



**ESL HOW-TO**  
33 bite-size  
print-friendly  
how-to articles  
on teaching  
important ESL  
grammar items



**FRESH IDEAS**  
teacher-tested  
ideas and in-  
structions in  
simple, easy to  
understand  
language



**ACTIONABLE  
TIPS & ADVICE**  
you'll want to  
start using our  
ideas immedi-  
ately - they are  
this good!



# ESL CHEAT SHEETS

**EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT  
TEACHING ENGLISH GRAMMAR:**

**33 PRINT-FRIENDLY GUIDES**

**HOW TO TEACH DEGREES  
OF COMPARISON**

It has probably been a while since your students have thought about the vocabulary you plan to use for this lesson, so it's important... PAGE 10



# CONTENTS

## GRAMMAR EDITION

- 3-4 **General:** 5 New Fun Ways to Teach Grammar to ESL Students
- 5 **Present Simple:** How to Teach the Present Simple Tense
- 6-7 **Present Simple:** How to Teach Present Simple to Complete Beginners
- 8 **Past Simple:** How to Teach Past Simple: Regular/Irregular Verbs
- 9 **Past Simple:** How to Teach the Past Simple Tense – Verb to Be
- 10 **Comparison:** How to Teach Degrees of Comparison
- 11-12 **Comparison:** How to Teach Comparatives and Superlatives
- 13 **Present Continuous:** How to Teach the Present Continuous Tense
- 14 **Present Continuous:** How to Teach Present Continuous: Alternative Approach
- 15 **Past Continuous:** How to Teach the Past Continuous Tense
- 16 **Future Perfect:** How To Teach the Future Perfect Tense
- 17-18 **Past Simple vs. Present Perfect:** How To Teach Past Simple vs Present Perfect
- 19 **Word Order:** How to Teach Word Order. Help Them Remember the Patterns
- 20 **Past Perfect:** How to Teach the Past Perfect Tense
- 21 **Present Perfect:** How to Teach Present Perfect. Activities and Examples
- 22 **Present Perfect:** How to Teach Present Perfect. Alternative Approach
- 23 **Present Perfect:** Present Perfect Mystery: How to Teach For and Since
- 24 **Future Simple:** How to Teach the Simple Future Tense
- 25 **Passive Voice:** How to Teach Passive Voice Constructions
- 26 **Passive Voice:** How to Teach the Passive Voice – While Being Active!
- 27 **Future Continuous:** How to Teach the Future Continuous Tense
- 28 **Present Perfect Continuous:** How to Teach the Present Perfect Continuous Tense
- 29 **Reported Speech:** How to Teach Reported Speech - Statements
- 30 **Reported Speech:** How to Teach Reported Speech: Alternative Approach
- 31 **Numbers:** How to Teach Ordinal Numbers in 5 Easy Steps
- 32 **Gerund vs. Infinitive:** Gerund vs. Infinitive: How to Explain the Difference
- 33 **Pronouns:** How to Teach Personal Pronouns
- 34 **Modal Verbs:** How to Teach Modal Verbs: 4 Simple Steps
- 35 **Questions:** How to Teach Question Structures
- 36 **Imperative:** How to Teach the Imperative Form
- 37 **Pronouns:** How to Teach Relative Pronouns
- 38 **Used To/Would:** How to Teach 'Used To' and 'Would'
- 39 **General:** How To Teach Boring Grammar Points: 7 Quick Proven Tips

# 5 New Fun Ways to Teach Grammar to ESL Students



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

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

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

Let's move on to some examples, and you'll see what I mean.

**H**OW TO TEACH THE EVER-ELUSIVE PAST PERFECT TENSE

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

Go to [OurTimeLines.com](http://OurTimeLines.com) where you may generate your personalized timeline and see when major historical events took place throughout your life. For example, if you were born in 1971, you'll see that the Internet was invented when you were 2.

Show students your timeline (or anyone else's) and set up the past perfect like this: “Sam, the Vietnam War ended in 1975. I was born in 1971. You were born in 1995. So, when you were born, the Vietnam War had ended 20 years earlier. When I was born it hadn't ended yet.”

Give as many examples as you like, go over briefly how the past perfect tense is formed (had plus past participle) and make sure they understand you're talking about two events that took place in the past, but one before the other - then, have students come up with examples of their own using the timeline.

Once they are comfortable using the past perfect in affirmative sentences, move on to examples with questions - then have them ask each other questions: "Laura, when you started primary school, had terrorists attacked the World Trade Center?"

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

## ACTION!

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

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

## CELEBRITY PROFILES

An awesome way to teach and practice any verb tense is through biographies. Try this activity to contrast the simple past and present perfect tenses. Find out which celebrities or sports stars your students admire. Then find a short biography or write one yourself summarizing a celebrity's main achievements. Read the bio with your students and make sure they understand the differences. Point out examples that clearly illustrate this: "He starred in his first hit film in 1985. But he has worked in 20 hit films throughout his career."

## CELEBRITY PHOTOS

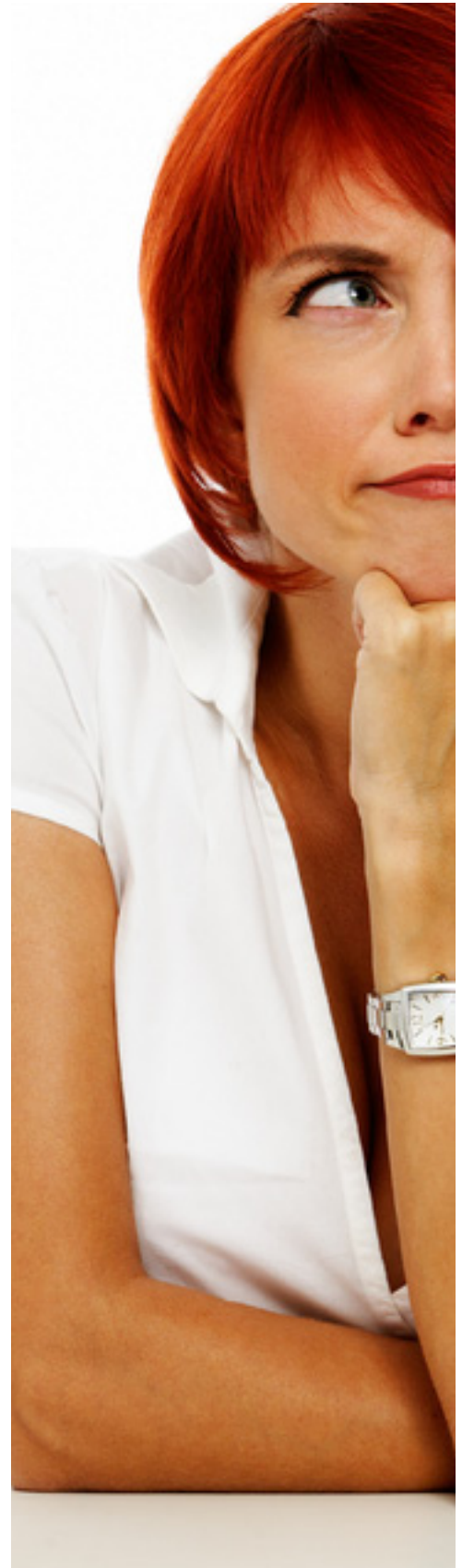
Another way in which you can use your students' interest in certain celebrities. Cut out celebrity pics from entertainment magazines (in fact, I recommend stocking up on a big pile of photos to use in a variety of activities). Use these pictures to teach comparatives and superlatives: "Katie Holmes is taller than Tom Cruise.", "Shakira is more talented than Ricky Martin.", and it works great with comparative adverbs: "Shakira dances better than Ricky, too."

## A OR AN?

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

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

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



# How to Teach the Present Simple Tense

When teaching the Present Simple the ultimate goal is to make sure your students understand that it's used to describe routines, habits, daily activities, and general truths. Also important is the contrast between the Present Simple and the Present Progressive. This series of steps will guide you towards teaching the Present Simple and covers function, conjugation, and form.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE AN ACTION

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

T: "What newspaper am I reading?"

S: "You're reading *The New York Times*."

### 2 INTRODUCE PRESENT SIMPLE - FIRST PERSON SINGULAR

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

*I have breakfast at 7.*

*I go to work at 9.*

*I have lunch at 12.*

*I go home at 5.*

*I watch TV before dinner.*

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

### 3 INTRODUCE PRESENT SIMPLE - SECOND PERSON SINGULAR

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

T: "John, you live in Queens."

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

T: "Sally, you have a dog."

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

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

### 4 INTRODUCE PRESENT SIMPLE - THIRD PERSON SINGULAR

Say: "I read *The New York Times*. Sarah reads *USA Today*". Make sure students notice that you've added the 's' for the 3rd person singular. Give more examples with other students, and introduce the irregular verbs: John goes to work at 8. Sally has lunch at 1. Students provide more examples from the information previously shared by their classmates.

### 5 DO THE SAME FOR THE PLURAL PERSONS

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

### 6 INTRODUCE PRESENT SIMPLE - NEGATIVE

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

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

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

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

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

T: Alex reads *The New York Times*. He doesn't read *USA Today*.

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

### 8 INTRODUCE PRESENT SIMPLE - QUESTIONS

Make a statement about yourself. Then ask a student a question to introduce 'do'. Say: 'I walk to school. John, do you walk to school?' Walk around the classroom asking students questions and teaching them to answer, "Yes, I do" or "No, I don't". Do the same for all persons except 3rd person singular.

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

Contrast students' habits. Make a statement about one, then ask about another student. Say: 'John walks to school. Does Sarah walk to school?' Walk around the classroom asking questions with does, and teach students to answer "Yes, he does" "No, he doesn't".

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

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

*Where do you live?*

*Where does she work?*

*How many languages do you speak?*

Obviously, you don't have to follow all of these steps in one single lesson: you can spread them over the course of a week to make sure your students have plenty of time to practice the Present Simple exercises in all its forms.

# How to Teach Present Simple to Complete Beginners

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

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCTION

There is no warm up activity to introduce any grammatical term or vocabulary. Assume that your students have limited linguistic knowledge, or none whatsoever. Write the substitution tables on the board. Get it right from the start. Make sure they have a model to practice and follow. Maybe they know the structures already but it's good to reinforce the grammar and if they are real novices they will need to follow your guidance. Keep it basic. You are teaching the verbs 'to be' and 'to do' only – which will form the foundations of their learning.

### 2 PRE-TEACH PRONOUNS

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

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

### 3 ELICITING NAMES

You write your name on the whiteboard. First name only. Ask your students 'What's my name?' 'What is my name?' Repeat. You may get a whole host of answers 'Michael/You are Michael/You're Michael/Your name is Michael/Mr Michael/Teacher Michael etc. Correct the errors and write clearly on the board 'My name is Michael.' 'I am Michael. I'm Michael' Teacher models Q & A. Ask all the students their names – going randomly around the class. Make sure that there is plenty of movement and friendly gesturing with an open hand. No pointing. Get your students motivated and animated. Stress

that you need first names only. It's much more friendly.

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

### 4 PRACTICE TIME

'What's his name?' 'What's her name?' Get students up and doing a mingling activity. Get them to report back to you the names they have learned. This is fun, practical and breaks the ice in a new group. Can they remember the people they have been introduced to? This is the time to check. Practice for as long as you feel necessary. Don't assume they have mastered this first step easily, as you will often find later that the elementary work is quickly forgotten.

### 5 REVIEW ON THE BOARD

Ensure you match your spoken practice with written examples. Do concept checking for your question practice. 'What's his name?' Show contractions on the board. 'His name is \_\_\_' or 'He's \_\_\_.' Ask your group to chorally answer/move around the class and ask students randomly.

### 6 EXPLAINING JOBS

Ask the class 'What do I do?' 'What's my job?' As students answer, make sure you write the answer on the board for future reference. 'You are an English Teacher.' Get them to repeat and point out the 'an' article if it has been omitted. Ask all the students individually 'What do you do?' You may not be able to elicit, so you will have to introduce the relevant vocabulary. It would be useful to have pictures, or flashcards of popular jobs to provide a point of reference especially for visual learners. Get your students to

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

### 7 DESCRIBING WHERE YOU LIVE

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

### 8 INTRODUCE HOBBIES

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

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

### 9 CONSOLIDATION OF MATERIAL LEARNED

Write the 4 questions on the whiteboard and model answers.

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

Drill the students chorally and individually. Questions followed by answers/

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

## 10 LIVE PRACTICE AND FEEDBACK

Students must introduce themselves to everyone in the class. Set the scenario with mime etc. – 'Imagine you are at a party and meeting for the first time. You must talk to all your class members.' Teacher walks around monitoring and giving assistance when required. Error

spotting/correcting. Focus on fluency rather than accuracy, unless mistakes are too blatant.

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

## 11 BRIEF INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION AND CLOSURE

The students introduce themselves to the class using the 4 sentences learned and practiced.

*Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_.*  
*I'm a/an \_\_\_\_.*  
*I live in \_\_\_\_.*  
*My hobby is \_\_\_\_.*

Aim for fluency rather than accuracy, as this is a big step and a major accomplishment for absolute beginners.

**RANDOMLY ASK STUDENTS ANY OF THE 4 QUESTIONS. ASSIGN HOMEWORK PRACTICE AND ADVISE THAT THE NEXT LESSON WILL BEGIN WITH THE SELF-INTRODUCTIONS COVERED. STAND AT THE DOOR AND ASK STUDENTS 1 OF THE 4 QUESTIONS, AS THEY EXIT TO GIVE THEM A SENSE OF REAL ACHIEVEMENT.**



# How to Teach Past Simple: Regular/Irregular Verbs

We're often told we should put the past behind us, not dwell in the past, etc. However, ESL students must do just that: to learn the Simple Past tense. As they learn that regular verbs simply need an -ed suffix, they jump for joy. 'This is not so hard!', they think. Then we hit them with the endless lists of irregular verbs to study, and their enthusiasm deflates like a balloon before your very eyes. Don't add to the confusion.

*Follow these steps to teach the Past Simple and keep your students right on track:*

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF REGULAR VERBS

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

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

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

### 2 PRACTICE PAST SIMPLE OF REGULAR VERBS

Go around the class and make statements in Present Simple, which students must change to Past Simple:

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

Now's a good time to practice the different pronunciations of the -ed past form.

### 3 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF IRREGULAR VERBS

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

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

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

### 4 PRACTICE THE PAST SIMPLE OF IRREGULAR VERBS

Go around the class and make statements in Present Simple, which students must change to Past Simple:

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

### 5 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE - NEGATIVE FORMS

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

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

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

### 6 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE - INTERROGATIVE FORMS

Model questions with 'did':

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

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

### 7 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE - SHORT ANSWERS

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

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

Students ask classmates Yes/No questions, and classmates reply with short answers.

### 8 PROVIDE EXTENDED PRACTICE

Tell students that the best way to learn which verbs are regular and irregular, and remember the past form of irregular verbs is through lots of practice and not necessarily memorization. Ask them to write about their last vacation for homework. Have them give a presentation on what people did 100 years ago. But no matter what you choose to do, just make sure your students practice the Past Simple in context, and not by memorizing lists of verbs. It's the best way to learn!



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

“To be or not to be?” is the question pondered by the melancholy Hamlet. On the other hand, an ESL teacher might ask: how do I teach the Simple Past of the verb to be, without needlessly confusing my students? It’s all rather simple.

Follow the step by step process outlined below, and don’t move on to next step until you’re sure your students have mastered the one you’re currently on.

## HOW TO PROCEED

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

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

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

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

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

Go around the class and say where each student was, giving examples in the third person singular: Sarah was at home. John was at the gym. Bobby was at a friend’s house. Etc...

Students continue by saying where some of their family members were: My mom was at home. My dad was at work. My sister was at the park.

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

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

### 4 DO THE SAME FOR THE PLURAL PERSONS

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

### 5 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF THE VERB ‘TO BE’ – NEGATIVE FORMS

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

Then have students do the same, always alternating between affirmative and negative statements.

### 6 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF THE VERB ‘TO BE’ – INTERROGATIVE FORMS

Model questions like this:

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

*S: I was at home.*

*T: Ask me!*

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

Continue with more questions from students. Encourage them to ask what time, where, when, why, etc. First, they ask you (second person singular, then they ask classmates, then they ask a classmate about another classmate (Where was Sheila last night?), and so on.

Make sure they ask questions in all persons, both singular and plural. If they are unsure as to how to ask a question, model it for them first.

### 7 INTRODUCE THE PAST SIMPLE OF THE VERB ‘TO BE’ – SHORT ANSWERS

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

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

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

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

## 8 PROVIDE LOTS OF EXTENDED PRACTICE

Try giving your students a few worksheets to review what they’ve learned. On BusyTeacher.org you will find plenty of various exercises that ask students to complete affirmative and negative sentences, as well as write questions.

For practical purposes, the examples above all cover location (at home/at school). But you may also practice the simple past of the verb to be with feelings (I was happy/sad), the weather (Yesterday was sunny/hot/windy), or opinions (The movie was good/bad/great), just to name a few options.



# How to Teach Degrees of Comparison

*Teaching degrees of comparison will take several lessons. Your students should have a good grasp of comparison related vocabulary such as tall, short, big, small, fast, slow, etc and initially, your lessons should revolve around only about ten or twelve of these. If students perform well using the set of words you have chosen, you can add more vocabulary later.*

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 WARM UP – REVIEW

It has probably been a while since your students have thought about the vocabulary you plan to use for this lesson so it is important to review their meaning and pronunciation. You can do this by conducting a warm up activity such as crisscross or by asking for volunteers to give you the definitions of words, spell words on the board, or use words in a sentence. At the end of this activity there should be two columns of words on the board. With the sample vocabulary above, the columns would look like this.

tall	short
big	small
fast	slow

The two columns should have enough space between them for you to write their comparative and superlative forms.

### 2 INTRODUCE – COMPARATIVE

Introduce comparative structures to your students without explaining them first. Play a short true or false trivia game saying sentences like “Russia is bigger than England.” Use hand gestures to suggest the meaning of each new word and try to have a student translate the sentence before asking whether it is true or false. Use the comparative form of each vocabulary word in a trivia question and write it down next to the word as you go. At the end of the game, underline the

–er ending of each comparative form and explain the comparative structure. Your students already have most of it figured out at this point so after some pronunciation practice or drilling, let them give it a try.

### 3 PRACTICE/PRODUCTION – COMPARATIVE

Worksheets can help your students practice but a more enjoyable way to practice degrees of comparison is to play a card game. Students should play in groups of three to five. You can make decks of between thirty and fifty cards where each card has an animal, for instance, and statistics for that animal such as height, speed, etc. There are many games you can play with a deck such as this one. Have students shuffle and deal all the cards. Explain that the student whose turn it is should choose a category such as height, he and the student sitting to his left should each play a card, and the student whose animal is taller should say “The ~ is taller than the ~.” or more simply “My animal is taller than yours.” That student now gets to keep both cards and the student with the most cards at the end of the game, is the winner.

### 4 INTRODUCE – SUPERLATIVE

Usually the following class would focus on superlative forms. They can be introduced in much the same way you introduced the comparative structure. Emphasize the –est ending and conduct some choral repetition as pronunciation practice. Continue to use the same set of vocabulary.

### 5 PRACTICE – SUPERLATIVE

Practice activities such as worksheets or card games would be appropriate for the superlative form too. Worksheets could include fill in the blank, matching, and write your own sentences sections. The card game above could be adapted to practice superlative. Students could all put down a card after the category is announced, the student with the

highest number in that category would make a sentence and keep the cards, and the winner would be the student with the most cards at the end of the game. You could also change the game entirely or use one card game in the first superlative class and change it for the second class if students are really enjoying them.

### 6 PRODUCTION – COMBINE!

After doing some short practice activities of both comparative and superlative forms that have already been covered, introduce one or two vocabulary words that use more and most to create their comparative and superlative forms. Make sure all the vocabulary words as well as their comparative and superlative forms are written on the board before conducting a combination exercise. A board game of boxes leading from start to finish would be ideal for groups of three or four. A turn would consist of a student rolling a die, moving her piece, and creating a sentence based on the image in the square she landed on. This game should use both the comparative and superlative forms of each vocabulary word. The first student to reach the last square wins.

### 7 REVIEW

The card game and board game require your students to do a lot of speaking so they have practiced extensively by the time they have finished. A short quiz will check your students’ understanding of the degrees of comparison and determine if further review is necessary.

*Degrees of comparison are often easy to introduce and fun for students to practice. Since students already understand the meaning of the vocabulary they are using in these lessons, it is much easier for them to grasp than other structures where new vocabulary is introduced. Including comparative or superlative forms in later activities will help keep them fresh in your students’ minds.*

# How to Teach Comparatives and Superlatives

“Comparisons are odious” says the old proverb, but in an ESL class they are also very necessary. And as there is not set rule for all adjectives, we must make sure students learn everything they need to know about comparatives and superlatives.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE FORMS FOR ONE SYLLABLE ADJECTIVES

Show your students an illustration of people of different heights, or ask three students to stand up. Introduce the comparative of one syllable adjectives:

*T: Juan is tall, but Mario is taller than Juan. Juan is shorter than Mario.*

Make sure students understand that for these adjectives the comparative is formed by adding -er. Students compare their heights.

Point to the three students who are standing and introduce the superlative:

*T: Mario is taller than Juan, but Sam is taller than Mario. Sam is the tallest of the three.*

Make sure students understand that the superlative is formed by adding -est. Students say who is the tallest and who is the shortest in the class.

### 2 INTRODUCE THE COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE FORMS FOR ONE SYLLABLE ADJECTIVES ENDING IN “E”

Show your students pictures of different types of furniture. Introduce the comparative:

*T: This brown sofa is nice. But the red one is nicer than the brown*

*one. It's also wider than the brown one.*

Make sure students understand that the comparative is formed by adding an r. Students compare the other pieces of furniture.

Point to three different sofas and introduce the superlative:

*T: The red sofa is nicer than the brown one, but the blue one is the nicest of the three.*

Make sure students understand that the superlative is formed by adding -st. Students say which pieces of furniture they think are the nicest, or the widest.

### 3 INTRODUCE THE COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE FORMS FOR ONE SYLLABLE ADJECTIVES ENDING IN CONSONANT-VOWEL-CONSONANT

Show your students picture or photos of different seasons and weather conditions. Introduce the comparative:

*T: The weather in May can be hot, but the weather in June is hotter than in May. October is a wet month, but November is wetter than October.*

Make sure students understand that the comparative is formed by making the last consonant double and adding -er.

Students compare the weather in different cities and countries with the aid of a weather chart. Encourage them to use other one syllable adjectives.

Point to the weather charts and introduce the superlative:

*T: November is the wettest month of the year. July is the hottest.*

Make sure students understand that the superlative is formed by making the last consonant double and adding -est. Students say which months are the hottest, the wettest, the coolest, the warmest, etc. in your city and others.

### 4 INTRODUCE THE COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE FORMS FOR TWO SYLLABLE ADJECTIVES ENDING IN “Y”

Discuss feelings to introduce the comparative:

*T: I am happy when I visit a friend, but I'm happier when it's her birthday.*

Make sure students understand that the comparative is formed by replacing the “y” with an “i” and adding -er.

Students compare their feelings in a variety of situations. Encourage them to use everything they've learned so far about comparisons.

Introduce the superlative:

*T: I am happy when I'm on vacation, but I'm the happiest when travel to a new place.*

Make sure students understand that the superlative is formed by replacing the “y” with an “i” and adding -est. Students say when they are the happiest, the sorriest, the saddest, etc.

### 5 INTRODUCE THE COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE FORMS FOR TWO OR MORE SYLLABLE ADJECTIVES

Show students pictures of popular vacation destinations and famous cities. Introduce the comparative:

*T: Berlin is a beautiful city, but Paris is more beautiful than Berlin.*

Introduce the superlative:

*T: Paris is a very beautiful city, but in my opinion Rome is the most beautiful city in the world.*

Make sure students understand that the superlative is formed by using “the most” plus the adjective. Students say which they believe are the most beautiful, the most expensive, and the most interesting cities in the world.

## **6 INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE FORMS OF IRREGULAR ADJECTIVES**

Continue with the comparison of cities and countries:

*T: The traffic in London is bad, but the traffic in Rome is worse. The traffic in London is better than the traffic in Rome.*

Make sure students understand that “good” and “bad” are irregular adjectives and their comparatives are “better” and “worse”. Students make more comparisons.

Introduce the superlative:

*T: They say the traffic in Rome is the worst in the world. But it's the best place to visit in Italy.*

Make sure students understand that “the best” and “the worst” are the superlative forms of “good” and “bad”. Students say which they believe are the best sights to visit around the world, and which have the worst problems.

**REMEMBER THAT IF STUDENTS ARE UNSURE ABOUT THE COMPARATIVE OR SUPERLATIVE FORM OF SOME ADJECTIVES, THE BEST WAY TO HELP THEM OVERCOME THIS DOUBT IS BY OFFERING LOTS AND LOTS OF PRACTICE.**

# How to Teach the Present Continuous Tense

When teaching the present continuous tense, one thing usually comes to mind. This tense is taught for the first time to students who are complete beginners, and who have had exposure to a small quantity of verbs and vocabulary, so the examples you may give, or the practice itself, is rather limited. They have, however, already learned the verb to be, which should be of tremendous help in teaching this tense.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS WITH AN ACTION

The present continuous tense is used to describe actions that are taking place at the time of speaking. So, the easiest way to introduce this tense is to carry out actions.

Take a pen or pencil and start writing on the board. Say: I am writing.

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

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

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

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

Show as many actions as necessary, and use illustrations, photos, even videos. Have students tell you what each person or group of people are doing. Try these present continuous cards for a fun game. Here's a worksheet where students have to write what the people in the photos are

doing. And here's a great one for pair work. Eventually, get them to practice the contracted forms (I'm, he's, we're).

### 2 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS – NEGATIVE FORMS

Pick up a book and say: I am reading a book. I'm not reading a newspaper. Give more examples alternating between affirmative and negative statements: Sarah, you're looking at me. You're not looking at Juan. Juan is listening to me. He's not listening to Sarah. And so on with all persons, singular and plural. Then have students do the same, always alternating between affirmative and negative statements.

### 3 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS – INTERROGATIVE FORMS

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

- T: Are you listening to me?  
- S: Yes!  
- T: Ask me!  
- S: Are you listening to me?

- T: What are you doing?  
- S: I'm looking at you.  
- T: Ask Juan!  
- S: What are you doing?

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

### 4 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS – SHORT ANSWERS

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

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

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

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

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

*Virgil once said, "Endure the present, and watch for better things" and this definitely applies to beginner ESL students. Although they may be impatient to learn more, and feel frustrated by their lack of vocabulary, they must take things one step at a time, and soon enough they'll be speaking English more confidently. It is your job to guide them on this path.*



# How to Teach Present Continuous: Alternative Approach

The present continuous tense is one that students will learn after learning the first three simple tenses that is simple present, past and future. When teaching additional tenses it is important to highlight what time period is referred to and also in what situations students would use each tense.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 WARM UP

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

### 2 INTRODUCE PRESENT CONTINUOUS

Give students some example sentences using the present continuous tense. By using pairs of sentences in your examples, you can show when to use the present simple tense and when to use the present continuous tense. A good example might be "I play baseball every day." and "I am playing baseball with Ben (right now)." See if students understand the difference in meaning between the two and ask for translations. It is important to illustrate on the board the difference between this tense and other tenses your students have learned. The best way to do this is by drawing a simple chart. On the board under your image illustrating the present tense, draw a similar image to illustrate the present continuous tense. You can also discuss the fact that the present tense is used when talking about daily routines while the present continuous tense is used when talking about specific non-routine actions and future plans.

### 3 PRACTICE PRESENT CONTINUOUS

Give students some basic practice exercises so they can get used to changing present simple verbs into the present continuous tense. This can be done in the form of a fill in the blank worksheet but this would also be an appropriate topic to use battleship for speaking practice. Students can use the battleship grid to change I, You, play soccer, speak English, etc. into the sentences "I am playing soccer." and "You are speaking English." If students have played this game before, it might take approximately thirty minutes to explain and play twice.

### 4 PRACTICE MORE

Phone conversations would be a real life situation where the present continuous tense is used quite often so in order to give students practice with this tense as well as basic phone conversation, make a short model dialogue for students to practice in pairs. This could be very simple where Student A asks Student B for someone and Student B replies "I'm sorry. He's not here right now. He's playing baseball with Ben." It could also be more complex. Adjust the conversation to suit your students' ability level and encourage them to create part of the conversation, preferably the present continuous part of the conversation, on their own. Have students volunteer to present their dialogues to the class at the end of the activity.

### 5 PRODUCE

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

dents might then guess the location as in a car, on a bus, in a train, or on a plane.

### 6 REVIEW PRESENT CONTINUOUS

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

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

# How to Teach the Past Continuous Tense

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

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

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE PAST CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 2 INTRODUCE THE PAST CONTINUOUS – NEGATIVE FORMS

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

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

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

### 3 INTRODUCE THE PAST CONTINUOUS – INTERROGATIVE FORMS

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

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

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

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

### 4 INTRODUCE THE PAST CONTINUOUS – SHORT ANSWERS

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

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

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

### 5 EXTENDED PRACTICE AND CONTRAST WITH PAST SIMPLE

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

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

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



# How to Teach the Future Perfect Tense

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

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE PERFECT WITH A TIMELINE

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

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

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

### 2 PRACTICE THE FUTURE PERFECT TENSE

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

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

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

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

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

Ask your students to make predictions about life in 2015.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ask students questions about what they expect in their future:

*T: Will you have graduated from college by the time you're 22?*

*S: No.*

*T: Ask a classmate!*

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

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

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

Have students ask you questions and introduce short answers:

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

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

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

### 6 PROVIDE PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXTENDED PRACTICE

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

If possible, try to find real examples of how this tense is used. Some good sources are newspaper articles, blog posts, and advertisements that deal with the future effects of our present mistakes. For example, you may find articles that discuss the effects of global warming, and mention that by the year 2020, all of the snow on the peak of Mount Kilimanjaro will have melted.

You will not only help them practice the future perfect, you will also teach them the importance of caring for the environment. Another valuable lesson, indeed.



# How To Teach Past Simple VS Present Perfect

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

## HOW TO PROCEED

### - SIMPLE PAST

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

### - PRESENT PERFECT

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

## 1 CONTRAST PAST SIMPLE VS PRESENT PERFECT

Students have probably had a gentle introduction to the Present Perfect before, but you are now trying to extend uses/meaning of the tense. Do not expect mastery by the end of the lesson – it takes a long time to be assimilated. A theme of Fame is useful as it naturally lends itself to talking about people's experiences/opportunities for role plays/interviewing etc. It would be particularly useful to contrast 2 famous people/biographies, where 1 member is living and the other is dead, so that students can clearly grasp the difference vis-à-vis time in the sentence structures.

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

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

## 2 QUESTIONS AND COMMON MISTAKES

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

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

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

## 3 EXPLAIN THE RULE

### PAST SIMPLE FORM:

- a) past form only.
- b) auxiliary 'did' + base form.

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

### PAST SIMPLE USE:

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

### PRESENT PERFECT FORM:

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

– try to think in the tense itself.

### PRESENT PERFECT USE:

Limit the teaching uses at the Lower Intermediate Level:

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

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

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

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

## 4 EXPLAIN FURTHER DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TENSES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# How to Teach Word Order: Help Them Remember the Patterns

Correct word order is often the difference between beginner and intermediate students. When moving on to more complex structures, students may find word order confusing and struggle to remember all the various patterns. There are many ways you can help them.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 WHEN INTRODUCING NEW STRUCTURES

It is best to teach word order when introducing new structures. For example, when teaching the simple past tense of make, it is important to emphasize “Mary made a cake.” as opposed to “Mary a made cake.” The second sentence of course is incorrect. Breaking structures into sections will help your students immensely. For this example, teach them Subject + Verb + Object or SVO to help them remember. How the board is organized will also aid your students. For this lesson, be sure to use three columns where column one has subjects, column two has made, and column three has a list of objects. If students are having difficulty arranging phrases during a particular lesson, for example a lesson about giving directions, then a lesson specifically designed to teach word order when giving directions may be necessary. In such a case, try to focus the first lesson or two on the pronunciation and meaning of new words with the following lessons on sentence structure, word order, and dialogue.

### 2 DRILLING WORD ORDER

After introducing new material, move onto drilling it. Have students repeat each section of the new structure after you. “Mary made a cake.” is really simple but say it in three parts anyway to start off with. If using columns on the board, assign part of the class to each column so that each group contributes one part of

the structure.

### 3 PRACTICE WORD ORDER

Students must also have the opportunity to practice word order on their own or in pairs. Worksheets can provide your students the necessary practice. Activities such as Maze are fun. Break sentences into grids like the ones below. The idea is to connect the words in the correct order with a line. Only words that share a side may be connected. For simple sentences six boxes is enough but for more complex sentences add another row or two and see what your students can do. To make the exercise easier, capitalize the first word and add a period to the last word of each sentence.

Mary	Made	a
me	For	cake
Jane	Card	for
made	A	Jack

Fill in the blank exercises are good practice. To make them easier, list the words or phrases students need to put in the blanks. Songs can be a useful teaching and learning tool in ESL. If you find a song that reinforces the structure you are teaching, create some worksheets to go along with it and perhaps that will help your students remember word order better.

### 4 WHEN REVIEWING

Word order lessons can also be useful before tests because it is possible to combine many different grammatical points in a word order review lesson. While it is tempting to give students worksheets with both correct and incorrect sentences, it is best not to expose them to intentionally incorrect material but to simply reinforce proper sentence structures. Any activity where students write or say complete sentences can be used to review word order as can a

variety of worksheets such as those explained above.

### 5 PRODUCTION

There are many activities which you can use to help your students practice word order when producing sentences on their own as opposed to working from material you have given them. In small classes an exercise such as Story Time can be used. The idea of this exercise is to build a story one sentence at a time: each student adds a sentence to what his classmates have already said. This can be a lot of fun and since students have no limitations, they can really draw on all their combined knowledge of English. Often, Story Time is based around a theme so you can choose to start a love story on Valentine's Day or a scary story on Halloween. Fruit Basket is a great way to get the class moving and is good for larger classes too. To play Fruit Basket, arrange chairs in a circle so that there is one less chair than the number of students participating. The person in the middle of the circle has to make a sentence, for instance “I like apples.” if you are teaching the structure I like ~ and all the students who like apples have to stand up and find a different chair. This exercise works well with lessons on telling time too: the model sentence would be “I get up at 7:30.” or something similar. If sentences are getting too specific and certain students haven't changed places in a while, sentences such as “I like ice cream.” or “I go to school at 8:30.” will get the whole class switching seats.

**BY FOCUSING ON WORD ORDER IN YOUR EVERYDAY LESSONS, YOUR STUDENTS WILL HAVE MORE PRACTICE WITH AND UNDERSTANDING OF WORD ORDER WHICH WILL LEAVE THEM FEELING MORE CONFIDENT IN THEIR ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITIES.**

# How to Teach the Past Perfect Tense

“My dad got home late from a meeting last night. By the time he came home, we had already had dinner.” The two *hads* in the same sentence is not only confusing for ESL students, it’s also difficult to pronounce. The past perfect tense is formed by the past of the auxiliary verb *have* plus the past participle of the main verb. This may not sound too complicated, but it’s still difficult for students to grasp exactly why and when this tense is used.

Let’s explain it to them step by step.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE PAST PERFECT WITH A TIMELINE

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

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

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

### 2 PRACTICE THE PAST PERFECT TENSE

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

use of *already*.

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

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

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

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

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

Ask students to provide more examples.

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

Use the same timelines to ask your students questions:

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

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

them prompts:

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

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

Have students ask you questions and introduce short answers:

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

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

### 6 CONTRAST PAST SIMPLE AND PAST PERFECT

Make sure that students understand which clause has the verb in simple past and which has the verb in past perfect. Usually the clause that starts with *when* or *by the time* has a verb in simple past. This is the perfect worksheet to practice this contrast. Here’s another Past Perfect activity for further practice.

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

# How to Teach Present Perfect: Activities and Examples

Most ESL teachers come to this hard realization. Most students who have learned English as a second language, effectively use only three tenses: present, past, and future. And they will most likely make themselves understood, but only by resorting to these three. The Present Perfect is one of those tenses that is soon forgotten, easily replaced by past simple. But students don't realize just how important it is that they master it. To ensure your students will not let the present perfect slip into oblivion, it must be taught right. This article provides several clear steps that will help you teach the Present Perfect tense.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT PERFECT – REGULAR VERBS

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

### 2 CONTRAST FINISHED AND UNFINISHED TIME

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

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

### 3 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT PERFECT – IRREGULAR VERBS

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

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

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

### 4 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT PERFECT – NEGATIVE FORMS

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

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

### 5 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT PERFECT – INTERROGATIVE FORMS

Model questions with *have* or *has*:

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

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

### 6 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT PERFECT – SHORT ANSWERS

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

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

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

### 7 PROVIDE EXTENDED PRACTICE

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

# How to Teach Present Perfect: Alternative Approach

The Present Perfect tense is often taught and practiced over the period of several months due to its complexity and the range of situations in which it is used. This can make classes monotonous for students and challenging for you to plan as you have to think of new practice activities to use.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE SIMPLE STRUCTURES

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

### 2 PRACTICE

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

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

### 3 INTRODUCE MORE COMPLEX STRUCTURES

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

### 4 PRACTICE WITH WORKSHEETS

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

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

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

### 5 REVIEW

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

### 6 ADDITIONAL REVIEW

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

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

# Present Perfect Mystery: How to Teach For and Since

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

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

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 WARM UP

As you have probably been studying present perfect for several lessons, try not to make it the focus of the warm up activity. This will give students a bit of a break as well as a review of other topics. A short game or activity which engages students and requires them to move around the classroom would be an excellent idea. You can conduct an activity such as Chinese Whispers to start off. This will give students some basic pronunciation practice and encourage them to work more efficiently in groups. Alternatively, you could play a game such as Fruit Basket where students have to make a sentence about their weekend or another similar topic which would again give students speaking practice and allow them to share a little bit about themselves.

### 2 INTRODUCE FOR AND SINCE

Perhaps in past classes you have only introduced and practiced a basic present perfect sentence structure such as "I have played baseball." In your introduction for this lesson introduce the longer structure using examples such as "I have played baseball for three years." and "I have played baseball since fourth grade." Have students volunteer to give a translation of your example sentences and ensure that they understand the difference between the two. Use

diagrams on the board to explain that the word for is used when referencing a period of time such as "three years" while since is used when referencing a specific point in the past such as "fourth grade". This may be hard for students to grasp initially so practice activities are vastly important.

### 3 PRACTICE

Start out by completing some sentences on the board as a class. Ask for volunteers or call on students to decide which word is appropriate for each sentence and when appropriate have students translate sentences as well. Next, have students work individually to complete a worksheet. The first section might have students choose which word best completes a sentence while the second section could ask students to match for and since with appropriate time phrases such as "three years" and "fourth grade". Check the answers aloud as a class to ensure that students understand when to use each of these words. If students are struggling be sure to provide them with further practice before moving on to the next section or perhaps ask another student to explain the use of each word to the class. Sometimes simply giving another explanation can help students understand a new idea.

### 4 PRODUCE

Using the same worksheet, have a section which asks students to write a few sentences of their own using these two words. Perhaps during the writing section students could be asked to write pairs of sentences where the first one uses for and the second one uses since to say essentially the same thing such as the pair of sentences used in the baseball example above. If this is too challenging for students conduct an activity that is more suitable to their level.

### 5 REVIEW

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

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

# How to Teach the Simple Future Tense

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

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE SIMPLE TENSE WITH WILL

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

*S: Barack Obama is the President.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 3 INTRODUCE THE SIMPLE FUTURE SIMPLE WITH WILL

#### - INTERROGATIVE FORM

Model questions with will:

*T: Will you help me with this?*

*S: Yes/Sure!*

*T: Will you go to tonight's concert?*

*S: Yes/No.*

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

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

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

*S: Will you give us homework for the weekend?*

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

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

### 5 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE SIMPLE WITH GOING TO

Unlike the future with will, where an instant decision is made, once you've made a decision, and it constitutes a plan, you use the future with going to to express it. Tell your students: *I have special plans for the weekend. I'm going to visit my grandmother.*

Explain to students that the conjugation for the future with going to is the same as for the present continuous. Provide plenty of examples in different persons: *You are going to have a special class next week. A student from London is going to speak to the class. We are going to listen to his experience studying in the UK.* Ask students to give examples of things they are going to do next weekend (make sure they understand they must be things they have already planned to do).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 9 CONTRAST BOTH FORMS OF FUTURE SIMPLE

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

*S: Where are you going?*

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



# How to Teach

## Passive Voice Constructions

At the beginning of most English courses, students focus on learning active voice structures. It is usually the easiest way for them to phrase sentences but as students progress in their studies, they will encounter passive voice sentences.

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

### HOW TO PROCEED

#### 1 WARM UP

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

#### 2 INTRODUCE

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

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

#### 3 PRACTICE PASSIVE VOICE

As a class have students change responses given in the warm up from active to passive voice. If they are doing well, call on students individually or ask for volunteers to

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

#### 4 PRACTICE PASSIVE VOICE MORE

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

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

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

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

#### 5 DISCUSS PASSIVE VOICE

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

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

#### 6 PRODUCE

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

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

#### 7 REVIEW

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

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

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

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

It may seem like a contradiction, but there's nothing "passive" about learning the passive voice. Students need to be as "active" as ever and fully engaged in their learning. But it is the teacher who must engage them. How do you get students actively engaged in learning something as tedious as the passive voice? With action, of course! By showing them that there is plenty of action involved, but that the focus is not on the actor, the one who is carrying out the action, but rather whoever or whatever is acted upon. Here is one of the best ways to teach the passive voice:

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 CARRY OUT AN ACTION!

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

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

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

### 3 COMPARE THE TWO SENTENCES

Point to the first sentence and ask if the subject is doing the action. They should say it is. Make sure they

understand that subject is active, the one responsible for carrying out the action.

Point to the second sentence and ask if the subject is doing the action. They should say it isn't. Make sure they understand that the subject is passive, the one who is being acted upon. Compare what happens to the verbs. Ask students what tense they see in the first example. They should recognize the past simple. Show students what happens in the second sentence: the auxiliary verb "to be" is used in the past tense ("was") with the past participle, in this case "dropped".

### 4 GIVE AN EXAMPLE WITH "WERE"

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

### 5 PRACTICE WITH MORE PASSIVE VOICE EXAMPLES

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

Teacher puts some books under a chair. *S: Books were put under a chair. Teacher closes a book. S: A book was closed.*

Teacher writes some words on the board. *S: Some words were written on the board.*

Give enough examples to make students comfortable with the use of the past simple in the passive voice.

### 6 PRACTICE PASSIVE VOICE WITH NEGATIVE STATEMENTS

Continue carrying out actions around the classroom, but this time challenge students to make negative statements followed by affirmative statements:

*Teacher drops some papers on the floor. S: Pens weren't dropped on the floor. Papers were dropped. Teacher closes a door. S: A window wasn't closed. A door was closed.*

### 7 PRACTICE QUESTIONS IN PASSIVE VOICE

Carry out actions and have students ask questions:

*Teacher opens a window. S: Was the dictionary opened? What was (just) opened?*

### 8 PLACE THE PASSIVE VOICE IN A REAL LIFE CONTEXT - DISCUSSION

Ask students to brainstorm the types of things that the government does for the population. The government repairs streets, cleans monuments, builds schools and hospitals, etc... Make sure students see that sometimes when we talk about actions, we're not interested in the actor, either because we know who it is (in this discussion we are clearly talking about the government), or because we'd like to emphasize the results, in other words what was accomplished. Discuss what things were done in the last year by the local government. Encourage students to use the passive voice.

*S: Streets were repaired. A new hospital was opened. The park benches were painted. Trees were planted. Etc.*

For all practical purposes, this article focuses on the past simple in passive voice.

Introduce the passive voice in other tenses: actions work very well with the present perfect, too ("Some books have just been put away") – and don't forget modals!

# How to Teach the Future Continuous Tense

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

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*S2: I will be studying all day to-*

*morrow.*

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

### 2 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE CONTINUOUS – NEGATIVE FORM

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

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

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

### 3 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE CONTINUOUS – INTERROGATIVE FORM

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

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

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

*T: Ask a classmate!*

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

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

### 4 INTRODUCE THE FUTURE CONTINUOUS – SHORT ANSWERS

Have students ask you questions about future events and reply with af-

firmative and negative short answers:

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

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

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

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

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

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

# How to Teach the Present Perfect Continuous Tense

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

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE THE PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

### 2 PRACTICE THE PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS

Ask students to give more examples through substitution.

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

*Prompt students to say:*

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

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

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

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

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

Ask students which sports they currently play.

*S: I play tennis.*

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

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

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

*Use affirmative statements as prompts for student questions:*

*T: I swim twice a week.*

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

*S2: Where have you been swimming?*

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

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

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

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

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

*ing for almost a year.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# How to Teach Reported Speech

## - Statements

Also known as Indirect Speech, Reported Speech is essential in everyday spoken English to basically “report” on what another person has said.

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

### HOW TO PROCEED

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

Ask students what they usually do on weekends.

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

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

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

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

Ask students what they are doing for the holidays.

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

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

Finally, report on what they said, but make mistakes: ask students to correct you.

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

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

Ask students what they did last weekend.

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

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

*T: Juan said he had gone shopping for groceries.  
S: I said I had gone shopping for Christmas gifts.*

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

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

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

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

#### 5 PRACTICE ALL TENSES IN REPORTED SPEECH

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

*T: Sarah, what do you want for Christmas?  
S1: I want an iPhone.  
T: Juan, what did she say?  
S2: She said she wanted an iPhone.*

# How to Teach Reported Speech: Alternative Approach

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

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 WARM UP

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

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

### 2 INTRODUCE REPORTED SPEECH

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

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

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

### 3 PRACTICE

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

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

### 4 PRODUCE

Reported speech is a great opportunity for students to do interviews with classmates, teachers or family members so this activity may be best as a homework assignment. If students have never had the opportunity to conduct interviews before, it would be good to provide them with several questions to ask. It may also be helpful to provide the translations of these questions for the interviewees.

### 5 REVIEW

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

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

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

Covering this topic thoroughly now will give students the confidence to create this section of dialogue in giving advice dialogues and role plays later on.

# How to Teach Ordinal Numbers in 5 Easy Steps

Once students have learned cardinal numbers, you will have to introduce ordinal numbers as well. This lesson should not directly follow the one on cardinal numbers because students need a lot of practice with those before being introduced to this topic however they are both beginner lessons and as such will most likely fall within the same school year. If students have had enough practice with cardinal numbers, this lesson should be fun and easy. You can use some of the same teaching materials and games too!

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 WARM UP

Use the warm up activity to get students thinking about cardinal numbers especially if it has been a long time since you last practiced them. You can do this by using decks of number cards to play games like Memory or Go Fish in small groups or by playing a game such as Bingo as a class. To review more vocabulary, you can make up a story as a class instead. You can start by saying "I went to the store and bought one cat." for instance, have the next student repeat your sentence and then add "and two ~." and continue on until everyone has contributed. If you have a very large class, you may just want students to say a number and an item instead of repeating everything each time but this will give them less number practice.

### 2 INTRODUCE ORDINAL NUMBERS

Since ordinal numbers have nothing to do with amount but rather with position, do not start off by using numbers but instead use images of other vocabulary words to simulate a race on the board. You can talk with your students about the positions of each item by saying for example "The dog is first and the cat is second." Begin with just a few words or images on the board and work your way up to

give students practice using the first ten ordinal numbers. Introduce the word 'last' as well since this is a position related vocabulary word. Once students understand the meaning of these words, you can use number flashcards and choral repetition for pronunciation practice.

### 3 PRACTICE

Using the same number cards as in the warm up activity, students can play games to practice these new words. Memory would be great for pronunciation practice as long as every student says the correct ordinal number aloud when he turns over a card. If students cannot be encouraged to actually say the words aloud, you may as well move on to another activity.

You can use BusyTeacher's ordinal numbers worksheets to test comprehension by asking students questions based on images or videos of races or lines. Students can also be prompted to write sentences about themselves such as "I am the first child in my family."

### 4 PRODUCE

To give students more speaking practice, you can provide them with a model dialogue or an interview activity. The model dialogue might focus on an image on the board where students take turns asking the position of various things and responding to questions. An interview activity could include questions such as "What's the first thing you do in the morning?" or "What's the first thing you do after school?" Your students' range of vocabulary will help determine what questions are appropriate.

Try to include a variety of previously studied material as well as different ordinal numbers even though first is probably the most commonly used.

### 5 CHALLENGE

If your students are doing well, you can talk about the pattern of forming ordinal numbers. Make sure that students know that except for eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth, numbers ending with one, two, or three are irregular and should be said first, second, and third respectively. You should also look at all multiples of ten from twentieth through ninetieth because these are pronounced slightly differently from other ordinal numbers. As with cardinal numbers students may confuse words such as thirteenth and thirtieth so these may require a round of Bingo of their own for extra practice.

### ORDINAL NUMBERS SHOULD NOT PRESENT TOO MUCH OF A CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS.

Try to give students lots of fun practice activities in this lesson. There are not many occasions where ordinal numbers will come up in ESL classes except when talking about directions, for example "Turn left at the third corner." and other instructions - "First preheat the oven." where students will get lots of extra practice.

# Gerund vs. Infinitive:

## How to Explain the Difference

### STUDENTS OFTEN HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME KNOWING WHEN TO USE GERUNDS AND INFINITIVES.

Even at the intermediate level, this is typically not covered extensively and lesson plans instead focus on very specific structures such as “I like playing ~.” or “I like to play ~.”

For the majority of students this simple approach is enough and much less confusing than trying to understand when one is more appropriate than the other because in many situations, although there is a slight difference in meaning, gerunds and infinitives are used interchangeably. A lesson teaching gerunds might focus on “I like playing/eating/reading ~.” and the question “What do you like doing?” When students create sentences that are incorrect, for instance “I like playing ski.” you can address the fact that ski does not follow the same rules as sports such as soccer, baseball, and basketball. An introductory infinitive lesson could use the same approach in order to give students some easy infinitive practice without overwhelming them with various structures and uses. With more advanced students or if the difference between gerunds and infinitives is covered in your textbook, you will have to address them in more detail.

### HOW TO PROCEED

#### 1 GERUNDS AND INFINITIVES

Gerunds and infinitives are nouns formed from verbs. Gerunds are formed by adding –ing to the end of a verb. Some examples are eating, playing, and listening. Infinitives use to before the verb so the examples above would be to eat, to play, and to listen. Both can be used as the subject or object of a sentence. The negative version of both gerunds and infinitives is made simply by adding not. With this information alone, you can create lesson plans that focus

on the various uses of gerunds and infinitives and give students some practice using them in sentences. Certainly looking at how the two are similar is the easiest method of introducing the topic.

#### 2 GERUNDS

Gerunds can also be used in prepositional phrases like in the sentence “They talked about swimming yesterday but decided it was too cold.” Additionally there are certain words that should be followed by gerunds such as avoid, enjoy, and dislike and there is no great way to remember which words except through considerable amounts of practice using them.

A mistake learners often make is saying a sentence similar to “I go to swim everyday.” when the correct sentence is “I go swimming everyday.” or even “I go to the gym to swim everyday.” When certain words, such as swim, follow the verb go, they must be gerunds. This applies to many activities such as swimming, scuba diving, skiing.

#### 3 INFINITIVES

There are also some words such as demand, hope, and pretend, that must be followed by an infinitive. As with gerunds, it takes a lot of practice to recognize which words this applies to and there is no rule to help.

Additionally, when the main verb of the sentence is a form of be followed by an adjective, an infinitive often follows. One example is “They were anxious to leave.” There are other structures that use infinitives as well. Trying to address all of them in a single class period will simply confuse students. It would be better to select what key points you want to cover or spread these lessons out over the course of the year so that students do not become bored studying just one aspect of the English language.

#### 4 MEANING

Once your students have had some practice using both gerunds and infinitives in separate lessons, combine them. You can give the class pairs of sentences where one sentence uses a gerund and the other uses the infinitive. Then as a class or in groups discuss the slight to substantial differences in meaning the sentences have. This is a challenging activity and should only be done with advanced students.

### WITH ANY LUCK YOUR TEXTBOOK WILL NOT ADDRESS GERUNDS AND INFINITIVES DIRECTLY BUT WILL STILL GIVE STUDENTS LOTS OF PRACTICE USING THEM.

This method generally works best it is more similar to how native speakers learn English. It is hard to explain why “I go to swim everyday.” is incorrect while “I go to work everyday.” is correct. Native speakers never question that because they are introduced to words, phrases, and sentence structures gradually by listening to people around them.

### THE BEST WAY FOR STUDENTS TO LEARN ENGLISH IS NOT TO MEMORIZE RULES AND EXCEPTIONS TO RULES BUT TO HEAR SENTENCES MODELED CORRECTLY AND PRACTICE THEM.



# How to Teach Personal Pronouns

**PERSONAL PRONOUNS CAN BE USED TO REPLACE NOUNS ACTING AS SUBJECTS, OBJECTS, OR POSSESSIVE MARKERS IN SENTENCES.**

For each of these uses, there is a different set of pronouns so students should be introduced to them separately. These are just some of the pronouns that students will encounter during their English studies however personal pronouns are also some of the most commonly used.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 WARM UP

Begin by talking about people so that students can provide some sample sentences to work with in the next section. You can ask questions as simple as "What's your name?" to start off with. Write sentences you would like to use on the board. You can have students volunteer to answer questions, play a short game, or call on students for this section. Since the introduction may take some time and requires students to really focus, try to conduct an activity that gets them out of their chairs and moving around.

### 2 INTRODUCE: SUBJECTIVE

Introduce subjective pronouns I, you, he, she, it, we, you, and they. It is common to make two columns with three rows each so that the singular pronouns are on the left and the plural pronouns are on the right. He, she, and it are generally listed together. Maintaining this format when introducing other sets of pronouns will help students remember them. Once these are on the board do some choral repetition for pronunciation practice and write some sentences on the board.

Be sure to have a sentence for each pronoun and ask students to tell you which word or words should be replaced. If students say that David should be replaced with the word

she, you can give them another opportunity to provide the correct pronoun and then talk about why he is the correct replacement in this case.

### 3 PRACTICE PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Continue to conduct practice activities as a class until you think your students have a good understanding of these new words. You can have students form teams of about four for an activity where when you say a sentence, the first team to write the correct pronoun on the board gets a point. If you say "The dog likes walks." students should write it on the board. It is a good idea to do activities like this so that as issues come up, you can address them rather than having to go back to clarify certain things after a lot of individual practice has been done.

For speaking practice you can play Fruit Basket or simply have students do a short writing activity and then ask them to read aloud what they wrote.

### 4 INTRODUCE: OBJECTIVE/ POSSESSIVE

You can introduce the objective pronouns me, you, him, her, it, us, you, and them as well as the possessive pronouns mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, yours, and theirs in much the same way you introduced the subjective pronouns above. Students should have an easier time understanding their meaning and memorizing them after having practiced using subjective pronouns. Introduce and practice these pronouns in separate classes until students have a firm grasp on the material.

### 5 PRACTICE

Similar practice exercises to the one you used for subjective pronouns can also be used for objective and possessive pronouns. To keep students engaged and focused on

the material, be sure to include some new activities as well. Fill in the blank and multiple choice exercises are both simple ways to check comprehension.

Students could be asked to talk about something they own for writing and speaking practice using possessive pronouns. The prompt for the activity could be "This ~ is mine." and you could require that students bring the item to class and write a certain number of sentences about it.

### 6 REVIEW

Once students have covered these three types of personal pronouns, you should do some activities which combine all three. Whether you choose to use worksheets or games to do this is up to you and depends on how well your class usually responds to certain types of exercises.

A review class which combines everything they have learned about pronouns may be a challenge but it can also help you discover what students are struggling with and where their confusion lies. If necessary you can address these things in a later lesson.

**YOUR STUDENTS WILL STUDY OTHER TYPES OF PRONOUNS DURING THEIR ENGLISH COURSE BUT PERSONAL PRONOUNS ARE ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT BECAUSE THEY ARE USED QUITE FREQUENTLY. STUDENTS WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRACTICE USING PERSONAL PRONOUNS OFTEN SO THERE IS NO NEED TO MAKE A SPECIAL EFFORT TO INCLUDE THEM IN FUTURE LESSONS.**

# How to Teach Modal Verbs:

## 4 Simple Steps

English language learners are often confused by modal verbs because they are used differently than other verbs and in a wide variety of situations such as asking for permission and giving advice.

There are a couple methods you can use to teach students modal verbs. One is to introduce only a few words at a time and complete several practice activities before attempting to introduce additional vocabulary. Another way you can teach modal verbs is to structure your lessons around their uses. You could leave all the modal verbs written on the board for the whole chapter but use only the ones appropriate for giving advice in one lesson and asking for permission in another for instance.

Let's look at the second method in more detail.

### HOW TO PROCEED

#### 1 INTRODUCE ALL MODALS

Start by introducing all the modal verbs you wish to talk about. This may include can, could, may, might, must, will, would, shall, should, and ought to but, depending on the level of your class, you can narrow it down to those you feel are most important. Obviously there are no images that can help students understand the meanings of these words so you can do pronunciation practice simply by pointing to the words on the board. In your introduction you can cover some rules that apply to all modal verbs. Unlike most verbs, no -s is needed to form the third person singular. For example "He should ~." is correct, while "He work." is incorrect. Adding not forms the negative structure. Additionally they always require another verb because they cannot act as the main verb in a sentence and they only have present tense forms so unlike the word swim, there is no past tense form for modals. This may seem like a long and confusing introduction but it is best after the

pronunciation practice to simply write the modals and their rules off to the side of the board for reference.

#### 2 ABILITY / INABILITY AND POSSIBILITY / IMPOSSIBILITY

Modals are often used to talk about abilities and possibilities or lack of them. Some of the words you want to focus on in this section are can, could, may, and might. Talk to your students about things they can do and practice using can in the target structure because this will be the easiest word to start off with (see our CAN worksheets). Next you should talk about might because it is also commonly used when talking about present possibilities such as "We can't play music in class because the other classes might be taking tests." which nicely combines the two words in one sentence. Building upon that, talk about how could and may are used to discuss future abilities and possibilities and also how could can be used to talk about the past in a sentence such as "When I was a child, I could climb trees." So as you can see just this one section on modals can take awhile. It is best to introduce structures gradually and to plan lots of practice activities for each.

#### 3 OTHER USES

You can center another lesson on asking for permission or making an offer or request. Can, could, may, shall, will, and would can all be used so you might want to break this up into pairs by introducing can and could, will and would, and finally may and shall. In other lessons you can cover using modals to make suggestions and give advice, to talk about obligations and prohibitions, and lastly cover using ought to and should to say what the correct action would be for instance "She ought to see a doctor." or "We should be quiet while the teacher is talking." For some classes it is not necessary to

cover all the different uses of modal verbs so feel free to choose what is most important and then cover those items thoroughly before moving on to the next topic.

#### 4 COMBINATION

If you cover many different uses of modal verbs in your class, be sure to have a lesson which combines them again. It makes sense to start with all the words you plan to cover in the first class and finish the same way. Since students have been focusing on just one use at a time, this lesson will bring to their attention the range of uses these words have and really challenge them. Fill in the blank and multiple choice worksheets may be appropriate and of course you can conduct role plays based on the different uses of modal verbs too.

**MODAL VERBS HAVE MANY USES. TEACHERS SHOULD REVIEW THE USES OF MODALS CAREFULLY BEFORE INTRODUCING THEM AND THINK ABOUT WHAT STUDENTS WOULD MOST BENEFIT FROM STUDYING SO THAT PLENTY OF TIME CAN BE DEDICATED TO THOSE ITEMS. LEAVING OUT SOME MODALS OR SOME USES OF MODALS IS NOT THE END OF THE WORLD AND MAY JUST GIVE YOUR STUDENTS A BETTER CHANCE OF UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS COVERED.**

# How to Teach Question Structures

Teachers often give students plenty of time to practice answering questions without dedicating sufficient practice time to asking them. For example, Crisscross is a very simple warm up activity where students answer questions such as “How’s the weather?” but after nearly a year of doing this activity, students may struggle to come up with the correct question for the answer “It’s sunny!”

Students can become accustomed to hearing key words in questions, in this case weather, and answering correctly without paying any attention to the question’s structure.

Here are some ideas to help students focus on this more.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 INTRODUCE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS TOGETHER

During the introduction of new materials, you can ask the target question when trying to elicit vocabulary. This way, students will hear it while they are focusing on the structure of the answer and after practicing the target answer you can go back and do some pronunciation practice with the question too. Question and answer structures are normally introduced together because for example “How’s the weather?” and “It’s ~.” are a pair and learning one without the other is not very beneficial.

### 2 PRACTICE THEM TOGETHER, TOO

Practice activities should also include both structures. For speaking practice this is easy because interview activities and model dialogues will certainly include both. Written exercises usually make students focus on answering the questions and not on the questions themselves. For structures where students have to compose their own responses such as “What’s your favorite sport?” it makes

sense that students would be more concerned with what they should say in response. On quizzes, exams, and in real life however, students are going to need to be able to ask as well as answer questions so include some activities that draw attention to a question’s word order. You can do this by adding a section of answers where students have to write the question for each answer.

If this is too challenging you can have students match questions with answers or, better yet, fill in blanks within the question. These exercises will help students practice question structures more extensively.

### 3 PRODUCTION STAGE

During production exercises, questions are usually provided so that students have some guidelines or organization for their activities. Model dialogues and role-plays can be adapted to give students more practice forming questions. You can also play Fruit Basket by asking the student in the middle to say a question and having everyone who would answer “Yes” change seats. Example questions might be “Do you like blue? Have you eaten sushi? Are you a student?” This can be used for many different question structures and levels. You could play Fruit Basket as a review activity at the end of the first lesson using the answer structure and as a warm up in the next lesson using the question structure. Students may struggle at first but the more familiar they are with asking questions the easier it will be for them to learn new ones.

### 4 FOCUS ON QUESTION WORDS

Make questions part of general review material and activities before exams or quizzes by dedicating a section to them. If you have a study guide for students, make sure that students write their answers to questions as well as complete the

questions. This will make them more aware of often overlooked words in questions. For “How’s the weather?” students may be tempted to say something similar to “What weather?” as the target question because many questions in beginning and intermediate English lessons start with what and because they recognize the word weather as the word that links it to the answer. When creating blanks in the questions, leave in words such as weather and focus more on who, what, where, when, why, and how as well as words such as your in questions like “What’s your favorite sport?” When conducting review games, you can include a section where students have to give the question for the answer provided. This may be the most challenging section of the game so awarding extra points for correct answers may be appropriate.

While many classes concentrate on having students answer questions, real life does not work this way.

**STUDENTS ARE GOING TO HAVE TO BE ABLE TO BOTH ASK AND ANSWER QUESTIONS WHEN GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM SO TEACHERS NEED TO DEVOTE PLENTY OF TIME TO QUESTION RELATED ACTIVITIES. ONCE YOUR LESSON PLANS START INCLUDING MORE OF THESE, STUDENTS WILL HAVE BETTER SUCCESS REMEMBERING AND USING QUESTIONS.**

# How to Teach the Imperative Form

In your classes, you have probably used the imperative form when giving directions to your students so they will be familiar with at least one of its uses. This lesson will make students more aware of the imperative form and give them the opportunity to practice using it.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 WARM UP

It has probably been a long time since your students played Simon Says so give them a review of body parts while practicing the imperative form by playing this game. Rather than have only one person give instructions, have students stand in a circle and take turns being Simon. This way when you give your introduction, students will have already had some practice using the imperative structure.

### 2 INTRODUCE

Introduce the imperative form using both positive and negative examples. "Please, stand up." would be a positive form that students should be familiar with from class while the negative "Don't text in class" is hopefully not needed very often. Elicit other imperative sentences from your students and write down further examples of your own. Explain that this structure is used when giving directions and orders and give students some speaking practice by having them read the sentences you have written on the board aloud.

### 3 PRACTICE

Have students match images with sentences. The images should depict either scenarios or actions where use of an imperative sentence would be appropriate. A good example would be to match the universal "no smoking" sign with the sentence "Don't smoke." You can also have students complete a fill in the blank exercise where the missing words

are listed for them to choose from. Check the answers as a class and review why certain choices were correct by asking questions about the images or sentences.

### 4 DISCUSS

Students have already been given many examples and completed a worksheet so they should have a good idea of when to use the imperative. At this point, talk about being polite while still giving orders and lead by example using please when giving instructions to your students. Discuss situations where use of the imperative form would be appropriate. Shouting for someone to "Stop!" if he is about to cross the street when a car is coming would be fine. On the other hand, if someone is simply making lots of noise or distracting you, shouting "Stop!" would be considered impolite. Tell students that directions in the form of a recipe or an instructional manual would also commonly use the imperative form.

### 5 PRACTICE

Prepare passages which include several imperative sentences and write the individual sentences on strips of paper. These can be conversations, sets of instructions, or recipes. A conversation could start off like this "Be quiet! I think I hear something. Come here. I heard it again! Listen carefully." Have students work in groups. Each group should be given the strips of paper to complete one passage and work together to place sentences in the correct order. Since each group has a different passage, it may be fun to have students share them with the class when the activity has been completed.

### 6 PRODUCE

Directions lessons will give students lots of practice using the imperative. At this time, instead of practicing giving directions, focus on cooking vocabulary and recipes

instead. Have students write recipes for their favorite dishes using the imperative form. They can practice reading the instructions as well but it may be necessary to make corrections before asking students to read their recipes aloud. In order to challenge students, you may have to specify how many sentences are required to complete this activity. Giving students an example on the board, will help them immensely. Encourage students to ask you questions as you move around the class monitoring their progress.

### 7 REVIEW

Ask for volunteers to give you imperative sentences. Once a student has volunteered, he can sit down while the rest of the class thinks of sentences. Continue this activity until all the students are seated or the bell rings and do not accept duplicate sentences.

**THE IMPERATIVE FORM IS SOMETHING STUDENTS WILL HAVE A LOT OF PRACTICE WITH ESPECIALLY WHEN STUDYING DIRECTIONS. ENSURING THAT STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THIS STRUCTURE NOW WILL MAKE FUTURE CLASSES MUCH EASIER FOR BOTH YOU AND THEM.**

# How to Teach Relative Pronouns

Intermediate learners will often spend several lessons on topics such as relative pronouns. Some teachers prefer to introduce only one or two relative pronouns at a time and then combine all of them in a final relative pronoun lesson. The outline below follows another method where all five are introduced at the same time but this approach will also take several lessons to complete.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 WARM UP

Plan a warm up activity based on the materials you want to use later on in class. Asking questions about hobbies, pets, and family members is useful because you can use the responses from students as examples during later stages of the lesson. If you ask "What do you like to do?" and Meg says, "I like to play tennis." write her answer on the board.

### 2 INTRODUCE AND DRILL VOCABULARY

There are five relative pronouns in the English language. They are that, which, who, whom, and whose. Write these words on the board, model the pronunciation for your students, and drill. Unlike most vocabulary words, there are no pictures or definitions that will help your students understand their meaning so the best thing you can do is explain how to use these words.

### 3 INTRODUCE STRUCTURE

Using the responses from the warm up, show students how to use these new vocabulary words. Our sample response could easily become "Meg is a girl who likes to play tennis." or "Meg is a student that likes to play tennis." It is important to demonstrate that that can be used to refer to both people and things while who and whom refer only to people, which refers only to things, and whose is the only one of the five that

reflects possession. If your students have difficulty, focus the first lesson only on that and who.

### 4 PRACTICE RELATIVE PRONOUNS

For the first practice activity, have a worksheet where students circle the correct relative pronoun for each sentence. There should only be two options per sentence and only one correct answer. The activity should not take long to complete but use the time correcting answers as speaking practice for your students. Ask for volunteers to provide the correct answer and ask for translations of the sentences to ensure that students understand them.

### 5 PRACTICE RELATIVE PRONOUNS MORE

On the same worksheet, you can include a pair activity. You will need eight sentences with relative pronouns where Student A has the first half of four sentences and the second half of four sentences while student B has the opposite halves. Student A goes first by reading the first half sentence while Student B searches his endings to find the one that matches and dictates it to Student A. When Student A has completed all his sentences, students should switch roles. It will be easier for students to complete sentences if there is no ambiguity as to which endings go with which beginnings. You can ensure that this is the case by using sentences such as I love going to zoos that have pandas. In this example the words zoo and panda should help students place them together.

### 6 PRODUCE

For a production exercise, have students write the names of five people on their worksheet (celebrities, for example). Have students work in pairs and take turns describing their people using relative pro-

noun sentences until all the names they have written down have been guessed. Using another teacher as an example, give students some easy model sentences such as "She is a woman who teaches History. She is the teacher that drives a red car." Another activity students may enjoy is a board game. Have students work in groups of three to four taking turns rolling the dice and moving. For every space on the board have a picture so that each student must make a relative pronoun sentence on his turn. Both of these activities require your students to understand the material quite well so be sure to do sufficient practice exercises before moving on to this stage of the lesson. Especially in large classes, it will be impossible to correct every mistake in activities such as these.

### 7 REVIEW

As a review or warm up activity, play fruit basket. Have students stand in a circle surrounded by a ring of chairs where there is one less chair than students. The student in the middle has to make a relative pronoun sentence and every student it applies to must then scramble to change chairs leaving a new student in the middle to create the next sentence. If certain students have not moved in a long time, mix things up with a sentence such as "I am a student who studies English."

**RELATIVE PRONOUNS CAN BE CONFUSING FOR STUDENTS TO GRASP AS THEY ARE PART OF A MORE COMPLEX SENTENCE STRUCTURE. STUDENTS WILL SEE RELATIVE PRONOUNS MORE AND MORE AS THEY PROGRESS THROUGH THEIR ENGLISH STUDIES SO PLEASE DEDICATE PLENTY OF TIME TO THIS TOPIC.**

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

Students can use “used to” or “would” to talk about actions in the past that they no longer do. Since behaviors change over time, this is an excellent structure to use when reflecting on the past. This also gives students the opportunity to explain how they have changed as they have gotten older.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 WARM UP

Get students thinking about the past by asking questions such as “What sport did you play when you were a child?” and “What did/didn’t you like when you were a child?” You could also simply have students volunteer something that they remember from their childhood. Write some sentences on the board as well as the names of the students who provided them to refer to later.

### 2 INTRODUCE ‘USED TO’

Introduce the structure “used to” by talking about one of the sentences on the board or using an example of your own. You can say “When I was a child I lived in New York City.” and then show students the target structure by writing “I used to live in New York City.” on the board. Have students repeat the sentence after you. Be sure to highlight the importance of the phrase “used to” by underlining it. Help students realize that it is important, for this structure, that you no longer live in NYC. Now ask students to look at the sentences on the board. As a class rewrite these sentences using the target structure and for each one check that the statement is no longer true. For instance, if Lisa said that she liked cake as a child and still likes cake then you cannot use that sentence. Ensure that students understand this key point.

### 3 PRACTICE ‘USED TO’

For the first practice exercise have students read ten statements

using the target structure and decide if the each sentence applies to them or not. For young students one such statement could be “I used to be really messy, but now I am more organized.” while for adult students, statements such as “I used to enjoy going to clubs, but now I prefer to do other activities.” might be more appropriate. You can then take a poll and collect your findings on the board. It may be interesting to see how many students used to do certain activities or behave in certain ways. Next have students think of some other “used to” sentences that apply to them. You can have students volunteer to read sentences aloud to the class or work in groups to discuss the different sentences. After you teach this lesson once, you can use sentences that your students created as the ten statements for the first practice activity in later lessons so that they are better tailored to your students.

### 4 INTRODUCE ‘WOULD’

Once students have become familiar with using “used to” on their own, introduce “would” and explain how it is used in similar sentences. “When I was young, I would play soccer after school.” is a good example because you can also say “When I was young, I used to play soccer after school.” Not every sentence that uses “used to” can use “would” so be sure to give some examples and explain the difference between the two. “Would” cannot be used in a negative sentence without altering its meaning and while you can say “I used to dance.” you cannot say “I would dance.” and mean the same thing either.

### 5 PRACTICE ‘USED TO’ & ‘WOULD’

Do a practice activity where students change “used to” sentences into sentences using “would” and then in groups, pairs or individually complete a fill in the blank exercise. Check all the answers as a class to ensure that

students understand these structures well before moving on to the next activity. In order to get your class moving and enthusiastic, you can do a team activity or play Fruit Basket for more practice.

### 6 REVIEW

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

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

# How To Teach Boring Grammar Points: 7 Quick Proven Tips

Most ESL teachers at some point have come across a certain grammar point that they struggle to find activities to liven up the class or add some life into it. Most of us generally loathe some topics more than others, and would rather find ourselves watching an episode of 'Days Of Our Lives' or, even worse, a drama series of our local country, rather than teaching that horrible topic again. The bad news is, when we think like this, it can negatively affect the vibe of class without ourselves even realising it. When we find a topic boring, we can generally pass this vibe onto students. This is something that all teachers must look out for, as when a student loses focus, it is very difficult to gain their attention. The best approach is to keep the energy levels of your class high and vibrant. There are a number of tips and tricks that can be adapted for all lessons, grammar points and topics that will keep your students focused and in the right frame of mind for learning.

## HOW TO PROCEED

### 1 SHOW OFF YOUR BEST ASSET

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

### 2 BE A LITTLE UNEXPECTED

One little gem we like to use in the classroom when teaching a boring topic, is to keep them thinking. Instead of feeding them the answers or elicit the answer out of them, we like to keep them on their toes. One such method is to give the students an answer to a question that is incor-

rect, and see how long it takes the students to recognise the error. Being unexpected means that they must always be thinking, and they are not going to find themselves anticipating the answers.

### 3 TELL A STORY

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

### 4 TAKE THE TABLOID APPROACH

One nifty little way to liven up any lesson is to use the lives of celebrities to explain a grammar point. To do this, find out about a local celebrity in the country, find out who they've been dating, associated with, previously dated, been married to, been embroiled in some form of scandal, and create a time line while explaining the tense. Example: Tom Cruise was married to Nicole Kidman (Past tense – Finished Action, They're divorced. Tom Cruise married Katie Holmes after he had divorced Nicole Kidman (Past tense, finished action / Past Perfect – the first action to happen in the past).

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

### 5 BE PRACTICAL

We are big advocates of teaching English that students will find beneficial and useful in their jobs or their lives. One way we like to do this is to try to use practical examples wherever possible. It is incredibly simple and can even be improvised on the spot. **An example is explain-**

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

### 6 USE THE NEWS

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

### 7 PLAY A GAME

Have you ever been in class and noticed that the following exercise in the book was a typical 'fill in the gaps' or something that you knew would send the students far away into a dreamlike trance? Well, this is the point where you can tell the students to stop everything, put their pens down, close books and stand up. Students love competition with each other, and any activity where two teams can be created and scoring is involved is a sure-winner with any tasks. Instead of having the students complete the activity in the book, in silence and on their own, they can learn and have fun at the same time by working together as a group. Practically any grammar point can be 'spiced up' with a little help of fun activities that will keep you and your students from falling asleep.