TRAINING AND RESOURCE GUIDE
FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS OF TESOL

A CREATIVE PROJECT
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction ................................................. 1

2. Approaches to Teaching .................................... 4

3. Personal Reflection ......................................... 7

4. Learning Styles ............................................. 9

5. The First Day ................................................. 15

6. Textbooks and Other Teaching Materials ............. 19

7. Lesson Plans .................................................. 24

8. Classroom Management ..................................... 32

9. Support System ............................................... 34

10. Additional Teaching Tips ................................. 36

11. Final Note ..................................................... 40

12. Resources ..................................................... 41
Introduction

In the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), there exists a wide array of instructional and informative material available to the English language teacher (for example, Brown 2001, 2007 and Mitchell and Myles 2004). Much of this material, however, is quite theoretical, quite linguistic in nature, seemingly written more for seasoned instructors or for those with some previous background in education or linguistics. It weighs heavy on the technical, theoretical aspects of teaching and learning. These aspects are quite important to study and to learn in order to teach effectively and well, but having a basic, practical idea of what to do in the classroom early on is equally as important. To that end, there seems to be a lack of basic, practical, and less theoretical resources written especially for new teachers just beginning their journey into the world of teaching English. This is especially important for those who must begin teaching English at the same time they begin their own formal studies and staff development and who experience the feeling of being somewhat tossed into the lion’s den armed with only a textbook and a ‘good luck.’ From personal experience, I can attest to the feelings of uncertainty, incapability, and anxiety. Can I really do this? Can I do this well? Where do I even begin? And how will I be able to convince my students that I am a capable and confident teacher?

This creative project synthesizes the material and information I have learned and the experiences I have gained in my two years studying and teaching English in the
Intensive English Institute at Ball State University. The goal of this manual is not to overwhelm the novice teacher with an abundance of linguistic terminology and theory but rather to foster self-confidence and to create a strong foundation for teaching through a simple, easy to understand, and practical introduction. This manual is not all-encompassing; it is not intended to cover every facet involved in teaching language. Rather, it is intended to be short and basic in nature, addressing the more crucial and practical aspects of teaching in order to help new teachers survive and succeed during those first few days and weeks in the classroom. It is expected that teachers reading this guide will be beginning or continuing formal TESOL studies, reading and familiarizing themselves with the theories and research that influence second language learning. This guide, while avoiding heavy emphasis on linguistic theory, is in fact grounded in theory, namely communicative, learner-centered theories of learning and teaching. But for simplicity and ease of reading for the intended audience (those with little to no linguistic or teaching background), theoretical explanations, overly technical terminology, and linguistic citations have largely been avoided in favor of practical, applicable explanations and descriptions.

While readers are strongly encouraged to read other, more detailed guides in order to develop their own philosophies and styles of teaching, the information presented here is intended to be read and absorbed in a short amount of time, unlike the majority of teacher training books available, which are often upwards of 300 pages. For a new graduate assistant, for example, who must begin teaching at the same time he or she begins formal study and training in TESOL, reading a 300-page book over the course of the week or weekend before classes begin and actually absorbing or gaining much from
the information is almost impossible. This is likely to only raise anxiety and stress levels. On the other hand, a forty-page manual discussing the basic elements of teaching is much more doable and much more comprehensible. It gives the reader the confidence to walk into the classroom that first day with an idea of what to expect, what to do, and how to succeed in doing it.

It is my hope that in creating this resource and guide, other teachers just beginning will start off with the tools to ensure success beginning from day one in the classroom and will not be overwhelmed or discouraged by the sheer volume and complexity of most of the training material available to them and, through reading this manual, will have a basis in their approach to teaching English and thus more confidence in their abilities to be and to become great teachers as they progress through their formal TESOL studies.
Approaches to Teaching

Many approaches have been proposed and used in recent history in an effort to figure out the best way of teaching and learning language. Each approach has its advantages and its disadvantages. Larsen-Freeman’s (1986) statement that “There is no single acceptable way to go about teaching language today” holds quite true. It is all about finding what works best for a particular group of students. As you progress in your studies and learn more about teaching styles and methods and become more familiar and more comfortable in your classroom, you will learn to read your students and be able to adapt your plans to find a more engaging activity to fit the mood of the class so that the students get something meaningful out of the lesson. In the meantime, though, do not be afraid to try things out. Trial and error is a great way to learn what works and what does not for both you and your students.

There are many roles a teacher can hold in the classroom –controller, manager, resource, and facilitator (Brown 2001). The ‘controller’ is the more traditional role, wherein the teacher is the master, the one in control of everything that happens in the classroom. They decide what students will do and when they should speak. Students are passive and simply follow the plan outlined by the controller (167). The ‘manager’ decides on, plans, and structures the main elements of the lesson but allows some freedom for creativity within the parameters that have been set up. The manager keeps students on the path toward the ultimate goal but gives the students some choice in how
they travel down that path (167). The ‘resource’ is the opposite of the controller; the resource essentially takes a backseat and allows the student to drive where they wish, providing assistance and help only when the student directly asks for it (168).

Each of the roles discussed so far has its advantages and disadvantages, its time and place within a lesson or a class, and often, you may find yourself alternating among these roles within any given lesson. There are times when it is necessary for you to assert more control, and there are others when it is better to give the students more freedom. But research (Brown 2001) has shown, however, that in any given situation, students learn best in an environment in which the teacher strives to be a ‘facilitator’ in the language learning process. This means that the teacher does not do all the talking. Facilitators help students discover the language and how it works; they get the students to do most of the talking. Facilitators set up the framework but allow students control over what goes on inside that framework (167). Create situations that require the students to make decisions and take an active role in their learning. Offer encouragement and further explanation if necessary to ensure that they understand what is required of the task at hand, of course, but avoid becoming the dictator of the classroom. This aligns well with the idea of student-centered learning. Teachers teach to meet the needs of the students. It is more about the practical application of the language outside the classroom in the real world than rote memorization. Just because a student can rattle off the full conjugation of a specific verb or fill in the blanks on a worksheet does not mean that the student necessarily knows how to use that verb correctly in the world outside the classroom.

Look for ways to encourage participation. Use your creative side and make class fun! Bring in or create games and interactive activities to get students involved in their
learning. Provide opportunities for students to have the floor. Make use of pair or group work; sometimes students feel more comfortable talking with someone ‘at their level’ of English ability. Role-play, have them quiz each other or interview one another, practicing new vocabulary expressions or grammar points. The more students can participate and take an active role in their learning, the better their overall learning will be. And with so many different people from so many different cultures and backgrounds, you will learn quite a bit from your students as well!
Personal Reflection

Now that you have read a little about various teaching approaches and teacher roles, think back to your own favorite teacher. What made this person a good teacher, in your mind? What traits did he or she possess? How did he or she teach lessons, conduct the classroom, and relate to students? Make a list of these things.

Next, think about your least favorite teacher. How did this person teach lessons, conduct the classroom, and relate to students? Make a list of these things, and compare this list to the first one you made.

Now reflect on yourself as a student. How do you like to learn? What kinds of activities and assignments do you enjoy most/least? Again, make a list of these things.

Based on the lists you made of your observations and reflections, you already have a foundation on which to build your own teaching style. You know more than you may feel that you do. You already have a general knowledge of what you consider to be effective teaching and learning styles. Often, we teach in the way we prefer to learn. I will use myself as an example here. I am a visual learner; I like to see things, read things, write things, and I enjoy a good grammar worksheet. When first teaching, I found myself using a lot of worksheets and written exercises in my classes. As I learned more about learning styles and teaching styles in my courses, I realized that I was teaching the way I preferred to learn and not really factoring in how my students learned best. It is important to note here that not every student learns in the same manner, and it is important to teach
to the needs of your students and use a variety of approaches and activities (see Brown 2001, Tomlinson 2003). But for the new teacher, being aware of your own preferences can help make you aware of natural tendencies to teach in certain ways and that awareness, in turn, can then help you make a conscious effort to expand your thinking and create more meaningful lessons for all your students. Taking into consideration the learning preferences of your students is an important element in creating meaningful lessons for all your students. The next section discusses in further detail various learning styles as well as types of activities that cater to these styles.
Learning Styles

Reflect on the list you made earlier about your own experiences as a student. How do you like to learn new material? Do you like to hear about it in a lecture? Read about it in a text? Figure it out by solving a problem?

Different people learn in different ways, and the way that works for one person may not work for the next. Thus, a good lesson should contain a wide variety of activities in order to accommodate students with various learning styles. Skehan (1991) defines a learning style as “a general predisposition, voluntary or not, toward processing information in a particular way.” In other words, each student has a preference for how they learn best. This is not to say that a student can only learn in that way; all students can gain something from every learning style. But each student will have strengths and weaknesses when it comes to learning, so it is important to keep the needs of the students in the forefront of your mind.

There are three major classifications of learning styles to consider when planning lessons (from Brown, 2007): visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.

Some people are visual learners; they learn with their eyes. Visual learners prefer to read about or see the new information they are trying to learn. They prefer pictures, graphics, books, taking notes, and putting things down on paper.
Other people are auditory learners; they learn best by listening. They like hearing about new material—listening to lectures, having discussions, performing oral drills, and other vocal practice.

Still others are kinesthetic learners. Kinesthetic learning involves a more hands-on approach. They prefer movement, working on something tangible, demonstrations, role-play, and games.

Keep in mind that these are preferences and not absolutes. A visual learner can learn through role-play, for example. Students can adapt to varying situations and contexts. But it is important to recognize the preferred learning styles of your students and incorporate activities in your lessons that appeal to each type of learner at least some of the time.

For instance, if you are teaching a speaking class, consider a variety of activities during one lesson that appeal to multiple learning preferences. Remember that just because you are teaching a speaking class, it does not mean that students cannot listen, read, write, or practice grammar, too! In any class, you want to consider the level of proficiency of your students when planning these activities to ensure that they are level appropriate. If you are unsure of what types of activities or topics are appropriate for your particular class, consult your syllabus or the table of contents for the textbook you were given. They should provide an idea of the kinds of topics and language points that will be presented in the book, and this can serve as a point of reference in determining if a topic is appropriate, too challenging, or not challenging enough for your students.

In a speaking class, have students give presentations, both individually and in small groups. Require them to do some background research on the chosen topic and
present their findings to the rest of the class. This is a good way to incorporate reading, note-taking, and summarizing. Another activity that incorporates all the skill areas and that students usually have fun with is a debate. Assign teams or pro/con sides or allow students to choose their position. Debates practice not only their speaking skills in presenting their points, but their reading skills and comprehension abilities in doing their research, their organizational abilities in creating valid arguments and points, and their listening comprehension skills in listening to and forming appropriate responses the other side’s arguments and points. Another more hands-on, kinesthetic activity is to perform skits and role-plays of real-life situations such as going to the bank, asking for directions, etc, based on the level of the class and the overall goals for the class. Again, make it level appropriate. A lower-level class should focus more on fluency and becoming more comfortable and confident in their everyday speech –role-plays involving real-life situations such as greetings and introductions, asking for help or directions. A more advanced class can focus more on accuracy and academic speech in addition to practicing fluency and everyday speech –learning how to lead a discussion or give a formal presentation in an academic class.

Probably the most vital aspect to teaching a listening class is to try to use material with as much authentic language as possible. Often the recordings accompanying a textbook for a listening course are contrived, unnatural, and overly formal. When was the last time you heard someone out on the street using fully enunciated, non-contracted, prim-and-proper speech? The more natural and real language you can expose your students to, the better off they will be in the world outside the classroom. Examples of authentic language include radio programs, TV shows, commercials, books on tape,
recordings with natural speech. In addition, you can have students listen to examples of speakers with different dialects of English or different levels of formality to work on natural speech and reduced sounds. Incorporate a speaking element by having students practice pronouncing those reduced sounds and words in addition to recognizing them when they hear them. Tongue twisters are always a hit and good for recognizing and practicing certain sounds. And you could even have students try to write their own tongue twisters! Other types of activities to consider in a listening class could include having students take notes and give written or oral summaries in small groups or pairs and having them do transcription exercises. In a transcription exercise, students listen repeatedly to a recording and write down exactly what they hear or what they think they hear. To incorporate a grammatical element, ask students to really think about what they wrote down to see if it makes sense grammatically and content-wise. They must use their knowledge of grammar and context clues in deciding if what they heard and transcribed makes sense and, if not, to revise it so that it does make sense.

In a reading class, authentic, as well as level appropriate, materials are important as well. In a lower-level reading class, you want to focus more on capturing the overall meaning of the text, while in more advanced classes, you can focus on the nuances and the style of the writing, such as why the author chose to write something in the manner he or she did and what that conveys to the reader. After reading a passage, students can complete comprehension questions – they could write their answers, discuss them with a partner, or even write a few of their own questions. Students could read an essay and write a summary or they could give an oral report (using visual aids, too) of a book they
have read. You could have them read an article on a certain topic and then have a lively discussion or debate.

In a writing class, in addition to the basic writing of sentences, paragraphs, and essays (depending on the level), tap into students’ creativity and have them write stories to work on descriptive writing or to practice adjectives. You can focus on a certain grammar point (like past tense) by asking them to write something using that form or whatever grammatical feature you want to work on. Similarly, they can evaluate other writing for how various features are used as well. They can write a skit or a role-play and then act it out for the rest of the class, thus practicing their speaking skills, too. Have them listen to a speech or book on tape, breaking it down into manageable parts according to their level—a few sentences or 1-2 minutes at a time for lower-level classes, a few paragraphs or maybe 5-10 minutes at a time for intermediate-level classes, and 15 minutes at a time and upwards for an advanced-level class. Students can take notes while listening and then later turn those notes into a summary or a reaction to what they heard on the recording, thus practicing their listening, note-taking, and writing skills. Students could write directions or instructions on how to do or how to make something, switch with a partner or group and have the other person or group read and follow the directions to make or do whatever was described, thus incorporating a kinesthetic element in addition to the writing, reading, and comprehension aspects.

Many students say they find grammar boring, so make grammar class fun for them! Play a game, do word puzzles, or write short stories using a certain verb tense or whatever the grammar point of the lesson is. You could begin each class by writing a few sentences containing grammar mistakes on the board and have students go up to the
board and fix the mistakes. To ensure that going up to the board is fun and not anxiety-causing, you could have students go up in pairs or turn it into a board race game. You would need to write the same incorrect sentence twice on either end of the board, divide the class into two teams, and ask that one volunteer from each team stand at the board. The other students on the team can call out help and corrections to the student at the board. The first team to correct all the mistakes wins. You could ask that a different student volunteer to stand at the board each day, and keep track of the number of wins for each team each week and offer a small prize such as stickers or bonus points. Grammar is important in speaking, too, so have them practice grammar points through role-plays, skits, etc. You could bring in newspaper or magazine articles and have students look for certain features and the context in which they are used in order to figure out patterns of usage. You could maybe even offer bonus points for finding mistakes in the article. To include a listening element, you could compare the grammar of spoken news versus the grammar of written news.

There is an unending supply of activities that appeal to various learning styles and incorporate multiple skill areas, but you must be willing to put in the time and the effort to find, adapt, or design your own activities and materials. You are only limited by your own imagination and determination. Whatever kind of course you are teaching, remember to include a wide variety of activities that include other skill areas and that appeal to multiple learning styles in order to make your lessons fun, engaging, and meaningful for all your students! But before you can focus on incorporating these elements into your classroom, you must make it through the first day of class and set the
tone for the semester. The next section discusses strategies and ideas for a successful first day.
The First Day

The first day in a new classroom with a new group of students can be an exciting and nerve-wracking time for a teacher. But it can be downright terrifying for someone who has never taught before. Take a deep breath, realize that we all have to begin somewhere, and remember that you ultimately do want to teach or you would not be here!

From the very beginning, you should strive to foster a sense of community, a welcoming and safe environment in which students feel comfortable and confident in their learning and their role in the classroom community. You are building a relationship with each other, setting the stage for the semester. Your students will remember the first impression they get from you. That fact can be quite intimidating. But with a bit of planning, the first day can run smoothly and be a lot of fun for both you and the students.

The main objective of the first day is for your students to get to know you, for you to get to know a little about them, and for them to get to know a little about each other in order to begin building that relationship. Welcome students warmly into the classroom. Smile. Say hello as each person enters the room. Introduce yourself and the course (to make sure everyone is in the correct room), and share your excitement about the coming semester.

Now, shift your focus onto the students. Some of them may know each other; some may not. An icebreaker activity is often a good way to get students speaking and
interacting with one another. One example of an icebreaker activity is to pair the students up and ask them to interview each other. Depending on the level of the class, this can be done in several ways. For a lower-level class, it is a good idea to model appropriate types of questions and answers. You can make a list of possible questions on the board or hand out a prepared list of possible questions to ask. Topics can include family, hobbies, interests, etc. Perhaps ask for a volunteer (there is always at least one outgoing person in class who loves to talk!) and do a practice interview with that person so that everyone understands what to do and how to do it. For a more advanced class, ask for their input and create a list of interview questions on the board. In any case, after you have explained what to do, give the students 5-10 minutes to talk. Then ask one student to introduce his or her partner to the rest of the class. Encourage other students to ask follow-up questions. Be encouraging and attentive to the student speaking. Some of them may feel shy or struggle a bit expressing their ideas in English, especially in a beginning level course.

Another important task on the first day is to do a needs assessment of the students in the class. A needs assessment is a process of identifying and defining students’ “necessities, needs, and lacks” in order to “facilitate learning in an environment that is closely related to the real life situations of the student” (Fatihi, 2003). In other words, a needs assessment asks why students wish to learn English (their motivation) as well as how they wish to learn it. If you understand your students’ reasons and motivation for learning English, you will be better equipped to create meaningful lessons and to teach material that will be useful to the students. In a given course, there will, of course, be topics and material that will be required within the course, but students are likely to be
more motivated, pay more attention, and remember the material when it is applicable to their needs.

Your needs analysis could also be incorporated into the icebreaker activity. If you are having the students interview each other, some questions they could ask include ‘why do you want to learn English?’ or ‘what do you want to learn in this class?’ This allows students to hear each other’s reasons and motivations for learning English as well as allowing you to then discuss those reasons right away and point out that, as a teacher, you will be addressing those different needs at varying times throughout the semester to balance out the various needs of each student.

Remember when assessing student needs that you are assessing their needs, not their skills. Do not assume you know what they need. Pay attention to their responses and really listen to what they are saying. Do not accept general responses. If the question is ‘why are you taking this course?’, do not accept the answer ‘to learn English.’ Ask that they be more specific, like ‘I want to learn English so I can get a job in international business back home.’ Also do not expect to learn the needs of all your students in one class. As the course progresses, you will continue to assess their needs, which may easily change over the course of the semester.

After this initial assessment, you must then incorporate their responses into the goals for the course. But realize that you will not be able to address every need of every student. Choose specific goals or specific topics that meet the needs of the majority of the students. Keep a list of these needs, and reassess the students regularly throughout the semester as their needs will inevitably evolve or change as the semester progresses. You can then easily update and adapt your lessons to fit the changing needs of the students.
Another important topic to discuss on the first day is the syllabus and class expectations. You will likely not have the entire semester mapped out on the first day, but you should provide a syllabus with important information about requirements and expectations for the class. Be sure to include your full name and contact information (office number, office phone number, email address, office hours). Also include any requirements for the course, such as required textbooks or other materials, absence policy, grading policy, as well as goals and objectives for the course – what the student can expect from you and from the course. It is not necessary to read the syllabus directly to the students, but it is essential to discuss and emphasize important details. Require them to read the syllabus carefully and make sure they understand what is required of them. It is okay if you run out of time for all of this on the first day. You can ask the students to read over the syllabus for homework and then address it during the next class.
Textbooks and Other Teaching Materials

You were likely given a textbook or two and told that they were what you were to use in a particular class. Textbooks are an integral part of most any course, and for good reason. There are many advantages to teaching from and learning from textbooks. But it is vital to realize that no textbook is ever perfect. Even a textbook that works exceptionally well for one group of students will not necessarily work so well for another group of students.

Ur (2006) provides the following rationale both for and against the use of textbooks. Advantages for using textbooks:

a. They provide framework and structure for the course. Students can look ahead and know what will be covered. The book can aid teachers in planning and structuring their lessons (79).

b. They can serve as a type of syllabus, laying out clear topics that will be covered (79).

c. They contain ‘ready-made’ activities and content at an appropriate skill level for the class. This saves the teacher time and energy; there is no need to prepare everything for the day’s lesson from scratch (79).

d. They are convenient. Everything is held together in a fairly durable, compact, and portable way. Students do not have to keep track of and shuffle though many loose papers. Everything is kept orderly and handy (79).
e. They provide guidance. New teachers especially can use the format of a particular unit or chapter in preparing lessons (80).

f. They help foster autonomy for students. Students can take the textbook home with them to refer back to, review material, and repeat or do additional exercises for extra practice (80).

Disadvantages for using textbooks:

a. They are unable to sufficiently address the needs of every student (80).

b. They are not always relevant to the lives of the students. If the material presented is not relevant or useful to the student, they will be much less interested and therefore much less motivated to learn it (80).

c. They can limit creativity and become too easy. Teachers risk falling into a pattern of simply following the book rather than taking the initiative to create exciting and interesting lesson. Students will quickly become bored doing the same things every day, and this will lead to a lack of motivation on their part (80).

d. They can lack variety. Textbooks are written with specific rationale and predetermined teaching and learning approaches that effectually treat each student the same and do not or cannot take into account the various learning styles and abilities that are present in most groups of students (80).

Textbooks are great resources, but no one book is going to work all the time. Spend some time reviewing many different books, and pull from a variety of sources when planning your lessons. It is essential to be flexible and adaptive in your teaching. Keep in mind the learning styles and the needs of your students. Of course, you cannot please
every student all of the time, but try to choose materials that will work for most of the students and incorporate some activities that cater to various learning.

At times, it is beneficial or even necessary to find or create your own materials for a particular lesson. Perhaps the information presented in your textbook is important for the students to know, but the manner in which it is presented is confusing, uninteresting, or not sufficient enough. In this case, you may wish to take the information from the book and create your own exercises and activities around it. This can be a bit scary and overwhelming at first. There are so many resources out there. The library has a great deal of books and other material, ranging from such things as grammar games to vocabulary builders to role-plays to audio files. It is just a matter of spending some time browsing what is available. The internet also has a wealth of information but takes a great deal of patience in wading through it all and determining the good sites from the not so good. Again, spend time browsing. If you stumble across something you feel would go over well, use it! And remember that you can always adapt any activity you find to fit the topics in your lesson.

Adapting an activity or exercise can take many forms. Activities that are engaging and personalized to your specific students, that are relevant to their lives, that allow students some real choice, and that encourage more cognitive skill are much more meaningful than standard, impersonal, rote tasks. If you are teaching a grammar lesson on question words, for example, and the material and exercises in the textbook do not seem appropriate to meet your students’ needs, there are several techniques for adaptation that you could do. Tomlinson (2003) offers the following techniques for adaptation: adding, deleting, simplifying, reordering, and replacing material (91).
If material or variety is lacking, you may choose to add something of your own to the lesson. Grammar is not just important in written tasks; add a speaking component, such a role-play or have students practice asking questions aloud to one another, for example. If there is too much of one type of activity, skip some or shorten them. Have students answer only ten of the questions instead of the twenty listed. If an activity seems too complex or difficult for students to understand, simplify it. This could mean rewording the directions to make them clearer or altering some of the directions to make the activity more doable. You may also choose to change the order in which activities occur. It may make more sense to practice writing questions and answers in the appropriate forms and tenses before completing an oral interview type activity, for example. Lastly, you may decide to replace certain material. A different picture or text may be more beneficial or more appropriate than the picture or text provided in the textbook. If the provided material on question words is heavy on the written side, for example, you may even decide to replace a reading activity with a listening activity in order to incorporate a wider variety of learning styles. Ultimately, you want to think about your students and what will be the most relevant and engaging for them. There is no perfect textbook, no perfect material. Think about your students and adapt your materials to help them get the most out of the lesson that they can.

Be proactive in creating meaningful lessons. Put yourself in your students’ place. If your instructor merely followed a text with no adaptation or supplemental materials, it would be awfully boring and disengaging; you probably would not get much out of a lesson like that. As a new teacher, it might seem easier to just follow a text until you get more of a feel for what you are doing, but even if you try something new and the lessons
fails completely, you will at least have given it a try. The only way to discover what works and what does not is trial and error. A good idea is to start small and work from there. Take an exercise from the book, and put a spin on it—in a lesson on question formation, for example, if the published exercise asks students to write questions for the responses provided, have students work in pairs and take turn asking each other the questions aloud instead of just writing them down in the book. Alter one aspect of the lesson—bring in an additional handout you made or found online. Show a video clip that relates to the topic of the day’s lesson—this can be anything from a news clip to a movie or TV scene to a commercial (YouTube has a wealth of short clips if you take the time to hunt for ones that work for your lesson). Use pictures to help illustrate new vocabulary words or expressions (images are especially helpful when teaching idioms!). Make a game. Your ability to use, adapt, and create your own classroom material will get better with time and practice.
Lesson Plans

There is a proverb that says “He who fails to plan plans to fail.” This statement holds especially true in lesson planning. It is absolutely crucial to have a plan before setting foot in the classroom. Without a plan for the day, you cannot expect to foster much meaningful learning for your students. Having a plan will also help the class progress in a smooth and efficient manner.

Planning lessons often requires a lot of time and thoughtful consideration as to the kind and quantity of material that can successfully be covered during a particular lesson. It is always better to have too much planned than not enough. If you do not get through all the planned material and activities today, they can be used tomorrow. If you do not have enough material or activities planned, however, it is not always easy to come up with more on the spot.

Planning a lesson may seem like a daunting task, but it is not so different from any other type of planning. In any kind of planning you make a list and you set priorities. You begin with a clear end or goal in mind. Then you create steps to reach that goal.

You are now ready to begin outlining your lesson plan. The first step has most likely been done for you: deciding what to teach (reading or speaking, for example). And you have also likely been provided a textbook that you are to teach from along with a general curriculum for the course outlining the topics to be covered in the course. If you
do not have a general curriculum for your course, take some time to study the table of contents of the textbook, and use the topics covered in the textbook as your curriculum.

First, look over the chapter in the textbook and identify the overall topic and purpose for the day’s the lesson. What do you want your students to learn by the completion of the lesson? This is the goal of your lesson. Write it down. This goal can be somewhat generalized, such as “understand question words,” based on the topics presented in the chapter.

Once the goal has been set, you need to decide on clear objectives, or, more specifically, what you want students to gain out of the lesson. Again, keep in mind the curriculum as well as the needs of the students. A simple way of stating objectives is by creating a list of what students will do. Specific objectives like “Students will produce questions using the question words when and where” are preferred to vague, immeasurable objectives like “Students will learn about questions.” Objectives need to be concrete and measurable, motivating, and relevant to the needs of the students. Write these down as well.

Next, based on the objectives you chose, decide which of the exercises and activities in the book you will have students complete, which ones you will exclude, and which ones you will alter or enhance. In making these decisions, consider your students, their preferred learning styles, and what would be most interesting and meaningful for them. The exercises in the book can often be given as homework, so you can spend class time engaged in more active, meaningful activities. The more you can bring the lesson to life, the more your students will gain from it. Use what students already know –their prior knowledge- and incorporate that into the activity. To continue with the example above
about producing questions with the question words *when* and *where*, rather than using an exercise directly from the book that deals with asking and answering questions about Tom and Jane, have the students change the questions to formulate questions relevant to each other’s lives or have them write and practice an oral dialogue or skit. Build upon previous lessons. For example, if you studied future tense last week, ask that the students include future tense questions in their dialogues. In this way, students are reinforcing and building upon what they learned before. Now that you have decided which and what types of exercises and activities to use, now think about the best order for these activities and write a skeletal outline of how the lesson will flow from one part to the next.

You now have a general idea of *what* will happen in the lesson. The next step is planning *how* it will happen. This should be thoughtfully planned out step-by-step.

1. **Review**

   Begin with a brief review of recent material. This allows students a few minutes to become mentally ready to think in and use the English they already know. It warms them up, so to speak, and also offers them a chance to ask questions or clarify anything they did not understand from previous lessons. If possible, try to tie the review in with the new material. For example, if you are reviewing past tense questions and the topic for the day’s lesson is future tense questions, you could begin by asking students questions about what they did yesterday and writing the past tense verbs on the board so that the students can review past tense forms and patterns. Then, you can say something like “Okay, we know what everyone did yesterday, so now let’s talk about what we will do tomorrow.”

2. **Presentation**
Once students are warmed-up, present the new material. Pre-teach new vocabulary and demonstrate new concepts with visual aids like pictures in addition to providing oral explanations. The idea is to lead students from the known towards the unknown. Then introduce the topic. Provide explanations and plenty of examples. To continue the above example, compare past and future tenses, like “Yesterday, Sue talked to her mother on the phone. Tomorrow, Sue will talk to her father on the phone.” Write future tense verbs on the board next to the past tense verbs so that the students are able to compare future tense forms and patterns.

3. Practice

After introducing the material, let students try it out on their own. This practice can take many forms. This is where exercises from the textbook may come into play (multiple choice, fill in the blank, true false, etc). But do not feel tied to the exercises in the textbook; be creative and design your own activities! Think about what would be meaningful as well as fun for your students. When students are happy and laughing, they are also learning! Regardless of the activity you choose to use, be sure to clearly explain the activity and what they are to do. It is important to allow the students to practice on their own or in small groups, but monitor these practice activities to ensure they fully understand and are using the new material correctly.

4. Application and Evaluation

Now that the students have had some time to practice and work with the new material, they need to apply it in context. The presentation and practice stages
focused more on the input of the material; the application stage focuses on student output and how they are able to use the material. Activities now should be more open and communicative (such as role-play, written work, group activities, etc). Through observing and noting how the students are able to apply the new material, you can evaluate how well they truly understood it. Were the objectives of the lesson met? Were they met sufficiently? This will give insight as to whether or not more time should be devoted to this material or if they are ready to move on.

5. Assignment and Conclusion

Finally, assign some homework so students can continue to practice the new material later. Do not wait until the last few minutes of the class to explain the homework assignment, however. You will feel rushed and students may not fully understand what they are being asked to do. If they understand the assignment, they will be more likely to complete it successfully and meet the objectives of the lesson. The possibilities as to the kinds of assignments you can give are endless. Examples can include exercises from the textbook, a worksheet you have prepared for them, or other creative activities such as interviewing people outside of class and reporting back their findings. As in the lesson and practice portions, consider the preferred learning styles of your students, and use your imagination and make homework fun and interesting! If you are teaching a lesson on asking for directions or information, for example, require students to go out on campus and ask other students for directions to a certain building on campus or call a store and ask what their hours are (they can provide a written or oral report of their
findings next class). If you are learning or reviewing specific grammar features such as comparative/superlative forms, for example, divide students into small groups and ask them to create a board game about comparative/superlative forms. Students will have fun using their creativity in creating their games, they will be practicing the grammar point, and other students will have fun reading the directions and learning how to play the other groups’ games on the day each group brings their completed game into class.

The following are some helpful hints and things to consider when planning for your lessons (adapted from Ur, 2006).

1. It is a good idea to have some sort of introduction and conclusion to the class every day. Perhaps begin the day with simple greetings, a few friendly questions about how they are doing or what did last night (also a great way to sneak in some extra speaking practice or past tense work!), and a quick intro of the goal for the day. At the end of the lesson, wrap up in some way to signal to the students that class has finished. This helps create a sense of balance and structure every day.

2. Order activities in a logical way. Do the more challenging activities earlier on in the lesson. Generally, students are more alert near the beginning of the class than they are near the end. So tasks requiring more effort or more brain power are often more successful early on. In the same vein, place interactive, loud tasks like games or group activities after quiet, solo ones. It is easier to transition from quiet activities to lively ones than from lively ones to quiet ones. Please note, however, that this ordering is not always best. A group of students in an 8am class, for example, may benefit more from having lively, easier tasks at the beginning of the
lesson in order to help them wake up a little! Think about your particular class of students and what works best for them.

3. Make use of a sufficient variety in the types of activities planned to keep the lesson lively and interesting. Incorporate activities that appeal to different learning styles.

4. Always plan more activities than you think you will need. No matter how much time you devote to planning the perfect lesson, you really have no idea how it will actually go over in the classroom. Something you expect to take 45 minutes could end up taking only 15, or a particular lesson could just completely flop. Therefore, it is essential to always have at least a few backup, go-to activities on standby for such situations. These could include a fun game or activity, such as Taboo (students can even make their own cards to change it up a bit and to practice their vocabulary and descriptive skills).

5. Keep an eye on the clock, and be aware of how time is progressing. Decide beforehand which elements of the lesson you can skip (or maybe give as homework) if you notice you are running out of time. Do not feel as though you must cover everything you had planned for the day; it is better to slow down and spend more time on a certain concept or exercise to ensure that the students really get it rather than rushing for the sake of covering everything. You can shift the unused portion of the lesson to the next day.

6. Finally, it is always best to try to end the day’s lesson on a positive note, to have students leave the classroom happy about what they accomplished that day. This could be as simple as a word of encouragement or praise for a job well done and a
‘have a great day!’ No matter what happened during the lesson, good or bad, have something positive to end on. It will make you and your students both feel better about the day.
Classroom Management

It is vital to be in control of your classroom. This does not mean, however, that you should be a dictator or be the one doing all the talking. It does mean that your students should respect that you are the teacher and they are the students; you have the final authority in the classroom. This does not mean that you cannot be friendly with them or include them in classroom decisions. You are trying to create a sense of community, after all, in which everyone works together cooperatively. Even a soft-spoken person can show authority in their own way. Sometimes showing mutual respect is enough. As you learn more about yourself as a teacher, you will eventually find your own voice and your own style.

In order to effectively manage your classroom, it is essential to outline the rules of the classroom at the beginning of the semester. Include a section on the course syllabus that states clearly what is expected and required from both the students and you.

Creating structure in the classroom through your lesson plans can go a long way in effective classroom management. In this way, students will know what to expect and what is expected from them every day.

Remember that not everything is going to go smoothly all the time. You will make mistakes, and it is okay to acknowledge and admit those mistakes to your students. You are trying to create a safe environment where students feel comfortable using English, even if they make mistakes. Remind them that native speakers of a language do
not always speak perfectly all the time either and that includes you, too. So for you to acknowledge that you have made a mistake (but that you do not dwell on it) reinforces that safe environment for them.

In an English language classroom, there will be students from all over the world, each with different academic backgrounds and cultural traditions, customs, and expectations. The academic requirements and expectations are much different in the United States than they are in many other countries. One major difference involves plagiarism and academic dishonesty. In the US, we take this very seriously; plagiarism can be grounds for expulsion. But in some countries, using someone else’s ideas and words is seen as a sign of respect and honor. So it is especially critical to explain very clearly what plagiarism is at the very beginning, as well as throughout, the semester, especially in a writing course. Check in with your program directors to find out if they have any handouts or resources to help you explain this to your students as well as what the policy is for handling situations involving students who plagiarize. Issues such as these will inevitably arise, but do not feel like you have to handle them alone. The next section of this guide discusses the benefits of turning to the support system -including fellow teachers, professors, and program directors- around you who are more than willing to help you handle the challenging matters and issues that you will face.
Support System

As a new teacher, you may feel overwhelmed at times or as though you are not providing quality, meaningful lessons to your students. But remember that you are not alone. You are surrounded by a readily available (and very helpful!) support system in your fellow teachers, professors, program directors, even your family and friends. They all want you to succeed. Don’t be afraid to talk with them, ask for help, or even just vent about your struggles and frustrations.

Creating a support system early on is essential for any teacher, especially a new teacher. Talk with your fellow teachers who have more experience, or even talk with other new teachers –pool your resources, talk with each other about your ideas and your struggles, share ideas, opinions, and questions on your lesson plans and activities. That old saying that two heads are better than one definitely holds true in language teaching.

If possible, ask to observe an experienced teacher’s class. Doing so will provide a different approach and viewpoint to teaching, lessons, activities, and things you may not have considered doing before but now have the idea. Sometimes another teacher can offer some creative insight or perspective that you may not have thought about. You may even offer insight that the other teacher had not thought about. You are more creative than you probably give yourself credit for. If you weren’t at least a little bit creative, you would not have the desire to be a language teacher!
Seek advice from your own professors or program directors. They will likely be more than willing to offer suggestions and tales of their own adventures in the classroom. Realize that even the most seasoned teachers have made mistakes, had lessons bomb, and felt unsure of themselves at one time or another. Teaching in itself is a learning process; utilize the resources you have around you to learn and practice and to continually grow as a teacher. The more you talk with other teachers, the more you will learn and the more confidence you will gain in your own teaching abilities.
Additional Teaching Tips

Focus more on what the student is saying than making sure they are saying correctly. Do not focus too much on grammar (unless, of course, you are teaching a grammar class!). The main goal is communicative competence, or getting the message across clearly. Use a communicative approach. This means that communication is the focus. If a grammar mistake is impeding comprehension, address it. If it does not interfere with comprehension of the intended message, let it go. Constant correction can have an adverse effect—students fear making a mistake and refuse to participate. Create an environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves, even if they do make mistakes.

Keep in mind the proficiency level of your students and be sure your expectations from them are realistic based on their level. Students with a beginning-level proficiency have different needs than those with intermediate-level and advanced-level proficiencies. If you are unsure about what realistic expectations are for the specific level you are teaching, consult the syllabus and textbooks (if they were provided to you) or talk to fellow teachers or program directors about this. At lower-levels especially communicative competence and fluency are more important than accuracy. You want to get the students speaking and feeling comfortable doing so. Use authentic language, but keep it shorter and simpler.
Use lots of visuals, especially when introducing new vocabulary words. Bring in pictures, show a video clip, or draw on the board (even stick people can get a point across!).

Encourage students to use context clues to guess the meaning of unknown words rather constantly turning to the dictionary. Using the context will encourage them to think in English and not mentally translate from their native language.

Speak clearly but normally. Native speakers use contractions and reduced forms of words and sounds constantly when speaking. This is what the students will hear outside of the classroom, so teach it to them!

In every learning situation, students have different styles of learning and processing information; it is no different in language learning. Be sure to include activities in your lessons that encourage students to speak, listen, read, write, or even draw! Create an environment where students can see how each skill relates to and helps with other skills. Just because you are teaching a speaking class, for example, does not mean that students cannot read, write, and listen! If one student is giving a speech or presentation, have the other students listen carefully and take notes and then ask follow-up questions afterwards. In this way, students are practicing their listening skills, their note-taking skills, as well as their own speaking skills. In a reading class, you could ask students to give an oral report or write a summary of what they are reading.

Encourage participation from everyone, and do not allow a few students to monopolize the class. There will be some students who are outgoing and want to talk or participate all the time, and there will also be some who are quieter and do not feel comfortable speaking to the entire class, especially at the beginning of a semester as they
might not know anyone in the class. There are different ways to actively participate during class; take differing personalities into consideration when planning activities. Use small group or pair activities to encourage shy students who may feel more comfortable interacting with one or two people rather than an entire class. This is not to say that quieter students do not have to participate in full-class activities or ever speak in front of the whole class, but it does offer them an opportunity to speak and participate in a way that is perhaps more comfortable for them.

Acknowledge the success of the students, no matter how big or small, and offer positive feedback whenever possible. Praise goes a long way in boosting confidence and motivation. Be sure, however, that praise is concrete and meaningful and not merely empty praise. Effective praise is genuine and personal, it addresses a specific point or contribution a student has made, and it attributes students’ success to their effort rather than their ability or other external factors. Praise can both verbal and nonverbal (stickers are always a hit!), and it reinforces intrinsic motivation to continue to work hard and achieve goals.

Have the students teach you something! Ask them to talk about or give a short presentation about their culture and traditions. It will not only be interesting for you and the other students to learn about other cultures, but students generally enjoy talking about their native countries and traditions.

The English language has some pretty interesting and tricky features, and students will constantly have questions about how and why certain aspects (especially grammar!) are the way they are. If a student poses a question that you do not know the answer to, do not make up an answer! A simple solution is to tell the student that they have asked a
really good question and that you have a great handout in your office on the subject that you will bring to the next class (or you can ask the student to come to your office hours if the question is not necessarily relevant to the whole class). Then, after class, you can look up the answer or explanation in the library or online and create a handout with the explanation and some practice exercises. This way, you are not providing incorrect information to your students, and you are learning something new as well.

Patience is essential. You will have to repeat and explain the same concept multiple times. If students just aren’t grasping a certain concept, try not to show your frustration because that will only frustrate the students further that they do not understand. Instead, think of it as a challenge to yourself to see how many different explanations you can come up with for one thing. However, do not spend too much class time explaining the same thing; if a student is just not understanding no matter how you explain something, you can always meet with that student individually outside of class.

Be positive. Your attitude affects the students’ attitudes. Happiness is contagious. If you are smiling and happy and excited about the lesson, your students are more likely to happy and excited, too. Do not get discouraged if you find yourself struggling or frustrated. Remember your support system, and ask for some help or advice. Keep a positive outlook, and realize that things will improve with time and practice.

Finally, keep it fun! Keeping lessons fun for you to teach motivates you to stay enthusiastic, which, in turn, makes the lesson more fun and engaging for the students, which motivates them to participate and be actively involved.
Final Note

As a new teacher, you will learn to overcome the challenges you will inevitably face in the classroom through taking chances and stepping out of your comfort zone. Take chances by including new ideas or activities in your lesson plan, and alter those plans when you realize that they are not working. Take chances by asking veteran teachers their thoughts and opinions on your ideas and accept any constructive criticism as a challenge to think harder, to be more creative and innovative. Keep in mind always the needs and personalities of each group of students; they have much to offer and contribute to the class and to you.

It is my hope that in reading this guide you feel as though you have gained a sense of what is involved in teaching English to speakers of other languages and now feel that you have a solid foundation on which to build your skills and abilities as a teacher of English. I hope you feel more confident in your abilities to teach effectively and are better prepared for your first days.

But most importantly, I hope you have fun! You have chosen this career path for a reason. Care about what you are teaching, care about your students, and continue to study and to put into practice what you are learning in your studies. You have the foundation knowledge of what it takes to survive and succeed in the classroom; the possibilities now are endless! Good luck!
RESOURCES


