

30 teaching tips

Penny Ur

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Lesson planning

Tip #1: Write out your lesson plan



.... Even if you never look at it!

Brief notes:

Components, order, timing

Have it at your elbow.

Tip # 2: Include a reserve



Add to your plan something you'll add if you have extra time...

...And

Something you'll leave out if you are short of time!

Tip # 3: Share your agenda

Tell the students at the beginning of your lesson what we're going to do

Write it up on the board?



Tip # 4: Teach new or difficult stuff early in the lesson



... When the students are freshest.



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Tip # 5: End with something nice

Finish the lesson with a smile!



Summarize, demonstrating what they've achieved

Congratulate / approve what they've done

Tell a short story/joke (relevant to topic!)

Play a quick game

Sing a song

Homework

Tip # 6: Don't give homework at the end of the lesson!



You may not have time to explain properly.
Students may not have time to write it down.
Students may not have time to ask questions.
Putting it at the end conveys the message that it's not so important.

Tip # 7: Define homework by time, not quantity



Rather than: 'Do Exercises A and B'...

...Try saying:

'Do as much as you can of exercises A and B in 20 minutes'

Tip # 8: Find ways to check without wasting half the lesson...

Checking homework through teacher-student 'ping-pong' can take ages.

Other options:

- Just dictate answers, students self-check
- Give answers on the board, students self-check
- Students check in pairs, ask you if there's a problem



Questioning

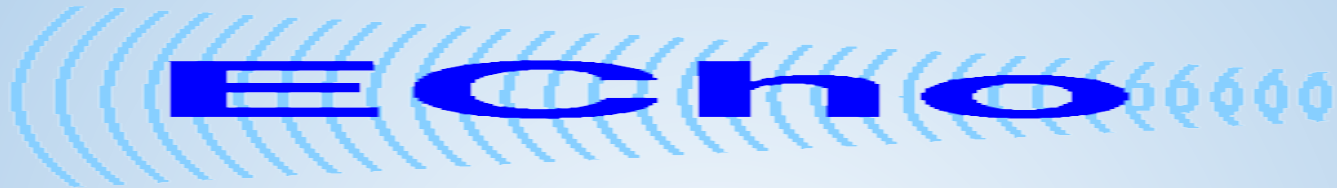
Tip # 9: Allow wait-time

Don't nominate the first student to raise his/her hand. Wait.

'I'm waiting to see at least five people raise their hands'



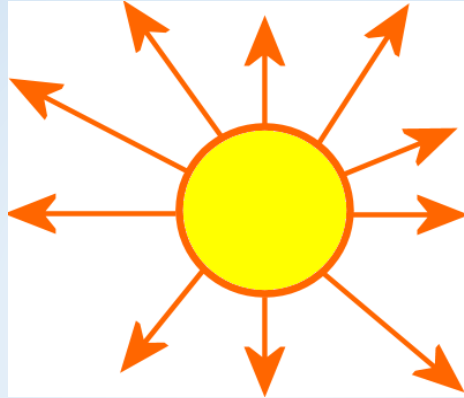
Tip # 10: 'Echo' responses



Repeat students' responses...

- To make sure everyone hears them
- To confirm
- For the sake of the repetition
- To correct
- As an indirect compliment to the student

Tip # 11 : Make questions 'open-ended' as often as you can



Closed-ended: What is the opposite of 'wide'?

Open-ended: How many things can you think of that can be *wide* or *narrow* ?

Tip # 12: Don't always insist on teacher-nominated responses

Sometimes just tell students to call out answers as fast as they can



Pick up and echo / write up all the answers you hear.

→ More participation

→ Shyer students respond under 'shelter' of the others.

Correcting mistakes

Tip # 13: Correct students yourself, rather than asking them to correct each other

Most students prefer to be corrected by the teacher.



Tip # 14: Draw attention to correct answers



Don't take the right answers for granted.
Give credit, and get other students to notice as well:

By 'echoing'

By saying the student's name in your response

By complimenting and praising.

Tip # 15: Don't limit yourself to quick corrections: get students to 'notice' the mistake and the correct form.

Recast:

Learner: *He go to school. Teacher: He goes to school.

Noticing:

Learner: *He go to school:

- Teacher: He goes. Say that again.
- Teacher: He...?
- Teacher: He goes??!! (making a face).
- Teacher: You made a mistake here... can you correct yourself?
- Teacher: Remember the rule...?



Tip # 16: Do (sometimes) correct during fluent speech

You may have been advised never to interrupt students to correct when they're in the middle of speaking in a communication activity.

But there are situations when it's helpful to do so.



'Student orientation'

Tip # 17: Elicit expectations or requests from the beginning



What do you want from this course?

What do you expect?

What do you particularly dislike doing in English lessons?

Any special requests to help you learn better?

Tip # 18: Share goals

Goals of the course as a whole



Objectives of a particular activity
Why you're giving this homework
What you hope they'll gain from ...

Tip # 19: Get periodic feedback

Don't wait until the end of the course.

Ask them to tell you

- What has helped them learn?
- What hasn't helped them?
- Any particular suggestions for you (the teacher)?
- What can he/she (the learner) do more, or better?



Tip # 20: Involve all (or most of) the students

Try to avoid 'one at a time' questioning

Use as much as you can tasks that have all the students responding simultaneously...

Or as many of them as possible.

Including (but not necessarily) pair/group work.



Options that involve all, or many, students

Free-response brainstorm

Responding by quick written notes

Responding by a signal

‘Mingling’

3-4 students write simultaneously on the board

Pair or group work

Acquiring vocabulary

Tip #21: Devote a quarter of your class time to vocabulary work

It's worth it!

Vocabulary: the key to proficiency

In most cases, they won't just 'pick it up'

Need for focused presentation + review.

Some ideas

Identifying / teaching selected new items in a
text

‘Word of the day’

New words you’ve learnt recently

Dictations

Vocabulary notebooks

Combining vocabulary with skills work

It helps to vary genres of reading texts

If your textbook only uses very limited types of texts ...

Information?

Stories?

Dialogues?

Find more!

For example:

Genres of written texts 1: Prose

articles and reports

stories

reviews

explanations

email correspondence

instructions, directions

encyclopedia entries

Genres of written texts 2: Information display

infographics
data display diagrams (graphs, flow-charts etc.)
lists
syllabuses
itineraries
bibliographies
programs
recipes
menus

Genres of written texts 3: Short

quotations
proverbs
short emails
slogans
clichés, popular sayings
newspaper headings
street signs
dictionary entries
'one-liners'
SMS messages

Teacher talk

Tip # 23: Teacher talk is a good thing!

1. It's students' best source of 'comprehensible input'
2. A teacher's job is to teach: teaching involves (among other things) 'telling'.



Of course students also need to be activated, or they won't learn...

But lowering 'ttt' is not a value in itself.

Tip # 24: Tell stories

Illustrate your target topic or information through stories

- personal anecdotes
- jokes
- synopses of movies / books
- traditional tales or fables



Group work

Tip # 25: Group work is not necessarily a 'good thing'



It's good if you want students to have opportunities to speak.

It's good as a change from teacher-led or individual work.

BUT

Not all students like it

And

Group work may result in:

- slower process;
- some students doing nothing;
 - ‘sharing of ignorance’;
 - discipline problems.

If you choose to do it, make sure it's worth the investment, and leads to good learning.

Tip # 26: Use pair- rather than small-group work when you can



It leads to more participation

It's easier to set up and stop

It's easier to control as it's going on

Tip # 27: For group work, first give the instructions, then get students into groups.



If you put them into groups first, they'll pay less attention to instructions.

Give instructions, and when you're sure they've got it put them into groups, and let them start work.

Tip # 28: Tell students in advance how the group work will end.

Tell them before they start...

Timing? ('You have ten minutes')

Buzzer or bell? ('This buzzer / bell will sound at the end')

Work completion? ('We'll stop when the first group finishes')



Tip #29: Base group speaking activities on tasks, not topics

Topic based: Talk about ...

Task based: Achieve an outcome (decision, solution, list, drawing...)

Examples of tasks

- Try to think of as many uses as you can for a pen [or tin can, or sheet of paper...]
- Find as many things as you can that you have in common with your partner
- Decide on order of priority of a set of qualities (e.g. qualities of a parent, or teacher, or politician)
- Brainstorm as many solutions to a given dilemma as possible
- Decide on a set of reforms you would introduce to improve your institution.
- Plan an event (a party, a sports competition, a wedding...)

Tip #30: Never say never

There are few, if any, rules that should always be observed in the classroom.

Good teaching depends on:

- Knowing what principles and practical strategies are likely to enhance learning;
- Knowing when to abandon any particular one of these in specific circumstances.

Thank you for your attention
pennyur@gmail.com