

# 101 Teaching Tips

Written by

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<http://eslinsider.com/101-teaching-tips>

Read the PDF or watch the video

1. **There is no one way** to teach.

## Using your body

2. **Movement.** A still class can be a bored class. Certainly it's important to have the students sitting at their desks for portions of the lesson, however that time should be limited. Movement is key to breaking up boredom and stasis in your class. Use activities that get the kids up, moving around and interacting. Movement is important on your part as well. If you are always teaching from the same place your students will get bored. Move about the room as you teach. This will help keep your students on their toes.

3. **Facial expressions.** Have an open face, with your brows up versus a frown and a cold face. Smile :) A smile shows that you're happy to be there. Make sure that it's an appropriate time to smile and most importantly that it's genuine. A warm open face with your eyebrows lifted up a bit will increase your likability.

4. **Use gesture.** Use your body to speak. Use your arms and hands to make appropriate gestures. These can be like handshakes or hugs to your students.

5. **Eye contact.** Before you speak to your students get their attention and eye contact. Your eyes should roam about the room and make contact with all of your students eyes.

## Your voice and speaking

6. **Your mouth** should never be moving when you are looking at a book, your notes, the board or any inanimate object. Doing so will diffuse whatever you're saying. Talk to their faces and not to an inanimate object. The goal is to maintain the students attention.

7. **Adjust your voice** for the appropriate action. Take care of your voice. It's not necessary to speak loudly all the time. Find a comfortable and suitable level for what's needed and remember to use a variety of tone and volume.

8. **Avoid shouting.** Shouting doesn't work very well. Kids don't usually respond well to it and you'll lose your voice. Unless a student is otherwise in danger I would avoid shouting.

9. **Speak comprehensively.** Speak to your students in a language that they understand. Your role as a teacher is mainly as a communicator. Be sure to adjust your language to fit their level of comprehension. The language that you use in your kindergarten classes should be different from the language that you use in your adult classes. You often cannot talk to them like you would your best friend. You will need to come down to their level and simplify.

10. **Drink water.** Keep a glass or a bottle of water on hand.

11. **Clear instructions.** Give clear instructions and then call on a student to repeat those instructions to check their understanding. If no one does then try simplifying your language so that they understand.

12. **Speaking.** Encourage speaking by getting involved in discussions, but do not dominate them.

13. **80/20.** More or less they speak 80% and you speak 20% of the time. Of course there may be times when you're speaking more, like when you are introducing new material, but as a general rule 80/20.

## Approach-how to be

14. **Be authentic.** Get rid of the artificial person (teacher) that you think you're supposed to be. Become the person you really are. Be yourself. Be your likable self.

15. **Be flexible.** Schedules will change, classes will get canceled, students won't show up, and the CD player might not work. Be flexible and be able to roll with it.

16. **Be positive.** Try not to use the words "don't" or "won't". Remember it's more effective to state the positive versus the negative. For example, telling your students to "Speak English" is better than "Don't speak Chinese".

17. **Know.** If you don't know an answer to a question related to English it's best to pause, think about it and then tell your students that you can talk about it in the next lesson. Make a note of it and find out the answer before the next class. Or you could make it their homework assignment to find out.

18. **Be responsive.** Student boredom is a sign that you should change something. Change either what you're doing or how you're doing it. Let yawns be your guide to creating better lessons.

19. **Leave your personal problems** at home. If you're having a rough day do your best to leave it at home. Baggage will conflict with your lessons and rub off on your students.

20. **Remember that your students haven't heard this material before.** Maybe you have, but most likely they haven't. It's important that you still have an interest in what you're doing and that you make it interesting for them. Even though you may have taught a class or these pages before, what can you do to it to add new life into it? If it's a drag for you then it will be a drag for them too.

21. **Be patient.** Patience will be key. It takes time to learn a new language. The learning process has many ups and downs and your students will have difficulties and get frustrated. You will have to be patient.

22. **Enjoy teaching.** If you are enjoying teaching then your students will likely be enjoying learning. Although remember that just because you may find a topic interesting doesn't mean they will.

## Tactics-something you do

23. **Use variety.** Variety is the spice of life. Use variety in your lessons. If you always do one thing one way change it! This will help prevent student boredom. If you always start a class off with a game consider starting it off with a dictation or a quiz. If you always have a quiz on Friday, play a game instead. If you always dress casual, dress formal for a change. Too much of any one thing becomes boring.

24. **Use prediction.** This engages students imaginations. For example, after finishing a chapter in a story book you can ask them, what will happen next? Or if your playing a video stop the movie and ask the same question. Or show a clip of the movie without the sound and ask them to predict what it is about.

25. **Passive** and active. For balance in your lessons keep these energies both in mind. A nicely balanced class utilizes both of these energies. Active is energetic: people are moving and talking, there's often excitement and fun involved. Active could be using role-play, doing group work or playing a game. Passive is more quiet, concentrated, often individualized and calm. Passive could be taking a quiz, doing bookwork, worksheets or using one of the Passive Activities in the videos.

26. **Improvise.** Be able to improvise. Be able to think on your feet. Often things won't go as planned. Plan on it! You may find out that the students already studied the lesson you just planned for. Or maybe everybody forgot their books. So what are you going to do? Unexpected things will happen and when they do you'll need to be able to respond to it.

27. **Draw.** Use the board as much as you can and draw. They say a picture is worth a thousand words. Sometimes kids would rather watch you draw a picture on the board than hear you talk. That picture can be used to describe something, teach meaning or tell a story. It can be a great way to introduce a lesson. Just make sure that it isn't too time consuming.

28. **Play** with them. Get involved and play with them when you can during the game or activity. That means don't always stand on the sidelines as a coach or say "teacher".

29. **Remember** their names. Students will take an offense to when you forget their names. Remembering their names shows them that you respect and care for them.
30. **Write their names down** or use straws. It can take some time to remember their names especially if you have large classes. You can use Post-its to help, have them write their names down on them and post it on their shirts. Alternatively you can write their names down on the board and/or on straws for large classes.
31. **Emphasize completion.** Make it clear when something finishes: use a bell, clap your hands or turn on/off the lights. Have some signal to let the students know when an activity has ended. This will prepare them for the next part of the lesson.
32. **Have back-ups.** Have back-ups on hand for those students who finish their work earlier or for when things go faster than expected. Keep some worksheets and puzzles on hand and always have a number of games and activities that you can use at any time. I wouldn't worry too much about having the perfect lesson for when things don't go as planned.
33. **Use games** and activities to support and reinforce your lesson. These will help motivate young learners and enliven the repetition of language learning. Adults also like suitable games and activities.
34. **Use music.** Music can be used as part of your lesson included in games, activities and/or when teaching songs. It can also be used for special days or for perhaps when doing more individual like work. For example, you could use some classical or other soothing music when taking an exam or have the students respond to the music (virtually any appropriate kind) being played using drawing and writing.
35. **Use root words** to quickly expand vocabulary. Words like play, player and playful all have something in common. Root words can be a way of expanding your lesson as well. If your lesson seems skimpy or if the content is too easy for your students, take a look at the vocabulary and see if you can introduce some new words.
36. **Use surprise.** Whenever possible use the element of surprise in your classes. Keep them on their toes.
37. **Respond to content.** Have your students respond to the content as well as the language. Find ways to make the content more interesting. Put yourself in their shoes. If you were learning a new language you would want to learn language about the things that interest you.
38. **Repetition.** Incorporate repetition into your lessons. Repetition is a basic to language learning. Try to minimize the mechanical parts of it and maximize the interesting and successful ones.
39. **Cohesion.** Try to keep groups or teams together through out the year when playing games or doing activities. Switching a child from his group with his friends can disturb his sense of belonging. Of course as mentioned before you can temporarily relocate a child if he is being troublesome.
40. **Name your groups or teams.** This will work with young learners and especially kindergarteners. Find suitable team names for their ages. They could be like the hawks, the lions, the bears or the doctors.
41. **Use Appropriate material.** Students not interested? Use appropriate material for their level.
42. **Meaning.** Consider the different ways of teaching meaning. Use objects, body language, pictures, synonyms, opposites and kinds of to teach meaning.

43. **Material and textbooks.** Consider adding to the material or replacing, skipping or changing it to better suit your needs.

44. **Group work.** Many of the games and activities in ESLinsider involve teaching small classes, however these games can be easily adjusted to accommodate larger classes. To accommodate larger classes the individual usually should be replaced by a group. So instead of competing between two people on two different teams, compete with all the people in two different groups. In other words two whole groups would be speaking at once versus two people. And judge them the same way. They must all say it correctly in the group if they are to win.

45. **Spread out.** Make sure you call on different students. You will most likely have a few students who will be frequently raising their hands. Make sure you spread the attention out and call on other students. otherwise it will look like favoritism if you keep calling on the students.

46. **Choosing students.** Consider creating straws or names written on paper and randomly selecting a straw or name from the bag to call on students. This will add an element of surprise to the classroom. It also helps keep them alert.

Or for small classes you can take a marker and spin it on the floor. And then call on the student that the marker points to.

47. **Reflection.** Reflect upon your teaching. Look back at your teaching and reflect upon your classes. What went wrong? What could be improved upon? And what worked?

48. **Experiment** with your teaching. Try new things and new approaches.

49. **Dress up.** Wear a costume to work one day. Your students get used to seeing you as the same you all the time. Dressing up will break up the monotony and add some excitement to the classroom.

50. **Do something unusual.** Bring in your guitar, a puppet, or dinner.

51. **Quotes.** If you're teaching teens-adults bring in inspiring quotes. They can be written on the board or introduced at the beginning or at the end of your lesson and if suitable integrated into your lesson.

52. **Handwriting.** Encourage your students to have readable handwriting, however keep it in mind that it's a personal matter.

53. **Use your own judgement.** In many cases your employer may not have the faintest idea of what is an appropriate book or the best way to do something. They may not be teachers or educators. Politely give them your input. Sometimes you may have to ignore what your told as it's not always best.

54. **Think interaction.** Question and answer. Don't lecture it's boring and your students will fall asleep. Think interaction, question and answer, give and take.

55. **Adults** need to learn practical and useful language. Make sure that what you're teaching them can be applied to their lives.

56. **Get them involved.** Here's a famous quote, "Tell me I'll forget, show me I'll remember, involve me I'll understand."

## Correcting

57. **Make mistakes.** While you won't have to for young learners you'll have to remind your students that it's o.k. to make mistakes. Making mistakes is all part of the process. Fear of making a mistake is a big inhibitor.

58. **Correcting pronunciation.** Get them to correct themselves; often just repeating the word as they said it will get them to recognize their mistake. Singling out students to correct themselves repeatedly, is annoying and embarrassing for them. Have them do it once and then have the whole class repeat it together. You'll have to use your sensitivity for this one. Each student is different and some are more sensitive than others. In that case I might just correct the class as a whole.

59. **Correcting written work.** Use a simple red underline to correct students written mistakes. Or you can use an underline and an abbreviation like "P" for punctuation, "S" for spelling, "MW" for missing word, etc, however, if you use abbreviations make sure they know what they stand for. After you have done so, you can give it back and have them correct it.

60. **Be sensitive** when correcting students mistakes. Too much correction can demotivate your students.

61. **Selective correction.** If you have to correct a large number of papers or tests you could tell them that you will be correcting only one part of the test that day like spelling.

62. **Exchange.** Have the kids help you to correct their work by exchanging with other students.

## Lesson planning

63. **Prepare.** Most classroom problems stem from poor lesson plans. They say that you want to be able to give your plan to someone else and have them teach from it. I think that's unnecessary, however in the beginning it will probably be more important to have a detailed plan.

64. **Outline.** Save time lesson planning by creating a general outline of your lessons. Do what works for you. But the most important thing is that you understand it. After a bit of practice a few notes might be all you need.

65. **Starting and ending class.** Start and especially end your classes with something amusing. It could be a game, activity, joke, picture or even a story.

66. **The four skills.** A well rounded lesson incorporates listening, speaking, reading and writing. How can you incorporate these four skills into your lesson?

67. **We're all different.** Remember that all students do not learn the same. Consider the supposed different ways of learning like auditory, visual and kinesthetic. Present your material in ways that each of these learners will understand. Engage your students by using techniques that appeal to all three.

68. **Bring your materials.** This includes any materials that you will need for your lessons including basics like at least two markers/chalk and a pen.

## More ideas

69. **Students as resources.** Ask your kids for ideas. For example, you can ask your students what their favorite games or activities are. Your students have probably already had many teachers. You can ask them about which activities or games that they played with other teachers.
70. **Sit in** on another teachers class to get more ideas. Observing other teachers classes are a great way to get fresh ideas and to find new ways of dealing with problems.
71. **Use your students interests.** This will be especially important when teaching teens and adults. To engage learners you'll have to give them appropriate topics that they are interested in. This will be especially effective when teaching writing.
72. **Pop culture.** Take a crash course on Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Taiwanese, etc. "pop culture". Check Wikipedia. Like it or not, it will provide subject matter for your students to talk about. Your students will keep you in tune with the new trends in their country. You can learn something too.
73. **Get Feedback.** Ask them for feedback. Create a questionnaire and get feedback from your students. You can also get feedback from other teachers by asking them to sit in on your classes.
74. **Fresh ideas.** You'll need a lot of fresh ideas. Kids will get bored if you use the same games and activities for your classes. You will need to constantly bring fresh ideas into your classroom.

## Teaching multilevel learners

75. **Pair** the lower level learners with the higher level learners.
76. **Use different materials** for the different levels and put your students into groups based on their levels.
77. **Create** different questions/problems/ assignments for the different levels.
78. **Accept it** and teach as normal. Creating different materials and resources for different students in the same class can be time consuming. Some students will not want to be held back by a few slow students. Shoot for the majority and accept the fact that each student is responsible for his or her learning.

## Classroom Management

79. **Order.** Focus on having an orderly classroom. Put everything in it's place.
80. **Create procedures.** For example, the best way to get a large loud class to quiet down is to create a procedure. So that when you raise your hand they know what they must do. In order for them to recognize it you must...
81. **Rehearse.** Whether you're creating a chant or some other procedure, you will have to rehearse it for it to work effectively.
82. **Respect** not like. Focus on getting your students to respect you rather than like you. If you focus purely on getting them to like you it will probably have the opposite effect. It's possible that some of your students will not like you and it's possible that you might not particularly care for a student as well. But it's important that you treat them with respect.

83. **Disruptive students.** If you have a student who is being disruptive, talk to the student outside of class and/or consider writing them a letter. This will save them any embarrassment and again this is the respectful way of doing it.

84. **Rearrange** their seating. Change the students seating if you have students who talk to much or interrupt the class, so that they are no longer sitting with their friends. When they earn the right back let them sit with their friends.

85. **Contracts.** Consider making a student contract and giving it to them at the beginning of the year. Outline your expectations of them and of yourself.

86. **Calm.** Remain calm at all times. If you get irate then they win, and the situation rarely improves.

87. **Silent students.** Try using pair work for students who don't talk, this gives them less pressure. Or start sentences and have them finish it. Or use role play as this gives them a new identity.

88. **Avoid labels.** Avoid language like "you're such a good student" or "you're so smart". If that student is so smart how will the other students feel?

89. **Give them a choice.** When you're dealing with a disobedient child give them a choice. For example, would you like to sit with your friends or over there with the girls? Would you like to do that work standing up or sitting down? Would you like to join us in the game or take a test instead?

90. **Seating.** Experiment with different seating arrangements, use rows, u-shapes, circles and/or group work. Or even try back to back seating for certain activities. Different seating arrangements will be appropriate for different tasks. For example, if you want to foster more intimacy in your class try a u-shape.

91. **Be fair.** Kids have an innate sense of what is fair. They can help keep you in check. This will increase their respect for you.

92. **Focus on the majority.** Acknowledge the good students and don't let a few so called difficult students spoil your class or become the focal point. This is a challenge. This is like trying to get control of a race car when it's out of control spinning towards a wall, you can't help but look at the wall. But the thing is if you continue to look at the wall you will hit it. Whereas if you focus in the direction you want to go you will get there.

93. **Be consistent.** Especially in regards to your rules. There may be times when you might be feeling good and hear or see something that you'd rather ignore, but the thing is the kids won't ignore it. If you're being inconsistent with your rules, it will undermine them. The kids will see that and act accordingly.

94. **Crying.** In the kindergarten setting you may encounter an occasional crying kid. A crying kid can be a big downer, however you don't want to give this kid attention. Usually the crying kid just wants attention. Acknowledge the child and you could ask them if there is anything you can do, BUT quickly redirect the kids attention to something else. It could be a time to introduce a game and of course use your body and attitude to get the other kids attention.

95. **Rewards.** If you use rewards make sure that they are given sporadically and that they are not expected. Aside from learning the best reward is often just a smile, a high five or a compliment.

96. **Progress** is the best reward. Let the students know when they make progress. This is really what it's all about. Sometimes they are not aware of it themselves, so letting them know will surely encourage more.

97. **Create routines.** For example, everyday that you have this class at 1:15 you have everyone sitting at their desk, and at 1:55 you have the students line up at the door.

98. **Stop.** When you have a problem in the classroom stop what you are doing. If you have a child who is talking when they shouldn't be or doing something that you don't want them to, stop teaching. Stop talking and focus on that student. Often just that silence will get their attention. The class will stop too and look at that student.

The more common approach to these kinds of interruptions is to say, "Maggie stop talking" or "Max pay attention". That just causes more stress and work for you. It also is not very effective. You'll likely get their attention for just a second. When you have an interruption, stop teaching and look at the student. That student will then realize that they are doing something they shouldn't be.

99. **Clapping.** Use a rhythm of clapping to help get large classes under control. Use a set of three to seven claps in a quick rhythmic order (kinda like a drum beat). The students will then have to repeat the order back to you. You will have to teach them ahead of time so that they know that they should repeat it back to you. This will be especially effective for when you need to get the attention of a large class.

100. **Treat your students** how you would like to be treated. If you don't want them to say "What's up?" to you then don't say it to them.

101. **One at a time.** Allow only one student to leave the room at a time during class.

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