

Tools, Techniques, and Tips for a Successful EFL Experience

Phyllis Merritt, Nanjing - 2011

First Day of Class

Arrive Early For peace of mind, get to class early, and be ready for the day—calm, composed, and organized with board work, maps, poster hanging, sorting materials, and group seating arrangements complete. Take a deep breath, smile, and look poised as you wait to greet your class.

Don't Forget Your lesson plan, materials, handouts, and do not EVER be caught without bottled water, and a ready supply of Kleenex.

Name Tags Name tags get lost or turned around when participants sit around a table. Fold white index cards in half. Provide a large magic marker to write names on both sides. Use inside of cards later to make acrostic poems.

Bring Index Cards Take two colors of index cards (3x5 or 4x6) for student demographic data. (You may not be able to distinguish male from female names on your class roll so ask female class members to fill out pink cards and males blue cards (or mark top of card with a pink or blue pen).

Ask each student to write the meaning of their given name (poppy, courage, etc. To select English names: Bring a Names book that has names, origins, meanings, etc. Select a name that seems fitting, perhaps one that sounds something like their Chinese name.

If a student has an English name that would bring derision in an English-speaking culture, rename him/her suitably if they plan to go abroad. Or say, "I will select a name for you for this class."

Chinese name) Meaning, Pronunciation in English),
English name (if none, do they want one?)
Hobby(ies)
Birthday
Educational level and major
Occupation/profession, marital status
Home address, telephone number, B.P. number
E-mail

Name on a Stick

Introduce the use of CRAFT STICKS Print each student's name on tongue depressors or Popsicle sticks, with black magic marker. May use for more than one class by writing names on different ends of sticks or in middle with different colors.

How to Use: Keep them in a plastic container (a water bottle cut in half). Take one stick from the container, hold it up, and call the name of the student whose name is on the stick. (Set aside sticks of absentees.)

Use For Roll Call or for taking turns if the same student monopolizes the discussion, to keep the momentum up, or when students are timid or hesitant to answer. This insures that every student is called on and has opportunity to speak each day.

General Suggestions

Brown paper bags make good file cabinets in your room.

Take lessons to class in a large plastic bag.

Use masking tape all around the edges of posters to keep on the wall

Make Posters on white plastic bags—they will stay on the wall with static electricity

Make a "HELP WANTED" poster soliciting student positions: Class Monitor, Class Artist, Class Calligrapher (Printer), Class Technician (gets and returns equipment, operates video, cassette player, etc.) Sign up students to walk you home, take you to purchase supplies, or stop for coffee or a coke for a "Personal Interview" time. If you need something written on the markerboard, ask students to complete that ahead of time.

Opening Remarks

Begin: *Good morning. We are now beginning the 2011 Summer English Program. Welcome to this class. My name is _____ (write on board -- print not cursive). Please call me "_____" At home, in _____, I (tell your job, major/degree). I have looked forward to meeting each of you for many months. . . .*

(Prepare this poster before class) Say:

The goals for our class are:

1. Improve Listening Comprehension  and Speaking Skills. 

2. Learn about American (Western) culture.    

3. Make new friends. 

4. Improve Teaching Skills 

5. Think in English 

6. DREAM in English 

(The last day: Each student writes a half sheet of paper, "How I have achieved my goals of improving listening and speaking skills, learning about Western culture and making new friends.")

ASK CLASS TO ALL STAND. Say, *Please Sit down -- if previous to coming to SEP, you already knew:*

Every person in this class . . .

Now, for those who are still standing, please sit down if you knew at least 10 people in this class . . .

only 5 people in this class . . .

1 other person in this class. . .

*If you do not know **any one** in this class.*

Point out that during the SEP you hope all present will get to know each other better as Class Goals are met.

Explain Your Class Procedure: Agenda, Theme for the day, Roll Check, Posting of Announcements, Journal, Homework, Class Work, Group Work, Pair Work, Lectures, Special Activities, etc.

Sample Daily Schedule

Greeting - Teach a different greeting each day:

Hello, (Hi, How's it going? What's up? What's new? How are you doing? Howdy, etc.)

Answer Roll Call with a different phrase each day

I'm here. (Or: Present, Here I am, Over here, My name is _____ and I _____.

Proverb i.e. first day: "A good name is more to be treasured than great riches." Ask Agree? or Disagree? (thumbs up or thumbs down.

Or, "Love joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness and self-control"

(Assign groups to act out each characteristic.)

Tongue Twister Aluminum, linoleum, aluminum, linoleum,

Nicholas Novinksy named his nine nieces and nephews: Nora, Nell, Ned, Nina, Nate, Nancy, Nan, Nick, & Nathan

Journal Assignment -- usually associated with the topic for the day

PROCEDURE: 1. Look on blackboard each day for the Journal Topic.

2. Write 1/2 to 1 page for each topic.

3. Turn in your assignment the next day for comments

My Favorite Relative / If I Had a half day with nothing to Do /

Friendship is: a telephone call, sharing your lunch, etc.



Happiness is _____



Misery is _____

Love is _____

Friendship is _____



PRONUNCIATION WARM-UPS /PRONUNCIATION ADVICE

TEACHING THE LESSON

THEME For The Day: Group-Related Activities

Listening Skills Vocabulary Building

Comprehension Development

Jazz Chants Games

Language Enrichment, Discussion

Communication Skills

Stories

Dialogues

SINGING

LEAVE TAKING

Practice a different farewell each day, "Bye-bye." "So long," "I'm outta here." "See you later," "See you later alligator," "After 'while crocodile."

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS: Say, Our class will be patterned after (a Western) an American classroom setting and may be different from any you have had before.

1. Remember if you speak (Chinese) during this time:

a. It disturbs those who are trying to think in English.

b. It appears rude to the instructor

2. Interrupting or helping when another person is answering a question is not done in a western/an American classroom. Each person gets to give an individual answer.

3. You can feel free to respond when asked for help, suggestion or ideas.

SAFETY PIN SPEAKING REMINDERS You may attach a safety pin to each person's nametag. When anyone hears another person not speaking English, they get to take the pin. The person with the most pins at the end of the day wins.

GETTING ACQUAINTED ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTIONS FOR YOUR CLASSROOM

ALLITERATIONS "My name is Phyllis and I am going to Fuzhou with philosophy book in my suitcase."

2nd person: Her name is Phyllis and she is . . . , My name is (alliterate name, place and item being taken (Last person: prize)

ACTION NAME GAME

Students tell their name and add an action:

Student 1. My name is Tom (coughs).

Student 2. His name is Tom (coughs) and my name is Joe (claps his hands).

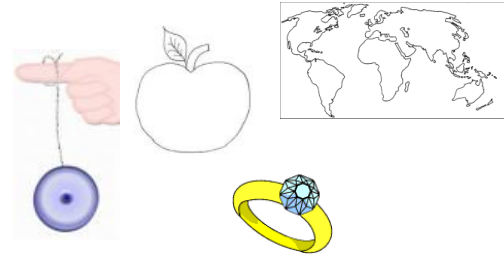
Student 3. His name is Tom (coughs), and his name is Joe (claps), and my name is Sue (scratches head).

Student 4. His name is Student 5 . . . Student 6

Or, Physically make the shape of the first letter of your name. (YMCA style)

DRAW YOUR NAME ACROSTIC

1. Draw on the board in random order one object beginning with each letter of your name.
 2. Ask students to tell you the names of each object in the order which will spell your name.
 3. Write each letter as the object is named.
 4. Ask your students to do the same, but let the rest of the class guess their names.
- For example: Draw a yo-yo, an apple, a ring, and a map = MARY



NAME PANTOMIME 1

Every player must use pantomime to act out his name using a word for each letter of his name. Example: D= detective, A= angel, S= Sun, etc. The others must guess the player's name. If all of the players know each other well, whisper in the class member's ears whose name they should pantomime.

WRITE YOUR NAME ACROSTIC

M any friends
A lways happy
R arely angry
Y outhful at heart

MAKE "LETTER PEOPLE" WITH THE FIRST LETTER OF YOUR NAME

Or, use outline letters or numbers to draw figures of important life events.



HOW MANY WORDS?

With a partner, see how many words you can make using the letters in your names. Allow first and last names if necessary. Demonstrate first with your name on the board.

LET'S DO IT, TOO

Students stand in a circle. Have the first student in the circle begin by saying their name. After they say their name, they are to put a movement for *every syllable* in their name. For example, if the student's name is Jessica...the movement could be **clap, stomp, clap**. The first clap is for "Jess", the stomp is for "i", and the third clap is for "ca". All of the students repeat the movement while saying that person's name. The same procedure is done by the next student in line. After the students have all said the next one, they would then come back and do the ones before that.

ANOTHER POETIC INTRODUCTION

Use the form below (or create a variation) to create poems that describe yourselves:

Name _____

Title (of poem) _____

I will never _____,

I will never _____,

and I will never _____.

I will always _____.

This activity lends itself to being done the first day and again at the last day of class. Compare responses and see how the students *and* the responses have changed.

INSTANT ID

Divide into two teams. Have two people hold a large, thick blanket up like a curtain. Have a person from each team stand facing each other with the blanket between, then quickly drop the blanket. The first one to correctly say the other person's name earns a point for his team.

THE NAME GAME SONG... A chant made up based on a one or two syllable name

Chris Chris / bo bis / banana fana fo fis / Chris

Target problem sounds by substituting the difficult sound. For example // /r/ would become:

Chris Chris / ro ris / banana lana lo lis / me my mo mis Chris / le ry lo ris / Chris

Or, V/F:

Phyllis Phyllis

vo vis

banana fana fo fis

ve vy vo vis PHYLLIS!

N:

Jan Jan

no nis

banana fana no nis

knee nigh no nis, JAN!

TH:

Theda Theda

though this

banana thana though this

thee thy though this, GAYLE!

CONCENTRATION: The rhythm for the game is slap, slap (on the knees), clap, clap, snap, snap (one on each hand, right, then left). Sit in a circle. The leader sets the pace. The object is to get to the leader's spot. The leader begins the rhythm, and on one set of snaps says his/her name on the first, and someone else's on the second (the names MUST always be said on the two snaps). The person who's name is said must respond on the next set by saying his/her own name and then someone else's. If the player does it correctly, the game continues. If the player does not do it quickly enough, that player must move to the seat to the right of the leader, and the rest of the group moves up a seat (toward the leader's spot) to fill in the seats. Game continues until group has learned names well.

PAIR SQUARE SHARE

(Need: Jigsaw name tags, different colors, numbers, with assigned questions on back)

Group all #1's (2's, 3's, and 4's) together. Instructions: *Split into pairs and find out your partner's name and birthday--(month and day).* All 4 come together and tell the others: "Her/His birthday is . . ."

GROUP COLORS TOGETHER All reds, (purples, greens, oranges) get together. Tell your name and birthday and the name and birthday of the other 3 who were in your group.

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

Place: cord in circle on floor, use whistle, bell or Squeaky Toy to gain attention

Instructions:

Using colors from Pair Share Square, or one-half of the group, stand on cord facing out.

The other half, find someone and face them.

Give everyone a question and each pair asks and answers the questions they have, at the signal the outside group moves to the right (or left one person and repeats.

Question Set One

1. What did you do last night?
2. What do you enjoy doing in your free time?
3. Where did you go on your last vacation?
4. What is the best thing that you have ever done?
5. What is your favorite food?
6. Who is your favorite film/movie star?
7. Which is your favorite book?
8. Which film/movie have you seen recently- describe it?
9. Which famous person would you like to meet and why?
10. Which is your favorite sport?
11. Why are you learning English?
12. Which is your favorite animal and why?
13. If you could do any job in the world, what would you do?
14. What would you do, if you received a million dollars?
15. How often do you go out at night during the week?
16. Can you tell me what you wanted to become when you were 10?

Question Set Two

1. Can you spell your first name and last name in less than a minute?
2. Can you give your address and phone number?
3. Can you tell me your favorite place on earth?
4. Can you name 3 cities in China and 3 cities in the Africa?
5. Can you say the months of the year backwards in 30 seconds?
6. Can you sing some words from a song in English?
7. Can you ask a question starting with each of these words:
WHO? WHAT? WHEN? WHERE? HOW?
8. Can you tell me where you spent last Christmas?
9. Can you tell me where you were born?
10. Can you name 3 good friends?
12. Can you recite a favorite tongue twister?
13. Can you tell me your first job?
14. Can you say your first name backwards?
15. Can you make a rhyme using your first name?
16. Can you name a famous person with your same name?

SILENT INTERVIEWS

1. Divide the group into pairs - try to mix the group into pairs who don't know each other well.
2. Ask the participants to introduce themselves to their partner.
3. Instruct the group that from this point forward, no speaking is allowed—no whispering, mouthing words, or making sounds.
4. Inform the group that they must tell their partner 3 things about themselves without speaking, similar to a charades game. These things can not be physical characteristics.
5. Once all of the partners have finished miming to each other, call everyone back into a circle.
6. Ask for each pair to verbally introduce their partner to the group, as well as the three things that they learned (or think they learned).



CANDY INTRODUCTIONS

A get-to-know-you game that helps people learn new facts about each other in an easy way. They select various pieces of candy from a bag, and each candy variety is associated with a fact about themselves which they will introduce to the others.

Candy Introductions work best when the group size is limited to 12, if you have more than 12, divide the larger group and run the icebreaker within the smaller sized groups.

Setup for Candy Introductions

Purchase several variety packs of candy, enough for each person to be able to have at least five pieces. They can be any candy type, but not too many choices (limit it to around five or six different varieties). Alternatively, you can buy gummy bears, life savers, gum drops, skittles, m&ms, or any other candy that already has a variety of colors.

Instructions for How to Play

Pass around the candy and tell each participant to choose anywhere from 1 to 5 pieces of anything that they want. Instruct them not to eat it yet, though. After they have chosen their candy, you will tell them what each candy type/color represents.

Write on the markerboard or a poster the following:

- Red - Favorite hobbies Green - Favorite place on earth Blue - Favorite memory
- Yellow - Dream job Orange - Wildcard (tell us anything about yourself!)

Name Tag Match Maker

Each group member will need a 5" x 7" card for a name tag.

Then give the following directions:

1. Put your name in the center of your card.
2. In the upper left corner, write 4 things that you like to do.
3. In the upper right corner, write your 4 favorite singers or groups.
4. In the lower left corner, write your 4 favorite movies.
5. In the lower right corner, write 4 adjectives that describe you.

4 things I like to do _____ _____ _____ _____	4 favorite singers or groups _____ _____ _____ _____
NAME	
4 favorite movies _____ _____ _____ _____	4 adjectives to describe me _____ _____ _____ _____

When everyone finishes, have them mingle with the group

for a few minutes. Without talking, they are to read the upper left corner of the other group members' cards. When time is up, they are to find one or two people who are most like them and visit for a few minutes. When time is up, they are to mingle again reading the upper right corner of the other group members' cards. They then find the one or two people most like them and visit. Repeat with the lower left corner and lower right corner information.

Rule: No two people can be in the same group more than once.

ADJECTIVE NAME GAME: The group is formed in a circle, and each group member is required to think of an adjective that describes him/her OR rhymes with the individual's first name. Each group member will amplify their new creative name, and the rest of the group will repeat that name and all the names of the previous people.

Change and use an adjective that alliterates with the individual's first name. "Hello! My name is Vivacious Velasquez." The next person would say this adjective and name before saying theirs. So they would go, "Hello, Vivacious Velasquez, my name is Silly Sam." Then the third person would go, "Hello, Vivacious Velasquez, and Silly Sam, my name is Easy-going Edwin." The last person must remember everyone's name AND adjective before stating theirs.

9. What's in a name? (Discussions from onestopenglish.com)

What's Your Name?

Can you answer these questions?

- What's your name?
- What's your full name?
- What's your surname?
- What's your last name?
- What's your nickname, if you have one?
- What's your family name?
- What's your married name?
- What's your maiden name?
- What name do you go by at work/school?
- What do your parents call you?

1. Why do you have your name?
 2. Is there anyone else in your family with your same name?
 3. What does your name mean?
 4. Where does your name come from?
 5. Is there an abbreviation for your name?
Does anybody use it?
 6. Are there any famous people with the same name as yours?
 7. How popular is your name today?
- See: www.zelo.com/firstnames/index.asp;
www.babynames.com; www.firstnamesfirst.com;
www.behindthename.com

Line Up

Ask students to line up according to one of the following patterns. This gives a break to the students and they must speak English to see where they belong.

1. Alphabetical (according to first name, last name, city or school) Practice: What's your first name? What's your last name? Where are you from?
2. How long have you lived in (_____)?
3. What month were you born? (January starts on the far right and December on far left).
4. What time did you go to bed last night? (What time did you get up this morning?)
5. How long have you studied English?
6. How many aunts and uncles do you have?

Our Class A Jazz Chant (for teachers who cannot sing)

We like to communicate, Mate. We eat good food, Dude. We help each other, brother.

We work together, Heather. We are very smart, Bart. Each one is unique, Zeke. We're always alert, Bert.

Together, we are strong, Wong. We have joy, Roy.

Jump to the right, jump to the left

Tell the class that you are going to say sentences which may or may not be grammatically correct. If they think the sentence is incorrect, they jump to the right, if incorrect, they jump to the left. Say the incorrect sentence again and ask students to correct you. Note common mistakes and repeat during the course.

Sample Sentences:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. I must to go home. | Incorrect I must go home. |
| 2. If I will have time, I will go. | Incorrect If I have time, I will go. |
| 3. I have so a bad headache. | Incorrect I have such a bad headache. |
| 4. I was born in (US/Canada/) | Correct |

Crossword Review - Molinsky & Bliss

For example: Body Parts. Write one word on the board and ask class to name a word starting with the last letter of the word. Use as a contest with groups vying for how many words they can use.

eye
a
r | b
r
a
i
n o s e
s
o
p
h
a
g
u
s houlder

Can You Do It in English?

Student Challenge!

Challenge:

Yes / Can

1. Can you spell your first name and last name in less than a minute? _____
2. Can you give your address and phone number? _____
3. Can you count to twenty in ten seconds? _____
4. Can you name 3 cities in Europe and 3 cities in the USA? _____
5. Can you say the months of the year backwards in 30 seconds? _____
6. Can you sing some words from a song in English? _____
7. Can you ask a question starting with each of these words: _____
8. WHO? WHAT? WHEN? WHERE? HOW?
Wh_____? Wh_____? Wh_____? Wh_____? H_____?

www.onestopenglish.com LessonShare competition

Journaling provides an alternative method of communicating with your students, builds relationships with your students through sharing about one another in writing and provides practice in written English skills. Emphasize communication, and do not make corrections. Be personal in responses. Do not discuss others' journals. You can do this the last 10-15 minutes of class or assign as homework. You can use sentence starters, or let students write about anything they choose. As teacher, you will also use the time to write.

ANATOMY LESSON

Prepare 2 sets of slips of paper with the names of all the body parts you plan to review. Put these slips in boxes near the board. Divide students in 2 lines and one from each line comes forward, picks a slip, and draws that part of the body on the board. The aim of this activity is to produce a semblance of a human figure on the board. No student is permitted to erase any part of the figure, so if the first student draws the ears first, and places them half-way down the board, the other students will have to fit all the lower body parts on the bottom half of the board. As each student completes his part of the drawing, he must say what it is he has drawn: "These are his hands" or "This is his nose", etc.

Copy Twice and Cut Apart

RIGHT KNEE LEFT KNEE HEAD NECK RIGHT FOOT LEFT FOOT RIGHT SHOULDER
LEFT SHOULDER RIGHT EYE LEFT EYE BODY NOSE RIGHT EAR LEFT EAR
MOUTH RIGHT ARM LEFT ARM RIGHT ELBOW LEFT ELBOW RIGHT EYEBROW LEFT
EYEBROW RIGHT HAND LEFT HAND TOOTH RIGHT LEG LEFT LEG TONGUE

SNATCH 'N GRAB GAME Use real currency if you dare. Or use play bills and real coins. Place the money on a table. Place a spoon in the middle of the table. Stand behind the table. Divide the class in tow two teams, lined up at the far side of the room. Call the first players to stand, one at each side of the table with their hands behind their backs. Call out an amount of money ("A dollar eighty-seven", or "Twenty-seven seventy-five"). Repeat at normal speed. Then say "GO." Players take the money they need from the middle of the table and assemble the required amount in front of them. When they think they have the correct amount, they grab the spoon and hold it high. Check to see if they are correct. If so, one point for their team, if not he must put back the spoon and let the other player take it. If neither player gets the amount right, they return to their teams and the next players come to assemble the same amount when you say, "Go."



INVENT A MEDICINE:

Divide the class into groups of 5-6 persons. Tell them to invent a medicine for a disease or malady that stumps medical science (or has never existed). Each group may choose its own disease.

INSTRUCTIONS: Name the medicine. Give directions for its use and tell what (or how) it cures.

Describe this product (color, how prescribed, ointment, liquid, herb, animal product, source, etc.)

Create a TV commercial for the product.

Present to the class. (Choose actors to play the parts. Decide on dialogue.)

It can be: **Wacky medicine Crazy diagnosis and instructions**

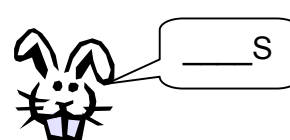
Funny symptoms Zany characters (doctor, nurse, patient, others)

BUILD A FAMILY TREE - Place class members on different levels representing different generations. Hang name tags which unfold to show different relationships. Start with "Son" is also a brother, a husband, becomes a father, grandfather, son-in-law, etc. Add "Daughter" until everyone in the class is part of the family and then take a "Family Album Picture."

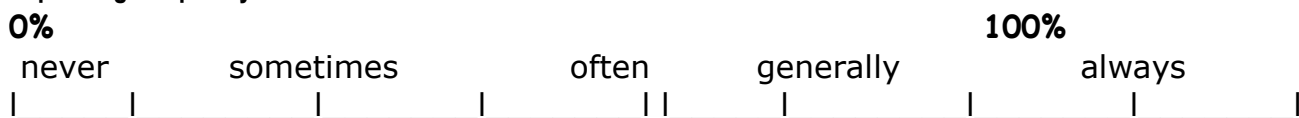
Reminder Sign for Present Tense (He talks. She talks. It talks.)
3rd person singular



"S" on a Stick



Explaining Frequency "How often?"



Fill in with other adverbs of frequency: (Hardly ever, Seldom, Rarely, Occasionally, Frequently, Usually, Once in a while, Now and then, Normally, Nearly always, Constantly)

Eight in a Minute Game (categorizing)

FOCUS: Have students list color words, food words, and animal words. Point out that learning new vocabulary is easier if they can put the words in groups. Suggest keeping an ongoing category list or notebook, and when new words are learned, they can be added.

1. On The board: airplane, bird, butterfly, rocket. Ask, How are they alike? (Things that fly)
2. Play Just A-Minute (see directions), writing the category on the board as you use it.
3. At the end of the game, pairs choose a category and make a list of words in that category. (OK to use those already mentioned.) Allow 10-15 minutes.
4. Share lists. Class listens and verifies that the words are actually in that category.
5. Variation: If you have a higher level class, the Ss can give clues.

Patterns for Playing Just a Minute

This is (a) _____ adjective, color, noun)

This is the opposite of _____

This is like _____

This is part of a _____

This can _____

Each player is given a limited time (perhaps 1 minute) to get other students to guess as many words as possible from the list given.

Examples of oral clues: **desk** - "Students sit here in class." **chalk** - "It's white." "Use it to write on the blackboard."

students - "Not the teacher." "Person who studies."

Player 1 announces the title or category on his card. He may tell about each word, but may not say the word, itself, may not point to objects in the room, and may not use his hands. He may describe it, tell what it is used for, where it is found, who uses it, what its opposite is, use a sentence that needs the word for completion, or any other verbal hints he can think of. When he hears the word, he can say "Right" and go on to the next clue. It is OK to skip a word and go to the next. The number of words guessed correctly goes to the person with the list.

Variation Divide the class into teams and only team members guess when their side is "up."

WORDS THAT RHYME

WITH YOU

1. blue
2. two
3. zoo
4. true
5. new
6. glue
7. shoe
8. drew

BODY WORDS

1. ears
2. teeth
3. toes
4. hair
5. nose
6. neck
7. eyes
8. hand

THINGS YOU CAN DO

WITH YOUR FEET

1. run
2. kick
3. dance
4. walk
5. jump
6. ski
7. skate
8. skip

ROUND THINGS

1. ball
2. penny
3. wheel
4. hamburger
5. ring
6. dish
7. circle
8. bracelet

LIQUIDS

1. water
2. milk
3. soda
4. gasoline
5. soup
6. coffee
7. oil
8. juice

Things in the Water

1. boat
2. fish
3. duck
4. stones
5. frog
6. shark
7. crabs
8. whale

Ideas for Categories

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 1) things that are green | 2) things to eat |
| 3) things in a bathroom | 4) animals |
| 5) vegetable | 6) fruits |
| 7) body words | 8) clothing |
| 9) furniture | 10) time words |
| 11) workers | 12) things that fly |
| 13) things at the beach | 14) places around town |
| 15) things with wheels | 16) things in a park |

More IDEAS

* At the end of class, erase the board and challenge students to recall everything you wrote on the board during the class period. Write the expressions on the board once again as your students call them out.

*Bring a cellular phone (real or toy) to class, and pretend to receive calls throughout the class. As the students can only hear one side of the conversation, they must guess who is calling you and why. Make the initial conversation very brief, and gradually add clues with each conversation. The student who guesses correctly wins a prize.

*Copy a page from a comic book, write out the dialogue, make copies for your class, and have them supply utterances for the characters.

*Empty a bag of coupons onto a table, and have students find a coupon for a product that they have no need for.

*Hand a student a ball of yellow yarn. Have him toss it to another student, while saying something positive about that student and holding onto the end of the yarn. Continue in this manner until there is a web between all the students.

These ideas are included in Hall Houston's Random ESL Idea Generator.

BIO-POEM

A bio-poem is a short biography telling about the life of someone.

Gretel,

Small, lost, tired, hungry,
Cares deeply about her family,
Sister of Hansel,
Who feels afraid,
Who needs a place to sleep,
Who gives companionship,
Who fears the witch,
Who would like to see her father again,
Resident of the forest.

THE PATTERN FOR WRITING A BIO-POEM.

Line 1	First name only
Line 2	Four traits
Line 3	Related to
Line 4	Cares deeply about
Line 5	Who feels
Line 6	Who needs
Line 7	Who gives
Line 8	Who fears
Line 9	Who would like to see
Line 10	Resident of

USE THE PATTERN TO WRITE A POEM ABOUT YOU.

1. _____
2. _____/ _____/ _____/ _____/
3. _____ of _____/
Cares deeply about _____/
Who feels excited _____/
Who needs _____/
Who gives _____/
Who fears _____/
Who would like to see _____/
Resident of _____.



TEACH WITH WHAT THE STUDENTS HAVE: USING CELL PHONES IN CLASS

No need to get annoyed when your students concentrate on using their mobile phones to text each other rather than focusing on the lesson. Harness this enthusiasm for the purposes of English study.

Mini sagas

The standard text has a limit of 160 characters (letters and spaces). This can be used to set an interesting challenge, especially for higher level students, e.g. 'Write a complete story that has a beginning, middle and end in less than 160 characters'. Try other ideas e.g. 'Write a complaint to a shop', 'Write a poem', etc. Make the writing more challenging by requiring the text to be exactly 160 characters – not any more or less.

English ring tones

Some phones can now record voices and use them as ring tones. Get each small group to discuss, agree and write out a sentence or two that would make a great ring tone, e.g. *Hi. How are you today? I'm trying to call you!* (Your students will come up with something more clever.) After you've approved the words, each group should record their ring tone on a phone. At the end, get all groups to play their ring tones and the class can vote for the best.

This is the off button

Pre-teach some key lexis (e.g. buttons, menu, fascia, screen etc.) and phrases (e.g. *It drives me mad; so badly designed* etc). In small groups, students introduce their phones to each other and briefly talk through any special features or oddities. They then describe the single most annoying feature and explain why it is so annoying. Extend the activity by asking students to teach others how to do something (e.g. take a photo) – using verbal instructions only – i.e. without demonstrating. Students may need reminding of useful verbs (e.g. press, cancel, select, go back, etc).

My perfect phone

Discuss how mobiles have evolved in recent years – with new features all the time. Brainstorm all the things that phones can do now and then start a second list of what they might be able to do in the future. Pairs then discuss, invent and list the features they'd like in their dream phone in ten years' time, possibly drawing a sketch as well.

60-second movies

With movie-making facilities in their pockets, students can now create their own 60-second masterpiece. Explain that they must plan a complete epic film that lasts just a minute. They should write a script, rehearse it (making sure it only lasts 60 seconds) and then film it. Hold an Oscar ceremony at the end to award the prize for Best Film.



Phone whispers: "Gossip"



With permission, distribute a phone number list. For homework, tell each student to be free between certain times. Start by phoning someone and leaving a complicated message in English. Each person should then phone the next one on the list. The last person should call you back. Next lesson, tell them the original message and the final one. Were they the same?

Fast texting

Tell students your phone number then get them to prepare to write a text message. Explain that their aim is to type in an exact copy of a text you will show them. When ready they should send it to you. The first 3 perfect answers you receive will be the winners. Reveal a prepared short story (using any grammar items you want to practise) written on the board or a large piece of paper. Students must now rapidly enter and send the text. The unpredictable speed of phone transmission will add an element of randomness to which messages you receive first. Check the texts carefully and reject those with any mistakes.

SMS translation

(Note: SMS = Short Message Service--a 'text message' or a 'text'.) Download and make copies of an SMS dictionary from the internet (web-search: 'SMS dictionary'). This will tell you lots of abbreviations such as **CUL8R** (See you later) **LOL** (Laugh out loud) **T2GO** (Time to Go). Distribute a short message to groups and get them to use the SMS dictionary to translate it into SMS using abbreviations. Then do the reverse - hand out a short printed message that uses some of the abbreviations and ask groups to prepare a translation into 'real' English.

SMS consequences

Each group of students discusses and writes the first line of a story (max. 70 characters) then sends it to the next group. Each group then continues the story they receive (again max. 70) and sends it on again. This time they finish the story (70 characters). Then read aloud.

USING STRING IN CLASS



1. Clothes line

Take your string and pin it up like a washing line to use as a new display place for flashcards, word cards, magazine pictures or students' work, using clothes pegs to fix items.

2. Picture story grammar

When you use a picture story to help present a grammatical item, reveal and attach the pictures one by one to the clothes line as the story unfolds. At the end, take the pictures down (or turn them around) and see if learners can recall the original sequence (and the accompanying language, of course). An interesting follow-on practice would be to take the pictures down, mix them up and then peg them up in a random new order. Students now have to work out a story that fits the new sequence (using the target grammar, of course).

3. Communicative Clothes line

Hang up two parallel clothes lines across the classroom. Select a number of pairs of pictures (i.e. two identical pictures or ones that have some item in common, are set in the same place, feature the same person etc). Divide the students into two groups, on each side of the room, standing parallel to the clothes lines. Divide the pictures into two sets, so that every item in set one has a pair in set two. Randomly peg them up so that each set is on one line, facing outwards (i.e. learners standing on one side of the room will see one set of pictures, but not the other). Students must now move along their line, talking to people on the other side of the room, describing their pictures (and listening to descriptions) and try to work out which pictures match and make pairs (and why) keeping notes as they go.

4. Sorting words

Anything hung on the line can easily be moved, removed or reorganized. For example, when you teach countable and uncountable nouns, randomly hang up your example words on the clothes line rather than writing them on the board. Now ask students to separate uncountable items to the left and countable to the right. Alternatively, ask learners to sort: verbs in past simple and past participle form, different word stress patterns, adjectives and adverbs, informal and formal phrases, words with the schwa vowel sound and those without etc.