS QUERY THEMSELVES

Often students' vague writing is symptomatic of vague thinking. There is no "treatment" for vague thinking, of course, but one way to address it is to train students to, on coming upon vague language like the taboo words or the vague language they have circled, is to query themselves, "Who, exactly, do I mean by 'some folks'?" and "Where, precisely, is 'this weird forest place?" Students can do this after getting used to your queries, and this creates a habit of thinking in specifics, which leads to better thinking and better writing.

8 WORK ON AUDIENCE AWARENESS

Another aspect of the problem of vague student writing is students not having a real sense of writing to anyone in particular, so they are not concerned about whether or not this unspecified audience understands them. Having students work in peer review groups, reading and commenting on each other's work, creates this sense of audience. Students will then stop and ask themselves, "Will the group understand 'stuff'?" Once the groups have worked together for awhile, it might help to mix them up and have students do peer review with a relative stranger in class, who isn't used to their writing and who doesn't know what they mean.

BY USING THESE METHODS, STUDENTS WILL GET INTOHE HABIT OF THINKING AND WRITING IN SPECIFICS. They may still talk about "stuff for the thing" with their friends, but these phrases will turn up in their writing less and less often as student thinking and writing skills improve.

Prodigious Stratagems for Escalating Vocabulary

AT EVERY LEVEL OF LANGUAGE LEARNING, VOCABULARY ACQUISITION IS VITALLY IMPORTANT TO SUCCESS.

Obviously we cannot express ourselves unless we have the words to do so. In the beginning stages, sometimes it feels like the main focus is practicing vocabulary usage and gaining retention. In later stages, sometimes there are other goals that take precedence. Here are some prodigious stratagems for escalating vocabulary usage and understanding in any classroom.

TIPS TO INCREASING VOCABULARY

1 CONSISTENTLY INTRODUCE NEW WORDS AND PHRASES

Vocabulary must surface in the classroom in both organic and structured ways. Every lesson should have a segment designed to introduce any new language they will need to do an activity or any kind of practice. When they are reading, new words should get introduced first. Same goes for grammar points, games, listening activities, etc.

When a word comes up out of nowhere that students don't know, it is worth the time and effort to stop and explain it. You will need to develop your method of this introduction and practice. Set up consistent routines so that your students know what to do every time. That could be, any new words that are introduced go up on the board as explanations are given. They should write the words and definitions down for later homework or activities. Set the precedence early for your expectations so that you don't have to give them the same directions repeatedly. Get students into good study habits with vocabulary from the beginning and you will see increased retention as time goes on.

2 LEARN HOW TO GIVE DEFINITIONS

One of the best skills you can develop as an ESL teacher is being adept at giving definitions both on the fly and prepared in advance. First always define the word in the most basic terms you can think of. This takes practice. Eliminate extra words or words that the students may not understand. Directly following the definition, give an example or two. After that you'll want to ask a few comprehension questions. For example, how would you define the word lazy?

Lazy describes people who don't like to work. You are lazy if you like to sleep, watch TV, and relax all day. Lazy people do not work hard. Lazy can also be an occasional trait. For example, sometimes I like to relax on the weekend. I don't do any chores or work, and don't do anything. I am lazy. My dog sleeps all day long — he is lazy. Are you lazy when you study English? Is your teacher feeling lazy today?

Your students will benefit from your simple and comprehensive definitions and you will often find yourself in the position of being put on the spot to explain new words and concepts. If you are struggling, rely on some concrete examples and then talk about the different ways a word may be used.

3 DEVELOP STRUCTURED PRACTICE FOR VOCABULARY

It is important that the words don't just get introduced, written down and then forgotten about. There needs to be an amount of natural practice in the classroom and in homework activities. One way to do that is to make sure you are using the new words when you speak to them. Ask them questions that could lead to using to newly practices words. You can do interactive fill-in-the- blank activities on the board or matching exercises as refreshers. Try to challenge them and correct them when they misuse a word.

4 CREATE MOTIVATORS TO USE NEW WORDS

Students may need some encouragement and motivation to use words that are new to them. Create safe ways for them to do this often. During games and activities you can have them gain extra points if they use any of the words from X number of lessons. Formulate motivators that are fun, fit the level and age of the students, and that also challenge students to find new and interesting ways to remember vocabulary. One example of a quick exercise is to play Tic Tac Toe, and get it moving at a fast pace. You can give them definitions and they have to use the word in a sentence or vice versa. You can come up with lots of ways to make practice fun. Point out that they should not only use the word, but recognize it when it is spoken. One unique way to do this is tell them to go home and watch a favorite 30 minute program in English. See how many students can hear some of the new words, but also possibly new uses for them. I've always found that this is a great conversation starter!

ENCOURAGING AND INFLUENCING STUDENTS TO ADVANCE THEIR VOCABULARY IS ESSENTIAL IN THE ESL CLASSROOM.

Once students get in the habit of evolving their vocabulary, you will notice a significant rise in students' abilities to grasp other concepts and put vocabulary together with grammar.

Teaching Vocabulary – 10 Fabulous Ways to Teach New Words

DID YOU KNOW THAT A STUDENT NEEDS TO ENCOUNTER A NEW WORD 10 TO 16 TIMES TO EFFECTIVELY "LEARN" IT ACCORDING TO RECENT RESEARCH?

Considering the number of new words students have to learn per course, this means us teachers have our work cut out for us. We all know that although it is important for students to use correct grammar and structures, words are the main carriers of meaning. This means that the more words students are able to handle accurately, the better their chances of understanding English and making themselves understood. To effectively acquire new vocabulary, students must go through four essential stages:

- first, they notice a new word with help,
- secondly, they recognize the word at first with help,
- then later on their own,
- and lastly, they are able to both recognize and produce the word.

It is essential that you, as the teacher, make use of activities that target each of these stages - more often than not, we make the mistake of merely introducing new vocabulary, and we don't give students the opportunity to put these new words to use. So, here are 10 great ways to teach English vocabulary, outlined for each of the stages of vocabulary acquisition:

1 NOTICING AND UNDERSTANDING NEW WORDS

1. **Introducing nouns, things, objects, animals, etc.** Visual elements work best with concrete nouns, but try to go beyond flashcards and illustrations. Try to use real objects whenever possible, or even sounds, smells, and tastes. Appeal to all of your students' senses!
2. **Introducing adjectives**. Opposites, like "big" and "small", "long" and "short", are usually illustrated with pictures, but here's another case where realia will help you teach new adjectives: the use of real life objects is wonderful for words like "soft" and "rough", adjectives that may take precious minutes of class time to explain. For more advanced adjectives, like "stunning", "gorgeous", "spectacular", "huge", or "immense", bring in photos of famous sights from around the world like the Louvre, Egyptian pyramids, the Eiffel Tower, etc., then use these new adjectives to describe these places in ways that clearly illustrate their meaning.
3. I**ntroducing abstracts.** There are things you simply cannot teach with a flashcard. What works best in these cases are synonyms, definitions, substitutions, or simply placing students within a given context. Consider this simple example: To teach the difference between "early" and "late", remind students what time class begins, then state that those who arrive before this time are "early" while those that arrive after this time are "late".

2 RECOGNIZING NEW WORDS

4. **Bingo**. Bingo is one of the most versatile games employed by ESL teachers. For younger learners, make bingo cards with illustrations, and call out each word. For those who can read, do the opposite, make the cards with words, then draw the flashcards from a bag. For teens or adult learners, you can make cards with the definition and call out the words, or vice versa.

5. **Matching.** Another type of exercise with countless possibilities. Students may be required to match opposites, synonyms, or a word with its definition, as well as a picture to a word.

6. **Fill in the blanks (with options)**. Hand out a piece of written text (anything from a description, song, letter, to even a short story) with blank spaces that must be filled in from a list of words. You can adapt this to longer texts, and also have longer word lists.

3 PRODUCING VOCABULARY

7. **Descriptions.** From a newspaper photo of a recent event to a personal account of a recent trip, there are countless things students can describe while putting new vocabulary to good use. This goes for both oral and written descriptions. You may give them some guidance, like indicating that they have to use at least five adjectives in their description, or five words related to sports, weather, etc. to no guidance at all.

8. **Fill in the blanks (no options).** Supply students with a piece of written text with blank spaces that have to be filled in with any word that fits. You may give them indications for each space, like "noun", "adjective" or "adverb", if they're advanced students. You can then read several out loud to compare the different words used to fill in each blank.

9. **Mind maps or brainstorming.** Tell students they need to think of words they can use to describe the weather. Write "weather" at the center of a blackboard or whiteboard and circle it. Write every word supplied by students as "rays" that shoot out this circle. They should reply with previously taught words, like "chilly", "scorching", or "mild". You may even have sub-circles shooting off to the side for winter, summer, etc. words. This works great for vocabulary review lessons.

10. **Guess what I'm thinking.** Students take turns describing something, like a place: "I'm thinking of a place that is so huge it takes visitors hours to see all of it. It has stunning works of art. It is a breathtaking building, very old, but with a modern glass pyramid in the front." Students choose to be as obvious or as cryptic as they like. Even little ones can do this with simple descriptions: "It's an animal. It has a very long neck and big brown spots." Or simply state a series of words: "Africa, black and white, stripes".

It's better to teach vocabulary in context, in other words, teach highly descriptive adjectives when the lesson is about travel. Or clothes and accessories when you're talking about shopping. Never teach a list of words just because, or students won't have a chance to practice this new vocabulary. **ON A FINAL NOTE, REMEMBER TO CATER TO DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES OR MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES.** Use songs and music, real life objects, or puzzles, but the more you mix the better. Remember the difference between recognizing and producing words: to practice recognition the words have to be supplied by YOU, then students use them to fill in blanks or match them. For students to effectively and accurately produce vocabulary, they have to spontaneously recall the words.

The Power of Words: 5 Tools to Help Students Learn Vocabulary

VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION IS A PART OF EVERY ESL CLASS. WHETHER YOU ARE TEACHING READING, SPEAKING OR LISTENING, YOUR STUDENTS WILL ENCOUNTER UNFAMILIAR WORDS.

As an ESL teacher, part of your job is helping your students learn these words and increase their functional vocabularies, but that vocabulary learning does not have to be boring. Here are some easy and fun tools you can use to help your students increase their lexical understanding.

TRY THESE 5 EASY TOOLS TO HELP YOUR STUDENTS LEARN VOCABULARY

1 HOLD A WORD SALE

Increase your students' vocabulary and decorate your classroom at the same time by challenging students to make an advertisement for a specific word. Using a set of vocabulary related to a current unit, assign one word to each of your students and ask them to create a poster sized advertisement for that word. In their ad, they should illustrate the meaning of the word and include the word itself. Then, post these ads around your classroom while you are studying the unit. Each student will not only learn the word that he was assigned. By looking at the advertisements created by his classmates, he will also learn the rest of the vocabulary set.

2 USE A REBUS

A rebus is a short story (usually no more than 100 words) which uses pictures in place of certain vocabulary words throughout the story. Your students can turn a plain text into a rebus with a few illustrated copies of key words in the story. Start with a story or text your students will enjoy, and then identify around a dozen concrete words in the text that can be illustrated. Then, using clip art, images available online, or your own artistic skills, make copies of those pictures. If you can, keep all the pictures around one inch by one inch, have your students cut them out, and then give them the text. As they read, they can place the pictures over the corresponding vocabulary words in the text. If you want to use the rebus again or rotate a set of rebuses through your students, have each person put her story and its corresponding pictures into an envelope. You can then make these available during independent reading time, and your students will love the vocabulary activity that feels more like a game!

3 USE THE MARGINS

If your students own their textbooks or you make copies of what you read as a class, encourage your students to write in the margins. This simple tool of drawing pictures or taking notes in the margin will help students remember vocabulary that can be found in the text. Ask students to circle a given vocabulary word and draw a line to the margin of the paper. Now, each person should illustrate or define that particular word. This technique of writing notes in the margin is classified as "marginalia" and will help students who need visual clues for effective learning.

4 FLASHCARDS

You already know what an asset BusyTeacher.org is to your class preparation. Now may be the perfect time to embrace a different resource set our site has to offer. Busy Teacher has hundreds of flashcards that you can print for free, and there are many ways to use these flashcards in your classroom! The simple, classic method is to make the flashcards available to your students for independent study time, but you do not have to stop there. Use the cards for a memory style game, use two duplicate sets to play go fish, or let your students come up with their own games for using flashcards in the classroom. The cards make small, digestible bites of language that your students can take in at their own paces. You can store sets of flashcards in a small box in a corner of your classroom or encourage each of your students to keep their own collection. If you like, laminate the cards to give them a longer lifespan.

5 KEEP A DICTIONARY

It may be an oldie, but it is still a goodie – keeping a personal dictionary. With a simple notebook, your students can create their own dictionaries of new vocabulary words. Using a logical organizational scheme – alphabetical, by theme, etc. – students should write down any new words they encounter. Then, have students either illustrate the word or write their own definition in English for the word. Doing so will cement the word in their useful vocabulary. As they write each word, they see it in their own handwriting, which provides visual clues. By writing an English definition, your students will make connections between the new word and the words they already know in English. Moreover, every time your students add a new word to a page they see the others they are in the process of learning, and looking up new words puts a physical link to the word, which is helpful to kinesthetic learners.

THESE ARE JUST A FEW SIMPLE TOOLS YOU CAN USE IN ANY ESL CLASS TO HELP YOUR STUDENTS LEARN AND SOLIDIFY AN EVER INCREASING COLLECTION OF VOCABULARY.

Making the most of these tools will help your students make the most of their language learning process, and they will be well on their ways to fluency.

How to Help Your Students Camouflage Common Words

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT AND USE IS A CONSISTENT TOPIC THAT ESL TEACHERS AND STUDENTS MUST FOCUS ON. VOCABULARY CAN SOMETIMES BE THE MOST DIFFICULT ASPECT OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT SINCE LANGUAGE RULES TEND TO BE GENERAL BUT VOCABULARY IS ALWAYS SPECIFIC.

If you are in the position in which many teachers find themselves, you see your student using the same words time and time again. You can push your students from this habit by focusing on vocabulary development and challenging your students to use better words, words that are more specific and those richer in meaning. Try some of the following activities with your students and see if their vocabularies don't proliferate.

HELPING STUDENTS CAMOUFLAGE COMMON WORDS

1 MAKE A LIST OF BORING WORDS

Even native speakers may have trouble knowing which words lack impact when they write. You can help raise your students' awareness of boring words by putting together a list of words to avoid. If you already have a grasp as the words your students use over and over, compile them into a list and challenge your students to write without using any of those words. Another option is to compile the list with your students in either one brainstorming session or one word at a time as your class improves their language skills. By helping your students first become aware of the words they should try to replace, they will start the journey to improve their vocabularies.

2 A THESAURUS IS YOUR FRIEND

One of the best tools for deepening vocabulary among your students is the thesaurus. It may be impossible to be an English teacher and not know that a vocabulary lists synonyms of common words. Once you and your class have put together your list of boring words, take some class time or assign a homework project to look up each of these words in the thesaurus. Ask your students to share definitions of the words that they recognize or know the meaning of so everyone in your class has some familiarity with new vocabulary. You may challenge your students to choose one or more words that they will make an effort to incorporate into their vocabularies in the coming days or weeks.

3 DISTRIBUTING WORD LISTS

Though the thesaurus is an invaluable resource for any language learner, your students may find it intimidating or discouraging, especially if they are not accustomed to working with reference books. If you want to make the process less intimidating for your students, compile your own word lists for your students' use. You may want to write these on your own or have your students participate in their creation. Either way, take one plain word such as good and ask your students to think of other words they could use in its place. You may include words such as beneficial, positive, preferential and any others that your students may come up with. Then turn to the thesaurus and add any words you have missed. Giving your students a copy of this list or encouraging them to copy the words into their notebooks will make the interesting vocabulary readily available to them and easy to use. Follow by making a list of words to use instead of said and then lists for each of the five senses. You may also want to include a list of words that can describe people. Then when your students write, either in class or for homework, encourage them to refer to their lists to keep their writing vibrant.

4 CREATE YOUR OWN LIST OF INTERESTING WORDS

If your students keep a vocabulary notebook or writer's notebook, have them assign a page for new words that they like. Remind your students to add new words to their lists as they hear them spoken or as they read them. They may choose words that are appealing for their meaning or for their sound. In either case, you may want to have your students look up definitions of the words, preferably in an English only dictionary, and copy those definitions on the page.

In addition, challenge your students to keep a list of unfamiliar words that they either hear or read. Though there may be nothing particularly noteworthy about the words, just learning new vocabulary will help your students increase the variety in the words that they use. To go along with the new word lists, why not have a word of the day in your classroom. You may choose the new vocabulary strategically or randomly. In the morning, write the word on the board with its definition and award points to any student who can use the word in his or her conversation that day. If you keep a running tabulation, you can award one student the title Word Wizard of the Week. This will recognize the work that he or she did in the previous week as well as motivate other students to put some work in to their own vocabularies in the weeks to come!

THE MORE EXPOSURE THAT YOUR STUDENTS HAVE TO NEW VOCABULARY, THE MORE LIKELY THEY ARE TO USE IT.

If you start by making your students aware of the words they should seek to replace and then give them the tools to replace those boring words with more interesting vocabulary, they will improve their vocabularies. As their vocabularies increase, so will their confidence speaking and writing in English. By integrating these simple activities into your daily classroom routine, you can make a big difference in how your students use language and how they feel when they do!

5 Important Words Your Students Won't Find in the Dictionary

DO YOUR STUDENTS THINK THE DICTIONARY IS THE END ALL BE ALL WHEN IT COMES TO LANGUAGE RESOURCES? HAVE YOU SEEN STUDENTS THAT ARE LINGUISTICALLY PARALYZED IF YOU SAY NO DICTIONARIES ALLOWED?
Give them a glimpse of the complete linguistic picture, and a more balanced view of Webster, by pointing out these words that the dictionary missed.

THESE ARE THE WORDS YOUR STUDENTS WON'T FIND IN THE DICTIONARY

1 SLANG

Slang is always a big red flag for English as a second language students. Because language is always changing, because it is a living and fluid thing, there are always new words being born into English. After a piece of slang becomes more commonly used and is used by a larger portion of the population, it may gain status by being added to the dictionary. For example, in recent years the expression "ginormous" (a combination of giant and enormous) gained some popular usage. Most English speakers would say it is obviously slang, but it now appears in the dictionary, labeled as informal language. On the other hand, the word "woot" which has become a common expression of happiness or excitement is not found in most dictionaries. Ask any college student today what it means and they will likely be able to tell you, but here is an instance where a commonly used piece of slang will be a mystery to your students who are overly dependent on the dictionary.

2 NEW TECHNOLOGY

Slang is not the only place language changes. With scientific advances moving forward every day, language moves right along with it. Words are added to English with many scientific discoveries or technological advancements. Because of this, the dictionary will not reflect these recent additions to the language, even if they seem like legitimate words. For example, if someone were to ask you what a netsurfer is, you could probably tell him or her it is someone who browses the internet for entertainment. You will not, however, find this word in the dictionary. Another example is technostress which describes a negative emotion tied to new technology. These are examples of new words that have come about as a result of technological advancements. These types of words also come as a result of scientific discovery. One such word is heliopause, which identifies a boundary between the heliosphere and interstellar space. Though it may show up in future revisions of the dictionary, you will not find it there now and neither will your students. Again, your students should be encouraged to think beyond the covers of their dictionaries.

3 LOANWORDS

What do you think of when you hear the word fahrvergnugen? How about joie de vivre? In fact, both speak of the joy of life, of living the good life, and neither of these expressions is English, not in the traditional sense, anyway. When two languages have natural contact with one another, whether through business or social relationships or another means, the speakers of these languages at times will use words from the language not their own. With continued use by those original speakers and then the adoption of the foreign word by other native speakers, what was once a foreign word becomes a part of (in this case) the English language. These words borrowed from one language into another are called loanwords. Many English words have been "loaned" to foreign languages, the word computer is used in French for example, and English has likewise borrowed many words from other languages. Eventually, these words and expressions may make their way into the English dictionary, but it sometimes takes quite a long time for that to occur. Making your students aware that these words exist is part of helping them understand the meanings behind them. If a word happens to be borrowed from an ESL student's native language, they will obviously have an advantage over other students where that word is concerned. Most of the time, however, these foreign words will be completely foreign to your students as well. If you like, you can encourage your students to keep a list of these types of words in a notebook for their own reference. It will come in useful when an English-speaking friend says, "Ciao!" and your student knows not to head for the cafeteria.

4 ACRONYMS

In this age of text messages, perhaps the most necessary "words" your students will need to enable communication with native speakers are acronyms. An acronym is a word that is composed of the initial letters of the words or the important words that make up a larger phrase. Some acronyms become commonly used words over time and make their way into the dictionary in their own right, radar and FBI for example. Others may never get dictionary status, but it does not stop native speakers from using these acronyms in their speech and writing. You probably know what ttfn, rotfl, and pyt stand for, but your students may not, and the dictionary is not going to help them understand them, either. Your students may find that there is no easy way to know what an acronym means unless they have learned the expressions from which it comes, but learning these expressions is worth the effort if they intend to communicate with native speakers through any informal, written means.

FINALLY, AS ANYONE WHO HAS EVER HAD A LESSON ON THE DICTIONARY KNOWS, THE VALUABLE REFERENCE BOOKS DO NOT INCLUDE PROPER NOUNS OR NAMES AMONG THEIR ENTRIES. MOST STUDENTS WILL EXPECT THIS TO BE THE CASE, AND THEY WILL NOT DEPEND UPON THEIR DICTIONARIES TO UNDERSTAND THESE WORDS.
The challenge ESL teachers have is to break their students away from the dictionary for more than just words which start with a capital letter. Making students aware is the first step in helping them know when the dictionary will be a help and when it will be nothing to them. As always, be sensitive to your students and understanding of their struggles but still challenge them to think outside the reference book.

Digging Deep: Fresh & Creative Tips for Teaching Word Roots

If you could give your ESL students the key to understanding brand new vocabulary, what would you do to make it happen? Well, you do not have to do anything drastic. Simply try some of these activities with word roots, and your students will learn the skills that are necessary to break down new English words into pieces that make sense.

HOW TO TEACH WORD ROOTS IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 ROOT MEANINGS

The key to understanding new vocabulary through the use of word roots is first understanding the meaning of the roots themselves. Many dictionaries include word roots in the definitions they give for words, and you can encourage your students to keep a running list of the word roots that they have learned or been exposed to. Keeping a running list will both help your students remember the meanings of the roots and give them a list they can reference in the future. In so doing, some of your students may even find that English word roots are derivative of their native languages, especially if they are romance language speakers (Italian, Spanish, French, Romanian, and Portuguese). Help your students understand word roots on a daily basis. When you introduce new vocabulary to your students, point out any word roots that may help them know the meaning of the new word without heading to the dictionary.

Though having your students develop their own word root definition list is useful, it may be a bit on the difficult or slow side since there are so many word roots that the English language includes. An alternative to creating your own lists is to provide your students with a list of word roots and definitions. You can find several web sites that give lists of English word roots and their definitions - you should choose the one that best fits the needs of you and your students and then make it available to them.

2 NEW MEANINGS

Once your students are familiar with the idea of word roots and have some definitions under their belts, it is time to show them how to use those word roots to discover the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary! Give your students some vocabulary words that are not familiar to them which are also composed of word roots they know or can look up. For example, you may want to give them the words acrophobia, xenophobia and bibliophobia after introducing the roots phobia, xeno, acro and bibio. Ask them to use only the word roots to try to figure out the meaning of the new words, and then give them the correct definition. Later, your students will be able to infer that any unfamiliar word that ends with phobia will likely be a fear of whatever the first part of the word means. The more word roots you review and practice with your class, the more tools they will have for understanding new English words. Given contextual clues, they will often be able to make a useful guess as to the meaning of the word when it includes one or more root which they have studied.

3 WORDS IN THE FAMILY

Your students have learned the meanings of several word roots, and they have used those meanings to decipher the meanings of new vocabulary. Now it is time to see what other words use those same roots. Ask your students to list as many other words they can think of that use one particular word root. You may want to take the root bene which means ‘good’. What words can the class think of that include this word root? This may be quite a challenge for your students, especially if their English vocabularies are not extensive. After racking their brains, let them use the dictionary to look up more words that contain the root bene. Have them start by looking up the word root itself. From there, they will likely find other words that begin with that root. In the case of bene, on the same page your students would find benediction, benefaction, benefactor, beneficence, beneficent, beneficial, - the list goes on. Your students may also be able to find more words by reading the definitions of the words they found.

4 GET CREATIVE

Your students should have a good grasp on word roots at this point and how they come together to make words that people use every day. Now you can challenge your students to get creative with what they know and try to invent what might be real words in English! Start by asking your students to write several word roots on index cards or give them a set you have already prepared. Each card should have only one word root written on it. Then, challenge individuals or pairs of students to combine these roots in original ways in hopes of coming up with existing English words. When the pairs have a handful of words they think might be real English words, have them look the words up in the dictionary and see if they were right. If the words that they came up with are very similar to or even the same as those in the dictionary, congratulate your students on their great accomplishments! You can even turn this activity into a game by awarding three points to anyone who is able to combine roots to make a true English word and two points to anyone who makes a combination very similar to an existing English word. Give your class a time limit, and the winners are the team with the highest score at the end of the set time.

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND PRACTICE OF WORD ROOTS, THE INTERNET OFFERS SOME USEFUL RESOURCES. There are sites that offer interactive practice with word roots, and your students may enjoy the activities they find there. Whether you give this option to your students or not, they are sure to benefit from any class time that you devote to the study of word roots in English. They will have gotten tools that will be useful for them for years to come in their English studies and language use!

Riddle Me This: Word-based Conundrums for ESL Classroom

BECAUSE RIDDLES ARE WORD PUZZLES, THEY ARE A FUN WAY TO BRING GAMES INTO THE ESL CLASSROOM AND STILL LEARN LANGUAGE SKILLS. THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT KINDS OF RIDDLES, AND THESE ACTIVITIES WILL INTRODUCE YOUR STUDENTS TO JUST A FEW OF THE POSSIBILITIES.

Try one, two or more and see how quickly your students catch on to these word-based conundrums.

TRY THESE RIDDLES WITH YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 YOU ARE SO PUNNY

Explain the concept of puns to your ESL class, that they are words or phrases that sound similar to one word but in effect mean something completely different. Give your class a couple of examples of riddles based on puns. For example, you might ask, "What room has no doors and no windows?" The answer is a mushroom. You could also ask, "Why didn't the skeleton go to the dance?" The answer to that question is he had nobody to take.

Then divide your class into two groups and have each group of students write pun based riddles on index cards. You may want to give them a book of riddles or refer them to a website where they can find lists of riddles in English. They should write the question on one card and then the answer on another card. Collect the cards from each group and shuffle them. Then give the question set to each group who did not write them. Your students should read the questions to see if they are able to guess any of the answers to the riddles. Remind them that the riddles are based on puns. If either group has any answers, give them an opportunity to ask the other group if those answers are correct. After each group has tried to guess the answers to the riddles, give them the shuffled answer cards, and give them time to match the correct answers to the questions. Was either group able to get the answers to any of the riddles? Do they understand the answers now that they have them? Review with your class the riddles and answers and explain the humor if necessary.

2 RHYME TIME

This simple little game is a good excuse to spend some time reviewing rhyming words with your class! If your students are new to rhyming or if it has been a while since your class has focused on how pronunciation affects rhyme, remind them that a rhyming pair is made with two words whose vowel and final consonant are the same but whose initial sounds are different. Give some examples to your class such as fat cat, tan man, or blue shoe.

Once you have reviewed rhyming pairs with your class, they are ready to play the game. In this game, you or your students will write a clue to a silly rhyming pair. In the clue, the writer should use synonyms to describe the rhyming pair that is the answer. For example, you might give the clue, "foot wear which has travelled through a berry patch" and the answer would be blue shoe. A shopping center that is twenty stories high would be a tall mall. Have your students think up two or three of their own clues that can be used to discypher rhyming pairs. Have each person fold one piece of paper in half for each clue and write the description on the top of the paper (imagine writing on the front of a card). Your students should then write the answer to the clue on the inside of the folded paper (imagine the inside of a card). Display all of the cards on a bulletin board within reach of your students. In their free time, they will enjoy reading the clues and trying to think of the rhyming pair. Once they think they have the answers or when they have been stumped, they can lift the flap and check the answers. If you like, have your students write a new set of clues to rhyming pairs every few weeks and change out the cards and clues to keep your students' interested.

3 TAKE A LOOK AROUND YOU

In this activity, your students will create riddles of their own to describe their classmates. Write each student's name on a slip of paper and put it in a hat or bag. Then go around the room and have each of your students choose one of the names from the hat. Without telling whose name they have, challenge your students to write a riddle using five adjectives that describe the person whose name they have chosen. They should start their description with, "I am..." and continue with one or more sentences. Encourage your students to be as specific as they can. For example, a person may write, "I am smart and studious. I am intelligent, athletic and energetic." Give your students several examples that you have written which describe people that they would all know. If time allows or if the need arises, this game is a good opportunity to review parts of speech. Your students may be in special need of a review of adjectives and adverbs.

As an extension of this activity, challenge your students to take the descriptions they have written and use synonyms for the adjectives they have chosen. How specific can they be in their clues? Can using one synonym or another alter the meaning of the clue? To make the clues even more interesting, show your class how to use a thesaurus to find more specific words for their descriptions! If your students come across words with which they are not familiar, encourage them to check an English/English dictionary to determine how each word varies from the others listed there.

PUZZLES ARE A CHALLENGE, BUT THEY ARE ALSO FUN AS IS THE CASE WITH LANGUAGE LEARNING. YOU CAN GIVE YOUR STUDENTS PUZZLES THAT OTHERS HAVE WRITTEN OR CHALLENGE THEM TO WRITE THEIR OWN.

Either way, they will be using the language skills and vocabulary they already know to acquire more.

14 Quick Tips for Teaching Homophones

For students who have not had any exposure to homophones, they can be frustrating and confusing. For students who have studied the sound alike word pairs, they can be a source of linguistic challenge and entertainment. Either way, your ESL class will benefit from some experience with these unique word buddies in English! The next time you talk about homophones with your ESL class, keep the following tips in mind.

HOW TO TEACH HOMOPHONES

1 English is full of homophones. Giving your students a set which they can reference will help ease their anxiety when it comes to different words that sound the same. This set of 706 sets of homophones (cooper.com/alan/homonym_list.html) that Alan Cooper compiled will help your students reduce their anxiety about homophones.

2 Encourage your students to keep their own list of homophone pairs in a vocabulary notebook. From time to time, ask your students to write sentences that use both members of the homophone pairs in the same sentence.

3 Sometimes what your students need most of all when it comes to homophones is practice. Giving them fill in the blank sentences or a cloze paragraph which test homophones will help them understand which word goes with which meaning.

4 Dictating sentences that contain homophones is also beneficial to your students. If you collect their papers, you can see which of your students is having trouble with the sound alike words.

5 It is not difficult to find online quizzes that test homophone comprehension. Giving your students a list of sites with these activities will give them resources they can use in their free time to do further homophone study.

6 You can give your students practice matching homophones with the correct definitions by creating your own crossword puzzles. Simply give the definition of the word as the clue and have your students fill the answers in the chart.

7 By writing pairs of homophones on index cards you can create your own set of Go Fish cards. Teach your students how to play the game if they do not already know how then use your cards to make matching pairs.

8 You can use these same cards to play a game of homophone memory. Students lay all the cards out face down on a flat surface and take turns trying to match pairs of homophones to each other.

9 You can play a relay race to review homophones with your class for a more energetic activity. Divide your class into two groups and have one person from each group come to the front board. Read a sentence which uses one of a pair of homophones. The first student to correctly write that homophone on the board scores a point for his team. The first team to reach fifteen points wins.

10 Similarly, you can play homophone Pictionary by showing the two people at the board a homonym pair on an index card and having them race to illustrate the words. The first team to guess the homophones correctly scores a point.

11 Riddles can be another fun way to review homophones with your students. Ask your class a riddle which has a homophone pair for its answer. For example, what do you call a naked grizzly? A bare bear. Challenge your students to come up with some homophone riddles of their own. You can display the riddles on a bulletin board and challenge your class to come up with the answers during their free periods.

12 Have your class list the letters of the alphabet from A to Z on a sheet of paper. Starting with each of the letters, see how many homophone pairs they can think of. Allow your students to work in groups and see if anyone can make a complete set of 26 homophone pairs.

13 Divide your class into small groups and challenge the groups to write one sentence with as many homophone pairs as possible. What is the highest number of homophone pairs that a group can put into a logical sentence?

14 Homophones are not a phenomenon unique to English. Group your students by their native languages to see if they can make a list of the homophones in their native tongue.

HOMOPHONES CAN BE FUN AS LONG AS YOU TAKE TIME IN YOUR CLASS TO TALK ABOUT THE UNIQUE WORD PAIRS IN ENGLISH. Try doing one homophone activity each day or spend a few days on a homophone unit. With some experience, exposure and entertainment, homophones will be fun for your class rather than fearful!

8 Fresh, Fun Ideas for Words and Post-It Notes

TEACHING VOCABULARY TO AN ESL CLASS CAN BE ONE OF THE MOST CHALLENGING ACTIVITIES A TEACHER HAS TO FACE. When a majority of vocabulary instruction boils down to simple memorization, how does a teacher make class interesting and engaging? Here are some fresh ideas you can use with your next vocabulary unit that will help your lessons stick and allow everyone to have fun in the process, too!

TRY THESE FRESH, FUN IDEAS FOR WORDS AND POST-IT NOTES

1 SYNONYM EXPLOSION

The next time you teach on synonyms, you might want to bring a stack of post-its to the classroom. Start by writing one word on a post-it and putting in on the front board. Then challenge your students to think of synonyms for the word. If a student offers a correct answer, he or she writes it on a post-it and places it under the first word. A second student follows. Continue trying to make the longest column of post-its possible before moving on to the next word. Reward your students with a homework free evening if they can create a column of post-its from the floor to the ceiling! If you have the room in your classroom, you might want to leave the lists up for a few days and encourage students to find additional synonyms or to use these words in their conversations and written pieces rather than the common word with which you started the activity.

2 PERSONAL PICTURE DICTIONARIES

Beginning English learners can create their own picture dictionaries using a spiral notebook and some post-it notes. Introduce your students to some basic vocabulary, pointing out physical items in the classroom whenever possible, and have them draw each item on a separate post-it. Then, have students write those vocabulary words in their notebooks and stick the post-its over the printed words. Your students can now look at the pictures and test themselves on the vocabulary words. Once a student is confident in the new vocabulary word, he can remove the post-it from the page. Organize words alphabetically or by theme in the notebooks.

3 VOCABULARY LEARNING CENTER

You can give your students the resources to review this week's vocabulary list at an independent learning center. All you need is a poster, some post-its and a few dry erase markers. Start with a sheet of poster paper and divide it into four sections. Label the sections words, synonyms & antonyms, sentences, and pictures. Then laminate the poster. To review a set of vocabulary words, write each word on one post-it and stick them in the first section. In the second section, students choose words from the list and write synonyms or antonyms on a second post-it. In the third section, students choose other words to use in sentences, which they also write on individual post-its. Any words that are left go in the last section, where students draw a picture illustrating the meaning of the word. By the time your students finish all three sections, they will have reviewed all of the current vocabulary words.

4 CLASSROOM DISPLAY

Do you have vocabulary lists that change on a regular basis? You can use post-its to create a permanent bulletin board for new vocabulary words and save yourself the effort of changing the board each week. Simply put this week's words on post-its and stick them to your permanent display. When test day rolls around, you can simply take the notes down and display next week's words on a new set of sticky notes.

5 GAME REVIEW

Vocabulary improvisation can be a fun and lively way to review vocabulary with your students at the end of a unit. Break students into groups of four to six for the activity, and make sure you have one or more vocabulary words for each person in the group. To review a word, write it on a post-it and have one student in each group place the note on her forehead. The other students in her group should act out the definition of the word. She must interpret her classmates' actions and guess the vocabulary word that is on her forehead. Once she does, another student wears a new word and the game continues. Your students will have so much fun with the silliness and energy that this activity promotes, they may not even realize they are learning!

6 RELAY RACE

Vocabulary review does not have to keep your students in their seats. This relay race will have your students racing to learn their vocabulary words for the week. Using a large piece of poster board, create a grid which will serve as the answer board for your vocabulary review. Write one word on each post-it, and place them in the grid. Then divide your class into two teams and have them line up. Give a fly swatter to the first person in line and place the answer grid on a flat surface in the front of the room. To review the vocabulary words, show your class a sentence which can be completed using one of the vocabulary words. You might want to prewrite them on poster board, put them in a power point presentation or use an overhead. Once students see the sentence, they race to the vocabulary choices and swat the correct answer. The first team to choose the correct word gets to place that post-it on their side of a scoreboard. As you give additional sentences, the choices become fewer. Play until all the words are used, and then declare the winning team. You can also do this activ-

ity using synonyms, antonyms or definitions of the same set of vocabulary words.

7 RACE TO THE FINISH

Your students will enjoy playing vocabulary dash with a set of post-it notes. This game reviews any vocabulary with physical representations in the room, for example items in the classroom or body parts. Put students into groups of three students, and give each group a stack of post-it notes with the vocabulary words on it. Then, give the groups thirty seconds to stick the notes on the correct objects. (Note: if you are reviewing body parts, have each group choose one member to be the model and have the words stuck to them.) As your students get better at the game, reduce the amount of time they have to post the vocabulary. They will enjoy the excitement and energy this game creates in the classroom.

8 VOCABULARY TREASURE

The next time your ESL students tackle content or cover a particular theme in class, let them contribute to the unit's content with a vocabulary treasure wall. On a section of wall in your classroom, create a treasure area. You can cut a treasure box out of poster paper, draw a pile of treasure on a large poster board, or be creative in how you designate your area. Then, as your students go through their studies and days, encourage them to note any new words that relate to the subject you are studying. For example, if you are doing a unit on baseball, your students might find the words homerun, umpire or World Series. Have any student with a word treasure write that word on a post it. On another post it, he should write the definition, draw a picture, or put down anything else that will help him understand the word. Once those post-its are done, he can put his discovered treasure in the treasure pile. He should first stick the definition note somewhere on the pile. Then, he should stick the note with the vocabulary word on top of that definition. The rest of the students can look at these treasures during free study times, and your class will feel like they are taking some control in what they learn in class.

WORDS REALLY ARE FUN, AND YOUR ESL STUDENTS WILL GET A GLIMPSE OF THAT WITH THESE VOCABULARY ACTIVITIES.

They are simple, straightforward and fun. On top of all that, they work, so grab some post-its and see just how much a sticky note can help your students learn!

Mind the Gap! 10 Fun Fill in the Blanks Activities for Any ESL Class

A GAP-FILLING EXERCISE IS PROBABLY THE QUINTESSENTIAL ESL ACTIVITY.

They're easy for teacher's to create, easy for students to complete, and may be designed for any vocabulary list or verb tense. Since they're so common in the ESL class, why not give them a new, fun twist? Here are some ideas for blanks your students will enjoy filling.

TRY THESE 10 FUN FILL IN THE BLANKS ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR NEXT ESL CLASS

1 ILLUSTRATED BLANKS

This exercise imitates the style of storybooks that have gaps in the story filled with pictures. This is probably the best type of gap-filling activity with very young learners, especially those who can't read or write just yet. Copy a short story onto a Word document. Delete some of the key vocabulary and paste some small pictures into the gaps to represent the word you deleted. You'll have to fiddle with the formatting, the size of the images and spacing of the Word document, but it's not that hard to do.

If your students can read, they read the story and fill the blanks with the help of the illustrations. If they can't read, you do the reading and pause to allow them to look at the picture and fill in the blanks.

2 DRAWING A BLANK

This is a variation of the activity mentioned above. Give each of your young learners a copy of the same story with the blanks in the text. Make sure that the blanks are big enough, i.e. that there is enough space for students to fill the gaps with their own drawings. Check answers by having students take turns reading the story out loud.

3 A GAP IN MY MEMORY

This is another way to practice key vocabulary. Write some sentences on the board and ask students to read them out loud. Then proceed to erase the key vocabulary. Ask students questions to fill in the blanks: Sarah wants to buy a _____. What does Sarah want to buy?

4 MUSICAL BLANKS

This is a classic and one that many of you have probably already tried, but it can't be left out of a list of great gap-filling exercises. Play a song for your students to listen to and provide the lyrics with blanks they must fill. You can handle the exercise in a number of ways. You can play the song and then give them lyrics to complete, or you can play the song while they fill the gaps at the same time.

5 VIDEO BLANKS

This is exactly like the Musical Blanks only in this case you use a short video: a scene from a sitcom, a YouTube video, or a CNN news video for more advanced learners. You'll probably have to create the script yourself in most cases, but BusyTeacher.org has plenty of scripted videos you can use!

6 FAMOUS COUPLES

A great way to teach vocabulary is to introduce it through very common pairings, for example: apples and bananas, bacon and eggs, black and white, mom and dad, burger and fries, etc. Create a set of cards in which only one of the words appears: ____ and fries, burger and _____. Ask students to pick up a card and fill in the blank.

7 OH, SNAP!

This game is similar to the game of Snap! Write sentences with gaps on small cards to create your deck of cards. Make sure that you include sentences with blanks that may be filled with the same word, for example: "_____ are red" and "I like to eat _____ and bananas". Both can be filled with the word "apples". Students take turns turning over cards and shout "Snap!" when the blanks on the cards may be filled with the same word.

8 MEMORY GAME WITH BLANKS

This is another game you can play with the same cards you use for Snap! In this case place all of the cards face down. Students take turns flipping them over, two at a time. The goal is to find two cards with blanks that may be filled with the same word.

9 FILL THE BLANK AS A TEAM

Divide students into two teams. Give one student a card with a sentence that has a blank. The student must figure out which word goes in the blank and then give the team clues as to what the word is. Say you're teaching a lesson that includes sports vocabulary. Sentence: David Beckham plays _____. The student has to provide clues about the sport without reading the sentence or mentioning the player's name: It's something you play with a ball. You play it in a field. Each team has 11 players, etc.

10 FILL IN WITH PHONEMICS

Fill in the blanks AND practice pronunciation at the same time. For this type of activity you can either put a phonemic symbol for each blank, or a word that includes the same phoneme. Example: "I asked my mother to _(lie)_ me a new book bag". Answer: buy

GET CREATIVE! DON'T GIVE YOUR STUDENTS THE SAME OLD BLANKS TO FILL.

Make them a little more challenging, - make them different!

Creating a Paper Zoo in Your Classroom

EVERY CHILD HAS EITHER BEEN TO THE ZOO OR DREAMED ABOUT GOING THERE. KIDS LOVE ANIMALS, AND THOSE ANIMALS ARE A GREAT LEARNING OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

As teachers we love to take our classes on learning field trips, but finances and location do not always make it easy to make those trips happen.

This year, bring your class on a stay-in field trip by **creating a paper zoo in your classroom**. Your students will have the same opportunities to learn about the animals and will get language practice in the process.

HOW TO CREATE A PAPER ZOO IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 GETTING IN THE MINDSET

Many of your students have probably had an opportunity to go to the zoo in once city or another. **Ask for a raise of hands to see how many children remember a trip to the zoo**. Ask any or all of them to share what they remember about the experience.

Then give your class some common ground by reading one or two books about the zoo. You may want to use *My Visit to the Zoo* by Aliki or *The Tiger Has a Toothache* by Patricia Lauber or any others that your students are familiar with and enjoy.

After reading, **start a list of all the animals a person might see at the zoo**. You can ask groups of three or four to make their own lists and then compile the lists to make one large classroom list of possible zoo animals.

To the students who shared a zoo memory, ask what information they learned about the animals there. Also, ask how they learned that information. Starting with the information your class gave, brainstorm a list of **what information a visitor to the zoo might like to have**. Your class may decide a visitor might like to know *what an animal's natural habitat is like, what an animal eats and how it gets its food, how many babies an animal has* and *how it cares for them* as well as *if the animal has any natural predators*. As you think about what information a person might want to know about a zoo animal, start a list of unfamiliar vocabulary words on the board and encourage your students to copy them into their notebooks. You may want to include words such as *habitat, prey* and *predator, zookeeper, visitor* or any other words that may come up during your discussion. Your students will use these words later when they make their own zoo.

2 CREATE THE ATMOSPHERE

Once your class has talked about the kind of information a zoo visitor might want to know, have them **think about how the visitors might learn that information**. How have they learned about different places they have visited? Whether it is a zoo or some other point of interest, visitors get information in many ways. These ways include signs, drawings, maps and workers at the location. Tell your students that they are going to create a paper zoo in the classroom, and they will need to include all these types of information for the visitors who will be coming.

For the zoo, each person in the class will have two responsibilities. First, each person will be part of an information group. The information groups will be responsible for creating signs for the zoo and maps that visitors will receive. Divide your class into two groups and assign one information responsibility to each group. It may be helpful to provide your class with brochures and maps from real zoos for them to use as models. You can find these online or grab a few extras the next time you are visiting your local zoo.

Each person will also be responsible for creating one exhibit. Each exhibit will focus on one animal, and you can allow students to choose from the list you made earlier or you can assign one animal to each student. Make sure no two students are presenting the same animal. The exhibit will include a picture of the animal, the animal's habitat and a sign with information about the animal. Each person should either draw or print a picture of the animal and create some type of habitat to display that picture in. He should also research information about the animal and write up an informational sign. When visitors come to the paper zoo, he will be the "zoo keeper" for that animal and will have to answer questions the visitors may ask. **Give your students several days to prepare and set up the zoo**. If your students are beginning level language learners, you may want to make a pair responsible for each exhibit rather than assigning one animal to each student.

3 WELCOME VISITORS

Once the paper zoo is complete, welcome visitors to see and learn about the animals. You can ask other classes to come and tour the zoo or open it up to parents and other adults. Whomever you invite, give them a copy of the zoo map and suggest some questions they might want to ask the zookeepers. They can ask information about an animal's diet, natural habitat or normal activities. Your students should be able to answer the questions based on their research.

Leave the zoo open for a week or two and then take some time to talk about the experience with your students. If they have been to a zoo, ask them to compare the class experience to the real thing. If they have not, ask them what they would like to get out of a visit to a live zoo. **If possible, invite a real animal handler** to visit the class and share what it means to take care of animals on a daily basis. You may want to consider a fieldtrip to a local zoo if time and budget permit.

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO LEAVE YOUR CLASSROOM TO HAVE A ZOO EXPERIENCE. YOUR STUDENTS WILL ENJOY CREATING THEIR VERY OWN ZOO RIGHT IN YOUR CLASSROOM, AND THEY WILL BE THE AUTHORITIES WHEN OTHERS COME TO VISIT.

Everyone will have fun creating and visiting your paper zoo, and your students will never forget the experience.

Twittering in Class: Feather Friendly Activities for the ESL Classroom

THE WORD 'TWITTER' HAS NOT ALWAYS BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH STATUS UPDATES AND SOCIAL MEDIA. Although it was not that long ago, it feels like an eon has passed since twittering had to do with our feathered friends. Still, birds are appealing little creatures that people enjoy. With spring knocking at winter's door, use these activities in your ESL classroom to welcome the little migrators back to the north, and you can let your students twitter about it as you do!

HOW TO PROCEED

1 BE A BIRD WATCHER

Bird watching, also known as birding, has been a recreational activity since the late 1800's. When The Autobon Society was formed in the United States and The Royal Society for the protection of Birds was established in Britain around that time, the founders could not have known how their measures intended to protect birds would lead to the hobby so many embrace today. Bird watchers look to observe birds in their natural habitats, living and singing and working birds. Previously, hunters would capture and kill birds to observe them, though this of course limited how much they could know about their victims. With this difference in mind, challenge your students to think about how bird observation changed when those watching aimed to preserve the lives of the birds they observed. Using a Venn diagram, have your students make a list of the similarities and differences between bird watching and hunting birds for observation. Encourage them to keep opinion out of the things they list and focus on facts. After each person has completed their diagram, have them work with a partner to see if either of them can add any other ideas to his or her list.

You can then get your students out of the classroom and into a natural setting to do some of their own bird watching. Take your class to a park or playground and challenge them to locate and observe birds. They should take notes on any birds they see during the activity. Your students should record the color, shape and overall appearance of the birds they see as well as any sounds they make and where the birds are located. After the bird watching session, make some copies of bird identification books available to your students and challenge them to identify by name the birds that they saw. If you like, have your students write their own bird entries using the books as models!

2 TWITTERING NEAR HOME

Every region has some variety when it comes to the birds that naturally live there. If you have a local authority who knows about birds in your area, invite that person to come and speak to your class. You may want to seek out a bird watching club and ask one of its members to volunteer his or her time to talk to your class. Your speaker can then talk about the birds that naturally occur in your area, what it is like to go bird watching and any tips for beginners at the hobby. Starting with the information that your guest presents, ask your students to do some research on one of the birds that he or she talked about. Try to get everyone in the class to research a different bird, and then have your students give a presentation on the bird which they researched. If your students choose one of the local birds that your guest speaker talked about, they will have a model to follow for their presentation.

3 FEATHERY EXPRESSIONS

Have you and your students noticed how many expressions include birds or a reference to them? It might surprise both you and them when you look at how often our feathered friends are mentioned in the sayings parents teach their children. Put your students in groups of two to three to discuss the meaning of each of the following expressions, which mention birds. They should try to determine what the phrase means and speculate how the expression may have come to be. After your groups have discussed the phrases, review the true meaning of each expression with the entire class. Were your students able to guess the meanings correctly? If you like, ask each person or each group to illustrate one of the phrases in a poster and then display them around your room throughout your bird studies.

Birds of a feather flock together.
A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
A little bird told me something.
That is for the birds.
You can kill two birds with one stone.
That is something worth crowing about.
He is running around like a chicken with his head cut off.

4 GET OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

As a final feathered adventure, why not take your students on a field trip to a local aviary! These bird preserves educate visitors about our flying friends and give patrons a chance to learn about different breeds of birds. If you have the money available in your budget and the travel means to do it, take your students to an aviary to learn some science behind the animals they have been focusing on in class. If you can, arrange a tour with a staff member and challenge your students' listening comprehension. After the trip, you may want to have them write a summary of what they learned, compare and contrast what they learned at the aviary with what they already knew, or take a short quiz based on the presentation. In any case, your students will benefit from listening to naturally spoken English by someone who is not their teacher.

NOT EVERYONE LIKES BIRDS, BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN THAT YOUR CLASSROOM CANNOT BE FILLED WITH TWITTERING AS YOU STUDY THE REMARKABLE ANIMALS AND USE THEM FOR INSPIRATION FOR YOUR LANGUAGE STUDIES. As your students listen, speak, read and write about birds, they will certainly have something interesting about which to twitter!

Bringing Nature's Treasures Into the ESL Classroom

ANIMALS HAVE A NEAR UNIVERSAL APPEAL TO YOUNG CHILDREN. WHETHER IT IS DINOSAURS OR HORSES, THERE IS SOMETHING WITH OUR FURRY FRIENDS THAT CONNECTS DIRECTLY WITH OUR HEARTS.

For that reason, if your ESL class is composed of elementary aged students, they are bound to have fun with these activities that bring the wild world of animals into the ESL classroom.

HOW TO BRING THE WILD WORLD OF NATURE INTO YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The environment in which animals live can directly affect their ability to survive. With man's ever-expanding habitat, some animals are getting the short end of the stick when it comes to having a healthy place to live. You can challenge your students to examine how healthy their own worlds are for the wild animals that live along side them. As a class, keep a list of all the different types of animals you see over a two week period. As students see animals at home or in their neighborhoods, ask them to jot down what they saw. The next day in class, add any new animals to your list. You should take advantage of the natural opportunity for your students to learn new vocabulary for animals and birds. Going over the list each day of the two weeks will also help cement that new vocabulary into their minds. Once you have your list, ask your students to examine whether the environments in which these animals live are healthy ones. They should look for and think about things like pollution, trash, food and water sources and places for the animals to live. As a class, decide on a service project that you can do to help make the environment friendlier to wild animals. You may decide to have a cleanup day or make food or shelter available to the animals that you live with. As an extension, encourage your students to think of other ways they can be kind to the animals around them.

2 WILD MEMORY

As ESL students, there is always a drive to expand one's vocabulary, and when it comes to wild animals there are almost always new words to be found. You can use this unique set of wild animal English words in a Memory style game with your students. Assign each student a partner and then direct the pair to this list of animals, which specifies names for the male, female and baby as well as the collective noun for a group of those animals. Ask each pair to choose ten animals from the list and write down the animal with its collective noun, the word used to refer to a group. Once each pair has chosen their animals, explain to them that the words used to refer to a group of each animal are called collective nouns. Some collective nouns are general (like group which can be used with people, pigs or cars as well as many other words) while other collective nouns are specific to the noun that they describe (like a pride of lions but never a pride of frogs). They should not confuse collective nouns with noncount nouns, which cannot be counted individually. (You cannot say 'I have one furniture in my living room' or 'there is one rice on the table'.) Collective nouns are used with count nouns (one lion, two lions) to refer to a group of those individuals. Once your students understand what a collective noun is, give each pair twenty index cards to make their games. They should write the name of each animal on one card and the collective noun which is used with that animal on another card. Have groups shuffle their cards and then lay them out on a desk in a grid arrangement. Students should take turns looking at two cards, turning each of the cards over so the other can see what is written there. If the students turn over a noun and its matching collective noun, he keeps the pair of cards. Whoever has the most cards at the end of the game is the winner. To give students an even greater challenge, have them exchange cards with another pair of students in the class and see how many matches they can make with the new set of animals.

3 I WANT A HIPPOPOTAMUS

In 1953, Gayla Peevey charmed listeners with the song "I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas." The song was written from the perspective of a child who was trying to convince her parents that she should be able to have a hippo for a pet. Ask your students to imagine that a hippopotamus followed them home from school one day, and they want to keep that hippo as a pet as well. What reasons would they give to convince their parents to keep him? Groups your students into discussion groups of three to four to talk about reasons they might give for keeping a hippopotamus as a pet. If your students get stuck, play the song for them for inspiration. If you like, have your students write a persuasive letter to their parents listing the reasons they think a hippo would make a good pet and refuting the objections they think their parents might have. For fun, you may want to invite parents to write letters to their children, depending on their levels of English, with their responses and post these in the classroom!

THESE ARE ONLY A FEW OF THE WAYS THAT YOU CAN BRING THE WILD WORLD OF NATURE INTO YOUR ESL CLASSROOM.

Your students will enjoy learning about animals while they increase their vocabulary and improve speaking and writing skills. If you find that your class is particularly interested in one of these subjects, take it a step further by assigning some research and ask for speeches on specific animals. Science and English never went so well together as when animals enter the ESL classroom, and your class is sure to have a roaring good time with it!

Underwater and Under Earth Adventures

DARK, DAMP AND QUIET? DIRTY OR WET? WHAT WOULD IT BE LIKE TO LIVE UNDER THE GROUND OR UNDER THE WATER?

If you have already challenged your students to think like a kite high in the air, this underwater and under earth adventure is the next step. Even if you have not, imagining what it would be like deep in the earth will be fun for your students and get them writing creatively.

UNDERWATER AND UNDER EARTH ADVENTURES IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 GET EQUIPPED

Are your students young enough to enjoy a dance party? If so, **play one or two songs that describe what it is like to be deep underwater**. You can use *"Under the Sea"* from The Little Mermaid or *"Octopus's Garden"* by the Beatles. Let your students listen to the music and move their way around the room pretending they are underwater. To set the scene even further, post pictures around your room of life under the water or under the earth. If your students are too old to dance, give them copies of the lyrics and have them read along with one of the songs still imagining what it would be like to be there.

Once they have imagined themselves there, ask your students what it might be like to be deep under the water or deep under the earth. Encourage your students to use all their senses when they picture themselves in one of the places. *How does it feel? Cold? Damp? Can they hear animals or water moving around them? Is it dark, or can they see? Can they smell anything?* **Make a class list of the sensations your students imagine it would be like underwater. Make a second list of what it would be like deep under the earth**. Your students can use these lists as a resource later when they write about these environments.

Now work on their listening skills by reading some books about these under the surface locations. You might want to use *Exploring the Deep, Dark Sea* by Gail Gibbons or *Under the Ground* by Claude Delafosse. You can also ask your students if they have had any experiences in these places and allow them to share with the class. Add to your class descriptive lists as new ideas come to your students.

2 DIG DEEPER

At this point, your students should have some idea what the depths of earth and sea might be like. Now they will write about one place or the other. E**xplain to your students that they will write a descriptive piece of writing**. That means that they will be describing the depths of either the sea or the earth. They can approach the subject two different ways. They can imagine that they are an explorer or scientist or another person who is visiting or exploring the deep places. On the other hand, they might choose to pretend they are an inhabitant of the deep sea or the deep earth, a fish or a mole for example, and write from that creature's perspective. Have your students write one or more paragraphs and then illustrate if desired. They may find the writing easier if you allow them to consult with a small group as they write, and the group will also help them get some conversation practice at the same time.

You can **design a bulletin board to display the written pieces and illustrations easily**. Along the top boarder of your designated area, draw the surface of the earth and a shallow band of what one may find beneath it: plant roots, rocks or animal burrows. At the bottom of the designated area, draw the ocean floor and a band of what you might find at the bottom of the ocean: plants growing in the sand, fish, shells or coral. Use the space in the middle of the area to display what your students have written and illustrated. If you like, you can post the underground pieces toward the top of the blank area and the underwater pieces toward the bottom. You can also bring art into the curriculum with an easy craft project that makes fish and post them on the wall as well. If you lack the wall space for a large display, compile the pieces your students have written into class books that they can read during their free reading time. You can assemble one book about being under the earth and another about being under the sea.

3 VISITORS AMONG US

To take the activity even further, **ask your students to find pictures of special tools that people use under the water and under the earth**. You might want to give them some old magazines to look through for this activity. Post these pictures around your classroom to set the under the surface mood. You might want to include pictures of *scuba gear, flashlights, hard hats, shovels, rope, gloves, cameras* or any of many other possibilities.

This is also a perfect opportunity to **invite a guest speaker to your class**. You can have a miner speak to them about working under the earth, or you might want someone with experience scuba diving to talk to your class about the deeps of the oceans. Either way, prepare the students by having them write questions for the presenter the day before that person comes. Have your special guest give a short presentation to the class and then allow your students to ask any questions he or she did not already answer. Afterward, you can have your students compare and contrast how they imagined the depths would be with what your guest knows from experience.

CHILDREN LIKE TO PLAY IMAGINATIVE GAMES, SO WHY NOT USE THEIR IMAGINATION TO FURTHER THEIR ENGLISH STUDIES. WHEN THEY PICTURE THEMSELVES DEEP IN THE EARTH, YOUR STUDENTS WILL LEARN NEW VOCABULARY AND GET PRACTICE USING SENSORY DETAILS IN THEIR WRITING.

If you can bring a guest speaker in your class will have even more fun. In any case, their imaginations will be stretched as they live under the surface in their minds.

Is Anybody Home? How to Teach the Culture of Families

Families are something that almost everyone has experience with. Most everyone was born into a family, fulfilled roles in that family and at some point, has left that family to grow and experience life. The family experience, however, varies greatly from one culture to the next.

How many children does a typical family have? Who lives together in the same house? How important is birth order in a family and a culture? All these are important questions that each student may answer differently. Because of this, teaching about family is a great opportunity to explore some of the cultural differences among your students.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 VOCABULARY

The first and most foundational step in teaching about family is to make sure your students know the vocabulary terms. Start with general terms like father, mother, brother and sister. Make sure your students understand the gender differences in words like niece and nephew and the lack of gender difference in words like parent and cousin. Different languages will not signal gender differences the same ways, and this may be confusing for your students. Likewise, your students may be confused with even simple words like brother that do not distinguish between older brothers and younger brothers as some languages do. Be patient in explaining these differences and let your students ask questions and share the differences in their languages.

2 RELATIONSHIPS

After your students understand the vocabulary, it is now time to examine the relationships between family members. The easiest way to do this is to create a family tree. You can either create a tree for a fictional family or use your own family as an example. Be as elaborate and as detailed as you can. As you create the tree, show how people in the family are related to each other. One person will likely be a brother to one person, a son to another person, a nephew or cousin to another. Using the family tree, you can highlight to your students how one person plays various roles. You can also point out generational differences: my mother's grandmother is my great grandmother. My mother's aunt is my great aunt. Only the bravest of teachers will attempt relationships as complex as second cousin once removed, but if you do even advanced students will benefit. Because of this, family is a topic that can be used with any level learner. The more advanced the student, the more complicated the relationships you can teach. This also makes family a great topic for a mixed level class since each student can find some level of comprehension that challenges him or her.

3 CULTURAL NORMS

Now that you have reviewed vocabulary and relationships among family members, you can discuss the culture of families. Who typically lives in the same house? Where does a newly married couple live? How many children are typical in your culture? How are older family members treated differently from younger ones? Are there responsibilities that come with certain family roles? (e.g. oldest son or daughter) Who cares for family members when they are unable to take care of themselves? All of these are great discussion questions that will keep your students talking to each other for hours. Discussions will be especially enlightening if your class is made up of students from different cultures.

4 MAKE IT PERSONAL

You can also give your students the opportunity to share about each of their families either in front of the class or in small groups. Give them time to prepare, and then let them share. You can also use family as a topic for writing assignments. What does your family mean to you? How is your family typical of your culture? How is your family different from a family in your host culture? In addition, if they are staying with a host family, compare and contrast your host family to your family at home. Be sensitive to your students that have lost members of their family to whom they were close. Students who have lost a sibling or parent may be especially emotional when discussing family. Give them permission to share what they can, and do not make them uncomfortable by forcing them to discuss sensitive relationships.

5 BRING IN OUTSIDE SOURCES

One of my favorite activities to do when teaching about family is to use movie clips that show familial relationships. One of the most entertaining is the clip from While You Were Sleeping when Sandra Bullock's character meets her supposed fiancé's family. The scene is quick and complicated, but taken segment by segment it shows many of the relationships present in typical families. You can use this or a scene from another movie or television show with your class. This is also a great way to bring in a book they have been reading if the book portrays a family. Have the class create a family tree for that family. Have them describe the relationships they see or read about. You can also show the movie clip before starting your lesson on family to bring the subject to the forefront of your students' minds and get them thinking about the topic.

TEACHING ABOUT FAMILY DOES NOT HAVE TO BE BORING OR ROTE. BECAUSE IT IS A TOPIC EVERYONE CAN RELATE TO IN SOME WAY, FAMILY IS A GREAT SUBJECT TO USE IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM.

Do not be surprised, though, if you learn a thing or two about your students that you never would have guessed. Take the opportunity to increase your understanding of their cultures - it will only make you a better and more sensitive teacher in the long run.

Art in Your Classroom: Shoot for the Stars With These Activities

Vincent Van Gogh is a world-renowned artist, but he was not what most people would define as successful during his lifetime. In fact, he only sold one painting before he died though today his pieces sell for millions, the most expensive of which sold for over $144 million. He died depressed and distained. His sad story can have positive effects, though, and you can see them in your ESL students. Art may not be the most common subject to include in an ESL class, but if you have never tried reaching your students through this subject you should. The content is often familiar and the artists inspiring. When you work with art in the ESL classroom, your students will be inspired and engaged in new and noteworthy ways.

HOW TO USE ART IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 VINCENT VAN GOGH'S STARRY NIGHT

Though not Van Gogh's highest priced piece, Starry Night may be one of his most well known pieces. If you can acquire a poster sized reproduction of this piece, ask your students to look carefully at the painting and take five minutes of silence in the classroom to let your class engage with the painting. Then ask willing individuals to share their thoughts on the piece. Encourage your students to comment on color, line, composition and how the piece makes them feel. After a few students have shared, give your class some time to compose a written response to the painting. Help them understand that a response to art can take very different forms or styles depending on the person who writes it. For some, they may write about how the piece makes them feel or what thoughts it evokes. For others, they may write about an experience that the painting has brought to their minds. Still others will evaluate the piece as a work of art, paying attention to technique and artistic skill. Some may even choose to compare the piece to another work of art or a piece of literature or movie. If anyone is willing, ask her to share her response by reading it to the class. If you can have students with very different styles of response share, your class will benefit most.

2 VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Once your class has thought about how Van Gogh's painting makes them feel, take some time to educate them about his life. Present to your class this short biography (bitly.com/ioPwKd) of Vincent Van Gogh available on YouTube. After watching the video once, give your class a list of these vocabulary words which will probably be unfamiliar to them: shunned, peasant, overwhelmed, macabre, austere, high-strung, thrived, syphilis, veil of depression, revolver and inspired. Then, watching the piece again, ask your students to guess at the meanings of the words as they appear in the video. Watch the video one more time, this time stopping the clip after each sentence which uses one of the vocabulary words. Write these sentences on the board and review the meaning of each word. If any students guessed correctly at the meaning of the words, commend them. If not, remind them that guessing the meaning of words in context is part of language learning, both in first and second languages, and they should not be discouraged if they were unable to correctly determine the meaning of the words.

If you like, you can also give your students some comprehension questions to answer after they watch the video. You can have them discuss these questions in groups of two or three. The following questions cover some basic information which is presented in the video clip and will target your students' listening abilities.

- What happened when Vincent turned fifteen?
- Which of Van Gogh's family members was he closest to?
- What did Van Gogh do when he was 28?
- How many languages did Van Gogh speak?
- How old was he when he died?

After watching the video, you can point your students to one of many websites that give additional information about Vincent Van Gogh and encourage them to take notes as they read about his life.

3 YOUR OWN STARRY NIGHT

Your students have thought about Van Gogh's painting, and they have learned about his life. Now they will use his artistic expression to inspire their own art, this time with words. Start by reviewing with your students the main elements of a story. These include character, plot, setting and resolution. Tell them that they will write a story using Starry Night as the setting for the story. They can create their own original characters or use themselves or someone else they know as the characters in the story. They should then determine the conflict and the resolution. Encourage each person to gain inspiration from Van Gogh's piece but to incorporate their own ideas into their stories. Remind them that artists often gain inspiration from other artists, whether in the same media or other media.

When your students' stories are finished, tell them that they will create their own versions of Starry Night. Using black paper and oil pastels, your students should create their own starry night in the style of Vincent Van Gogh. In addition, encourage your students to incorporate some element of their original stories into their reproduction of the famous painting. They may choose to do this by including one of their characters in the picture, changing an element of the piece or any other way they feel they can put their originality into the piece. If you like, display each story in conjunction with the picture by its author. You can title your bulletin board "We Are Shooting for the Stars."

THERE IS SO MUCH INSPIRATION TO BE FOUND IN ART, AND CLASSIC PIECES LIKE VAN GOGH'S STARRY NIGHT CAN BE INCORPORATED INTO THE ESL CLASSROOM IN MANY WAYS.

The activities here include speaking, listening, reading and writing and also encourage creativity and personal expression in your students. These same ideas can be applied to works of art by other artists that your class may relate to. In any case, they will learn more about the artists who have shaped our modern world through their creations!

It's a Small World: Language Activities to Bring Together Nations

IF YOU ARE TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE, THE ODDS ARE THAT YOUR STUDENTS HAVE DONE SOME INTERNATIONAL TRAVELLING. Many students, though they have studied English in their early education, travel overseas to further their studies at U.S. universities or language programs. These types of experiences tend to give individuals a larger perspective on the world and make them more sympathetic to people of other nations. You can use this international travel experience as a starting place for your class as you talk about different ways to bring the world to you.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS

One of Jules Vern's most famous works of literature is the classic novel Around the World in 80 Days. In this story, Phileas Fogg takes a bet that he cannot travel around the world in 80 days or less. The book was first published in 1873, and at that time travel was not as easy as it is today. Fogg plans to travel mainly by ship and railroad but also ends up travelling in less traditional ways as he makes his way around the globe. As a class, brainstorm a list of all the possible ways a person could travel from one world city to another. Include traditional options like planes and busses as well as more outrageous ones like riding a bicycle and riding in a covered wagon. Once you have compiled an extensive list, ask each person to choose one unusual means of travel and write a story of how he or she might use that method to take a trip to another city. If you like, set your students to do some research about how and where a person may choose to travel by less traditional means. You may want to offer some suggestions such as riding a donkey, taking a hot air balloon or travelling by elephant (as Fogg did).

2 AROUND THE WORD IN 44 HOURS

In 1980, David Springbett took a trip around the world using commercial airlines. His time eclipsed that of 80 days, but that does not mean it was uncomplicated. Springbett started his travels in Los Angeles and travelled to seven other cities before returning to Los Angeles 44 hours and six minutes later. The cities he stopped in on his travels were London, Bahrain, Singapore, Bangkok, Manila, Tokyo, and Honolulu, in that order. Have your class trace Springbett's travels on a world map, and then set groups of students to answer some questions. What was the longest distance he travelled on one flight? What languages are spoken in each of the cities where he stopped? If he had stopped for a meal in each of the cities, what might Springbett have eaten? If you like, divide your class into seven groups and assign one city to each group. You might also ask these groups to share some unusual facts about the cities they research. Once groups have discovered answers to these questions, bring the class back together for a discussion. What do your students think about Springbett's trip? Would they like to make a similar trip around the world? Why do people like to travel to foreign cities? What advantages can your students list that travel brings? What are its disadvantages? What were their experiences travelling overseas? You can also have the class work together to determine who made the longest trip both in time and in miles to reach your facility. If you want to bring an additional challenge to your class, divide your students into groups of around three students each and challenge them to plan their own flight around the world. They should consider which cities they would like to visit, how many miles they would have to travel and how long the trip might take if they used commercial airlines as Springbett did.

3 THE WORLD IN A BUILDING

The United Nations is one of the most important organizations in the world today. Their first General Assembly was held in London on January 10, 1946, and in 1952, the United Nations moved to New York City to land donated by John D. Rockefeller. Set your students to do some research about the United Nations. They can find some basic information about the United Nations at their website. Among the vast amount of information there are listed the four purposes of the U.N.: to keep world peace, to develop friendly relations among nations, to help the peoples of the world, and to be a center to make these things happen. In groups, have your students discuss why each of these items is important and then brainstorm ways the United Nations helps make these things possible. Then ask your students to think of ways they can help accomplish each of these goals in your classroom and with one another. Have each group choose one of the strategies they list and develop a plan to make it happen in your classroom. Then have each group present their idea to the class. The presentation should include an explanation of the idea, how to make it happen in the classroom and why it would be beneficial to your class and to the world.

ONE OF THE GREAT ADVANTAGES TO TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IS THAT YOU AND THE MEMBERS OF YOUR CLASS ARE OFTEN EXPOSED TO CULTURES FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. With these activities that take your students around the globe, they can increase their appreciation for one another and one another's cultures, in effect, doing their own small part in making the world a better place.

4 Important Tips for Teaching Etiquette and Cultural Differences

IF YOU ARE LUCKY ENOUGH TO HAVE A MULTI-CULTURAL CLASSROOM, ONE OF THE BIGGEST BENEFITS AVAILABLE TO YOU IS BUILT-IN CULTURAL LESSONS.

If you are in a uni-cultural class, there is still a lot you can do regarding teaching the etiquette of different countries as well as cultural differences. After all, you are a culture representative for your country and students will want to learn all they can about you and where you come from. Being politically correct is a new concept to a lot of students and depending on where you are, it may be a sensitive issue. Follow these tips for teaching etiquette and cultural differences and your mixing pot of a classroom will reap numerous benefits from sharing and learning together.

HOW TO TEACH ETIQUETTE AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

1 CREATE A DIALOGUE

It is essential to create a culturally appropriate and courteous environment from the very first moment of class. One way to do this is to acknowledge everyone's cultures, and get students talking immediately, in a non-threatening way, about themselves and their countries of origin. One fantastic ice-breaker for multi-cultural classrooms is a find someone who mingling exercise that is tailored to include a few statements to reflect the cultural diversity of the class, with things like, find someone who...

- is from Central America
- eats rice on a daily basis
- speaks Korean
- etc.

You'll really want to target benign topics which are easy to ask about and easy to discuss. Another ice-breaker you can do is to start a discussion with the class utilizing a map. If you have people from many different countries, they can show the rest of the group where they are from on the map and then talk about things like their language, a famous country food, or other culturally significant information. The point is to create an environment from the first class forward that enables students to talk about culture, differences, and themselves in an appropriate way.

2 MAKE COMPARISONS

There are several ways in which you can bring culture and etiquette into your lessons without it being the sole topic. One easy way to do that is to consistently make comparisons about the differences from country to country with topics that arise organically. If you are talking about greetings, for example, a good way to solidify what students are learning is to ask them the equivalent in their country's language. Ask them the appropriate and polite ways that they greet one another. Do men hug, shake, wave or something else? If you are the one in a foreign country, a major way to engage students is to ask for their advice on matters of cultural norms and etiquette. If you are doing a lesson on telling time, you can then get into a discussion about the cultural norms of their country. How appropriate is it to be late? When meeting friends from this country, what can you expect about time in general? Students will be more than happy to share information from their culture to help you navigate it. A third way to bring in comparisons is for you to share how something is done in your country. If you are discussing small talk, for example, you can provide examples of how people in your country handle small talk and what the nuances are. Follow that up with students then interjecting their thoughts, questions and comparisons.

3 SHOWCASE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

It is especially important and of noted significance to use your classroom as an outlet for students to share things about their heritage, culture and daily life. There are several opportunities where you can showcase culture and discuss differences as well as similarities. Some of the best topics that naturally lead to cultural discussions and activities are: food, nationalities and countries, family, and modal verbs. When approaching topics from a cultural standpoint, etiquette will almost inherently arise. If you are discussing food from a specific region, you can also approach all kinds of other topics as well. Some examples might be: timing of meals, normal ingredients or very usual foods, the role of alcohol, meanings of particular foods or ceremonies, etc. You can get creative and assign students presentations on one or more aspects of their culture, plan a potluck party or recipe exchange, or design some other way in which students share their differing beliefs and experiences. One goal of expounding upon differences is to find, in the end, that we are not all that different, and that we must display tolerance and acceptance. Students can learn a lot simply from listening to each other, and having the forum to do so.

4 BE THEIR GUIDE

If you are teaching in a westernized country where the students may be visiting or very new arrivals, you and the class could very well become their guide in navigating a new culture. In this situation it becomes even more vital to explain cultural norms, especially when it comes to etiquette and acceptable behavior. The above examples still hold true, but there may need to be more structured lessons around things like currency, riding the bus, polite responses, asking questions, and interacting with strangers. Often once students become comfortable in the class, they will begin asking their classmates for help, as well as the teacher. Be sure that you are setting good examples within the classroom and with your own behavior, as well as enforcing appropriate behavior among your students. The dynamic of entering a new culture with limited language can be exciting, but it can also be daunting and isolating at times. Everyone in the class can benefit from hearing different perspectives. Creating an environment where students can voice their difficulties and concerns will assist the class on a whole.

IN TODAY'S WORLD THERE ARE A LOT OF OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN ABOUT OTHER CULTURES AND FACILITATE A CLASSROOM OF TOLERANCE.

When approaching etiquette and cultural awareness, it is always a good idea to have an open mind, let your creativity guide you, and above all, provide students with appropriate outlets to express themselves!

You'll Love these Games for Teaching Anatomy Vocabulary

ALMOST EVERY TEACHER OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE HAS TAUGHT A UNIT ON ANATOMY AT ONE POINT OR ANOTHER.

Perhaps this is because it is one of the most tangible sets of vocabulary a nonnative speaker can learn. Perhaps it is because our bodies are such an important part of what makes us uniquely ourselves. Perhaps it is for some other reason. Regardless of the motivation behind the theme, anatomical lessons naturally find themselves in the ESL classroom. Once you have given your students some basics on the parts of the body, try one or more of the following games to review what they have learned!

TRY THESE ESL GAMES FOR TEACHING ANATOMY VOCABULARY IN YOUR CLASSROOM

1 IN THE CLASSROOM

"Simon says touch your head. Simon says touch your toes. Touch your ears".

Whether or not you are good at following directions, **Simon Says is a simple game that you can use to review the vocabulary of the body**. Having your students go through the motion of moving and identifying parts of the body is a great review for vocabulary that you have introduced in an earlier lesson. You can match the difficulty of the game to the skill level of your student – speaking more or less quickly, using more or less complicated vocabulary. Your students, too, will have a great time as you make the game harder and harder to eliminate players. Give the last one standing a prize, or just let him be Simon for the next round!

If you are feeling particularly adventurous, you may decide to play a game of *Twister Scare*. To play, either use a Twister mat or create a similar layout of colors on your classroom floor using craft foam, carpet squares or construction paper. (Heads up – you will want to make sure all the desks are moved from the area in which you will be playing.) **Then ask your class to brainstorm a list of common words for parts of the body**. Write each of these body parts on a small slip of paper and put into a bag or hat. For each turn, pull one body part from the pool and either choose a color or use a spinner or die to determine the color that will be the goal for that body part.

Keep playing for as long as you can or until your students have had enough!

2 IN THE GYM

If you have a bag of old clothes that you use in your ESL class, that can also be repurposed for a review of anatomical vocabulary. They make for a great *relay* race when teams have to identify the parts of the body that the clothes and accessories are worn on.

To play, divide your class into two teams and have each team choose a model who will eventually wear all of the clothes. For each turn, have one player from each team stand on either side of you as you pull an item out of the bag. The first person to identify which part of the body the piece is worn on wins the piece and should run to her model and put the piece of clothing on that person. When you get to the last piece of clothing in the bag, the team with more items on their model is the winner!

3 OUTSIDE

If your students are getting sleepy in their seats, this anatomy game is sure to wake them up. Take your class to a large playing area, outside or a gym work well. In this game, you will call out pairs of body parts like *"Ear to Elbow"* (the name of the game). Students must then rush to find a partner, and one of them must put his ear to the other's elbow. If anyone is unable to find a partner or does not match the body parts correctly, he is eliminated. Give another paring and each person must find a new partner.

You may choose to make calls such as *head to knee, hand to foot, hip to hip, shoulder to back* or any other combination you can think of. The last pair standing wins a prize.

4 IN SMALL GROUPS

Do you want to play a game of body parts with your students but get them to think outside the box? Try the classic game of *Operation* in which students must remove "punny" body parts from an electric surgical patient. Students will draw cards asking them to remove such items as the funny bone, the breadbox, the Adam's apple and butterflies in the stomach. If they touch the sides of the opening for each piece, a buzzer will sound and that person loses his turn.

You can use this game as a jumping off point to talk about idioms or expressions that have to do with parts of the body. **Challenge your students to do some research and compile a list of all the expressions using body parts that they can find**. You can make this a game in itself by grouping students and giving them a set amount of time to come up with their lists.

JUST BECAUSE LESSONS ON ANATOMY HAPPEN SO FREQUENTLY IN ESL CLASSES DOES NOT MEAN THAT YOU CANNOT HAVE FUN WHILE YOU GIVE THEM.

These games provide a fun review of what your students have learned and may also teach them a thing or two. So try one with your class and get in some laughs as you do your body parts review!

Get Up, Get Dressed, Get Going: Activities for a Unit on Clothing

NO MATTER WHAT LEVEL OF ESL YOU ARE TEACHING, SOME TOPICS SEEM TO COME UP IN CLASS AFTER CLASS.

One of these subjects that you will probably find yourself teaching at one point or another is clothing. Whether it is in a vocabulary lesson or part of a role play, clothing is one of the subject areas that all students can relate to, so the next time you find yourself teaching about shirts, shoes or serapes, give one of these activities a try!

HOW TO TEACH A UNIT ON CLOTHING

1 PLAN WISELY

To give your clothing unit a practical application, have your students think about what they would pack for a trip to a specific location. Begin the activity by brainstorming with your class the types of clothing they might wear in a cold location, a hot location, or a temperate location. The longer a list your class can generate for each category, the easier it will be for them to do the second part of the activity. Then, if possible, divide your class into groups of three or four and have four different weather reports available for the class to view. Have each group choose one person to take the first turn, and then play the first weather report for the class. The person taking the first turn must then tell his group what he will pack for his vacation to that location. He may choose to use vocabulary the class listed earlier, or he may choose to add his own. Either way, challenge each person to list at least ten items he will take on his vacation based on the weather of the region. Once that person has shared with his group what he will pack, play the second weather report for the next person in the group. She will then list the clothing items she will pack for her trip to that location. Continue until everyone in the group has had a turn.

2 DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

For a writing activity in a clothing unit, ask each of your students to choose a classmate about whom she will write. Then challenge her to write a description of how that person dresses without using that person's name. You may choose to let your students chose whom they will write about, or you may want to assign each person in the class to another. Either way, collect the descriptions once they are written. Then use them for a little game of identification. One option is to post all the descriptions on a bulletin board in the classroom, numbered but not identified. Have the members of your class read the descriptions and then guess whom the writer was describing in their piece. Your students should write down their answers and then review them together. Give a prize to anyone with a perfect score. The other option is to read each description to the class and see which of your students can correctly identify the person being written about. You can award points to the first person to guess each description correctly. The prize would then go to the person with the highest score!

3 CLOTHING ON THE SPOT

After your students are familiar with the vocabulary associated with clothing, do an on the spot review with this fun activity. Prepare by writing several locations on small slips of paper and putting them into a small bag or hat. You may want to include any or all of the following locations: a baseball game, a wedding, a New Year's Eve party, a picnic, a public pool, school, work, the grocery store, the prom, a ski resort, the beach and a job interview. Give each of your students a turn to pull a location from the bag. He should start his turn by saying, "I am going to go to...." and then insert the location. He must then tell the class what he is going to wear to that location. For example, one person might say, "I am going to go to a job interview. I will wear a shirt, tie and jacket. I will also carry a briefcase." If a student is stuck on his turn, allow other members of the class to offer suggestions. Students can be as creative or as serious as they like, but have the class act as judge for any answers that may be too silly to be practical!

4 NO SHIRT, NO SHOES, NO SERVICE

Businesses and restaurants sometimes have restrictions on the clothing you must wear while in the establishment. Some upscale restaurants require men to wear a jacket and tie. Other locations will refuse to serve someone who is not wearing shoes. Your class may have some interesting thoughts to contribute to a discussion on whether these restrictions are fair. Start by asking your class why some businesses might refuse to wait on customers who are not dressed appropriately. Once your students have shared some thoughts, challenge them to think of some circumstances where this preclusion might be appropriate and some other where it might be inappropriate. Allow individuals to share a personal experience when they were required to dress in a certain manner in order to get service at a store or restaurant. After the discussion, you can ask your students to make a list of the dress requirements they would establish if they were to own a store or restaurant.

MORE LIKELY THAN NOT, ALL OF YOUR STUDENTS WEAR CLOTHES ON A DAILY BASIS, SO ANY ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO TO STRENGTHEN THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF CLOTHING VOCABULARY WILL BENEFIT THEM IN VERY PRACTICAL WAYS.

The next time you teach a clothing unit, try one of these activities for a new perspective on old duds.

How Do You Feel Today? Teaching Emotions in ESL Classroom

EVERYBODY FEELS. TODAY I FEEL HAPPY. TODAY I FEEL SAD. TODAY I FEEL FRUSTRATED. FOR YOUNG STUDENTS, THOUGH, EMOTIONS CAN BE DIFFICULT TO TEACH BECAUSE THEY ARE SO INTANGIBLE. Bring emotions to a tactile level for your students with these concrete activities, and you'll all feel better at the end of the day.

HOW TO TEACH EMOTIONS IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 START THINKING ABOUT FEELING

The first step in teaching about emotions is to engage your students. If you have younger students, picture books are a great way to do this. Some good ones to try are Today I Feel Silly: and Other Moods That Make My Day by Jamie Lee Curtis or I Feel Orange Today by Patricia Godwin. After reading these or other books that your class likes, encourage your students to share how they are feeling today. Make sure they know that any answer is a good one: the key is to be honest. Also, remember that younger children may not be as attuned to their feelings as more mature students can be, so keep from forcing an answer if all they can say is that they feel fine.

Another way to engage your students at the beginning of an emotional lesson is to sing some songs about feelings. "If You're Happy and You Know It Clap Your Hands" is a great way to engage young children. The rhythm of the verses also helps with sentence intonation and pacing for students who struggle with their fluency. You could also sing "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf" or any other songs they might know and love that mention any kind of emotion.

2 TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

Now that your class is thinking about emotions, it's time to start some more structured work. Give a second use to old magazines by cutting out pictures of faces displaying different emotions. The bigger the face, the easier it will be for your students to see the emotion. Show one picture at a time during circle time or during a class discussion, and ask your students how they think that person is feeling. Ask them why they think the person is feeling that way. What are the clues they take from the person's facial expression? Then have a little fun and ask your students to mimic the face from the picture to show that same emotion. Even better than magazine photos, take some candid pictures of your students prior to teaching on this topic and use the faces they make for the same activity. Kids will love seeing themselves larger than life in front of the class and will feel a deep connection to the lesson when you involve their personal photos.

Today I feel board. That's not to say I feel bored. Maybe I feel happy, confused, concerned, elated, hysterical, nervous or loved. Our emotions change from day to day, so give your students a venue through which to share their emotions. Choose a selection of simple cartoon faces and print them out on full sheets of paper. (If you are nice to the art teacher at your school, he or she may draw you some original ones.) You can then post them on a bulletin board with a label under the picture naming that emotion. Then give each of your students a name tag with a push pin and ask them to place their name next to or under the emotion they are feeling today. (Be careful not to hang the faces too high for your students to reach.) This will give them some reading practice, but an even more beneficial activity is to ask your students to share why they feel a particular way on the day of the discussion. This promotes discussion and also gives your students an appropriate place and time to share special news. You can keep this bulletin board up all year if you choose to do so, and you can add more descriptive emotions as the year progresses thereby increasing your students' vocabulary.

3 WRITE IT OUT

Remember those pictures of faces you used in your class discussion? Now it's time to use them for a little writing practice. You will want to choose your writing activity based on the ages of your students. For younger students, give them one of the pictures you discussed earlier. Have them spend some time thinking about the emotion that person is feeling. Then ask them about a time they felt that same emotion. You can allow some time for class sharing or break your class into smaller groups so everyone can share their personal story. Then get in your writing practice by having students write about that time they had that particular emotions. This is especially good for younger children since it is easiest for them to share from their personal experiences. If your students are more mature, you can make the writing practice a little more challenging and a little more creative. Have them think beyond what the person in the picture is feeling and challenge them to think why the person feels that way. What could that person's story be? When your students write, have them do some creative writing telling the story of the person in the picture. Encourage them to use detailed descriptions and strong verbs in their creative writing.

EMOTIONS ARE SOMETHING PEOPLE EXPERIENCE EVERY DAY. THESE ACTIVITIES ARE ONLY THE BEGINNING OF WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR CLASS WHEN TEACHING EMOTIONS. Either way, when you teach about emotions, your students are sure to feel excited, eager, thrilled, animated, energized, full of life, absorbed...

Eat Up: Activities You Can Use for a Cross-Curricular Unit on Food

MOST ESL TEACHERS AT ONE POINT OR ANOTHER HAVE COVERED A VOCABULARY UNIT ON FOOD.

Sometimes, beginning students cover food in early units. Other times, intermediate or advanced students have an opportunity to review and expand their food vocabulary as it ties into other material they are covering. You can help your students solidify this vocabulary and give them an opportunity to use it in context with these food related activities that span the ESL curriculum. If you are teaching beginning students, you may want to simplify these activities, but intermediate and advanced students will benefit not only from the vocabulary review but also from the challenge of using it in real contexts.

HOW TO TEACH A CROSS-CURRICULAR ESL UNIT ON FOOD

1 READING

You may choose to begin your unit on food with some independent reading time in class. If you have internet access, direct your students to search for information about the food pyramid. For more advanced students, you may let them work independently while intermediate and beginning students work in groups. Direct them to this article on the history of the food pyramid (health.learninginfo.org/food-pyramid.htm) or encourage them to find their own information about the pyramid - much is available online. As they research, your students should be looking for information on when and why the food pyramid was developed as well as the appropriate way to use it. Once students have finished their research, ask each person to talk about how well or poorly he follows the guidelines set forth in the food pyramid.

2 GRAMMAR

Once your students have become familiar with the food pyramid, they will be able to make more informed decisions about their own food choices. They will be able to weigh the advantages and disadvantages any food has in comparison with another. This is the perfect time to introduce or review comparative adjectives in your grammar class. Start with a class brainstorming session in which your students list as many adjectives that describe taste as they can. You can also add new, unfamiliar words to their list. Be sure your final list includes words about flavors such as salty and bitter, words about quality such as healthy and rich, and words about opinion such as tasty and delicious. Then review with your class how to form comparative adjectives, by adding the –er suffix to the end of adjectives of one or two syllables or by using “more” before an adjective of three or more syllables. Note that there are exceptions to this rule and list some for your students. In pairs, your students can then compare different food items with a partner using comparative adjectives. For example, one student might say, “Coffee is healthier than soda.” The second student might answer with, “Apples are sweeter than lemons.” This partner work will serve double duty as vocabulary and grammar review.

3 WRITING

You students have learned about the food pyramid, they have learned how to use comparative adjectives, and it is time for them to put all of these pieces together. In your writing class, challenge your students to write about what they think is important when it comes to food. Is it better to eat healthy or to choose food according to flavor and enjoyment? Whatever their opinion, your students should write their ideas in one to two paragraphs. Ask each person to include specific examples of good choices that he or she would make and to use comparative adjectives when doing so.

4 LISTENING

Even the food pyramid says that people should enjoy small and infrequent portions of their favorite, unhealthy foods, and ice cream may be one of the most popular of those items. Ask each person to share her favorite ice cream flavor with the class, and once your students’ mouths are watering, show them this YouTube video on Ben and Jerry’s Ice cream (bit.ly/RjH-spS). In the segment, a reporter travels to Ben and Jerry’s Vermont production facility to learn about how the ice cream is made. In the video, the reporter and his guests mention several ingredients Ben and Jerry’s either uses in its ice cream or is considering for future flavors. Show the video to your students to see how much they can understand after one time through. Ask comprehension questions and elicit a summary of the video from the class. Once their stomachs stop rumbling, ask your students how many different ingredients the video mentions, and play it for them again. You may then choose to play the video a third time and let them check their answers.

5 SPEAKING

Ben and Jerry’s is known for their creativity in new and unusual ice cream flavors and combinations. You can give your students a chance to think out of the carton with this activity. In groups have your students come up with original ice cream flavors. Each group should discuss as many possibilities as they can think of and then decide on their own original combination. You might encourage each group to choose one basic ice cream flavor, one sauce like mix in (such as fudge sauce or caramel) and two or more solid mix ins (like cookies or candy pieces) which will give them concoctions similar to Ben and Jerry’s. Then, each group should come up with a commercial to advertise their original ice cream dream concoction. Either have your students perform their commercials live or record them and show them all to the class.

WHEN THE UNIT IS FINISHED, WHAT BETTER TIME IS THERE TO HAVE A FOOD FESTIVITY IN CLASS?

Bring in a few cartons of Ben and Jerry’s ice cream to share or ask students to bring in snacks or native dishes. Of course, keep in mind any allergies your students may have and enjoy the close of the unit.

Fill Your Plate with these Food Themed ESL Activities

Whether you from Asia, Europe, the Americas, Africa or Australia, you eat food. It is an experience common to all people throughout the world. While we all eat, the things that we eat differ not only from one continent to the next but from one household to the next. Regardless, the students in your class will have some experience with food which is why a food unit so often appears in foreign language textbooks. For beginning students, a unit on food is often vocabulary based covering basic terminology and foreign language equivalents. Intermediate students may find themselves in conversation class practicing ordering a meal in English or taking someone else's order. Advanced students may find food coming up in thematic units, perhaps on ethical or environmental companies. For any level English students, lessons on food are a common occurrence. Whatever level English class you are currently teaching, you can encourage your students to practice their conversation skills and listening skills with the following food-based ESL activities.

TRY THESE FOOD THEMED ESL ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR CLASS

1 THE PERFECT MEAL

If you teach younger students, having them create the perfect meal will allow them to be creative while also teaching them about healthy eating. Start your perfect meal lesson by reviewing what it means to eat in a healthy manner. What types of food should people include in their diets? Encourage your students to share their answers, and then ask them if they know why certain foods are healthier for a person than others. Ask them what makes "bad for you" foods bad. You may be surprised at how much your students know, or you may be shocked at how little they know! So much of that knowledge depends on what they learn at home, but you can do your best to develop informed food consumers. Guide your discussion to talk about the food pyramid. If you need a food pyramid diagram to show your class, you can find several useful images online. The pyramid will list six different food categories: grains, vegetables, fruits, oils, milk and meat/beans. Help your students understand that eating healthy means eating from all of these groups, but the majority of their food should come from grains, vegetables and fruits. Ask if the items that they thought were healthy are listed in the pyramid. If not, can your students think of any other items that might be listed in the food pyramid? Now that your students possess the knowledge of how to eat healthy, have each person design his own perfect meal. Start by having your students divide a paper plate into six wedges with a magic marker (the proportions should more or less match those on the pyramid). Then allow your students to cut pictures from food magazines or draw their own pictures of the foods they would include in each of the six categories to make up their perfect meals. Once they finish, give your students an opportunity to share their perfect meals with a partner or in front of the class. When everyone has had a chance to share, encourage your students to take their plates home and try to eat from all six categories each day to make sure they eat healthy and eat happily.

2 WHAT DO YOU EAT WITH?

If your class includes both westerners and easterners, you may want to have a small discussion on the utensils we use to eat our meals. Divide your class into small groups to discuss which implements they prefer to use at their meals. Most likely, your students will say that they use a fork or chopsticks, but encourage any other options your students may want to share. Encourage each person to share whether their choice is typical of people in their home culture or if their opinion is in the minority. Then give each person a chance to share how he or she feels when using a different utensil. If any of your students are willing, have them offer an opinion as to why the utensil that is most popular in their home culture is preferred over the others. After your class has exhausted the topic, you can also turn your discussion of eating implements into a game. See who can pick up the highest number of shelled peanuts with chopsticks in a sixty-second time period! Another more elaborate activity is to collect several eating and serving tools. You should include pie servers, serving spoons, whisks, sugar spoons, plastic knives, chopsticks and any other items you have available to you. At the beginning of the class period, have each person choose one of the items without telling them what it is for. Later, break the news that the utensils that they chose are the only ones they will be allowed to use to eat a meal or snack you provide. Make sure you check for allergies in your class, and then if it is okay give each person a plate of spaghetti or a bowl of ice cream. Your students will get a laugh trying to use a family sized spoon to scoop noodles into their mouths or eating ice cream with a pie server! Just make sure you have a big sense of humor and plenty of napkins on hand for cleanup!

3 PLAN A MEAL

With the holidays right around the corner, ask pairs of students to plan a holiday meal for a group of eight to ten people. Working together, each pair should decide whether they want to have a traditional meal, a nontraditional meal or an international meal. After each pair decides, have them determine what dishes and/or recipes they would need for each type of meal. Make sure you have some general cookbooks available for your students to look through when they are planning. You may also want to play some movie clips from classic holiday films where the characters are sharing their holiday meals. Then using the recipes from the books or others they might know or find in other sources, have each pair determine how much of each ingredient they will need to create their culinary masterpieces. Then using grocery circulars, each pair should determine how much money they would need to cook their feast for their guests. If your students are old enough, have each person bring in a food item to share at a classroom holiday meal. Each person may decide to bring a dish that is traditional in her culture or something unexpected. Again, be aware of any allergies in your class and skip the meal if there are any issues!

MOST ESL CLASSES DO COVER A UNIT ON FOOD AT SOME POINT IN THE YEAR. It may come in a unit from vocabulary, conversation or home life and culture, but whatever the reason your class is studying food, you can have fun with these conversation based activities. You and your students are sure to want seconds if you do!

More Ideas for Teaching a Cross-Curricular ESL Unit on Food

FOOD IS A RECURRING TOPIC IN THE ESL CLASSROOM. PERHAPS THAT IS TRUE BECAUSE FOOD CAN BE USED IN CONNECTION WITH MANY TOPICS – PERSONAL PREFERENCE, GIVING CHOICES, CULTURE, AND MEMORIES TO NAME JUST A FEW.

Whether your students are studying food in relation to native cultures or because you will be taking a fieldtrip to a local restaurant, you can work across the entire ESL curriculum with activities related to food. Here are some ideas that you can use in a typical ESL curriculum when food is what's on the menu.

HOW TO TEACH A CROSS-CURRICULAR ESL UNIT ON FOOD: MORE IDEAS

1 VOCABULARY

You can combine a vocabulary lesson with a field trip with a short jaunt to the local grocery store. After a classroom review of general food vocabulary with your class, send groups of three into the grocery store for a photo scavenger hunt. Challenge each group to find at least one food that starts with each of the letters from A to Z and then take a picture of that food. Set an appropriate time limit and then regather before heading back to the classroom. After the scavenger hunt, have students compile a list of the foods they found in the grocery store and match them to the pictures. If you have the resources, set up a page on your website where your students can post their pictures and the names of the foods. Your entire class can then use this site as a resource for learning new vocabulary!

2 CONVERSATION

If you were going to die tomorrow, what would you want for your last meal? You may never have considered the question, and perhaps your students have not considered it either. Pair your students for a discussion on what they might like for their last meal. Ask each person to share why they chose that particular food and what memories are associated with it. Encourage your students to share any other food memories they might have including family meals, holiday celebrations or interesting restaurants on travels.

3 WRITING

Though not a traditional composition, having your students write a menu will challenge them to be creative and concise. To start the activity, bring in some menus from local restaurants or print some that are available online. You may even want to have your students bring in some menus the two weeks previous to the activity, or let fellow teachers or parents know that you are collecting menus and ask for their help. On the day of the activity, have groups of three or four students work together to plan a restaurant menu. They will need to include several drinks, four appetizers, four main dishes and two desserts. Encourage them to use the example menus as models from which to organize their menus. For each item on the menu (except the drinks), they should write an appealing description of the dish. It should clearly state what items are in the dish but should also appeal to the sense of taste by using specific adjectives and details, just as a typical menu might provide. If you like, have your students price their items as well and then post the menus on a bulletin board. Allow each student in your class to view the menus and choose which restaurant they think they would prefer.

4 SPEAKING

No matter where you are, if you go to a restaurant you will have to speak. For this reason, a restaurant role play is a perfect fit for a unit on food. Start by brainstorming a list of expressions you and your students have heard at restaurants. You should include phrases like I'll have the..., What can I get for you? How do you prepare...? Is everything all right over here? Do you need anything else? As you brainstorm, divide the phrases into two lists – one that the wait staff would use and another that the diners would use. When it is time to enter the restaurant if possible, have your students rearrange their desks into smaller "tables" at which they will sit. One person in each group should then play the wait staff, handing out the menus and taking orders from the diners. You can use one or more of the menus your class created in the writing activity for your fictitious restaurant. Then switch roles until each person has had a chance to play the part of the wait staff. Encourage everyone to use the phrases you listed in the brainstorming activity during the role play.

5 GRAMMAR

Whether your students enjoy cooking or not, recipes have something to offer them and their language learning. These instructions, which describe the delectable to the dull, are all written in the imperative mood. The imperative, in English, is used to give instructions, advice or commands. Since recipes are instructions on how to create a particular food, they are written in the imperative. Show your students some examples, from magazines, the internet or cook books, and have them note the verb conjugation in the recipe instructions. Remind your class that the imperative is used for giving instructions, and then ask each person to think of a food they know how to make. It might be something simple, like microwaving macaroni and cheese, or it might be something complex from their native country. Much will depend on the age of your students. Ask your students to write the instructions for their recipe using the examples they have been looking at as models. If your students do not have food allergies and you have the resources, you may decide to have a hands on approach to using the imperative. Have groups of students follow your directions for making a dish in class. No cook options include salads, fruit salads and sandwiches, which may be easier for some classrooms. Put your students in groups of three or four and either read them the directions from a simple recipe or have them read the directions themselves. If everyone follows the directions closely, each group should have a similar dish at the end of the activity.

THOUGH SOME MAY BE HESITANT TO BRING FOOD INTO THE CLASSROOM, AND SOME FOR GOOD REASON LIKE ALLERGIES, THE TOPIC OF FOOD LENDS ITSELF TO MANY DIFFERENT TYPES OF ACTIVITIES. These are only some of the ways you can link food and English as a second language while you fulfill your students' appetites for English.

Cook Up Some Fun: How to Teach ESL with Cooking

MOST BEGINNER ESL CLASSES TEACH A UNIT ON FOOD, BUT THERE IS NO REASON TO LIMIT YOURSELF TO A FOOD UNIT TO TEACH WITH COOKING. There are many ways and many reasons to bring fresh flavor to your ESL class through cooking.

HOW TO TEACH ESL WITH COOKING

1 EXPERIENCE A DAY IN THE LIFE

If your class is reading a novel, short story or other piece of literature together, you may be able to help your students relate to the characters with classroom cooking. Give your students a taste of the fictional character's life by whipping up a batch of a food mentioned in the text. (For example, Turkish Delight if you are reading The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, fresh maple candy if you are reading Little House in the Big Woods. etc.) There are many resources both in print and online where you can get recipes for unusual foods mentioned in literature. To search simply type the word recipe and then the food you are looking for in your favorite search engine. You are sure to find many options for preparing that food.

Do not limit yourself to literature, either. Even business articles have the potential to include cooking. One of my students' favorite activities in our unit on businesses that give back was when I brought in a pint of Ben & Jerry's ice cream for the class to share. Many companies that your students read about every day are related to food. Likewise, there are plenty of geographical locations with food connections. Spice up your classroom style with a taste of something different by bringing those connections into your lesson.

2 MEASUREMENTS

Cooking is also a great way to introduce measurements to your students in a way that is realistic and practical. Since most areas of the world use the metric system, this may be the first opportunity your students have had to learn the U.S. measurement system. You can introduce this foreign concept to your students by using familiar food. During your lesson, you can cover typical cooking measurements like cups and teaspoons, but why stop there? Teach pounds and ounces while whipping up a pasta salad. Let your students feel how heavy a pound of cheese is by passing it around (keep it wrapped, please!) before mixing it into a batch of macaroni and cheese. Even if you are teaching with the metric system, your students still need to learn the English vocabulary for those measurements, so let them see and feel how heavy or long or big these measurements are.

3 COUNT AND NON-COUNT NOUNS

Can you give each student a bread? No, you will have to give them slices of bread, grains of rice or glasses of milk. They can see and feel a cup of coffee, a splash of cream, or a tablespoon of peanut butter. You can give out one banana and one knife to each student. These are just a few of the count and non-count nouns you can cover when the class cooks up a set of peanut butter and banana sandwiches or has a spontaneous coffee house. Food provides a great opportunity to introduce or review the concept of count and non-count nouns since so many food items are non-count. Through cooking, though, you can take a potentially dull and boring topic and make it enjoyable and memorable, and it does not even have to be expensive. If you have no heat sources, make a sandwich (count). If you can get a portable burner or have access to a stove, make bean (count) and cheese (non-count) quesadillas. Even rice pilaf is possible with rice (non-count), veggies (count), and dressing (non-count). Let your creativity flow and give your students a perk in the middle of class.

4 CLASS PREPOSITIONS

You can use cooking as an opportunity to create or strengthen relationships among your students, too. Tell your students to each bring in a piece of fruit the following day and then surprise them by making fruit salad as a class. You may want to do the cutting yourself to keep things simple and safe (depending on the age of your students), but if you let your students cut up the fruit for the salad, make sure they wash their hands and keep things clean. As you put the different elements in to the bowl together, review prepositions of place. The apples are under the oranges. The banana is on top of the oranges. The oranges are beneath the banana. If you have a glass bowl or use individual clear cups to assemble the salad, your students will be able to see the placement of each type of fruit more easily. The seeds are in the grapes and the pit is out of the peach. As the teacher, try to bring more unusual items or items that are local or culturally unique. Most students will probably bring apples, oranges and bananas. Even if your salad is limited to three or four fruits, once you review the prepositions mix it up with a cup of yogurt (any flavor is okay) and enjoy a snack. Have napkins handy, too.

5 IT ALL GOES BACK TO CULTURE

Most importantly of all, food screams culture. Give your students a chance to talk about their home cultures when they share a food typical of home. This works great as a presentation to the class. It is a perfect opportunity for public speaking when your students demonstrate how to prepare a traditional or typical food, and the smells drifting into the hallway will make students in other classes jealous. Do not stop with a simple presentation, though. Get some writing practice in by having another student retell the process of making a food. You may want to schedule time for pairs of students to interview each other. Students presenting and writing will both have to describe the steps in the procedure and will have to explain the process in chronological order, an important organizational strategy.

DO NOT LET INTIMIDATION STOP YOU FROM BRINGING FLAVOR AND FLAIR TO YOUR NOT SO TYPICAL ESL CLASS. You can use cooking in many different ways and for many different purposes. Your students are sure to find it fun and memorable, and you will have a great time, too. Everyone will be walking with a satisfied stomach and a smile on his face.

I Scream, You Scream, Classes Scream for Ice Cream

ARE THERE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO DO NOT LIKE ICE CREAM?

Probably, but for the most part ice cream is a favored treat among young people from all areas of the globe. You can use this natural affinity for the frozen dairy product to liven up your ESL class with some activities centered around the chilly treat! Following are reading, writing, listening and speaking activities that involve the shiveringly good snack, ice cream.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 A RAINBOW OF FLAVORS

If your students like ice cream as much as most young people do, this first activity will energize and excite them. Working together as a class or in groups of four to five students, ask your class to brainstorm as many ice cream flavors as they can. They can include flavors for sale in your geographical region as well as ice cream flavors your students may only be able to find in their home countries. Once the list is as long as your class can make it, challenge students to break the list into different categories. Each category should be distinct from every other category, and there should be enough categories so that every flavor is included in one and only one category. Your students may choose to work with fruity flavors, candy flavors, flavors with nothing in them and flavors with things in them (chocolate chips, for example). Allow your students to be creative in their categorizations. Then have them continue to work in groups to define each category and write a short description of that category. Most likely, they will find flavors that do not fit easily into one category or another, or they may find others that may fit into more than one category. If so, have your students note and explain the exceptions to their categorization schemes.

2 INVENTIVE RECIPES

Now that your class has seen what manufactures have to offer, challenge each person to come up with some inventive flavors of his own! If he could make his own ice cream flavor, what would it be? Ask each person to think of at least five new ice cream flavors that he would like to see made available and then make sure each of the flavors has a unique name. Then each person should choose one flavor and present it to the class trying to convince the class that his idea is the best new ice cream flavor possibility. After everyone has presented his new flavors, ask the class to vote for the one new ice cream they would like to see manufactured. If you like, have each person decorate an ice cream scoop template for his original ice cream flavor and then display those scoops stacked on one another on the wall. Make a simple brown paper triangle to place under the scoops to look like an ice-cream cone, and make sure the winning flavor gets the top position on the cone.

3 CHILLY MEMORIES

Almost everyone has some memories associated with ice cream. One could be licking an ice-cream cone while walking through a local fair or a large amusement park. Another could be making a gutter sundae (http://www.rethinkingyouthministry.com/2008/05/sundae-in-gutter.html) with a large group of young people. Still another might be making zip lock bag ice cream (bitly.com/lqT6D) in a preschool class. Ask your students to share some memories they have that include or involve ice cream. Do your students have good memories? Do they have any bad memories? If students cannot think of a memory that includes ice cream, is there some dream that they have that could involve ice cream? Ask your students to write a personal narrative that tells their ice cream story. Before writing the stories, remind your students that each story must have a beginning, middle and end. You may also want to review the story elements of setting (where the story happens), character (who is in the story) and plot (the events of the story). After your students write their stories, encourage volunteers to read their stories to the rest of the class.

4 A SQUISHABLE FUN TIME

Your students, after all their talking and writing about ice cream, will probably be ready for a chilly snack! You can give them the opportunity to make their own ice cream in class with a zip-lock ice-cream activity. Not only that, you can also challenge your students' abilities to follow spoken directions as each person makes his chilly treat. Take the zip-lock ice-cream recipe (bitly.com/lqT6D) and have all the ingredients and supplies ready for your students. You may want them to work in small groups or individually, so make sure you have enough of each item for your entire class. If you want to test your students' listening comprehension, read the directions for making the ice cream out loud one step at a time and have your students follow those directions. If you prefer to test their reading comprehension, give each person a copy of the recipe and have him follow the directions to make his own ice cream snack. When you are through with the activity, you can have sundae toppings for your students to put on their creations, if you like. Not only will your students have fun following directions, they will be making a new ice cream memory that will last!

OF COURSE, SOME OR ALL OF THESE ACTIVITIES MAY NOT BE APPROPRIATE FOR EVERY ESL CLASS.

Allergy awareness is of utmost importance any time you decide to use food in the classroom as some allergic reactions can be deadly. Make sure you know what if any restrictions your students have on their diets and plan your activities accordingly. With that in mind, encourage your students to have fun with this ice cream unit using their creativity and energy!

No Junk Here: Fun Food Activities for the ESL Classroom

Junk... it can mean the items you throw away during spring-cleaning. Junk can refer to what gathers at the edge of a public sewer grate. Junk can be bits and pieces of old cars and machines waiting to be repurposed for repairs. The word junk can be used to refer to so many things, so when did it come to describe the food that so many young people eat on a daily basis?

Junk food includes a large spectrum of not so nutritionally beneficial cuisines. Some people have even gone so far as to describe the four junk food groups! Most of the time, though, junk food is the casual laid back items that people tend to eat at social events or with friends. Though often they are, these social foods, though, do not have to be nutritionally empty to be enjoyable. Why not open up the junk food conversation with your ESL class and let your students weigh in their own opinions when it comes to junk food?

TRY THESE FUN 'JUNK FOOD' ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR CLASS

1 A COMMON DEFINITION

People have many different definitions of what junk food includes. For some, it is social or casual food. For others, junk food earns its title through nutritional information. Still others define junk food by how much pleasure one takes while consuming it.

Start the culinary discussion by asking your students to given their own opinions on what constitutes junk food. In small discussion groups, ask each person to explain what they understand junk food to be. What criteria does each person use to classify something as junk food? Ask each person to share what some of his favorite junk foods are with his group. Then, working together, challenge each group to articulate a definition for the phrase 'junk food'. They can write anything they choose for the definition, but it should include input from each group member and his understanding and personal definition of junk food. Then have each group explain its definition to the rest of the class noting similarities and differences with each group's definition.

2 JUNK READING

Just about every ESL student spends time in reading class, but being a proficient reader includes more than just books and magazines. Sometimes reading proficiency requires a second language speaker to read nontraditional texts, in this case nutrition labels. To familiarize your students with nutrition labels, you can copy one label or print one from the internet and walk your class through each piece of information on the label. You will want to point out each of the following specifics from the food label: serving size and servings per container, calories and calories from fat, total fat and cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrate and fiber, protein, and vitamins and minerals. You should also highlight that the label gives percentages as applied to a 2000 calorie a day diet, an appropriate number for most adults.

Now that your class has a general familiarity with nutrition labels and knows what the numbers and vocabulary mean, it is time to apply the general knowledge to junk food. Provide for your students a collection of nutrition labels for them to read in their discussion groups. If possible, plan ahead and ask your class to bring in labels from the foods they eat on a daily basis and use those, or collect several food labels on your own and copy them for your class. In your set of labels, include what are traditionally considered junk foods as well as traditionally non-junk foods. Label each of the tables with a letter (ideally A through J) and keep a record for yourself of which labels are from which foods. Then ask your groups to read the labels and decide if each of the items should be classified as junk food. To do this, your groups should use the definitions they composed in the first activity. After reading each label and comparing the food to the definition, each group should divide the labels into junk food and non-junk food. Once all the groups have finished, reveal to them what products the labels came from and discuss any surprises. Now that the groups know what products the labels are from, would they change any classifications?

3 VENDING CREATIVITY

Your class has discussed the definition of junk food, they have applied their reading skills to nutrition labels, and now it is time for some creativity. Start by brainstorming with your class the different locations vending machines are often located. Your list should include schools, businesses, rest stops, malls, department stores and as many other places as your class can think of. Then, if your school has vending machines, take your class on a mini fieldtrip to that vending machine to take a look at what is inside. Many vending machines hold fifty products or more, and many of those products probably fit your students' definitions of junk food. Ask your students to take note of the products offered in the vending machine. If you want, you can ask them to write their notes down to help them remember what the machine has to offer. Then, returning to your classroom, ask each person to design the contents of his own vending machine. The diagram does not have to be detailed – a blank grid is enough. Each student should be specific, though, about the items that he or she would include in the vending machine. Encourage your students to be creative. They can include both refrigerated and nonrefrigerated items as well as products available in their local area along with those only available in their home countries. Students should keep in mind the discussions about junk food while making their designs. Some may choose to include unhealthy foods and others may choose only healthy foods. Most will probably include a combination of the two. Once each person has finished his vending machine, display the pictures along a hallway outside your classroom. Your class will then vote on their favorite vending machine. Giving each person a paper coin, send your class members one at a time to the hallway to tape their coins under the vending machine they would most likely choose. After everyone has voted, note which products are most appealing to your class.

WHETHER YOUR STUDENTS ARE FIVE OR FIFTY, THEY HAVE PROBABLY EATEN WHAT MOST WOULD CALL JUNK FOOD. Through these exercises, your students will increase their knowledge of good nutrition and perhaps think twice before consuming items that are bad for their health. If nothing else, you will know what snacks would be most popular at your next in class party. Have fun with these activities, and bon appetit!

You'll Find Sugar, Spice and Everything Nice in These Activities

WHEN THE WEATHER TURNS COLD THERE IS NOTHING QUITE LIKE CURLING UP IN FRONT OF A FIREPLACE WITH A HOT DRINK AND A SLICE OF SPICY, BROWN GINGERBREAD. YOUR CLASSROOM MAY NOT HAVE A FIREPLACE, BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN YOU CANNOT BENEFIT FROM SOME OF WINTER'S SPECIAL COMFORTS.

The next time you are looking to spice up your ESL classroom, try one of these activities, but don't forget the napkins!

HOW TO PROCEED

1 A REAL GINGERBREAD HOUSE

In 1985, a life-sized gingerbread house was built in Rockefeller Center in New York City. The giant confection was big enough for people to walk through (though they were probably not encouraged to lick the wallpaper). If you are lucky enough to teach at a school with a home economics program, see if the teacher will lend you the ovens for this activity. Part of having good reading comprehension is being able to follow directions. Put your class into groups of three students each to follow the directions on a box mix of gingerbread. Before throwing your students to the kitchen, review any unfamiliar vocabulary that they will find on the box. You may also need to include a short lesson on the Western system of measurement since most other areas use the metric system. Provide all the ingredients that your students will need and then encourage the students in each group to talk with one another as they bake the cakes. To test how successful each group was at following directions, have them taste a sample of their own culinary creation and watch their faces for reactions! Please note, as with any cooking activities you are thinking about doing in class, make sure none of your students has allergies to the food that you will be working with.

If you really want to give your students a challenge, see if they can figure out how much gingerbread they would need to make a room the size of your classroom. They should start by determining the area of the walls, floor and ceiling and then determine the area of the cake they baked. Then using their imaginations and math skills, see how many box mixes it would take to make a room out of gingerbread. This will be more than just a math challenge to your students. If they work in groups to do the figuring, they will have to use numbers in English, one of the most challenging second language skills. With this in mind, try to make sure your groups are made up of students with different native languages.

2 HANSEL AND GRETEL

Who is more familiar with gingerbread houses than the beloved brother and sister Hansel and Gretel? The famous fairytale by the Grimm brothers tells a gruesome tale of two children drawn into a witch's house made of gingerbread and candy. Many artists have illustrated the tale over the years, and there are more than enough pictures available online. Print a few for your students to look at and see if they recognize the story from the pictures. Then using the pictures as inspiration have students work in pairs to tell the story of Hansel and Gretel to one another. It is okay if they do not get all the details right in their tale telling, but individuals should be creative if they make up their own gruesome tale. The only requirement for their version is that the story contains a life-sized gingerbread house.

Then after your students have talked through the story, have each person or groups of students write their stories down. How close did they get to the original? If your students are up to the challenge, give them a copy of the Grimm brother's version to read and compare to what they wrote. Have each person note the similarities and differences between their version and the classic version.

If you like, give your students a chance to illustrate their own stories and post them along with the text on a bulletin board titled "Sugar, Spice and Anything But Nice" in reference to the witch.

3 NO PLACE LIKE HOME

If you are able, bring in a decorated gingerbread house for your students to see, pointing out to them how icing and different candies are used to make the house colorful and detailed. If you know someone who decorates cakes or makes gingerbread houses, invite him or her to talk to your class about the process. Some areas even hold public contests for the best decorated gingerbread house around the holidays. If there is one near you and you can get transportation, take your class to look at the sugary buildings!

Using what they have learned for inspiration, ask each of your students to plan candy decorations for their own gingerbread house on a blank house diagram. They can use any candies they like in their pictures. Then ask each person to present to the class his ideal candy and gingerbread house design. Each person should explain the different types of candies he would use for his house and why he chose them. You can then display the pictures around your Hansel and Gretel bulletin board.

The bravest teachers may decide to make gingerbread houses in class as a final activity! Ask each student to bring in a bag of candy (any kind) and a cardboard milk carton. You should supply graham crackers and icing but make sure you have a few parent volunteers ready to come to class and help with the houses. Students should share their candies, and when everyone's house is finished let your class vote for their favorite.

SNOW, COLD WEATHER AND GINGERBREAD... WHAT COULD BE BETTER? ONLY USING SOME OF WINTER'S FAVORITE THINGS TO HELP YOUR STUDENTS PRACTICE THEIR LANGUAGE USE.

These lessons will challenge their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills and are sure to warm their hearts and bring some spice to an otherwise ordinary class period!

Ridiculous Recipes - Giving Instructions for Crazy Concoctions

NOT EVERY PERSON LIKES TO COOK, BUT THIS ACTIVITY WILL ENGAGE EVEN THE LEAST INTERESTED STUDENTS, NO PREVIOUS COOKING EXPERIENCE NEEDED. WITH THE FOLLOWING LESSON, STUDENTS WILL CREATE A SILLY, FICTIONAL RECIPE AND GIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING IT.

Your students should stretch their creativity and get some laughs in the process in this not so traditional cooking lesson.

RIDICULOUS ESL RECIPES

1 MIS EN PLACE

When starting your lesson on ridiculous recipes, g**et your students in the right mindset by providing some cookbooks for them to browse**. You will want to select the cookbooks based on the age of your students. The examples you give can be whimsical like *Mud Pies and Other Recipes: A Cookbook for Dolls* or serious like *Kids' First Cookbook: Delicious Nutritious Treats to Make Yourself*. You may also want to cut out selections from the weekend newspaper which often contain recipes. Allow your students to look at these books and see the format that recipes generally take.

To make sure your students understand how to read a recipe, make copies of one recipe for the entire class or project a recipe on your front board. Lead a discussion with your students in which you point out what types of information a reader can get from a recipe (*ingredients, number of servings, sequence of steps and time of preparation*). Then allow your students to share cooking experiences they have had in the past. You may even want to share a cooking video available on YouTube.

One of the most well known concoctions has to be the secret potion mixed up by the three witches in Shakespeare's Macbeth. *"Eye of newt and toe of frog... Wool of bat and tongue of dog..."*

You may have to review some of the vocabulary with your students before they understand, but once they do ask them how this differs from a traditional recipe. You can also read portions of the book *Stone Soup* to give your students another example of a cooked up mixture.

2 PREHEAT OVEN

Before assigning the writing topic, **brainstorm, as a class or in small groups, real foods that you and your students like to eat**. Then tell your students that they will make up a recipe for a strange and imaginary food. They can take a twist on a food that is on your list or come up with a new idea all together. The food that they choose to write about should be something completely strange and not something you would ever really make. They might be something like *pickle ice cream, hot dog salad,* or *shoelace pasta*. The more creative and outlandish your students' ideas, the better.

Now compile a list of cooking techniques that someone might find in a real recipe. Your students can use the cookbooks for examples such as *dice, sauté, bake, whip, steam,* etc. Encourage your students to use strange techniques in addition to standard cooking methods when writing their ridiculous recipes, the more outlandish the better.

3 COOK UNTIL GOLDEN BROWN

Give your students time to write their recipes. Make sure they understand that the ingredients should be listed before the steps in the cooking process and that those ingredients should be listed in the order they appear in the instructions. If desired, **allow your students to illustrate their recipes** and then share them with the class. You can compile all the recipes into a class book and make it available with the other cookbooks for free reading time. Your students should have fun as they stretch their imaginations and creativity when writing their recipes.

After writing their ridiculous recipes, you can repeat the writing exercise by having students **write out real recipes for foods that they know how to cook.** You can even give them an opportunity for public speaking by letting them demonstrate their recipes in front of the class. It may also give you and your class a free lunch which is sure to lift everyone's spirits.

Take it to the next step by writing *process essays*. Your students can use either of their recipes, but this time write them in essay format rather than recipe format.

THESE RIDICULOUS RECIPES ARE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUR STUDENTS TO STRETCH THEIR CREATIVITY TO THE LIMIT. BY COMBINING SILLY INGREDIENTS WITH BIZARRE COOKING TECHNIQUES, YOU WILL HAVE A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS WITH YOUR CLASS.

The practical benefits will allow your students to read and follow a traditional recipe, too. Who knows? There may be a future chef among you.

Mama's House: An Interdisciplinary ESL Unit on the Family

FAMILY IS A NEARLY UNIVERSAL TOPIC AMONG ESL CLASSES.
Beginning students study family related vocabulary. Intermediate students may discuss family roles. Advanced students can tackle controversial topics like what should be called a family. No matter what level you teach, the family can find a place in your classroom. Here are some activities you can use as is or modify for your students the next time you study families.

HOW TO TEACH AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ESL UNIT ON THE FAMILY

1 LISTENING

You can test your students' listening comprehension by playing Family Bingo with your class. Ask each student to bring in a picture of his or her family and to write ten fun facts about them. Then give each person a few minutes in front of the class to share the ten fun facts about the people in the picture and any other information he chooses. You may want your students to take notes as they listen, because they will need to remember the information about each family. You should also take notes and write down various information from each presentation.

Then, have your class make their own Bingo boards. Starting with a five by five empty grid, each person should write the names of his classmates randomly in the squares: the center square is free. To play, you will read facts about each person's family without naming the student whose family they are about. Read the facts in random order. Your students should mark their on their Bingo boards as you read facts about them. The first person with five in a row shouts "Bingo" and you can start another round. Just make sure you check to see if the winner was right in what he or she heard.

2 SPEAKING

For your speaking class, put your students in small discussion groups to share about their families. Working together, students should brainstorm all the members of their families and what roles each of those people plays. In addition, each person should share what role he plays in his family. When thinking about family roles, encourage your students to list what they do well – listen to problems, clean the house, make people laugh, etc. Then have groups discuss each member of the family's role and compare and contrast it with what they think are the traditional roles for those same members of the family.

3 READING

Family genealogy has become a popular hobby these days. With resources like ancestry.com, individuals can learn vast amount of information regarding their family. The more family members who submit information to ancestry.com, the easier it is for their relatives to piece together the family puzzle. When the family comes up in reading class, give your students some time to explore ancestry.com. On the site, students can learn how to make a family tree and what types of information help amateurs create a family genealogy. If you like, have your students make and post their own family trees on a designated bulletin board in your classroom. Then give the class some time to look at their classmates' work and learn about one another's families.

4 WRITING

If you have students who made trips overseas to study English, you know that their community where they study can be like a surrogate family to them. Using a Venn diagram and working in pairs, ask your students to compare and contrast their international community with a typical family and the various relationships one might find there. In what ways are the community and a family the same? In what ways do they differ? Ask each student to write one paragraph discussing the similarities between the international community and a family and a second paragraph discussing the differences between the two. If you like, you may also want your students to write an introduction and a conclusion to complete a block style compare/contrast essay.

THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING OF WHAT YOU CAN COVER WHEN FAMILY IS THE TOPIC FOR THE DAY.
As your students think about the people who are important to them, put it to good use as they improve and refine their English skills and let the family out of vocabulary class into all areas of your curriculum.

You'll Have Reason to Celebrate with These ESL Activities

People celebrate different things every day of the week. Some days, people celebrate a birthday or holiday. Other days people celebrate religious or political events. Still other days personal accomplishments or achievements are enough to spur people on to celebrate. In fact, any event can be cause for celebration, so whatever today's reason might be, these ESL activities will fit right in with the festive mood of the moment.

HOW TO TEACH A UNIT ON HOLIDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

1 WHY CELEBRATE?

Though not always the case, most people have a reason to celebrate. Working as an entire class, brainstorm as many reasons as you can that someone might celebrate. Be sure to include political and religious holidays as well as personal achievements or personal milestones such as birthdays. As you compile your list, encourage all members of your class to participate. For those who may not normally volunteer answers, remind them that any answer during a brainstorming session is a good one. In addition, everyone has things that she celebrates that others do not, so each person has something unique to contribute to the discussion. Once everyone has given a few reasons for celebration (and that alone may be good reason to celebrate) break your class into smaller discussion groups for the next part of the activity.

In groups, your class should decide on a classification scheme for the items on the board. As a rule, look for the following when classifying items. Each group should be distinct from every other group with no one group functioning as a subset of the other. There should be no overlap between the groups. That is, no item should be able to fit into more than one group. Each group should have a name or at least a description that distinguishes it from every other category, and students should be able to explain the differences between the groups.

Depending on the language level of your students, you can work with these classifications in your writing class. For lower level students, have each group or each individual write a paragraph about one of the classes or groups. The paragraph should include the name of the group, a description of it, what distinguishes it from the other groups and some specific examples that would be classified in that group. For students more advanced in their language studies, individuals can use this activity to write a classification essay following including the same criteria as the paragraph. In this case, though, each person will write about three or more classes and will also include an introduction and a conclusion with their paper. Give each group a chance to share with the class how they classified the items, and encourage your students to compare and contrast how different groups classified the same items.

2 HOW TO CELEBRATE?

How a person celebrates a given event differs from country to country and from household to household. Because of this, talking about celebration is a natural opening to share about native cultures among your students. To do this, ask each person in class to think of a recent celebration in which he participated. Then using the journalistic questions who, what, where, when, why and how, each person should make notes about the event, putting into words as many specific details as possible. To help your students, you can suggest questions that begin with the question words. For example, who was at the celebration? Who planned the celebration? What did you do? What did you eat? What did you say to one another? Where did you celebrate? Where did you spend your time during the celebration? Countless questions can be asked using these words. If you want to challenge your students to do more of the work, have them work in smaller discussion groups to come up with and answer the questions on their own. No group will have the same questions and therefore the same answers. Using journalistic questions is another useful prewriting activity, and your students can now use the answers that they have put down on the page to write a more organized and composed piece. Another option rather than writing would be to put that same information into an oral presentation after which other students can ask clarifying questions of the presenter. However you decide to share the information among your class, encourage each person to help the others understand his culture with the information he presents.

3 PLAN TO CELEBRATE

Now that your class has had some general discussion about celebrations, bring your plans to something more specific. For either an upcoming holiday or other event in the near future, have groups of students plan a celebration for the class. In groups of about four students, ask your class to be very specific as they plan a celebration for the event. They should discuss the location of the celebration, the events of the celebration, what items they will want to include (such as food or music) as well as any other details they can think of. Allow students to use the internet to get prices and compile a budget for the event. They should also put together an invitation list which includes all the members of your class as well as any other people they would like to invite. Finally, each group should write some sort of invitation to send out to the invitation list. They may choose to do a simple card, a more formal invitation or a short note or letter, depending on the occasion. If you have models for them to use as inspiration, your students will have an easier time with the activity. Ultimately, you may or may not want to have the celebrations, but your students will have benefited from the planning process.

YOUR STUDENTS ARE LEARNING AND IMPROVING THEIR ENGLISH, AND WHO NEEDS ANY MORE REASON THAN THAT TO CELEBRATE?

Still, encouraging your students to share some of their personalities and cultures will help them appreciate their classmates in a fun and friendly environment, and that is also a reason to celebrate. Party on!

Is Christmas in April? Tips for Crafting Unforgettable Calendar Lessons

LEARNING THE DAYS OF THE WEEK AND THE MONTHS OF THE YEAR IS ONE OF THE PRIMARY LESSONS FOR ELEMENTARY LEVEL STUDENTS.
There is a lot of information to absorb and to apply, so the more creatively and concretely you can present the lessons, the better. Follow these tips for crafting calendar lessons and your students will never confuse January with June again!

HOW TO TEACH AN UNFORGETTABLE CALENDAR LESSON

1 INTRODUCING THE CALENDAR

The first thing to do when thinking about a calendar lesson plan is to determine the best way to introduce all the vocabulary systematically. This can often be a stumbling block for students with pronunciation and retention. It's easiest to start with the days of the week. You'll want to first test student's knowledge level asking questions like, What is the first day of the week? What days are on the weekend? Chances are students know a few of the days of the week, if not most of them. You can then practice spelling, ordering, and pronunciation. A fun way to practice this is to give them a puzzle of the days of the week and see how quickly they can put it together. After they have it assembled you can then have them fill in some blanks or ask questions practicing things like, Tuesday is three days before _____/Friday is the ____day of the week/_____ is the day before Friday. Come up with lots of these and then have the students join in by trying to stump their classmates.

Once they have mastered the days of the week, you can then move to introducing the twelve months of the year. A fun way to begin with the months is to write them up on the board as scrambled words. Have the students work out the correct spelling as well as the correct order of the months. You may also want to briefly discuss seasons here and how the months shake out with however many seasons there are in the country where you are living. Then you could do a similar activity to the above fill in the blank, but with months, for example:

Christmas is in _____/June follows _____/_____ is three months before May/etc. You can get creative with these fill in the blank exercises and use humor to make them memorable. This tends to be much more interesting than What is the first/second/third month of the year.

Another way to test out comprehension for pronunciation and spelling is to list all the months of the year on the board in random order. Line the students up in two teams or lines by the board. The two students at the front of the line will go head to head. You say a month and the first one to circle the right month gets a point for their team.

2 QUESTION AND ANSWER

Another way to practice months of the year is to do various kinds of question and answer activities. The more entertaining you can make the rounds, the more memorable the subject matter will be for students. A fun warm up is to shout out questions like What is the 10th month?/Does January follow April?/What is the seventh month? Create competitive play and get students to ask the questions as well as shout answers back or raise their hands. This is a good time to work on pronunciation while providing a much-needed comprehension check. If students are slow to answer or need their notes, it may be time to do some review before progressing.

From this warm-up you can go into other question rounds or surveys. If you haven't already done so, ask the students to find out all their classmates' birthdays by doing a mingling activity. The trick is to turn it into a guessing game because the students aren't allowed to ask simply, when is your birthday? They must ask questions to determine the month and then the day. This may take some time depending on the number of students you have and it could also get a little noisy. Once they have discovered everyone's birthdays, tell them they must then line up in order of birthday from oldest to youngest. Then you can have them switch around, youngest to oldest, furthest birthday to nearest birthday, etc. This is a very memorable activity that will have the students speaking and laughing a lot.

One last questioning game you could play for months of the year is 20 questions. One student chooses a card with a month on it and the students have to ask yes/no questions to guess which month is on the card. You could also play variations on this and add in holidays.

3 12 GREAT MONTHS

Provide each student with some blank calendar pages and get creative with what you can do with them. Inform them that as a class they need to create a complete twelve month calendar. You could number off the students and have them fill in the calendar pages according to the number you gave them. You could also get crafty here and have them decorate their month or months (depending on the number of students that you have), with either colored pencils, markers, or even magazine pictures for something of a collage. This can be accompanied by discussing what holidays happen during what months and in what countries. If you have a multi-cultural class, you could include a lot more holidays and discuss when they are celebrated. This might be challenging if the students don't have the language skills to express the holidays in English. It would really depend on the level.

DISCUSSING THE CALENDAR MIGHT AT FIRST SEEM LIKE A RATHER DRY TOPIC, BUT YOU CAN MAKE IT INTERESTING.
The information students are learning is so necessary that any way to craft more memorable lessons will be a breath of fresh air.

Let's Party! But Let's Learn, Too: Facilitating Productive Parties

AT LEAST ONCE A SEMESTER, AROUND A MAJOR HOLIDAY OR NEAR THE END OF A TERM, A STUDENT USUALLY PROPOSES, "LET'S HAVE A PARTY!" I USED TO CRINGE INWARDLY, CHANGE THE SUBJECT, AND HOPE STUDENTS WOULD FORGET ABOUT THE PROPOSAL BY THE NEXT CLASS SESSION. They rarely did, so this wasn't an effective strategy for avoiding class parties.

Why did I want to avoid them in the first place? Well, face it: they are a hassle, to the instructor, mostly, who may have to bring most of the refreshments herself--and then clean up herself as students duck out the door at the end. More importantly, class parties rarely resemble parties in most other settings, where participant interaction is what makes it a "party." Often students sit at their desks eating and not talking to anyone or only talking to members of their own language group—in that language, so no one else can join in. More and more it struck me these "parties" were just not a good use of instructional time, which we can sorely spare in any case, with cuts in class hours due to budget concerns in many parts of the country. Still, students want their end-of-term or holiday parties. Is there anything an ESL instructor can do to avoid making it a complete waste of time—and perhaps even a positive learning experience?

HOW TO FACILITE PRODUCTIVE PARTIES IN YOUR CLASSROOM

1 GET HELP

Don't do it all yourself. Post or pass around a sign-up sheet for food, drink, and utensils. Make sure everyone signs up and every category is covered. Also have students volunteer to provide entertainment or help with clean-up. So not only do you have help with the party, but also students begin to take ownership. If a student volunteers to bring enchiladas, and perhaps makes them himself, he is somewhat motivated to stay around through the party as the dish gets eaten (I always feel some pride watching food I made disappear at an event.) He might even share the recipe with other students, and some interaction takes place.

2 PRACTICE

Some students may not have attended an American or Western-style party and may not know what to expect. Explain that parties are about socializing and that students will be expected to speak in English. Give them a chance to practice by introducing some common party topics—family, friends, vacations, movies, and TV are a few. Put the topic on cards, and have students practice before the party by sitting in pairs or groups, drawing a card, and discussing the topic on it.

3 PREPARE

The big day is here! The teacher should come equipped with a few essentials (not that students would ever forget). I always bring at least one dish of food most students will like, something traditionally "American," like pumpkin pie, some soda, paper plates, and some forks. I put all of this in an extra large garbage bag, which I later use for disposing of the party waste rather than throwing it in the tiny class wastebasket. (Not leaving an overflowing wastebasket earns some gold stars from the janitorial staff.)

4 PARTICIPATE

Be a good host, and just as a good host would, walk around and encourage party goers to talk to each other, introduce a topic of interest, make sure everyone is comfortable, and so forth. Ask students what their plans are for the next term or for vacation. Encourage use of English as necessary.

5 TEACH SOMETHING

Your role of teacher is still in place even though it is a "party." Raise something topical, in the news, such as the national election, and discuss something about the political process while remaining neutral about the candidates: e.g., "We elect a president every four years. Do you think that is the correct amount of time?" Or discuss a recent movie/book: "Has anyone seen 'The Help'? What do you think?"

6 ADVISE SOMETHING

If this is the end-of-term party, this is a perfect time to talk to students about their future academic plans. Often ESL students are not getting serious academic advice from their advisors, who might know little about their students' academic needs beyond how they relate to engineering or pharmacy, or so forth. The ESL instructor, however, is more likely to take a more holistic approach to their students' education: e.g., "You really should take the next developmental writing class before attempting freshman composition, and you should also reconsider taking sixteen units in one semester." This might open a dialogue, and some students might come to your office for further guidance as they often are feeling a little lost about the next steps.

7 PLAY A PARTY GAME

Play a traditional party game like charades: have the selected student think of a word or concept in English and then act out that word without speaking. The other players must guess the word, using English. The one who guesses first then acts out a new word or concept. As a variation, the instructor might write out the words on cards beforehand for students to draw rather than coming up with something themselves.

8 WRAP UP

As the party winds down, the term does, too (if it is an end-of-semester party). Students begin to realize this toward the end of the party and grow a little somber. I, at this point, ask students to share one great thing about the term, one awful thing, and any advice for future students. This allows the students to process their feelings about the end of the semester and recall what they learned. It also helps me with revising the syllabus, noting what students liked and didn't like about the term.

SO NOW, INSTEAD OF CRINGING AND RUNNING WHEN YOUR STUDENTS MENTION "PARTY!" YOU CAN HAVE A PLAN IN PLACE THAT WILL MAKE PARTIES, RATHER THAN A HASSLE AND DULL WASTE OF TIME, PRODUCTIVE AND FUN.

Are You Packed Yet? A Cross-Curricular ESL Unit on Vacation

EVERYBODY LOVES A VACATION, AND THOUGH YOUR STUDENTS MAY HAVE TRAVELLED FAR TO ATTEND ENGLISH CLASSES, THEY ARE PROBABLY LOOKING FORWARD TO SOME SIGHTSEEING BETWEEN SESSIONS. To get them ready, try a unit on travel, but you do not have to limit the lessons to vocabulary class. Here are some travel related activities that you can use across the ESL curriculum as your students continue their English fluency journey.

HOW TO TEACH A CROSS-CURRICULAR ESL UNIT ON VACATION

1 READING

Travel magazines are fun to look at and help a vacationer imagine what his or her trip might be like. Collect some travel magazines from friends and family or request them from the library for this activity. Ask each person in your class to choose an article that describes a popular vacation destination and read it. After a first reading, ask the person to deconstruct the article into outline form, noting the important points the author makes. After each person has looked in detail at the article, ask him or her to write five multiple choice questions that can be answered by reading the article. Each student should then exchange the article and the questions (not the outline) with another student who should read the article and then answer the questions. Each student should check his partner's answers and explain any errors. If you would like to extend this activity into writing, you can also ask a second student to write an article based on the outline created by the article's first reader. Then, give each student a chance to compare the article that he wrote with the original article from which the outline was made.

2 WRITING

If your students are at the level where they can write essays, travel and vacation make great topics for a compare/contrast essay. Start by putting students into groups of three or four to discuss some of the most interesting places they have visited. These may be locations close to home or exotic destinations around the world. Encourage students to share details about the experience: what they ate, what they did, what they saw. Then have each person choose two locations to write about in a compare/contrast essay. This type of essay can follow two organizational patterns, and you should review them with your students. Both styles of essay will start with an introduction and end with a conclusion, but the body of each style essay will have organizational differences. In a block style essay, the body of the essay will have two paragraphs, and each paragraph will discuss one of the locations about which your student is writing. In a point-by-point style essay, students should choose three points of comparison between the two locations. Each of the three body paragraphs will discuss one point of comparison and will address both of the locations. As always, encourage your students to use sensory details when they write, so the reader can feel as if he or she is at the vacation destination.

3 SPEAKING

Whether your class is dramatic or not, planning and then performing a commercial about a vacation destination can be fun and entertaining for the entire class. Start by dividing your class into three or four groups (or more if you have a large class) and ask each group to choose a vacation destination about which to create a commercial advertisement. You may want to have some travel magazines available for them to look through for inspiration or give them internet access time to do research. Ask each team to create a 90-second television commercial for the location they choose making sure each person in the group has a speaking part in the commercial. You can encourage your class to be creative and entertaining. Once the commercials are finished, either have each group perform their commercial live or have each group record their commercial and have a screening in class. If you choose the second option, you may be able to use the commercial for grading and self-evaluation purposes and, of course, an excuse to have popcorn in class!

4 GRAMMAR

Part of taking a vacation is packing the correct items to take along. To make the best decisions, the vacationer must think about the activities he or she will engage in during the vacation. In pairs, have students choose a vacation destination and then discuss, using the future tense, what they will do once there. Each person should share his or her plans along with the necessary items to pack. Your students should use phrases such as, "I will go swimming, so I will pack a bathing suit." This review of the simple future is especially helpful for beginning grammar students but still has value for those further along in their studies. If you like, you may also want your student pairs to make a list of the items they decide to bring and then share with the rest of the class.

NO MATTER WHERE YOU LIVE AND TEACH, DREAMING OF VACATION IS A NATURAL PART OF LIFE. Before summer vacation rolls around this year, give your students a chance to think about their own dream destinations with this unit on vacation, which spans the ESL curriculum. Moreover, if anyone does take a vacation because of what she learned in class, ask her to share from her real life experiences once she gets back.

Exploration Exploits: Activities to Take Students Around the World

THE WORLD IS A VERY BIG PLACE, BUT IN TODAY'S SOCIETY THE PEOPLE OF OUR WORLD ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE CONNECTED EVERY DAY. The internet and other venues for communication have opened the world to students no matter where they live. Also, so many students decide to study English overseas that often our classrooms become a representation of the globe. The following activities will help your students learn more about the world around them and have fun using English in the process. You may even learn a thing or two as well as you all travel around the world with the following activities.

HOW TO TAKE YOUR STUDENTS AROUND THE WORLD

1 FLY YOUR FLAG

Every country has its own flag, but how much do students know about the meaning behind those flags? **Create a display of flags from around the world**. You can either bring in small flags and display them in a vase or other arrangement, or print pictures of various flags from the internet. See how many of the flags your students can identify with their countries. Make sure you have a flag for each of the countries represented in your class. Then group your students by country of origin, and give them their country's flag. Have each group work together to **write an explanation of the flag's design**. If you have older students, they may be able to do this without research, but younger students may need to use the internet or other sources to explain the significance of colors and pictures on the flag. After your students have written an explanation of their native countries' flags, tell them the story of your country's flag. Then ask each group to come to the front of the room and share the story behind their flag and get some practice in public speaking.

2 PIN THE TAIL ON THE WORLD MAP

Now that your students have shared with the class about their home countries, assign some research topics with the following game. Did you ever play pin the tail on the donkey when you were a child? This game follows the same concept. Give each student a pushpin with his name and/or picture on it. Blindfold the student and spin him three times, then point him in the direction of a world map on the wall. Make sure the map is not mounted too high for your students to reach. Allow your students to **pin their marker on the map**. Whatever continent or ocean your student lands on, that is the area he must research. Hopefully you will have students scattered around the map so every continent and ocean are researched. You can also make this a group project by grouping students depending on where their pushpins landed. Give your students some time to do the research either in class or at home, and then take some time for presentations on the different areas of the world. You may want your students to research the climate, animal life or terrain of the areas they are researching.

3 CASH ONLY

Can your students name the currencies used throughout the world? Start your global monetary travels by explaining the word currency and then brainstorming a list of currencies that are used throughout the world. Do this activity either in small groups or as a class. **How many total currencies can the class name?** Did they include dollars, Euros, pesos, and lira? What other examples did they give? Now see if they can name the countries that use those monetary units. There may be more than one country that uses each unit. Test your students' general currency knowledge in groups by giving them a matching game with the following pairs. How many of the following countries can they match to their units of currency?

Bulgaria (Leva)
China (Yuan)
Czech Republic (Koruna)
Ghana (Cedi)
Hong Kong (Dollar)
India (Rupee)
Italy (Lira)
Ivory Coast (CFA Franc)
Philippines (Peso)
Norway (Krone)
Venezuela (Bolivar)
Serbia (Dinar)

If possible, **start a collection of foreign money to display in your classroom**. Encourage your students to bring in small amounts of money from their home countries and/or from places they travel. Give your class an opportunity to examine the money, the language, shape and appearance of each coin or bill. If your students are willing to leave the currency with you, over a few years you may have an impressive collection to use with future classes. See other money activities and worksheets we have on BusyTeacher.

4 IN GOOD TASTE

Bread is one of the most common foods throughout the world, but the personality of each country shows through in this basic food. **Complete your journey around the world by bringing in sample bread from different areas of the world that are available in your grocery store**. You may want to include white bread, a pita, flour tortillas, a baguette, matzo and naan. Then pair your students for the following activity. Each pair should create a Venn diagram to compare and contrast two of the types of bread they have samples. To make a Venn diagram, draw a large circle on the paper and overlap it with a second large circle. Label each circle with one of the items being examined. You can assign the two types of bread to each pair or let the students choose the ones they will write about. They should then describe each of the two types of bread in one of the circles. The characteristics that are true for both types should be written in the overlapping area of the diagram. The characteristics that are unique to each type should be written in the areas that do not overlap. Now your students should write one paragraph about the similarities between the two types of bread and a second paragraph about the differences. If you would like, you can also ask your students to write an introduction and a conclusion to create a complete essay.

THESE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE MANY WAYS YOUR CLASS CAN TAKE A MINI-TRIP AROUND THE WORLD. THROUGHOUT YOUR JOURNEY, ENCOURAGE YOUR STUDENTS TO SHARE FROM THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES AND PERHAPS SHOW SOME PICTURES. Learning about the world is so important for people in the 21st century. Have fun as your journey, and you may even want to keep a scrapbook of the experience.

How to Teach an ESL Unit on Transportation and Travel

ESL STUDENTS, IF THEY ARE STUDYING IN THE UNITED STATES, ALMOST ALL HAVE EXPERIENCE WITH TRAVEL.

Whether for that reason or because travel is a hobby for many, travel units are very common among ESL curriculums. It is easy to take the idea of travel and apply it to the different language classes you may be teaching. Here are some suggestions on how you can do it.

TEACHING AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ESL UNIT ON TRANSPORTATION AND TRAVEL

1 SPEAKING

Most of the time when a person travels, she ends up staying in a hotel. Your students can practice the interaction between a hotel guest and a hotel clerk with a simple role play. One student should sit at a desk and ask the other student for information. She will be looking for information on the length of stay, how many beds are needed for the number of guests and any special accommodations the person needs. The hotel guest will also have to give the clerk her full name, address, phone number and payment information. When pairs of students have practiced the role play, have them trade parts and do it again. During the role play, encourage your students to use any or all of the following phrases:

- May I help you?
- Do you have a reservation?
- Do you have any vacancies?
- Have a pleasant stay.
- How will you be paying?
- How long will you be staying?
- Here is your key card.
- Your room is located...
- Would you please sign here?

2 WRITING

Part of travelling is seeing the sights an area has to offer. If a traveler does not plan, though, he may miss out on a big attraction because the location is not open on a certain day, because he spends too much time on another sight, or because he does not plan how to get to the attraction. In this exercise, your students will write a travel itinerary for a tourist destination. Have each student choose a location to look at, either a place he has been or a place he would like to go, and plan a trip to that area. Tell your students to choose a location that has tourist attractions or other places of interest rather than something like going to a beach. Approve your students' choices, and then have them plan an itinerary for a weeklong visit. Make sure your students look into the public transportation available in that city, and if there is none locate a car rental office they would be able to use. For each location, your students should note how to get to the location from where they will stay and how long they plan to be there. The information could be put into chart format, which may challenge your students to write concisely and clearly.

3 READING

If you can collect several travel brochures, they will come in handy for this exercise. A travel agent might be a great resource for getting some of these, or grab them any time you visit a new place and keep a running collection to use in class. If you do not have time to gather actual brochures, you can use the internet as a resource for your class. Have your students choose a brochure or a set of brochures about one city. Give them time to look over and read the brochures, and ask them to make observations on the style of writing in the brochures. Small groups are a good venue for this. Challenge your students to share how the writing in the brochure is different from that in more traditional texts you have probably used in class. Is the brochure informative? Does it appeal more to emotion than to logic? Is the writing meant to be persuasive or simply informative? Does it rely more on pictures or more on text? Which is better? Once your students have fully discussed the brochures, have the small groups write 5 rules that a writer should follow when putting together a travel brochure. If you like, have your students write their own travel brochures that advertise a location in their home countries!

4 LISTENING

For a challenging listening exercise using British English, show your students this video from the BBC on travel ads (news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/fast_track/9487366.stm) that are too good to be true. The eight minute video discusses why some advertised travel packages are not what they appear to be and what consumers can do about it. To use this clip in class, play the video once for your student to get the feel of the speaking and information presented. Then, ask your students to listen again and see if they can note three different types of information: why these advertisements are too good to be true, how the industry is being regulated, and advice to consumers. You may want to pause the video after each section and discuss it with your students if they are having trouble. Play the video a third time and let your students check their notes, and then have them discuss their answers in groups of three or four students. After the groups, you may want to show the video one more time and then discuss it as a class.

WHETHER YOUR STUDENTS ARE THINKING ABOUT TRAVELLING OR JUST RECOVERING FROM A RECENT TRIP, TALKING ABOUT TRAVEL IN THE ESL CLASSROOM WILL GIVE THEM USEFUL, PRACTICAL ENGLISH SKILLS THAT CAN BE USED IN REAL LIFE.

You and your students may learn about a travel destination that you just cannot keep away from and you'll be planning a trip before you know it.

Top Activities to Take Students Across the Country

NOT MANY ESL TEACHERS CAN AFFORD TO TAKE THEIR STUDENTS ON A FIELD TRIP ACROSS THE COUNTRY, BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN THAT YOU CANNOT LEAVE YOUR CLASSROOM AND EVEN YOUR CITY WHILE STUDYING ENGLISH.
These activities will show you how to take your students across the country in their quest for language acquisition, no transportation required.

HOW TO TAKE YOUR STUDENTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY: NO TRANSPORTATION REQUIRED

1 MAKE A PLAN

On September 10, 1913, the Lincoln Highway, the first paved road in the U.S. that reached from one coast to another, was laid out. It took until 1927 to complete, but the highway system of the United States was born that day. After this time, travel from one city to another in the U.S. would never be the same. In the spirit of the pioneers who built that first cross-country highway, announce to your students that you will hold a cross-country race. In this race, your students will have to travel from New York to San Francisco just as that first highway did. Whichever group can make the trip in the fewest miles will win the race. Have your students work in groups to plan their trips. Your students should discuss which roads they will take, and they will have to accurately measure the mileage. (You can do this by having each team use a string to mark their trip along a highway map. Once the complete trip has been mapped, remove the string and measure it. Then use the mileage key to calculate how many miles the trip took.) They should also keep a list of the states and cities that they will pass through. You will want to make several maps available to your class during this activity, and have them complete the planned route in class. Otherwise, your groups may have identical directions that originated from Map Quest. At the end of your class period, announce the winners of the race and, if desired, award them a trophy for the shortest trip across the United States.

2 TAKE IN THE SIGHTS

Now that your groups have their routes planned, have them do a little research on sights they may like to see along the way. They can choose to visit cities or national monuments, parks or recreational areas. Each group should look at the locations along their route and then choose five points of interest that they will visit. If possible, have each group collect some tourist information and visit web sites to find out more about the sights they have chosen. You may also want to have your students write a personal letter for additional information from organizations around the country, or you may want to borrow some tourist guides from the library or get some at AAA if available.

Once your group has chosen its sights and done some research, have each group give a presentation to the class about one of their tourist attractions. They should include information about the site, where it is located, and why they chose it as one of their tourist destinations. Ideally, each presentation will also include some historical information about the location and information about its popularity with tourists today.

3 MAKE IT PERSONAL

Now that your class has taken a pseudo trip across the United States and seen some sights along the way, why not open your class up for discussion? Use this time to talk about the different modes of travel a person could use when travelling across the country. Make your list as exhaustive and creative as possible, including not only plane, train and automobile but also ferry, scooter, bicycle and others. After your discussion, ask each of your students to share their personal stories about coming to the U.S. Most of them probably flew, but what other details can they give about their trips? How many hours did it take? How many locations did they stop at along the way? Did they have layovers? Did anyone have to take a train or ferry or another type of unusual transportation? What interesting sights did they see along the way? If they were to highlight four or five of those interesting sights, what would they be? You may want to write out some questions for your class and have them discuss those questions in groups of three or four. Then have each group share their most interesting answers with the class.

Now that you have talked about it, have each of your students write a narrative about his or her trip from his home country to the U.S. They should include details about their modes of transportation as well as the interesting sights they took in during their travels. If you have a world map up in your classroom, post the narratives around the map and near your students' countries of origin. You may choose to title the board "Our Travelling Ways" or some other travel related title.

As the last piece of your students' personal travel stories, have them measure on the world map how far each of them travelled to get to your school. Make sure each person understands how to measure mileage on the map using the key to get numbers that are more accurate. Whereas the race across the U.S. awarded a prize for the shortest trip, this time acknowledge the person who travelled the most miles to continue his or her study of English.

EVERYONE ENJOYS A LITTLE EXCITEMENT IN THEIR WORKDAYS, EVEN IF THAT WORK IS LANGUAGE STUDIES. WITH A RACE ACROSS THE UNITED STATES, YOUR STUDENTS WILL HAVE THE FUN AND EXCITEMENT OF TRAVEL AND ADVENTURE WITHOUT EVER LEAVING THE CLASSROOM.
Not only that, they can get to know one another better as they share their own stories of travel to the U.S. So get ready, get set and go! The race is on.

Oh the Places You'll Go: Geography Based ESL Lessons

GEOGRAPHY CAN BE A COMMON TOPIC OF CONVERSATION IN THE ESL CLASSROOM SINCE SO MANY ESL STUDENTS COME FROM DIFFERENT AREAS AROUND THE WORLD. Your class will naturally talk about countries, continents and oceans as they get to know one another in casual settings. Sometimes, though, a teacher finds that she needs to be more intentional about teaching geography to her ESL class. When that happens, here are some activities to try.

HOW TO TEACH FUN GEOGRAPHY-BASED ESL LESSONS

1 HAVE MAP, WILL TRAVEL

Your students almost certainly have a reading component to their English studies, but how often does your class attempt to read nontraditional texts? Students studying ESL need skills for non-text reading just as much and perhaps more than mainstream students do. When you are talking about geography, bring in some maps of the city and state in which you live for your students to explore. Take some time at the beginning of your class to explain the key, which defines the symbols found on the map, the grid, which is used to locate cities and other landmarks on the map, and the additional information, which is given about the region pictured on the diagram in front of them.

Then set your students to explore the map with some comprehension questions to answer. Can they determine the distance between one location and another? Can they locate certain cities or areas of interest? Can they use the map to compile a set of directions from one area to another? Once your students have become familiar with the world of maps, challenge groups of three or four students to make a map of their own. Give each group a large piece of paper and ask them to make a map of your classroom. They will have to speak with each other to determine the symbols they will use to represent items on the map. They will also need to communicate how they will go about diagramming the map and what additional information they will need to include. Give your students class time to work on the project or assign it for homework. When all the maps are finished, display them in your classroom or in the hallway and ask students to compare the maps with one another. What information did other groups include that was helpful? Is there anything missing from any of the projects? What could each group have done to make their map more informative? Have your students discuss these questions in their groups as they debrief the activity.

2 A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

You can marry geography and language by looking at pictures which have been taken in different areas around the world. Pair students and give them a picture to examine. Ask your students to make specific observations about the geography of the picture and write them down. What natural elements are in the picture? Encourage your students to avoid general words, like tree, and use more specific words, like maple tree or coconut palm. After your students have made observations about the terrain, have them look at the activities that are happening in the picture. Are the people working or relaxing? What kinds of work are they doing? After making specific observations about the people, your students should move on to buildings, landmarks, and natural features.

After your students have finished their detailed observations, ask them to make some conclusions based on their observations. What do they think the humans in the area have done to change the environment? What evidence can they use to support those conclusions? What observations did they make that can help them determine the climate and rainfall of the region? How do these environmental factors affect the way the people in that region live? Finally, ask your students what they would explore further if they could visit this place.

After the observation and interpretation of the first location, give each pair of students a second picture, and have them repeat the same activity with it. After they have answered the questions and made all their observations and comments, ask your students to compare the two locations. What is similar between the two areas? What is different? Which location appears to be a more difficult place to live? Have humans reacted in similar ways in both locations? Why or why not? Which would each student prefer? Close the activity by asking each student to make a guess as to where the pictures may have been taken.

3 YOU CAN GOOGLE THAT

In today's world of technology, knowledge is easier to acquire than any other time in history. With this in mind, have your students do some research on a particular city using the internet and a Google search or a site such as Google Earth. By typing the name of the city into the search engine, your students will be able to access plenty of information about the cities they have chosen. Give your students time to explore the web sites and take notes on what they have read. Then ask your students to use that information to compile travel scrapbooks about the cities they have visited. They can include pictures they have printed from the web sites, but they should also include personal observations about the location. After they have compiled these travel scrapbooks, give each student an opportunity to tell the class about his vacation with a short presentation. The era of the slide show may be over, but travelers today still like to talk about what they have experienced. After each presentation, allow your class to ask questions for additional information. If at any time during the school year one of your students visits another city or region, ask him to share some of his experiences with the class in a similar presentation, photos encouraged.

WHETHER YOUR STUDENTS ARE WORLD TRAVELERS OR HAVE BEEN IN ONE CITY ALL OF THEIR LIVES, THEY CAN EXPLORE THE REMOTEST REGIONS OF THE WORLD THROUGH PICTURES AND TECHNOLOGY. Perhaps giving today's students abundant opportunities to learn about different areas of the globe, our world will become more understanding of her different people groups. If so, then there is most certainly a bright future ahead of us!

Up, Up and Away: Aviation Themed Language Activities

IF YOU ARE TEACHING ESL CLASSES, THE LIKELIHOOD THAT YOUR STUDENTS HAVE FLOWN ON A PLANE IS VERY HIGH. Whether the air travelers are well into their adulthood or especially if they are still children, flying can be very moving experience. With this type of shared experience, your students will probably enjoy sharing a piece of their personal history with their classmates.

TRY THESE AVIATION THEMED LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES!

1 GET OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

If you can, take your students to tour a local airport. Before taking your trip, ask your students to share in small groups any experience they remember from a time that they flew on a plane. They may share memories of the plan, visiting the cockpit, or waiting in the airport. Though international airports may be off limits due to security parameters, you may be able to bring your class to a county or private airport to give them a shared experience. Ask the manager of the airport if he would be willing to take your class on a tour of the facility. During the tour, encourage your students to ask questions of the manager and pilots they might encounter. In addition, challenge your students to take note of the layout of the airport. Once you return to class, ask your students to reproduce that airport layout on a large poster and use the vocabulary they have been learning to label each area. You can also ask your students to write a thank you note to your tour guide for his time and attention during the field trip. Follow up your field trip with a free writing experience in which your students compare their previous trips to the airport with the shared class trip.

2 FOLLOW DIRECTIONS

You can use an aviation moment to give your students some practice with following directions. Photocopy some pages out of a paper airplane instructional book or find some online and provide your students with some paper. Challenge each person to follow a set of directions to make a paper airplane. You can choose instructions that are as easy or as difficult for your students to follow as you like. The important thing is that they are reading the directions and following them to create their very own paper planes. Once your students have followed the directions and have their homemade planes, give your students some time to decorate and personalize their planes before having a contest. Take your students outside and line them all up with their airplanes for a distance challenge. On the word *go*, have everyone release his plane in the same direction. In a challenge to see whose plane can travel the farthest, award the winner with a ribbon, homemade trophy or other simple prize! You may want to have three flight trials and measure the total distance each plane travels awarding the person with the greatest overall distance travelled and the one with the longest single flight.

3 THE HISTORY OF FLIGHT

If your class has internet access or can make use of a computer lab, let your students do some exploration on the history of flight with this on-line exhibition (bitly.com/SE01Un) provided by the Library of Congress. This site presents a great deal of information on the history of flight. Divide your class into three groups to do the research. Each group should read the introduction, and then assign each of the groups to one area of the web site to research: the dream, the achievement, and the timeline of flight. Have each group read the information and make notes of the main points they find there. Give each group a chance to talk together and decide what information they will pass on to the rest of the class. Then divide your students into groups of three, one person from each of the original groups. In this new group, each student should explain to his partners the information he read in his section of the web site. If each explanation is adequate, each of your students will have gotten practice in both reading and speaking and will have access to all the information that the web site provided.

4 VIDEO PLANES

If you are looking to increase your students' vocabulary and give them some listening practice in the bargain, try this set of videos from ehow.com. In the first video, Mike Camelin walks the viewer through the basic exterior parts of an airplane. Provide your students with a simple plane diagram available from the International Aviation Academy of Australia. Then play the short video for your class at least three times and challenge them to listen for the various parts of the plane listed below. As your students listen, they should try to label each of the parts on the plane diagram. Once you have given your class ample opportunities to watch the video, have small groups of students compare their answers before reviewing the diagram as a class.

Fuselage
Propeller
Engine
Wings
Landing gear
Empennage
Horizontal stabilizer
Vertical stabilizer

Another video that Mike Camelin makes available on ehow.com is how to choose a good flight school. In this one-minute video, Camelin lists three qualities that someone should look for in a flight school (a structured syllabus, clean and well-maintained aircraft, and ample resources). Challenge your students to listen for these three necessary qualities and then to list either examples of those traits or reasons why they are important.

Mike Camelin also presents a video on how to turn an airplane. He describes two different motions that are necessary for a plane to turn. These are a tilt and a yawing motion. After watching this video, ask your students to describe what each of these motions is like first using their hands (as Cameline does in the video) and then without using their hands. You may want to have your students write these descriptions and then compare with a partner.

WHETHER YOU CHOOSE GROUP BASED OR INDIVIDUALIZED ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR STUDENTS, EVERYONE WILL COME AWAY FROM THESE LESSONS KNOWING MORE ABOUT THE HISTORY OF FLIGHT AND WHAT IT INVOLVES TODAY. So take off into the wild blue yonder and explore the topside of the world with some of these memorable activities!

5 Fun Games that Teach the Weather

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A FRESH WAY TO TEACH YOUR ESL STUDENTS COMMON WEATHER WORDS? ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A NEW WAY TO REVIEW WEATHER EXPRESSIONS AND VOCABULARY?

Why not try one of the following games to add some energy to your class and fun to the everyday topic of weather?

HOW TO TEACH WEATHER: 5 FUN GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

1 PIN THE TAIL ON THE GLOBE

After introducing or reviewing a list of weather terms, post a world map on your classroom wall. Take a few moments to introduce your students to the terms equator and pole and discuss what types of weather the residents at each place (human or otherwise) experience year round. Then, depending on the time of year, discuss with your students what the weather may be like in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. Finally, review weather in specific areas like rain forests and deserts. Now it is time for fun. Give each student in turn a marker with either a pushpin or piece of tape or other adhesive. This is especially entertaining if you can take a picture of the student or have her draw a small self-portrait. Blindfold one student, give her three turns while she wears the blindfold, and then point her in the direction of the world map. The student should then place the marker somewhere on the world map. You can encourage her to aim for the type of weather she thinks she would enjoy. Then remove the blindfold and have your student describe the weather where she is on the map. Give each student a turn to place himself on the map while blindfolded and then tell the class about the weather at his location.

2 I'M GOING ON VACATION

Do you have a dream vacation? Most people can imagine where they would like to go whether it is skiing on a dramatic slope or sunning on a peaceful beach. Give your students some practice with weather words by getting them thinking about their dream vacation. Have your class sit in a circle and ask a volunteer to start. The person who takes the first turn will also take the last turn in the game. With each turn taker, the person should first describe in about two sentences the type of weather he would like on his vacation, and then tell the rest of the class where he will go on that vacation. For example, "I like sunny skies and warm ocean water. I'm going on vacation to Hawaii." The second person, whoever is sitting to the left of the person that just went, will describe her dream vacation weather, and then tell the class where she is going on vacation. Then she must also repeat where the first student is going on vacation. The third student then tells the class about his dream vacation weather and then where he will go. He also says where student number two will go and then where student number one will go. Continue in this manner until you make it all the way around the circle to the first student who must say, in the correct order, where each of his classmates will take his dream vacation. Feel free to prompt students throughout the game if they are stumped, but do not be surprised if the students do it on their own. If you have the map on the wall from the previous game, you could also let your students put their markers on the globe where they said they would like to vacation after the game is finished.

3 TWENTY QUESTIONS

Here is a game that reviews not only weather words but also question asking. Have one student choose a location he would like to visit. You can supply a list of possibilities or just let him choose at random. The rest of the class takes turns asking questions about the destination trying to determine where the person chose. Encourage your students to use questions about the weather at the beginning to narrow down the possibilities. If the class cannot guess after twenty questions, the student answering the questions wins. If they are able to guess before using all twenty questions, the class wins. Give each student a chance to be the question answerer. If you have a particularly large class, you may want to break your students into small groups to play the game.

4 CLOTHING RELAY

This game requires more preparation than the others and a small financial investment, but you can use the props anytime you teach about weather. Start by getting a collection of clothes that are appropriate for all weather conditions, bathing suits, hats, scarves, shorts, raincoats, sunglasses, etc. You can ask for donations from parents, friends or purchase some second hand items at a thrift store. Put them all into a large bin and place them at the front of the class. Then divide your class into two teams and have each team chose a volunteer to stand up front with the collection of clothing. The rest of the class should line up at the back of the room in teams. For each round, you will announce a weather condition and one person from each team should run up to the front of the room. They must then run up to the person on their team who is standing by the clothing and chose an item that is appropriate for that type of weather. The runner must then place the item on the other student without the other student's assistance. The first person to choose an appropriate item of clothing for his teammate and put in on the teammate appropriately scores a point for the team. Continue until everyone has had a turn or until you have used all your weather words. The team with the most points wins.

5 CLOTHING STACKER

This is another game you can play with the collection of all weather

clothing. Again, divide your class into two teams. You should also divide the clothing into two equal piles. Again, have one person volunteer to wear the clothing, but this time the opposite team will dress him or her in all the clothing from their pile. That person then returns to his own team and stands at the front of the room. The others are in line at the back of the room. Begin a relay race in which one person at a time runs up to the dressed member of their team, removes a piece of clothing, and announces to you or another judge what type of weather in which that item can be worn. After getting an okay from the judge, he runs back to the rest of the team with the item. Then the next person takes a turn. Continue until the person up front has been stripped of all his weather clothing. The first team to finish wins the game.

WHEN IT COMES TO TEACHING WEATHER, DO NOT BE A DRIP. PUT SOME FUN AND EXCITEMENT INTO YOUR CLASS AND DO A WEATHER LESSON BASED ON GAMES.

It will energize your students and challenge them to think on their feet, and weather will become an instinctive part of their vocabulary.

Extreme Weather: Be Prepared with These Cool ESL Activities

WHEN A PERSON IS CAUGHT IN AN EXTREME WEATHER SITUATION, IT CAN BE TERRIFYING. Perhaps that is part of the reason most people find natural disasters interesting. That general interest is just one of the reasons your ESL class will enjoy these activities planned around extreme weather, so take shelter and jump right in!

TRY THESE COOL ESL EXTREME WEATHER ACTIVITIES

1 A PLAN FOR DISASTER

From the time that we were young, we heard our teachers, firefighters and police officers talk about having a family disaster plan. The intent of these plans is to prepare in case of an emergency, to make sure your family knows how to stay safe and find each other in an emergency. Challenge your students to develop their own family disaster plan in case of extreme weather or another disaster at home. Your students can follow these step-by-step instructions (disastercenter.com/guide/family.htm) to develop emergency plans and get reading comprehension practice at the same time, but your students will have to do a little research, too, to complete their family disaster plans. Either in groups or individually, students should make a list of the possible emergency situations that could happen in your community. After making the list, have pairs of students research how to handle each of these specific emergencies before writing their plans. Finally, have each student write out his family plan with the help of his parents and siblings. Not only will your class get language experience from the activity, they will be prepared in the rare case of a dangerous event!

2 A TWISTER IS COMING

Tornadoes have been the subject of many movies, but two stand out as most popular. The first is The Wizard of Oz in which a tornado whisks Dorothy to the fanciful world of Oz, house and all, up in a funnel of wind. The second movie, which is centered around tornadoes, is Twister. In this popular film, storm chasers run after dangerous storms for weather research purposes. These two movies can provide your students with an opportunity to practice their observational as well as analytical skills. Start this activity by explaining to your class the function of a Venn diagram. These two overlapping circles are used to organize information about two different but similar items. Show your class clips from each movie. If you do not have your own copies you can use Wizard of Oz Tornado Scene and Twister the First Tornado Scene both available on YouTube.com. After viewing the two scenes, have your students work in pairs to complete the diagram. In the overlapping section of the diagram, they should write words which describe how the tornadoes were portrayed in both of the films. In the remaining space, they should give details about the tornadoes specific to each movie. They can then use that information to write a reaction to the movies.

If you have time to watch the entirety of Twister, you can introduce your students to the idea of storm chasers. These scientists research extreme weather through means similar to those portrayed in the movie. You can give your students additional exposure to storm chasers through episodes of Storm Chasers available on Discovery.com. Students can use the information they receive from these programs to decide which movie more accurately portrayed the tornadoes. You may also want to give your students some information on "tornado alley." This area of the United States is most known for its frequency of tornadoes though the name is not official.

3 I FEEL THE EARTH SHAKE

Depending on the area in which you live, earthquakes may be a realistic danger for your students. This instructional video on earthquake safety (youtube.com/watch?v=1KlLSB4uhzk) is not only informative, it makes a good cloze listening activity for your ESL students. Give your students a copy of the following steps to take in case of an earthquake (with the bold words removed). Then play the video for them several times challenging them to fill in the blanks. Once your students have finished watching the video, have pairs compare their answers, and then give the correct answers to your class. You may choose to review unfamiliar vocabulary after you have given your students the correct answers.

Don't panic.
Get under a table or a desk.
Check for injuries.
Call emergency services to get help for injured persons.
Leave the room.
Exit the building.
Once outside, move to the evacuation assembly point.
Wait for further instructions.

4 THE RING OF FIRE

Are you and your students familiar with the expression "The Ring of Fire"? The Pacific Ring of Fire is an expression used to describe the area of the Pacific which is home to over 75% of the world's volcanoes! Though your students will probably never experience a volcanic eruption first hand, they can get some map reading skills by plotting the earth's active volcanoes on a world map. Using this list (geo.mtu.edu/volcanoes/world.html), have your students work in small groups or as a class to mark the location of these volcanoes. Which area of the world has the most volcanoes? Now give your students some basic information on the Pacific Ring of Fire. You can use this short article from Wikipedia (wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_Ring_of_Fire), before asking each person to explain in his own words, either written or as an oral interview, why he thinks the Ring of

Fire is a good or bad name for that area of the world.

5 HELP TO THE RESCUE

When communities suffer natural disasters, emergency relief agencies often step in to help. Some of the most popular relief agencies are the International Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, and Mercy Corps. Set groups of students to some online research to investigate the history of one of these agencies. They should be able to find source material quickly and easily. You may want to give your students a list of questions to get them started on their research. What services does the agency provide today? How does the agency determine which communities need assistance? When and why was the organization founded? Where do they get the money to support their services? Once your students have completed their research, make time for group presentations. Ask your students to collectively present the information they found, and make sure each student plays some part in the presentation. Not only will these presentations give your students speaking practice, they will also provide information about emergency services that could be useful at some point in the future.

IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY, IT IS ALWAYS BEST TO BE PREPARED, AND HAVING THE CORRECT INFORMATION IS A LARGE PART OF THAT BATTLE. MAKE SURE YOUR STUDENTS ARE AS ARMED AS THEY CAN BE FOR WHATEVER MAY COME!

They will improve their language skills in the process and gain some of the knowledge necessary to keep safe in an emergency.

How to Teach Weather

TEACHING WEATHER VOCABULARY EARLY ON IN THE COURSE IS A GOOD IDEA BECAUSE IT IS SOMETHING THAT STUDENTS CAN PRACTICE REGULARLY.

During your daily warm ups, if you decide to ask students questions, you can always ask about the weather and the vocabulary comes in handy during other activities too.

TEACHING WEATHER: STEP BY STEP GUIDE

1 WARM UP

Start off with your usual warm up and try to get students talking about seasons. Ask students what season they like best and see if anyone can explain why. This could elicit much of the vocabulary you plan to practice during the lesson so if certain vocabulary words come up, write them on the board. You can also talk about different activities students like to do during particular seasons and why some of them, such as snowboarding, cannot be done year round.

2 INTRODUCE

Through your warm up activity, you may have been able to build a vocabulary list on the board which is good because it shows that some students are familiar with these words and will make the introduction easier. If you are unable to elicit any weather related vocabulary, you will have to spend more time on your introduction and practice sections. Once you have completed the warm up, introduce your weather related vocabulary using weather flashcards. Some basic words you may want to include are sunny, cloudy, raining, snowing, hot and cold. Drill these new words using choral repetition first and then call on students to say them individually.

3 PRACTICE

After students have had some practice pronouncing these words, conduct a short activity to give them some further practice. You can do this by giving each student a small version of one of the flashcards. Have students arrange their chairs in a circle and remove one chair. The student in the middle can read his card and the students with the same card should remain seated while the other students have to change seats. This way, the word being said should always change and no one will have to sit still for long. When making these mini weather flashcards, it is important to use the same images that you used on the large flashcards if possible because consistency will help your students memorize the words and associate them with particular images.

4 INTRODUCE

Next ask students "How's the weather?" which automatically introduces the structure for the question of this lesson. When students reply "Sunny!" you can say "That's right! It's sunny." thus modeling the sentence structure you want them to practice. Use the flashcards to have students practice the model sentence using different words. If you want students to say "It's snowing." the snow flashcard should say snowing on it. You want to give students as much practice as possible with the form of the word they will need for the lesson.

5 PRACTICE

Students can use the same cards they had earlier or maybe switch with a partner for the next activity. Ask students to walk around the room asking "How's the weather?" and answering the question based on the card they have. Students should try to find someone to say each weather word listed on the worksheet and get signatures from the students they talk to.

6 PRODUCE

Now you are going to want students to produce some material on their own. You can have short writing activities where students talk about their favorite and least favorite weather. You can also ask them to say what they like to do when it's sunny, cloudy, or raining for instance. This will give students a bit of writing practice and at the end of the activity you can have volunteers read their responses to the class for more speaking practice.

7 REVIEW

For a review activity, try to include another recent topic, for instance, days of the week into your weather lesson plan. You can do this easily by creating an activity about weather forecasts. Students can work in pairs where each student has a weekly weather forecast with some blanks. Students have to talk to their partners about the weather on different days to successfully complete their weekly forecast. Students should take turns asking and answering questions. The structure of the question for this activity would be "How's the weather on Monday?" while the sentence structure could be "It's sunny." or "On Monday, it's sunny."

WEATHER IS DEFINITELY A TOPIC THAT ESL STUDENTS CAN TALK ABOUT OFTEN BECAUSE IT AFFECTS THEM ON A DAILY BASIS.

Give them plenty of opportunities to use weather related vocabulary throughout the course to keep these words fresh in their minds.

Ice, Ice, Baby

WHETHER IT IS WINTER AND THE SNOW AND ICE ARE ALL AROUND OR WHETHER IT IS SUMMER AND YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS WOULD RELISH SOME WAY TO COOL OFF A BIT, ICE IS ALWAYS CLOSE AT HAND. The thematic unit that follows explores ice in four significantly different ways.

You can do all of these activities or just choose those that tie in to what your class is already studying. Either way, your students will be shivering with excitement.

HOW TO TEACH A THEMATIC ESL UNIT ABOUT ICE

1 BREAK THE ICE

An icebreaker is a fun activity to do with your class. Here is one you can do with either a new class or a group that has been together for a longer time, the more students in the group the better. Make a list of twenty to thirty questions for your students to ask one another. They can be Present Perfect questions like *"Have you ever ridden a motorcycle? Have you ever been to Europe? Have you ever taken a spin class?"* The more your class knows each other, the more specific or unusual your questions should be. Then give each student a blank bingo board (five by five empty grid) with boxes big enough to write the questions in. Ask each student to write some of the questions in random order on the bingo board. They can also make up their own questions and use them in the blanks. Then tell your students to exchange their boards with someone else in the classroom. All at one time, send your students to mingle among the class to ask one another the questions. When someone answers in the affirmative, the student can mark that square. If a student marks five squares in a row, up and down, across or diagonally, he should shout, "Bingo!" and he wins that round. Play as many rounds as you like changing the cards that students use and/or changing the questions in the squares. Your class will learn many fun and interesting facts about each other while practicing their speaking skills.

2 ICE TO EAT

Making ice cream is an easy cooking project for your class to do, and it does not require any special equipment. In a small, heavyweight zip lock bag, add ½ c. milk, ½ teaspoon vanilla and 1 ½ Tablespoons sugar (or to taste). Seal the bag tightly. In a large, heavyweight zip lock bag, put 6 Tablespoons of salt with a lot of ice. Place the smaller bag (the one with the milk mixture) into the larger bag (the one with the ice and salt) and shake it about ten minutes until the ice cream thickens. It is a very simple process that almost anyone can do.

One way to integrate this activity into an ESL class would be to orally give the directions for making the ice cream to your students and have each of them follow those directions to make his own bag of ice cream. If your goal is a speaking activity rather than listening, make one batch of ice cream for the class. Ask a discussion question, and whoever is shaking the ice cream is the only one allowed to speak. After she has answered, have her pass the bag to another student who will then answer the question. Either way, once your ice cream has thickened enjoy it together as a class.

Just one note of warning: make sure no one in your class has a milk allergy before attempting this activity.

3 ICE EXPERIMENTATION

If you are responsible for adding science activities into your curriculum, this activity will do just that. Stage an experiment to examine the speed at which ice will melt. You will need five ice cubes, some plastic bags, salt and other granulated materials. In this activity, your students will make predictions about which ice cube with melt the fastest. The control cube will be unaltered and placed on a desk to melt. Each of the other four cubes will have a granulated substance applied to it. Students should predict which ice cubes will melt the fastest. You can have your students discuss their predictions in pairs or have them write the predictions down. In each of four zip lock bags, place one of the granulated materials. Use salt in one, soil in another, sand in a third, and a fourth material in the last such as breadcrumbs, ground spices or baby powder. After sprinkling cubes two through five with the granulated substances, place each of the five ice cubes on a desk and have your students observe which ice cubes melt the fastest and which take the longest. Your students should take notes and measure the amount of time each cube takes to melt. Then have your students compare the actual results to their predictions. Were they right? What was the order that the cubes melted in? If you like, **have them write a report that discusses their predictions and the actual results of the experiment**.

4 ICE SPORTS

Ice hockey is a sport popular in different areas of the world, but that is not the only icy sport colder weather has to offer. Give your students some independent research time to learn more about one of the following icy sports: *ice hockey, ice surfing, ice-skating, curling, ice climbing, broomball,* and *bobsledding*. Then have them present the information they have learned to the class. Each person should take notes on their classmates' presentations in preparation for **an ice sport quiz**. After the presentations, you should compile a list of ten to fifteen true/false questions about ice sports and see how well your students listened and how much they understood.

If it is winter and the ground is snow covered, you can take your students outside for an Easter egg style hunt. For an easier game, the day before you play, freeze water tinted with food coloring in ice trays. Then the day of the hunt, hide the ice cubes in the snow for your students to find. To make a more challenging game, hide raw white eggs among the snow and see how many your students can find. Be careful to get them all before you go inside or you'll have a mess once the snow melts.

ICE CAN BE FUN FOR YOUR CLASS ANY TIME OF THE YEAR.

New Ideas for Teaching Weather

ON OCTOBER 1, 1890, THE U.S. CONGRESS CREATED THE WEATHER BUREAU. IN 1970, ITS NAME WAS CHANGED TO THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE.

In honor of the organization that provides so much essential information to the U.S. on a daily basis, take some time out of your normal ESL activities to do some new activities with the weather.

HOW TO TEACH THE WEATHER: NEW IDEAS FOR YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 YOUR WEATHER UP NEXT

Studying the weather offers a unique opportunity for reading practice. By giving your students a copy of a weather map available in a national newspaper (like USA today), they can get an idea of the weather in a large area. Before they can understand the map, though, you will need to review the different symbols that are used there. Depending on the age of your students, they may or may not be familiar with the terms warm front, cold front, high-pressure area and low-pressure area and the symbols which represent them on the map. Give your students some background on the words and the symbols, and then challenge their reading skills by asking information that they can only find on the weather map. You can also find national weather maps on weather.com and other web sites. You may want to have your students compare the data presented on maps from different sources and see if the data match. If not, why do they think there are discrepancies?

Your students can get some listening practice with the local weather as well. Either during the news broadcast or later on the channel's web site, play the weather segment for your students, and then ask some comprehension questions to see how much they understood. For lower level students you may want to keep your comprehension questions simple. What weather is expected? How should you dress for this weather? For more advanced students, ask more advanced questions. What are the expected high and low temperatures? What time is sunset? You should vary your questions based on the information that the newscaster presents.

2 SEVERE WEATHER

You hope that it is not too often, but there are times when severe weather threatens your location. Make sure your students understand what "severe weather" means, and then as a class brainstorm a list of the possible conditions that may be considered severe weather. Your list should include hurricanes, tropical storms, tornadoes, blizzards, hail, tsunami, freezing rain and strong winds. To go with your list of severe weather terms, have your students list what the effects of this type of weather can have on the area it hits. They should include dangers to people in the area as well as potential damages to surroundings.

Using the list of severe weather conditions you have compiled, have each student select one type of severe weather to research. She should gather information to include in a brochure on how to behave in that particular type of severe weather. Your students should write out the warning signs of their particular weather, what to do if that weather hits, how to prepare in advance for that weather, and which areas of the country are most likely to be affected and when. Then she should compile that information into a brochure. Copy each brochure and then send it home with each of your students. Encourage your students to talk with their families about severe weather conditions that they might experience and to make a family plan in case of an emergency. FEMA has a useful template available on their website that you may want to send home with each of your students to use with their families.

3 MORE THAN JUST LOCAL

Tracking weather does not have to be a local only activity. In today's world, communication is easier than ever, and the globe has never seemed smaller. Have your class take a global approach to the weather by tracking the conditions in another world city. You can choose your cities in a couple of different ways. One way is to have each student select a city from his native country and then do a daily check of the weather in that location. Another way to choose cities for your students would be to compile a large list of cities that they think might have interesting weather. If you put each city on a small slip of paper, have your students draw a city from the slips of paper, and that city will be his assignment for the remainder of the month.

Every day, for one month, each student should record the weather conditions of his city. You should require measurements on temperature, rainfall, wind and sky conditions. If you like, you can challenge your students for additional information like allergen levels, dew points or wind chill. When the month is up, have your students compile their information in some type of graph. Then, give each student an opportunity to share some of his information with the class.

While each student is tracking the weather for his individual city, your class should track the weather for the city in which you live. Again, at the end of the month tabulate the data. You can then have your students compare and contrast the weather in your city with the city they tracked throughout the month. Is there a city they would prefer to their own because of the weather?

STUDYING THE WEATHER CAN BE MORE THAN JUST SUNNY DAYS AND RAINY SONGS.

Take your weather studies to the next level this month in honor of the National Weather Service's birthday on October 1st with these not so typical weather activities!

When It Rains, It Pours: A Cross-Curricular Unit on the Weather

WEATHER IS ONE OF THE STANDARD THEMATIC UNITS THAT ESL CLASSES INCLUDE. IT MAY APPEAR MOST OFTEN IN VOCABULARY CLASS, BUT WEATHER ACTIVITIES FOR ESL STUDENTS CAN SPAN THE ENTIRE CURRICULUM.

The next time the weather comes up in your ESL classroom, try some of these activities that have to do with sun and sky. You can use these activities as they stand, or use them for inspiration for your own cross-curricular weather assignments.

HOW TO TEACH A CROSS-CURRICULAR UNIT ON WEATHER

1 LISTENING

Weather reports are a regular feature on the daily news, and those reports are a perfect tie in to the listening facet of your ESL unit on the weather. Whether you show your class a weather report from the area in which you are located or another area of the country or world, choose a weather segment (hundreds are available online) and play it for your class. If possible, use that weather segment to do a cloze exercise with your students. To prepare the activity, start with a transcript of the report, and replace every fifth word with a blank space. When your class views the weather report, give the modified transcript to your students, and challenge them to fill in the blanks as they listen to the report. The cloze activity will test your students' general grammatical knowledge as well as listening skills. Another strategy, which is more weather intensive, is to replace all the specific weather vocabulary words with a blank and challenge your students to complete the transcript as they listen. Before you do this with your class, though, be sure you have reviewed the weather vocabulary with them.

2 SPEAKING

Generally speaking, most areas of the United States experience four separate seasons each year. In January, we start with winter, which often includes snow and cold temperatures. When spring rolls around in March, flowers start to bloom, many areas have an increase in rain, and the temperatures begin to rise. Summer brings even hotter temperatures and a bounty of plant growth. Autumn arrives in September with changing leaves, cooler temperatures and windy weather. Depending on the home country of your students, your class may experience the four seasons for the first time when studying English in the U.S., or you may teach overseas where your students have only two seasons. In either case, the seasons are a great way to incorporate speaking and conversation into your ESL unit on the weather.

Divide your class into groups of three or four and ask them to discuss the weather that a person often experiences during each of the four seasons. If your students have never experienced snow or another element of seasonal weather, ask them to imagine what that season's weather might be like. If your students are old enough to understand the concept, you can also ask each group to explain why the northern hemisphere experiences weather opposite of the southern hemisphere and why weather near the equator remains relatively consistent all year long.

3 READING

Having sufficient English reading skills means more than reading pros texts. Your students should also be able to read charts, tables and maps. Weather maps can provide a great opportunity for your students to read non-text documents. Start by collecting several weather maps that span several days. You may want to save them from the newspaper or print maps that are available online. Give each pair of students a different weather map, and then ask them to plan the activities they will do as the weather allows. If possible, give them additional weather maps from locations around the world and challenge them to make plans for those areas as well.

4 WRITING

Start your writing lesson by showing your class yesterday's weather map of the country. Ask your students to point out differences in the weather in different areas of the country. Then, using that map, challenge students to write two paragraphs explaining how the weather affected the people living in two different regions. Students should start with the weather where they live, explaining how it affected them and their lives – what they wore, what they did during the day and how they may have spent their evenings. Then, have your students write a second paragraph about a person in another area of the country where the weather was different. In the paragraph, each student should answer the same questions and touch on the same ideas as when they described their own experiences. This is also a good time to review the concept of parallel structure between paragraphs with your class.

5 GRAMMAR

You can use weather as a tie in to the conditional tense during grammar class. First, review the conditional tense as it relates to the present. In the if clause, students should use "were" to describe the weather that differs from the weather at the moment. For example, if it is raining, students would start with "If it were sunny..." If it is sunny outside, encourage students to start their statements with "If it were raining..." Then challenge students to complete the sentence with an activity they would do under the fictional weather conditions using "would" as the helping verb. For example, "I would go to the beach." Or "I would carry an umbrella." In pairs, have your students go though every possible weather condition they can think of and create a conditional statement for each. Suggest that they use their weather vocabulary list to come up with as many possibilities as they can. You may also want each person to write out several statements after they have practiced with their partner.

WEATHER IS SUCH A VERSATILE TOPIC FOR ESL STUDENTS IT SHOULD NEVER BE LIMITED SIMPLY TO VOCABULARY CLASS. Use these activities with your class or use them as inspiration for your own class activities and your students will have a firm understanding of weather vocabulary while furthering a well-rounded ESL class.

Weather Caster for a Day

NO MATTER WHERE YOU LIVE, NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE FROM, EVERYONE KNOWS ABOUT WEATHER. MOST PEOPLE EVEN HAVE FAVORITE TYPES OF WEATHER.

Some people like the hot sunny days of summer. Others like the cool crisp air of autumn. Still others love the adventurous possibilities that come with the year's first snowfall. Whatever type of weather your students are fond of, they will enjoy acting as weather forecaster for a day in this fun filled weather themed unit.

HOW TO USE WEATHER IN YOUR CLASSROOM

1 THINK ABOUT IT

Get your students thinking about the weather in different ways. You may want to share some books that talk about the weather such as *What Will the Weather Be?* by Lynda Dewitt or *How's the Weather?* by Melvin Berger. Your students may have other books they like that mention or discuss weather conditions. Encourage them to share these books and why they like them. As you finish reading about weather, drop a little tune on the same subject. Kids like to sing, and there are songs about the weather that they probably already know. They might enjoy singing *"It's Raining, It's Pouring"* or *"You Are My Sunshine."* You can even make up simple songs about the weather by taking a common melody (like *"Mary Had a Little Lamb"* or *"Row, Row, Row Your Boat"*) and writing a simple set of new lyrics. Your students may even take to the challenge if you explain the concept to them.

After reading and singing, **show your class some clips of weather forecasters giving their daily message**. You will want to have a variety of newscasters, and make sure you have both males and females for your class to see. Discuss with your students the similarities and differences between the people. Ask your students what they liked about the newscast and what they would change. Then take some time to talk about the different symbols they used in the programs to represent different types of weather. As a class, **brainstorm different types of weather** and decide on graphics to use for each type. You do not have to use the same ones that they use in the videos. In fact, keeping a simple representation for different types of weather will be better for your students. If you have calendar time every day, your existing set may already have a set of symbols for different types of weather that you can use with your class.

2 TALK ABOUT IT

Now that your students are familiar with weather forecasters, explain to them that **each of them will make a weather report** similar to the ones you watched as a class. Have each person first decide what type of weather he or she would like to present.

Then group your students by those types of weather: put all the *sunny weather* students together, all the *rainy weather* students together, etc. In these groups, ask your students to think about different words they know that talk about this kind of weather. Give each group some weather books and newspapers to use as references for additional words. Have each group make a list, and you may want to offer some additional words as well.

This is also a good time to **introduce your class to the thesaurus**. By looking up one weather word, the group will find similar words that they may also be able to use in each of their forecasts. Then give each student an opportunity to share with his group some things that he might say in his presentation. The other students in the group should give him some feedback and then take their turns.

In preparation for the presentation, each student should draw a picture of the weather he or she will present. If you have butcher paper or any other large sheets available, have your students draw on these and then use them as a backdrop for the presentation. Allow each student to create his own backdrop for the presentation, and encourage him to use some of the symbols that your class decided upon for weather symbols.

3 WRITE ABOUT IT

Before giving the presentation, each student should write out some of the things she would like to say. She can use the feedback she got from her group earlier to write out the best weather forecast that she can. If possible, make others resources available to your students such as maps and computers so they can research the weather accurately. Also, point out that weather forecasters are generally upbeat and pleasant, even when the weather is less than ideal. **Have your students write out their weather reports in this friendly and informative style** and then get ready for a presentation in front of the class.

4 PRESENT IT

The time has finally come for your students to **give their weather presentations**. Give each student some time in front of the class with his backdrop to talk about the weather. Record each presentation to use later. After everyone in class has presented, ask the class *which report was most informative. Which was most entertaining? Which was most original?*

Next time you have an opportunity to talk with your students one on one, show each person his broadcast and discuss areas he needs to improve and what strengths he showed in the presentation.

GIVING EACH OF YOUR STUDENTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE HIS OR HER OWN WEATHER FORECAST WILL BE A GREAT CHANCE TO WORK ON PUBLIC SPEAKING WHILE ALSO LEARNING ABOUT THE WEATHER. YOU CAN FOLLOW THIS ACTIVITY WITH A SCIENCE UNIT ON THE WEATHER AS WELL.

Weather is a topic that everyone can relate to which makes it a good subject for use as a class presentation. Your students will have fun with their presentations while having many opportunities to practice their speaking skills.

Cash and Carry: Money Fun for the ESL Classroom

SOME PEOPLE HAVE GOT TO HAVE IT. SOME PEOPLE REALLY NEED IT. SOME PEOPLE LOVE IT, AND SOME PEOPLE HATE IT.

It is lost and gained and wasted and earned every single day. It is money, and it is a part of everyone's life in some way or another. Not only that, money is a topic worth discussing in the ESL classroom. The following activities can help your students learn more about the U.S. monetary system as well as what people do with money in other countries. Why not give them a try? They're free!

HOW TO HAVE FUN WITH MONEY IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 FOREIGN DOLLARS

Part of the challenge for many students who travel overseas is getting used to the monetary system in their host country. Not only do internationals have to think about the exchange rates when they make purchases, they often have to work with a new system of money with different units and different breakdowns of those units. How familiar are your students with U.S. money? They may not know as much as they think. You can give them these simple questions to discuss in groups as you start your money activities.

1. Does the U.S. feature any states on its money? (Yes, each state has a quarter designed to feature it.)
2. Is there anyone portrayed on a bill that is not a president? (Yes, Alexander Hamilton is pictured on the $10 bill and, Benjamin Franklin is pictured on the $100 bill, Salmon Chase is pictures on the $10,000 bill.)
3. What is the next denomination after the $1 bill? (The $2 bill)
4. What U.S. coins can you name and what amounts are they worth? ($.01 penny, $.05 nickel, $.10 dime, $.25 quarter, $.50 half dollar, $1 dollar coin)
5. What is the largest denomination in U.S. bills? ($100,000 though they were only minted for less than one month between 1934 and 1935 and were not circulated among the public.)

2 TWO DOLLARS, PLEASE

Have your students ever seen a two-dollar bill? Many of them may not have since there are so fewer in circulation than other denominations of U.S. bills. Ask for a two-dollar bill the next time you are in your local bank, and bring it in for your students to examine. This may be the first time they have ever seen one. Ask your students to do a little research about the two-dollar bill (or another denomination of their choice) and create a brochure which gives information about the paper money. Each person or group should research the history of their bill and share it in the brochure. They should also include a picture of both sides of the bill and information on when and why it was created. If you like, have each person make an additional brochure featuring a piece of money used in his home country. You can then make the brochures available to your students during independent reading periods so they can learn a little more about their classmates' native countries.

3 COUNTERFEIT BILLS

Ask your class if anyone can explain the meaning of the word 'counterfeit'. There are several lengths to which the U.S. government goes to prevent counterfeiting. If you have computers available in your classroom, send your students to the Internet to read about how to detect counterfeit bills. This survival guide mentions nine different things to look for when testing a bill's authenticity. Have your students work in pairs to read the article and then list the nine tips for detecting counterfeit bills. You may want to encourage your students to look at an authentic piece of money as they read. To follow up the activity, ask your students to share either with a partner or in a written response what they would do if they found they had received a counterfeit $100 bill. Ask volunteers to share their response with the class.

4 WHAT A BARGAIN

In many cultures, it is appropriate to bargain with a merchant before purchasing his products. If any of your students come from cultures where bargaining is typical, ask them to share some tips on how to bargain with a merchant (certain phrases he should use, maintaining a friendly attitude, etc.) As a large scale classroom role-play, you can create your own market in which your students will bargain for the things that they need. Have each person think of something he uses on a daily basis that he would like to sell in the classroom market. Then give everyone in class $20 in play money to use in the market. Have half of the class be shoppers and the other half merchants and role-play, encouraging each person in class to get all the items he or she would need for a day. Then change rolls and let the shoppers be the sellers and vice versa. Finish by giving everyone an opportunity to shop again, at the same time, and see how many people choose to shop and how many choose to sell. When the activity is over, see who has all the items they would need to go through a day and see who has the most money. Which is more important to each person?

MOST PEOPLE USE MONEY ON A DAILY BASIS, AND TRAVELERS TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES FACE A LEARNING CURVE WHEN IT COMES TO USING AN UNFAMILIAR MONETARY SYSTEM.

With these activities, you can not only help your students learn more about U.S. money, you can also help them become more knowledgeable consumers as they trade and sell in a class market!

5 Out of This World Ideas for Teaching About Space

Are you looking for some stellar activities you can do with your ESL class while you teach about space?

HOW TO TEACH ABOUT SPACE

1 IMAGINE THAT

What is it like in outer space? Your students will have to use their imaginations to answer that question, even if they have already learned extensive content about the universe beyond. Unless they have actually taken a rocket into orbit, your students will have to speculate what those outer regions are like. Divide your students into groups of four to talk about what they imagine outer space to be like. During their discussions, your students should try to use sensory descriptions when sharing their ideas. You can ask them questions like the following. What does it feel like in space? What can you see? Do you hear anything? What? Can you smell anything? What does it smell like? Is there any taste in the air? What will you eat while you are there? Giving students some informational books about space may help them put detail in their descriptions. Encourage your students to be creative and use their imaginations in this activity. They may say they can smell green cheese when they are near the moon. They may see bits of ash floating by that have come loose from the sun. Because your students are using their imaginations, there are no wrong answers here as long as they can give good explanations for their ideas.

2 WISH YOU WERE HERE

Do you ever send post cards when you are on vacation? Have your students ever sent a postcard to someone from the U.S.? Have available for your class a collection of postcards from as many places as you can find. They are even more useful if they have a message written on them. Then give your class some time to look at the post cards and read the messages that the senders have written. Ask your students what they would want to say to their friends and family if they were to send a post card from outer space. Would they use the usual, "Having a great time. Wish you were here," or something more original? Tell your students that they are going to write post-cards to three people from outer space. Obviously they will not actually go into space, but they must imagine themselves there when they write the post cards. Give your students some pieces of card stock that are four inches by six inches, the size of a typical post card. Then have each student write three post cards to people, imagining that they are writing from space. Your students should also either draw or paste a picture onto the front of the card just as an actual post card would have. You can have your students drop their post cards into a classroom mailbox. Then post the cards on a bulletin board so the rest of the class can enjoy what their peers have written. You should post some cards with the message facing out and others with the pictures facing out. Once you take down your class' post cards, encourage them to send the post cards to the people they wrote to, but make sure they explain the purpose of the class project when they do.

3 SOMEDAY, SOMEDAY SOON

For many years, people have dreamt of the day that human beings would live in outer space. Whether it was the moon, another planet or a man made space station, people have imagined themselves living in outer space for generations. There are plenty of movies and television shows to prove it, too. Encourage your students to think about the future. Can they picture themselves living somewhere other than planet earth? Pair your students with one another and give them time to discuss what it might be like to live some place other than earth. Each pair should work together to think about, discuss and describe what it would be like to live in this other place. The pair should draw a picture of their farfetched home and then present to the class the details about this place. Give each pair a chance to work on their public speaking, and then ask your class to vote on which scenario they think is most realistic or most likely to come true.

4 IS THERE LIFE ON OTHER PLANETS

Some people have very strong opinions as to whether or not life exists on other planets. Do your students have opinions on the subject? If there is anyone who has a relatively strong belief on each side, divide your class for a debate. Give students some time to research and present a supported argument either for or against the proposition that there is life on other planets. If you have a class of at least twelve, put four students on each side of the debate. For the remaining four, have them act as judges in the debate. When the rest of the class has presented its arguments and had an opportunity for rebuttal, it is time for the final four to determine which side has presented a better argument. If you desire, have the judges work together to write an opinion, similar to those a judge would write, stating which side of the debate was more convincing and had stronger support.

5 TAKE A SURVEY

Have you ever challenged your class to write a survey and then go out and talk to participants? If not, the topic of life on other planets is a great topic to begin with. Divide your class into groups of four or five and have each group write a survey on life on other planets. Then have your groups go out into the public and ask the people they meet for a moment to answer a few questions. This activity will give your students practice speaking with native speakers as well as give them a cross section of opinions. After your students have gotten enough participants in their surveys, have them come back to class and discuss the results. Were they surprised at what people believe? Did most people share their own opinions? What can they learn from the opinions of others?

WHEN TEACHING ABOUT SPACE, THERE IS NO LIMIT TO WHAT THE IMAGINATION CAN DO. THESE OUTER SPACE ACTIVITIES WILL GET YOUR STUDENTS PRACTICING THEIR LISTENING, SPEAKING AND WRITING SKILLS ALL WITH THEIR IMAGINATIONS ENGAGED. You can wrap up your space unit with one of many movies that portray life in outer space as you and your students come back down to earth for the next class unit. Have a great trip, and don't forget to write!

How To Teach a Lesson with the Guinness Book of World Records

PEOPLE ARE FASCINATED BY EXTREMES, AND THERE IS NO BETTER PLACE TO SEE THE EXTREME BEHAVIOR OF HUMANS THAN THE GUINNESS BOOK OF WORLD RECORDS.

Within its pages are short, easily understood articles that describe the outrageous things that people do. Take your class on an in house adventure that include a range of language games with these fun-filled activities based on this fascinating book, and expect your students to be amazed.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 READING

Make a few copies of the Guinness Book of World Records available to your students to peruse. Ask them what their impressions are, and then present them with the following questions as well as any others that come to your mind.

How is the book organized?
What types of things do people hold records for?
Which articles do you see that seem outrageous?
Which ones impress you most?
Are there any records that you might want to attempt to break?
Is it positive or negative to compile these records in one place? Why do you feel that way?
What changes would you make to the book?

Give your students some time to discuss these questions in groups, and then open the discussion to the class as a whole. Ask your students if there are similar publications in their native countries and what they know about them.

2 GRAMMAR

Talking about world records is an opportune time to review comparative and superlative adjectives. Comparative adjectives are those that compare two or more items, stating that one is superior or inferior to the other(s) mentioned. Generally, these adjectives are formed by adding the suffix –er to the end of the adjective. He is bigger than his brother. She is happier today than she was yesterday. However, when the adjective is three or more syllables, instead of using the suffix –er, your students should use the word "more" with the base form of the adjective. That woman is more beautiful than a movie star. Albert Einstein was more intelligent than John Wayne.

Review this structure with your students and then brainstorm a list of about twenty adjectives. Then give your students five to ten minutes to write comparative statements about themselves and their classmates. Follow with an opportunity for them to share their creative comparisons with the class.

Superlative adjectives follow a pattern similar to comparative adjectives. Rather than –er as a suffix, superlative adjectives take the suffix –est. Instead of using the word "more," superlative adjectives use "most." As you are reviewing these forms, make sure your students are clear that while a comparative adjective compares two or more items, a superlative adjective is used to describe the one object that surpasses all others. For example, rather than saying Jack is smarter than Jill (comparing the two children) a superlative adjective would be used to say that Jack is the smartest boy in the world. In this case, there are no others in the world who rate above Jack in intelligence. Give your students a chance to practice using superlative adjectives by making superlative statements about the students in your class using the list of adjectives you already generated. Again, give them a chance to share with the class.

3 SPEAKING

After your students have had some time to become familiar with the book, ask them why they think these people were able to set these records. Was it because of a special skill? Was it luck? Were any of the records simple trickery? On the board, write the words talent, skill, trick and luck. Review the meaning of these words if necessary, then have your students discuss in small groups which of these four qualities is most important. Make sure your students are able to give support for their opinions. Then have each group present to the class what they agreed was most important or where their opinions differed. After the discussion, ask each of your students to share with the class what they would do to set a record for the Guinness Book of World Records. Make sure each student explains whether this achievement would be because of talent, skill, trickery or luck.

4 WRITING

As a final activity with the book, have your students each choose one person who holds a record in the book. Tell your students to imagine that they could have a conversation with this person, and explain that an interview is a conversation where one person asks questions and the other person answers them. Many people give interviews including movie stars, politicians and sports figures. Ask your students to write a ten-question interview that they would like to give to the record holder. They can ask questions like, "Why did you want to break this record? What do people think about you because of it? Has your life changed at all since you made it into the book?" If you have advanced students, you may want to challenge their listening as well as interview skills by playing a segment from Katie Couric on how to conduct a good interview, available on YouTube. Check their comprehension skills by reviewing the points that Couric says make a good interviewer. If you like, you can have your students partner and role-play the interview that they have written in front of the class – one student asking the questions and another pretending to be the record holder and answering the questions.

WHETHER YOU HAVE A CLASS FULL OF FUTURE RECORD HOLDERS OR NOT, YOUR STUDENTS ARE SURE TO FIND THE INFORMATION PRESENTED IN THE GUINNESS BOOK OF WORLD RECORDS FASCINATING, ESPECIALLY IF THEY HAVE NEVER ACTUALLY LOOKED INSIDE ITS PAGES.

While your students are imagining their fantasy record placements, they will be practicing their language skills and becoming better students of English without even knowing it.

Award Worthy ESL Activities

What is it that makes someone or something award worthy? What criteria should individuals or committees use when doling out awards? Who should decide what awards should be given and who should receive them? What is an appropriate prize for an award winner? All these questions are ones which your students will ask and hopefully answer as they explore the idea of awards. In the process, they will have fun and acquire award-winning language skills in English!

TRY THESE AWARD WORTHY ESL ACTIVITIES

1 THE ACADEMY AWARDS

How much do your students already know about the academy awards? Start class with a discussion in which you encourage your students to share what they already know about these awards. Has anyone ever watched the awards before? Does anyone know what the categories are? Can anyone name a winner of an academy award? Once students have shared, take a few minutes to show a video clip from a previous award ceremony. Ask your students to pay particular attention to the speeches given by the winners of the awards. Though watching the video should increase your students' familiarity with the awards, you may want to direct your students to research more information either online or through library research. They will likely discover that these awards are given to professionals in the film industry. A person can win one of these awards in many categories. The categories cover many different areas of film production including directing, writing and acting. After your class has more knowledge of the awards, give your students a list of all the active categories in which awards are given, and ask each person to select a category in which he or she would like to receive an award.

Now that your students have a general understanding of the academy awards and each person has chosen his or her award category, ask your class to write their own acceptance speeches, modeled after the ones you saw earlier in the lesson. You can point out that many people use their acceptance speech to thank others for their support or to give credit to others who assisted the winner in his success. Others add personal comments, humor or other elements to the short speeches. The limit for each of these speeches during the ceremony is forty-five seconds. Challenge your students to write their own acceptance speech that fits within that forty-five second time limit. If your students are unsure what they would like to say, they can find inspiration from speeches that others have given. Then have your own award ceremony in class and have each person give his speech. If you like, you can design your own awards and give them to your students before each person gives his speech. Encourage your class to clap and cheer and generally have a good time. On an additional note, these speeches would also be a good opportunity to video tape your students so you can review their speaking in one on one conferences.

2 THE TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Talking about the teacher of the year award with your ESL class is a good way to bring an award into their lives in a real and tangible way. Though the criteria differ from state to state, students who nominate their teachers for teacher of the year often write letters of nomination to the award committees. Though you should not ask your students to write a letter nominating you for the award, you can use this idea to practice their formal letter writing skills. Ask each of your students to think of a previous teacher who had a great impact on him or her. Encourage your class to make some notes about what made that teacher special. Did he teach his subject in an interesting or unusual way? Did she make a great impact on the lives of her students and their families? What was it about that teacher that was most memorable? After the brainstorming session, have each person organize his thoughts into a formal letter of recommendation. You can use this opportunity to review with your students how to write a formal letter and what type of language is appropriate in formal writing. When the letters are completed, encourage each person to write a personal letter to their teacher explaining the class activity and attaching a copy to the personal letter. The teachers will be encouraged to hear how they have impacted the lives of their students and have made an impact!

3 EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

Not all awards have to be large scale. Many employers offer an employee of the month award on a steady basis. This award is a way to recognize and affirm regular people doing regular jobs. When awards are for the average person, though, the criteria for the winner will be very different from those that we have already discussed. Break your class into groups and introduce them to the concept of employee of the month (if they are not already familiar with it). Ask each group to imagine that it is the management of a particular business. Your students can decide for themselves what business they want to imagine themselves as. Then, keeping the fictional work environment in mind, ask each group to compile a list of criteria they might use to determine who the employee of the month is. They should keep in mind what skills and attitudes they are looking for in an employee and then weight those items in a checklist. Then have each group determine what an appropriate prize would be for the winner.

You can follow up this activity by discussing with your class what makes a model student in your ESL class. You can express your expectations and articulate the criteria you use as you evaluate them. If you like, start awarding a student of the month award based on the criteria you communicate to your class. In addition, you can maintain a bulletin board throughout the year displaying each student of the month until the final semester. You can also use the award as an opportunity for your students to give a short acceptance speech in front of the class.

EVERYONE LIKES TO BE RECOGNIZED FOR HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS. WHEN THAT HAPPENS, IT IS GOOD TO BE ABLE TO EXPRESS ONESELF IN AN ORGANIZED AND STRAIGHTFORWARD WAY. Though most of your students may not win national or international awards in their futures, though some might, they will benefit from talking about what makes someone award worthy. Besides, who knows? Someone in your class may need to give an acceptance speech in the future, and you might just get a mention!

Batter Up! Fun Ways to Bring Baseball into Your Classroom

SPRING IS IN THE AIR, AND BATTERS ARE AT THE PLATE. WHEN THE DAYS GET LONGER, THE SUN SHINES BRIGHTER AND THE THERMOMETER STARTS TO RISE, MANY OF OUR THOUGHTS GO TOWARD THE WORLDWIDE SPORTS SENSATION, BASEBALL.

Though considered the great American national past time, baseball is popular in many of your students' home countries as well. These baseball themed activities will be the perfect combination of language learning and springtime fun for you and your students.

HOW TO BRING BASEBALL INTO YOUR CLASSROOM

1 CASEY AT THE BAT

One of the most famous of all baseball poems is "Casey at the Bat" by Earnest Thayer. First published in 1888 in The San Francisco Examiner, the poem has become a part of the American pop culture. You may want to initially present the poem to your students with one of the videos on YouTube. Disney's 1946 version of the cartoon animation of the classic will give your students some context for the poem and, perhaps, elicit a few smiles! Follow that with a printed text of the poem. As you read through the poem with your class, point out any baseball lingo or idiomatic expressions and review their meanings. Make sure your students have an overall understanding of the situation and the actions of the characters before moving on to the extension activities.

2 WHO REALLY WINS AND LOSES

This classic baseball poem brings up an interesting question. Who is affected by the success or failure of a sports team? Most people would assume the players are those most affected, but the outcome of sports games can affect the spectators as well as the players as it did in Mudville. Challenge your students to think of a time when they were emotionally affected by sports, particularly as a spectator then put them in discussion groups to talk about it. How did they feel? Why? What made them feel connected to the team? Ask your students to examine the crowd's reaction in Thayer's poem and ask your students to note how the crowds were affected by the game they were watching.

Some sports spectators may become too involved when it comes to the players that they love. Show your students this article on a football fan who suffered a heart attack at a pivotal moment in his favorite team's game. How do your students feel about this dedicated sports fan? What would they ask him if they could talk to him in person? What advice would they give? Have your discussion groups come up with some advice to give this dedicated fan.

3 BEYOND THE DIAMOND

Many baseball terms have worked their way into American culture in non-sports related ways. Give your students some of these baseball idioms used in English and challenge them to guess their meanings. Then, see if anyone in your class can give an example of a baseball term or other sports term that is used in everyday language in their home countries. They may not be able to. You may want to have your students read this article from USA Today, which explores baseball jargon used in business context. Then as a class, brainstorm as many sports terms used in non-sports contexts as you can. Once the list is finished, have your students work in groups to write a skit that includes as many of these idioms as possible, and then have each group perform their skit for the class.

4 HEROES AMONG US

Many people, children in particular, look up to sports figures and consider them heroes. However, anyone who watches the news knows that these celebrities make as many bad decisions as any other person. Does a sports figure have a greater responsibility to act in a more honest and respectable way because children do look to him as a hero? If they are role models, do they have an obligation to the fans and kids to act like one? Ask your class these questions and let each person weigh in on the topic. You may want to bring up examples such as Pete Rose and Barry Bonds and let your students do some research into their specific missteps before making their final decisions. Then separate your class into two groups, each in support of one side of the issue, and ask each group to articulate the reasons which support their opinion. Finish by having each person write a reaction in which he or she explains why he takes the position that he does on the issue.

5 A GRAND SLAM

To celebrate the close of your baseball unit, take a movie day and watch A League of Their Own, the classic movie that portrays the woman's baseball league creation and close. Do your students think they made the right decision to dissolve the league? Should women be allowed to play professionally with men? You may want to have an informal conversation with your class.

Alternately, you may want to take your students to a live baseball game! Many minor league teams offer tickets at prices even teachers can afford, or make the game an optional social event for students in your program. They will have fun watching a live game and experiencing all the festivities that the stadium has to offer.

Of course, playing a game outside with your students is sure to score big with your class as well provided you have the weather and the facilities that make it possible.

Hold Linguistic Olympic Games: 10 ESL Activities for the Olympics

IS YOUR CLASS EXCITED ABOUT THE NEXT OLYMPIC GAMES? You can take advantage of that excitement by holding your own Olympics, a Linguistic Olympics that will test your students' language skills and allow them to have fun in the process. Here's how.

TRY THESE 10 ESL ACTIVITIES FOR THE OLYMPICS

1 MEDALS

Everyone who watches the Olympics wants to follow the winners from their country. Start your linguistic Olympics by setting up a scoreboard with a section for each country represented in your room or each student in your class. This is where you will keep track of how many medals each person wins. You can use a bulletin board, a large white board, or a large piece of paper. When each person or country wins a gold, silver or bronze medal, put one in the right spot on the scoreboard. Use photocopies or printouts of medals and staple or tape them to the scoreboard.

2 THE MARATHON

The key to success in a marathon is having the strength and capabilities to last for the long haul. Participants in a Spelling B need a similar long-range outlook. In honor of the marathon, host a Spelling B in your class, using vocabulary words you have studied throughout the year, and see who can last the longest. The three participants who last longest are your medal winners.

3 FENCING

Fencing is a delicate and careful sport that necessitates elegance. Likewise, diagramming sentences according to syntactic rules is a delicate and particular process. Give your students some experience with the linguistic challenge and help them understand the underlying rules of English grammar as they practice identifying noun phrases, verb phrases, prepositional phrases and sentences. Give a timed exercise for the official score and award medals accordingly.

4 SWIMMING

The key to success as a swimmer is being able to cut through the thick context of the water as you swim across the pool. Give your students their own cut to the quick exercise with a reading comprehension activity. Make it a race and see how quickly your students can cut through the entirety of a reading text to the essential information. Try hosting a newspaper scavenger hunt (have students scan the paper for answers to specific questions) and see who is most fleet of mind. The speediest players who also get the answers right will bring home the gold (or silver or bronze).

5 ARCHERY

Archery zeros in on one essential element. Athletes are trying to hit the specific mark. Give your students a cloze exercise where they need to find an exact word that completes a text both grammatically and contextually. To create a cloze activity, take any text and replace every fifth word with a blank. See how close your students can come to the original answer, but take any other answers that complete the text logically. Everyone with 100% earns a gold.

6 THE RELAY

As runners race in a relay, they depend on one another for the team's overall success. You can challenge teams of your students to relay on each other in a similar way with a spelling relay race. Using vocabulary words you have already studied in class, the longer the words the better, put students into teams of five or six, and line them up facing the board. To start the race, call out one of the vocabulary words. Each team should race to put the word on the board, but each player can only put up one letter. If someone made a mistake, the current player can erase any or all of the word, but they can only add one letter. For example, if you called the word home, the first student would run up and write h on the board. Then run back. The second student would then run up, write o, and run back. The teams continue one person and one letter at a time until one team spells the word correctly. Everyone on the winning team gets the gold.

7 SOCCER/FOOTBALL

Soccer players must work as a team, relying on their teammates' skills and abilities to score as many points possible each game. Challenge your students to make letters work together as a team with this simple word generation game. Put a long word on the board, one that has at least ten letters. Review the definition and then show your students how you can use the letters within that word to make other, smaller word. For example, from the word example your students would be able to make map, leap, ax, etc. Give your students one or two minutes to form as many words as they can from the letters that make up the word on the board. Whoever comes up with the highest number of words wins the gold medal.

8 SYNCHRONIZED SWIMMING

Can your students word together seamlessly, matching their meaning as synchronized swimmers match the movement of their bodies? Test them to find out. Assign your students to pairs, and give each pair a blindfold, which one player will wear during the activity. Line your pairs across a gym wall, the blindfolded person in front, the other behind, and put an object somewhere in the room. The person without the blindfold will have to shout directions to his partner as that person slowly races to the object. The first person to capture the goal object is the winner. Note, if you have a large class or a small room, consider playing in rounds and having winners advance to the finals.

9 WRESTLING

Your students will have to wrestle with their minds and vocabulary in this challenging game. Have your students write the letters a through z on a piece of paper. In this activity, you will write a category on the board and they will have a limited amount of time to think of one member of the category that begins with each letter of the alphabet. If you were to put sports up as the category, your students would be looking for answers like archery, basketball, canoeing, dodge ball, etc. The person with the most correct answers takes home the winning medal.

10 THE AWARDS CEREMONY

During the Olympic presentation of medals after each event, pride swells in the citizens of the winning nation as they hear the familiar melody of their national anthem. Your students may have similar feelings about their own national anthem, even if it does not come with a gold medal. As you and your class close your linguistic Olympic games, give each of your students a chance to share his or her national anthem with the class. You should let the class listen, and then ask each person to share what he knows about the anthem and how it came to be. If you want presentations that are more formal and contain more information, give your students some time to research their national anthems before the presentation.

IF YOU HAD A TORCH LIT IN YOUR CLASSROOM, IT WOULD BE TIME TO SNUFF IT OUT.

The Olympics are over, but that does not mean language learning stops. Continue to encourage your students toward fluency and competence in English, and everyone will be a winner.

It's All in How You Play the Game: Fun Activities With a Sports Theme

THOUGH NOT EVERY PERSON CAN BE CLASSIFIED AS A JOCK, SPORTS PLAY A PART IN THE LIFE OF EVERY STUDENT. If your school requires physical education classes, sports may be a part of your students' daily life. If your adult students are beyond the age of that requirement, sports still factor into adult lives through hobbies, spectator occasions, children's activities, or national pride at global competitions like the Olympics. No matter how sports fit into your students' lives, you can include sports in their ESL classes with some fun, themed lessons.

TRY THESE FUN ESL ACTIVITIES WITH A SPORTS THEME!

1 A SPORT WITH ANY OTHER NAME...

The word 'sports' is used to describe a seemingly limitless number of activities. How many sports can you and your students list? Brainstorm as a class to make as extensive a list as possible, and then ask your students how they would define the word sport. Are there certain activities that should be classified as sports that they would say should not be? Are there any activities not classified as sports that should be? Once your students have discussed this question on their own, have them read *Is Cheerleading Really a Sport* (cheerleading.about.com/od/skillsandabilities/a/031002a.htm) and offer their opinions in small group discussions. After the groups have had ample time, ask each group to write a position on the question of whether cheerleading is really a sport giving reasons to support their opinions.

2 SUPPORT YOUR TEAM

At some point, your students will probably end up showing support for a particular team. They may find themselves cheering for a high school team or a city's professional players or even national competitors in the Olympics. With your class, brainstorm some expressions they might use to show their teams their support. You should be looking for phrases such as "Go team!" and "Defense!" You may want to have your students do some listening research by watching some popular sports films that show fans cheering for their team. Once your list is adequately large, have your students make crowd signs to support their team. If you have a school team for a seasonal sport, make signs that your students can use at the next game. If not, have your students choose a professional team to support and then display the signs around the classroom.

3 WHAT CAN I SAY?

Even bystanders at sporting events feel some degree of victory or loss after the game is over. Sometimes the tension is high with a score in the final seconds of the game bringing home the win. Other times, it is clear from early in the game which team will be victorious. One example of such a game occurred in 1916 with the worst defeat in football history. Georgia Tech triumphed over Cumberland University with a score of 222 to 0. With such a clear victory/defeat, the crowd was surely filled with intense emotions. Divide your class into two "teams" to represent the students from each of these universities who attended that historical game. Assign each team a school, and then pair each student with someone supporting the opposing team. Have your students role play a conversation which may have happened after the game. Will your students offer condolences, congratulate the opposite team on a good game, or revel in their own victory? Ask volunteers to perform the role-play in front of the class. Then change up the conversation by pairing students with a person supporting their own team. What types of things would they say to a fellow winner or loser? After the role-plays, discuss with your students what it means to be a good sport and list some comments that would be appropriate after a game in which your team was victorious or suffered defeat.

4 PLAY YOUR PART

In sports like in life, each person must play a role in a larger organism. Sometimes that means playing a role in a family, while sometimes that means playing a role in a business or large company. Set your students on a little research project on a sport of their choice from the list you brainstormed in the fist activity or from a list you provide. Your students should look up the different positions that an athlete might play on a team for that sport and summarize the responsibility and strategy he should follow when playing that position. To share this information with the class, have your students make a diagram which shows each of the different positions a player might hold and list bullet points of his responsibilities in that position. Ask each student to react to another's informational diagram by saying which of the positions he would choose to play if it were up to him and why he would choose that position.

WHETHER A PERSON LIKES IT OR NOT, SPORTS ARE A PART OF LIFE. WHY NOT GIVE YOUR STUDENTS SOME TOOLS TO HANDLE SPORTY SITUATIONS BY DISCUSSING WHAT A SPORT IS AND HOW TO BE A GOOD SPORT? You can close out your activities by giving your students a chance to be part of a team, at least on paper. So get ready, get set and get going on these sports related language activities. Go team!

Ready, Set, Go! - ESL Activities about the Olympics

THE OLYMPICS ARE AN EXCELLENT ESL TOPIC NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF THE DIFFERENT WAYS YOU CAN ADDRESS IT BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF HOW POPULAR THE EVENT IS AROUND THE WORLD.

Regardless of where you teach, students will most likely be aware of the Olympics and may even be watching the events on TV, reading about them in the paper, or keeping track of them online. Whereas some sporting events are popular more with male or female students, the Olympics appeal to both and are appropriate for all age levels too. In preparing for an Olympics themed lesson or lessons, it might be a good idea to survey your students to see how much they already know and where their interests lie. The results of the survey can help you decide what types of activities to do and what topics to focus on. Below are some ideas to help you get started with your Olympics lesson plans.

TRY THESE EXCELLENT ESL ACTIVITIES ABOUT THE OLYMPICS

1 LOWER LEVELS

To practice simple sentence structures you can create an Interview or Find Someone Who worksheet. For both of these, students will mingle repeatedly asking their peers a predetermined question such as "What's your favorite sport?" or questions like "Do you like basketball/gymnastics/tennis?" and recording responses on their worksheets. Students should also respond using the appropriate structure, in the cases above "I like soccer" or "My favorite sport is soccer" and "Yes, I do" or "No, I don't", when asked questions by their classmates. This is a beginning level activity to practice basic listening and speaking exchanges and is a more enjoyable way to drill particular structures. You can also make a race out of this activity by rewarding the students who complete the worksheet quickly or within a particular time limit.

For lower level students, reading material will likely have to be heavily adapted but you can tailor the vocabulary and grammar to best suit your students. You can then read the short story or article as a class. If you would like to cover a specific teaching point or language skill, you can also draw students' attention to it in the passage you use, practice it using another task, and then ask students to use it in their own speaking or writing. When reading with low level students, images can significantly aid comprehension and are therefore highly recommended. If you choose to make flashcards for important new vocabulary words, you can use the same images as the ones in the story.

Just for fun, word searches or crosswords can be included on Olympics handouts too (try BusyTeacher's FREE Word Search Creator!). These can be especially good for lower level learners as a way to introduce or review vocabulary related to a particular topic and can be completed individually, in pairs, or in groups. As extra sections on worksheets, these types of activities also provide students who finish their work quickly with something enjoyable, yet academic, to do while others continue working. Since students all progress at different paces, it is always a good idea to have small mini tasks available to fall back on.

2 HIGHER LEVELS

Intermediate to advanced students could write, edit, and deliver speeches about a favorite sport, a famous athlete, the importance of international sporting events, or even a sports related event from their childhood. Depending on the age of your students, research might be required but this could be done just as easily without research especially if students want to focus on their own achievements in sports or hobbies. If your classes are quite large, you could have students peer edit the speeches in small groups before marking them yourself and then have students present the polished product to groups rather than to the whole class. When doing speeches in class, students should always be required to give their peers feedback after each presentation as this encourages active listening and can help students notice important features of good speeches. The feedback sandwich, that is where a positive comment is followed by constructive criticism and then another positive comment, is a common approach to peer feedback which eliminates unproductive comments.

With intermediate and advanced students, you could facilitate a short discussion about athletes in general, have the class listen to an interview with an Olympic athlete and answer comprehension questions, and finally discuss the content of the interview. This can really involve all four skills and can also be conducted with a focus on reading, rather than on listening, if the interview is transcribed. A transcription would make the activities easier for intermediate and upper-intermediate students whereas the listening focus might serve to challenge advanced students. Using a transcription and recording together would be another possible option and is probably best as students all learn differently and have various strengths and weaknesses.

For listening and speaking practice set up a debate. To do this divide the class into two large groups or have students work in pairs. Topics might include whether or not international sporting events serve an important role in society today or whether or not highly paid athletes deserve the amount of money they make. You could also just choose a highly respected athlete, it is best when the athlete is from the country you are teaching in, and ask students to debate whether or not that athlete is the best athlete of all time. Other topics would serve equally well for debates. It is usually best to have several topics

available in case one does not generate conversation as well as you would have liked. If students have done debates in class before, they should be familiar with the format which is really ideal for improving speaking fluency and active listening. If students are debating in teams or groups just be sure to have students take turns speaking so that everyone participates.

For more of a focus on reading, choose an article or adapt one about the Olympics or a particular sport or athlete that students can read either in class or as homework. An accompanying worksheet with comprehension and discussion questions can better prepare students to discuss or debate their ideas in class once they have gotten everything worked out on paper. Students who are quiet during discussions or debates often have just not worked through their opinions or what they want to say quickly enough to contribute so these foundation activities will help engage more students in these speaking activities.

3 ALL LEVELS

For role plays, students could pretend to be an athlete, real or imagined, and answer interview questions asked by peers. This would be especially productive if some of the questions are known in advance and if students have also observed interviews given by athletes in the past either in class or at home.

Students could be encouraged to write letters to famous athletes wishing them good luck in the upcoming games or explaining how they have inspired others. These letters could be quite short and simple, even taking the form of cards for lower levels, or long and more complex depending on your students and what you want them to achieve through this assignment.

Take a virtual fieldtrip either to Olympia or to London! If you want to focus on the origin of the Olympics, Olympia is a good place to start. Meanwhile, students, most of whom will likely not be attending the events in person, will love the chance to see what all the hype around London is about too. It is amazing to see what a huge impact hosting the Olympics can have on a city which can also be a subject for discussion. Short of taking a virtual fieldtrip, you can use an adapted London map and Olympic venues to teach such topics as directions.

You can host a school wide version of the Olympics with a focus on English by having a speech competition or spelling bee. Representatives from each class could be chosen to compete at different grade levels and then at a school wide level or there could be different events for each grade level. Students could even be encouraged to select class colors and wear them throughout the competition! Scores could be delivered in a way similar to Olympic gymnastics events and gold, silver, and bronze medals could be given to the winners. If cooperative events are more suitable, consider a spelling relay where teams of students compete rather than just individuals. While a little competition can be a good thing, it is important to keep these activities fun and enjoyable for everyone.

THE OLYMPICS ARE A REALLY INTERESTING TOPIC AND THERE ARE TONS OF ESL ACTIVITIES THAT YOU CAN DO RELATED TO THE OLYMPICS AND SPORTS IN GENERAL.

For even more ideas, search Busy Teacher for related worksheets and materials. Just remember to consider your students' interests when planning these special activities and have fun!

Would You Play? Weighing In Opinions on Extreme Sports

WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO GET YOU OR YOUR STUDENTS TO JUMP FROM AN AIRPLANE? TO PUT YOUR LIFE IN THE HANDS OF A BUNGEE CORD? TO RISK CONCUSSION FOR THE SAKE OF A GAME?

Some sports and popular past times are questionable or even irresponsible in the minds of those who think the dangers outweigh the experience. Whether you would play without a helmet or not, your students will have a chance to express how they feel about these potentially dangerous but oh so popular sports during the following activities.

HOW TO TALK ABOUT EXTREME SPORTS IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 BOXING

Whether spectators want to believe it or not, and how could they not, boxing is dangerous to a person's health. Being punched repeatedly can cause countless injuries, injuries to the head, body and internal organs. In fact, boxing is so dangerous that in 1983 the American Medical Association tried to have boxing banned because of the negative health effects for the men and woman who participated in the sport. Even with such strong medical opinion against the sport, boxing continues. In fact, boxing has recently seen an increase in popularity because it is a good activity for improving physical fitness. Some training centers limit participants to punching bags and pads, but others still give trainees some time in the ring to fight it out, which also means greater potential injuries.

With all that said, ask your students whether they think boxing is a good sport and useful for physical conditioning or whether they think it is too dangerous and should be banned. Divide your class into two groups based on their answer to the question, and then ask each group to list as many reasons in support of their opinion as possible. You can give students some time to do research and gather statistics about the injuries as well as the physical benefits that come from boxing. Once everyone has had enough time to complete his or her research, hold a debate in your classroom. Allowing each team free discussion throughout the debate, let each side argue their points and then refute the points of the other team. After the debate, ask each student to write an opinion either in support or against boxing. Your students should feel free to take middle ground on the debate, they should just make sure they explain their position and give evidence to support it.

2 SKYDIVING

Have you ever jumped from a plane? Have any of your students jumped from a plane? If anyone in your classroom has taken the plunge, ask him or her to share some details about the experience. The idea of jumping out of a plane and plummeting to the earth may not be everyone's idea of a good time, but there are many people who love the rush that throwing themselves into the atmosphere supplies. Supporters of the sport argue that skydiving can be done safely, though. Take some time with your class to brainstorm what safety precautions someone taking their first skydive should consider. You will want to encourage your students to think about the proper equipment, education and company with whom they might jump. Then divide your class into three groups and assign one area of preparation to each group. (If your class came up with precautions that do not fit into these three categories, define categories that they do fit into and assign each of them to an additional group of students.) Keeping in mind the specific precautions for each category, challenge its group to present the information to the class in the form of a skit. Each person in the group should have some type of speaking role in the skit. You can encourage your students to be creative and have fun while writing and performing their skits.

3 AMERICAN FOOTBALL

How much do your students know about the sport they probably refer to as American football? Many international students know very little about the rules and just view football as a rough and dangerous sport. Tell your students that you are going to ask them to write an opinion piece about whether or not they would be willing to play football but you want them to have more information on the sport before they decide. If you have the resources, invite a local football coach or player to come and explain the game to your students. You may need to have a diagram or at least a white board available as he explains the rules of the sport. Also, ask your guest speaker to talk about the safety equipment that football players wear. Helmets are probably the most obvious piece of safety equipment, but ask your guest to talk about the pads, mouth guards and other items football players use for protection. If you like, you may want to give your students some time to do additional research on football after the speaker is finished or show them portions of a football game.

Once they have learned enough to make an informed decision, ask your students to write a response to this question: Would you play? Their response should include three paragraphs. The first paragraph should describe what they learned about the sport. The second paragraph should weigh the good and bad about football, and the third paragraph should be their opinion and why they would or would not play. Once the responses are written, post them on a bulletin board in your classroom designed to look like a football field. For responses in which your students say they would play, post their pieces on the field. For students who said they would not play, post their responses outside the field as though they were sitting on bleachers. This display will provide a striking visual as to how your students feel about the game and where they stand on the safety of the sport.

NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE ON THE GLOBE, SPORTS PROBABLY HAVE SOME IMPACT ON YOUR LIFE. Whether you are a player or just a spectator, you probably have access to football, soccer, rugby or some other sport on a regular basis. Some sports, though, are questionable when you weigh their benefits against their dangers. By encouraging your students to think about a controversial topic such as dangerous sports, you will give them realistic opportunities to practice their language skills, and they may learn a thing or two about the game in the process!

Roller Skates: Move Right Along with these Fantastic ESL Activities

What is the quickest way to get from here to there? Well, it all depends on what those places are. Getting to the top of a mountain in a short amount of time would certainly require a different means of travel than getting to the bottom of the sea. Under what circumstances, then, might roller skates be the quickest or best means of travel? Your students will explore this question with the following activities that explore what it means to move on wheels rather than heels.

HOW TO TEACH AN ESL LESSON ON ROLLER SKATES

1 THE BEST SKATE

Though the inventor of the roller skate is unknown, its first recorded appearance was in 1743 when a performer wore them on stage in London. Since then, the roller skate has undergone several transformations and has fulfilled many different needs. Give your students some time to explore the history of the roller skate on Wikipedia.com which includes some pictures that show how the roller skate has changed over time. Ask groups of students to articulate, in their own words, what changes the roller skate has experienced in the last two and a half centuries. Then challenge each group to take the roller skate's development a step further by thinking of one or more ways that the roller skate can be further improved. These improvements can be for function or style or any other reason. Have each group write a description of what improvements they would make to the roller skate and then present their ideas in front of the class. After each presentation, ask the rest of the class for their reactions. Would they support the suggested changes, or do they think those changes would not be beneficial. Encourage each person to support his answers with specific reasons.

2 WHEELS IN THE WORK PLACE

What do restaurants and roller skates have in common? Not much other than the servers who carried out food laden trays while on wheels! This, of course, happened at drive in restaurants in the 1950's and 60's in the era of the car-hop. The iconic picture of girls in skirts and high ponytails skating out to wait on customers in convertibles comes to mind when thinking about that era. Many chose skates over shoes because roller skates made for faster delivery of the food to the customers. Are your students familiar with this historical phenomenon? If not, familiarize them with it and then ask them to think of other occupations that might be improved by wearing roller skates. Break your class into discussion groups to talk about what work would be like wearing skates while at work. They can come up with their own occupations to think about, or you can supply each group with a list of typical occupations. Can the groups think of any jobs that would be easier on skates? Which would be most detrimental on skates? Challenge each group to make a list of pros and cons to wearing roller skates in the work place.

3 ROLLER DERBY

If your students have completed a unit on sports, did they discuss the roller derby at all during the unit? The 2009 movie Whip It shows the roller derby in action, and you may want to share a clip from the movie with your students to familiarize them with the sport. They can also get an informative explanation of the sport at Wikipedia.com. Once your students are familiar with the roller derby, show them how to use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast two different items. A Venn diagram uses two overlapping circles – one for each item being considered. Qualities that both items possess are written in the overlapping section of the circles. Qualities that only one item possesses are written in either of the circles outside of the overlapping areas. In this case, you can compare roller derby with a sport of your choice as an entire class, or you can give your students time individually to compare and contrast roller derby with a sport that they choose. Using the completed diagram, students should write one paragraph about how roller derby is similar to the other sport and a second paragraph about how roller derby differs from the other sport.

4 CONTROVERSIAL WHEELS

A product that has been the center of controversy lately is the combination sneaker and roller skate called Heelys. These shoes that become pseudo skates with just one click of a wheel in the heel have been hugely popular with kids but not so popular with adults. Many retail establishments and public places have banned the potentially dangerous shoe. National news programs have addressed the shoes in warning video segments. Parents have worried and kids have begged to have a pair of the unique footwear. With all this controversy over the shoes, this is a good opportunity for your students to express their own opinions. Give your class a chance to do a little research on line about Heelys. They will find advertisements and instructional videos as well as articles on the shoes. After gathering information about Heelys, ask each of your students to offer her opinion on the product. You can do this either as a class or in discussion groups. Each person should support his or her opinion with facts and examples that prove why Heelys should be allowed or why they should be banned. In addition, ask any of your students who have worn Heelys to share about their personal experiences. After listening to their classmates, have each person write a letter to the editor either in support of or against the shoes. You can bring in the editorial section of recent papers to give your students an example of what the letter should be like.

ROLLER SKATES HAVE EXPERIENCED A REVOLUTION FROM THEIR FIRST APPEARANCE IN 1743 TO THE CONTROVERSIAL SHOES IN THE 21ST CENTURY, AND MANY PEOPLE STILL HAVE STRONG FEELINGS ABOUT MOVING THROUGH THEIR DAYS ON WHEELS.

Your students will benefit from thinking about what it means to move on wheels and how they can improve or damage our daily lives.

Play Ball! Bringing Summer Sports into the ESL Classroom

WHEN SUMMER WEATHER IS STEADILY APPROACHING, IT IS A PERFECT TIME TO USE SPORTS AS A VEHICLE FOR YOUR ESL LESSONS. Not only will it be fun for you, your students will have a ball learning a little more about American sports culture.

1 ON YOUR MARK

Get your students thinking about sports with a couple of preliminary activities. Either as a class or on your own before class, brainstorm a list of all the sports you can think of. Make sure you include games like cricket, ultimate Frisbee, curling, ping-pong, bowling, field hockey, rugby, water polo and any other more obscure sports that come to mind. Then challenge your students sort them into cold weather and warm weather sports. This will work best as a small group activity. See how many they are able to get right and then give them the answers.

Another preliminary activity you can do is give students a matching challenge. How well do they know the national sports of countries around the world? Using the list below, challenge students to match each country with its national sport. Some may be easier to guess than others, but this is a good time to review not only names of sports but also the names of countries, a task that can be more than challenging. Use a world map if you have one available and allow your students to pin the games to the appropriate countries.

2 GET SET

Now that your students are thinking about sports, it is time to look at a few in more detail. This is a great opportunity to have your students do some research either in the library or online and then work on presentation skills. Assign one sport to each student or let them choose one that interests them, and ask that student to research the rules of the sport. Each person should then give a presentation to the class on how to play. Allow the class to ask clarification questions of each presenter, and step in to answer if your student gets stumped. Games that might work well would be kick ball, dodge ball, ultimate Frisbee, Frisbee golf, baseball, badminton, bocce and croquet. All of these games can be played as a class though some will be more appropriate for larger classes and some for smaller ones.

Introduce your students to sports culture, too, with a few movie clips. Show how a team interacts before, during and after the game with movies like The Sandlot, The Bad News Bears or Kicking and Screaming. Alternatively, share clips that show crowds cheering for their teams. You can teach your students some phrases to cheer with like “go team!”, “defense!”, “go get ‘em!” and “you’ve got this!”. Ask your students what they might say if they were cheering on a team at home. You can make a chart in your classroom of sports cheers from around the world. You can have students discuss in groups or pairs how these cheers are similar to and different from cheers in English.

You can also introduce your students to the food most often associated with sports. Most stadiums offer their patrons snacks like hotdogs, peanuts, nachos, popcorn, soda and candy bars. This may be a good opportunity for you to bring some food into class and do a little teaching with cooking. While snacking, ask your students what types of food they might have while watching a sporting event in their home countries. Again, this is a natural place to discuss the similarities and differences between other cultures.

3 GO!

Now that you have learned the rules for summer sports, learned how to cheer and what kind of food to expect at the game, take your class outside for a little fun. Kickball is a great game to play if you have the space for it. It requires no equipment other than a ball and some way to mark the bases. It is also a short game and not likely to cause any injuries. Divide your class into two teams and encourage them to cheer for one another in English. They can use either the expressions they learned in class or the English equivalent of what they would say at home.

If you have more time for outside fun, you can also hold a mock summer Olympics with your class. Ask each student to bring a simple game to class and teach the others how to play. (If you have access to clips from the television show Minute to Win It, you will find easy, short and fun games that use only common household items.) Then play the games and award points to each winner. Whoever has the most points at the end wins the gold and bragging rights till the next Olympics.

NO MATTER WHAT SPORTS YOU LIKE OR DO NOT LIKE, SUMMER IS THE PERFECT TIME TO ENERGIZE CLASSROOM LIFE WITH SOME LESSONS ON SPORTS. You do not have to be serious or strict: just have a good time with your students. They will also get practice speaking English and learn new vocabulary in the process. The sun is shining. The air is warm. Go outside and have a ball!

National Sports:

Anguilla / Yacht Racing
Bahamas / Sloop Sailing
Bermuda / Cricket
Bhutan / Archery
Brazil / Association Football
Canada / Lacrosse and Ice Hockey
China /Table Tennis (Ping-Pong)
Cuba / Baseball
Dominican Republic / Baseball
India / Field Hockey
Jamaica / Cricket
Korea / Tai Kwon Do
Lithuania / Basketball
New Zealand / Rugby Union
Norway / Cross-country Skiing
Scotland / Golf
Sri Lanka / Volleyball
Sweden / Football
Turkey / Wrestling
United States / Baseball.

Invent Something Out of the Ordinary for Your ESL Class

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR AN ACTIVITY TO DO WITH YOUR CLASS THAT COMBINES BOTH WRITTEN AND SPOKEN LANGUAGE BUT HAS A CREATIVE ELEMENT, TOO?
If so, try this lesson on invention which challenges students to think creatively as well as linguistically and just may improve the world in the process.

HOW TO TEACH AN ESL LESSON ABOUT INVENTIONS

1 ESSENTIAL INVENTIONS

Ask your students think of something they could not live without. After a minute or two, break your class into groups to share those most important items. While in those groups, ask your students to tell the others why they need this item, what they would do without it, and how they could make it better. Your students may say that they could not live without a cell phone or laptop computer, but what about life's more basic items? Could they live without a bed? The light bulb? A refrigerator? We often do not realize how many modern inventions we find irreplaceable. Have your groups make a list of all the modern conveniences they use on a daily basis and would not want to live without.

Once your students are thinking of those important items in their lives, challenge them to think beyond their daily limits. If they could invent anything, what would it be? What would it do? Why would they want it? Give your students some time to think and make notes about their invention, and then divide your class into groups to talk about what they would create. Encourage students to ask questions of one another to refine their ideas. You should allow students to take notes on their classmates' comments and ideas so they can use them later when refining their inventions.

2 HISTORY IN THE MAKING

Now that your students have inventions that they can really picture, it is time to introduce those inventions to the world. Each student will be responsible for creating an advertisement for his or her invention. Help your students get ideas by making old catalogs and magazines available to them. They can look through the magazines for style and content of advertisements and model their own advertisements off those in the magazines. Once your class is familiar with these ads, have each person create an ad for his or her invention. The ad should include a picture of the product, a description of it, the creator's name and some information about the product. Once everyone in class has completed his or her invention, compile them into a class catalogue. You can reproduce a few copies for your class and then break them into groups to look at their classmate's products in the catalogue.

After the groups have had a chance to read about their classmates' inventions, explain to your class that they will make a commercial for one of the products. Each group should select one product from those created by its group members. As a group, they should then write a commercial for the product. Encourage them to be creative and engaging. You may want to show them classic commercials in English like Wendy's "Where's the Beef?" or other classic commercial such as Dunkin' Donut's "Time to Make the Donuts" or Coke's commercial starring Mean Joe Green. Stress that effective commercials appeal to the viewer's emotion as well as his logic.

Once the commercials are written, give your students a chance to perform their commercials in front of the class. Stress to your class that everyone should participate in the commercial. Once all the groups have performed, take a vote in class for the most popular product. Either by a show of hands or by ballot, have your class vote for the product they would be most likely to purchase. Recognize the inventor of the winning product with a certificate of creativity and/or a prize.

3 ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

To follow up your lesson on inventions, you can use the Newberry Award winning book The 21 Balloons by William Pene Dubois. In this book, a balloonist travels around the world via a series of original inventions. The main character, a retired schoolteacher, decides to spend one year in a hot air balloon of his original design. Though he fails in his attempt, he is rescued to an island whose inhabitants are inventors in their own right. Your students will enjoy the straightforward language and creative inventions, some real and some imagined, presented in this novel. Another follow up activity would be researching an inventor who made a significant impact on the world. You may want students to research the inventor of that item they said they could not live without, or you may want your students to focus on more classic examples such as Thomas Edison. In either case, give your students an opportunity to present their findings to the class.

PEOPLE EVERYWHERE EVERYDAY STRIVE TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE IN WHICH TO LIVE. GIVE YOUR STUDENTS A HAND AT THIS GOAL BY ASKING THEM TO INVENT THEIR OWN CREATION.
You will be surprised at the creativity your students show when given the chance. Who knows, maybe one day one of their inventions will take the rest of the world by storm.

Inventive Language Ideas for the ESL Classroom

IMAGINATION IS ONE OF THE MOST REMARKABLE QUALITIES THAT THE HUMAN RACE POSSESSES.

Over time, humans have seen needs in all areas of life and have taken the steps necessary to meet those needs through invention and innovation. Inventions have made day-to-day life easier, have enabled us to communicate with people on the other side of the world, and have saved lives over and over again. Encourage your students to channel some of their creative energy into making their own inventions. The inventions these lessons encourage probably won't change the world, but they are fun and will give your students a chance to use the language skills they are working to improve!

HOW TO PROCEED

1 INVENT A MACHINE

Human beings use machines for all kinds of activities: medical tests, food preparation and personal care just to name a few. If anyone has an idea for a machine with value, eventually mankind will produce that machine. Give your students a hands-on creativity outlet to create their own machines using marshmallows and toothpicks. Start by asking your students to think of a machine that might make life easier. It could be for their daily life, for the fields of medicine and science, something to aid in communication or any other idea they can come up with. Then, challenge each person to build the machine he or she thought of using marshmallows and toothpicks. By poking the toothpicks into the marshmallows, your students will be able to create all kinds of shapes and designs. If a student is having trouble coming up with an idea for an invention, encourage him or her to start by putting together the raw materials and then deciding later what that machine is. Once everyone has had enough time to create their machines, ask each person to share with a discussion group what their machine is and what need it meets. Make sure you have extra marshmallows for groups to snack on during their discussions!

2 INVENT A CHARACTER

One of the keys to writing engaging fiction is having interesting characters. You can walk your students through the character creation process step by step with this somewhat silly activity. Give your students around thirty seconds to scribble on a piece of paper. Call time and then challenge each person to find five images in their scribble. Each person should then look at those images and decide on a character to which one or more of those images relate. The image might be a picture of the character, something the character owns or likes to do, or any other object that connects with the character. Then have your students write an imaginary interview with their characters. To do this, as a class, brainstorm some questions a person might ask during an interview. They can be serious questions or ones that are more frivolous. Once your class is finished, challenge each person to take ten of those questions and answer them from the point of view of the character they have created. If you like, ask each student to use the character they have created in a story which they write and illustrate.

3 INVENT A GAME

One of the great contributions Bill Watterson made to the world was Calvinball – a game his characters Calvin and Hobbes played in the comic with the same name. In this game, Calvin and his stuffed tiger Hobbes would make up new rules every time they played. In fact, one rule of Calvinball is that it could never be played the same way twice. In the same spirit, challenge your students to come up with their own games using the materials you have available in your classroom. The materials might include balls, dice, timers, game pieces and index cards along with anything else you are not using for another activity. In groups of three or four, have students invent an original game and make a list of the rules of how to play. Then each group should present their game to the entire class. After all the presentations, have the class vote on one game they would like to attempt to play. Afterward, have everyone write a short journal entry explaining whether they liked the game and any suggestions they have to improve it.

4 INVENT A WORD

Language is a fluid thing. Everyday people use language in new and creative ways. With that in mind, challenge your students to create their own English words based on what they already know about the English language. You may want to take a few minutes to review some common word roots with your students so their words have a basis in the existing language. For example, review word parts like -phobia (the fear of something), bene- (something good), mal- (something bad), bi- (two), mono- (one), etc. Also, take some times to review the prefixes and suffixes that give meaning to words, like –tion, re-, un-, -ly, etc. Once each person has decided on his or her original word, have the person write a definition of his or her word including the part of speech, its related words and come up with an original sentence using that word.

INVENTION IS A BEAUTIFUL THING THAT HAS POTENTIAL TO IMPROVE THE HUMAN RACE AS WELL AS INDIVIDUAL LIVES.

These silly inventions may not affect the rest of the world, but they will certainly make your ESL class a better place, so encourage your students' creativity and get their inventive minds moving in the right direction.

Magical Mystery Tour

ABRACADABRA! IN JUST AN INSTANT, YOU HAVE TRANSFORMED YOUR ESL CLASS INTO AN AMAZING SPECTACLE. YOU WON'T BELIEVE WHAT IS BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES. Your students will be amazed when they bring a little magic into their own lives and English lessons.

HOW TO BRING SOME MAGIC INTO YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 INVISIBLE INK

What do you get when you combine a science experiment with a speaking activity? *Invisible ink*, of course.

This is a simple experiment with just a few necessary materials. All you need is some lemon juice, water, cotton swabs and paper. Explain to your students that fruit juices contain carbon compounds (molecules made with carbon and other elements). When those compounds are heated, they break down and the carbon separates from the other elements. When it does, its natural, dark color comes out. Allow your students to make a mixture of lemon juice and water and use a cotton swab to write a secret message on the paper. It will be invisible. They can then exchange messages and hold them up to a light bulb. The heat from the light bulb will break down the carbon compounds, and the ink will become darker. **They can now read the secret message**.

Group your students together for some discussion time after the experiment. Have them discuss what they think would happen if they use more water in their ink or more lemon juice in their ink. Allow them to work together to **discover the perfect formula for invisible ink** and then make a recommendation to the class as to the perfect formula.

2 A MAGIC LANTERN

Do your students know the story of Aladdin and the magic lantern? Start this exercise by reading them the story or showing them part of the popular movie. Make sure you include the part where the genie offers Aladdin three wishes. Group your students together to **discuss what wishes they would make if they had three wishes**. This is a good time to use the conditional tense. *"I would wish for riches. I would wish for fame. I would wish for love."*

Once all your students have decided on their wishes, ask them this question. *What could go wrong with that wish if the genie were a trickster?* Then give them some more discussion time to **talk about the consequences of having wishes granted** and see if they would change their wishes at all.

After students have discussed their wishes, have them **write about those wishes**. You may want your students to write a paragraph on each wish or just a few sentences depending on their age and language level. Either way, they should write what their wish is, why they would wish for it and what the results of that wish would be. Are they wishing for themselves or someone else?

You can also **set up a wishing "wall"** where your students can post their compositions or other wishes they make later. You can keep a supply of sticky notes handy so they can add their wishes as they come up with them. You may want to have a student read one wish each day and have the class try to determine whose wish it was.

3 A MAGICIAN'S SECRETS

A lesson on magic is the perfect time to have a local magician visit your classroom and do some tricks for your students. A professional would be nice, but even an amateur can be a good presenter to your ESL class. Ask the magician to do some tricks for your students. As they watch, they should try to figure out how the magician performs his tricks. Have your students discuss in groups what they think the magician's secrets are. After some discussion time, bring the class together to ask the magician if they are correct. *"Did you already have a rabbit in your hat? Did you put the coin between your fingers?"* They should listen carefully as the magician either confirms or denies their solutions and then shows them how he performs some of his tricks. Then challenge your students to do their own magic tricks. Have groups of students do some research on magic tricks, and then give each group some time to perform in class. They may or may not reveal the secrets behind their tricks to the class after their performance.

If you do not have access to a local magician, **you can also use video from the well-known magicians Penn and Teller**. They have a reputation for explaining magic tricks and taking down the veil of mystery. Simply show your students the beginning where they perform the various magic tricks, give your students time for discussion, and then play the rest of the clip where they explain the trick. Your students will still get practice with **making predictions** and critical thinking though Penn and Teller's tricks will most likely be far more complicated than those of a live magician.

4 VISIT HARRY

The most well known magician in the world today just may be **Harry Potter** of J.K. Rowling's books. If you have time, view one of the Harry Potter movies in class or on a field trip. Since Harry attends a school for magic, you can have your students compare his educational experiences with their own. Show your students how to create a Venn diagram to get their ideas on paper. Then either have them discuss the similarities and differences of Harry's education to theirs or have your students write about them. You can also have your students compare Harry's friends to their own or ask them what they would do if they were Harry in his dangerous situations.

MAGIC IS FASCINATING TO PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. THESE ACTIVITIES MAY NOT HAVE YOUR STUDENTS SPELLBOUND, BUT SPENDING SOME TIME ON MAGICAL LESSONS WILL CERTAINLY GIVE YOUR STUDENTS SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT.

They will have fun practicing their listening, speaking and writing skills as they explore the mysterious world of magic.