

# Activity Cycle

Elementary school teachers often feel pressured to come up with more and more new and interesting activities for every class. However, not only is this unnecessary, it can actually detract from the students' linguistic development. If the students expect a new and exciting game every class, they will focus on the games, not on the English, and their functional comprehension will be constricted to the game environment.

The key is to find a repertoire of **adaptable activities that your students enjoy**, then regularly cycle those activities in and out of your lessons.

## Level-Up Activities

No matter how exciting a game may be the first time, if it is exactly the same time and again, students will gradually lose interest. However, a slight variation—be it a new rule or a new level of linguistic difficulty—can breathe entirely new life into an activity.

Level-Up Activities can be used in two key ways:

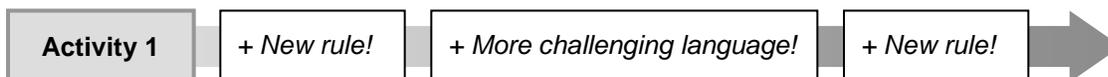
1. To add something new when an activity is re-introduced in a subsequent class.
2. To extend the duration or adjust the challenge level of an activity already underway.

A single activity could have two, three, four or more stages, building from a simple base to more challenging levels of English or more challenging levels of game play. Working in stages allows us leeway to adapt to the needs of individual students or to the needs of different groups in the class.

### *Level-Up Activities in an Activity Cycle*

<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Week 2</b>		<b>Week 3</b>		
Warm-Up A	Warm-Up A	+ Level Up!	Warm-Up A	+ Level Up 2!	➔
Activity 1	Activity 2	+ Level Up!	Activity 3	+ Level Up!	
Activity 2	Activity 3		Activity 4		
					Warm-Up C
					Activity 1
					Activity 3

### *Single Activity Level-Ups*



## Basic Level-Up Activity

### Games Students Enjoy

Fruit Basket	<i>Each student is assigned a fruit, and they sit with their chairs in a circle. The “it” stands in the middle and calls a fruit, and all those students must change seats while the “it” also tries to sit in one of the vacated seats. The one remaining student becoming the next “it.” If “fruit basket” is called, everyone moves.</i>
Rock, Paper, Scissors Train	<i>Students play rock-paper-scissors in pairs, and the loser falls in line behind the winner, making a two-person “train.” When two trains meet, the leaders play RPS and the losing train joins the end of the winning train. This continues until the whole class becomes one big train.</i>
Card Slaps	<i>Students sit around a set of cards placed face-up on the floor. The teacher calls out one of the cards, and the students race to slap that card. Whoever has the most cards at the end is the winner.</i>

## Songs & Chants

Songs can be used to open and close your classes, to reinforce target structures, or simply as a break between activities. The younger the students, the more important songs become to the lesson structure.

It is not always necessary for the students to be able to sing all the words of a song. Instead, ensure that there are sufficiently interesting actions that, even if the students only feel comfortable enough to sing a portion of the song, they can still enjoy participating throughout. For more complicated songs, it may be necessary to modify the lyrics to better suit the level of the students.

### Teaching a Song

1. Vocabulary	<i>Before starting, go over the key vocabulary in the song and introduce any gestures that might be associated with each word.</i>
2. Line-by-line	<i>Slowly practice saying the key lines of the song as connected sequences of words, gradually adding a rhythm.</i>
3. Melody	<i>Introduce the melody as you begin to sing the entire song through, encouraging students to do actions for the parts where they may have trouble singing.</i>
4. Sing-Along	<i>Play a CD and have the students sing along and do the actions as much as possible. If the song has instrumental sections, be sure to consider what you will do in that time.</i>
5. Modification (Optional)	<i>Gradually change vocabulary items, add gestures, increase/decrease speed, replace some words with actions, assign boy/girl parts, etc.</i>

6. Re-use	<i>Use the song again later in the same lesson as a review, or in some future lesson as a warm-up or “reset” activity.</i>
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With younger students, songs can be used as cues or control elements throughout the lesson. For older students, rather than songs, rhythms and chants tend to be more appealing.

## Assessment

In most elementary schools, a week or more often elapses between one English lesson and the next. Students do not take notes, and very often forget the Target Language the instant the class is over. As such, it is important to review as much as possible—even at the end of the same lesson.

Try to consciously allot 5 minutes at the end of each class for a detailed Assessment. While you may sometimes find it more effective to simply allow the students to continue to play a game they are enjoying, do not simply write the Assessment off as an afterthought. Instead, try to ensure that your Assessment is just as engaging as any of your other activities.

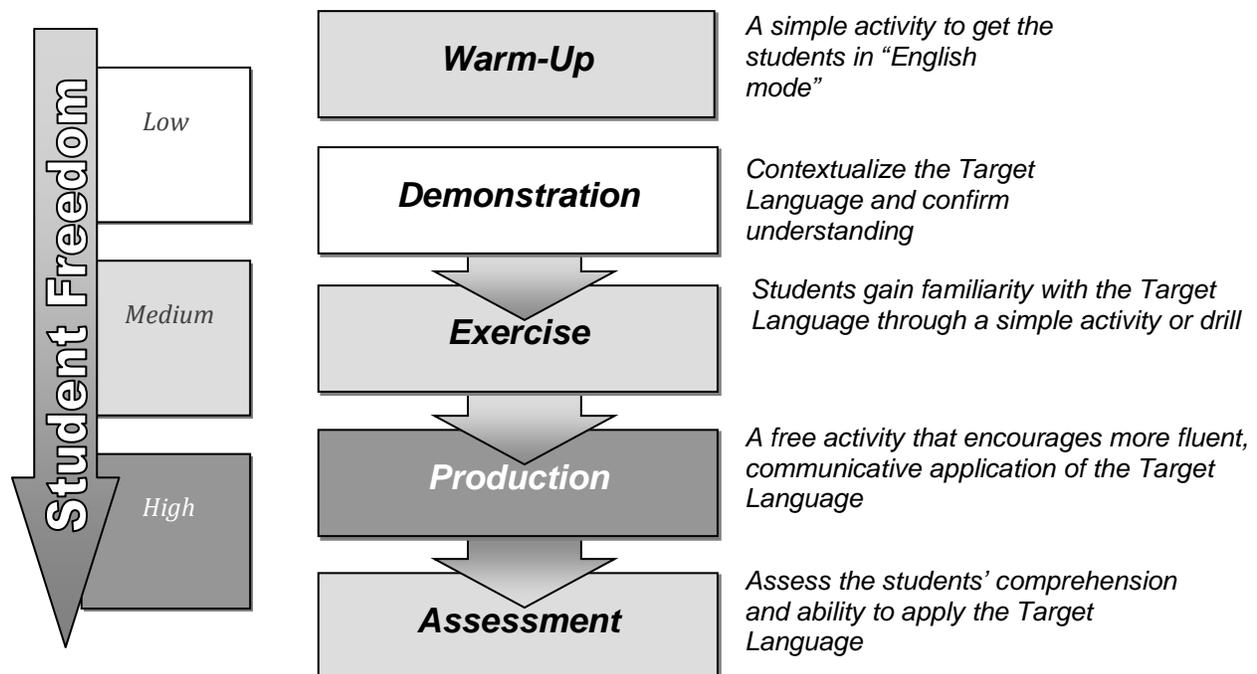
### Assessment Activities

Gradual Reveal	<i>Gradually show a flashcard and challenge the students to raise their hands and say what it is as soon as they think they know. You can give the card to the student as a reward, or play with teams and points continuing from a previous game.</i>
What's Missing?	<i>Put all your flashcards on the board and have the students close their eyes while you remove one (or more). Then have them open their eyes and race to raise their hands and say which card is missing.</i>
Songs	<i>Do one final round of any songs you introduced during the lesson.</i>
Mini-Games	<i>Play a brief version of an activity used earlier in the lesson.</i>
Picture Books	<i>If you have access to picture books related to your subject, read one to your students at the end of the lesson, encouraging them to supply key words.</i>

# Practical Activity Design

The following are key considerations in the development of a successful classroom activity:

Variables	<i>How many options do the students have? If there are too many, they may be overwhelmed. If there are too few, they may become bored by menial repetition.</i>
Wait Time	<i>How long does an individual student have to wait for his or her turn? How long feels like too long? This may depend on the activity: longer waits can sometimes be offset by a sense of team spirit or anticipation.</i>
Number of Chances	<i>How many times will the students engage in communicative interaction? Just once? Three or four times? A dozen times or more? How does this accord with your teaching objectives?</i>
Monitoring	<i>Does the activity need to be monitored to ensure appropriate student participation? If so, how? More importantly, is there any way to reduce the need for monitoring?</i>
Weaker Students	<i>Is it possible for weaker students to participate fully? Do they have a fair chance of feeling successful, or will they merely be treated as an obstacle or liability by the stronger students?</i>
Student Development	<i>Do students have opportunities to develop their communicative skills over the course of the activity in order to succeed, or is it just a test of their existing knowledge?</i>
Purpose	<i>Does the activity work as a stand-alone, or should it be paired with another activity in order to round-out the students' experience with the Target Structure?</i>



## Tips for Kindergarten

Songs	<i>Songs are vital. Incorporate as many songs as possible, including lots of easy, repetitive actions so they can at least move along if they're not comfortable with the words. Don't expect perfect coordination.</i>
Songs as Cues	<i>Use songs as control elements in games. If students are to play rock-paper-scissors, have them sing or move along to a song before each round. If they are to run and touch something blue, use a song to build up to the command.</i>
Storybooks	<i>Anything with pretty pictures and a simple, repetitive pattern will do. Consider including actions for the students at key points, but again, do not expect great coordination. Ensure that the book is large enough to be seen. You may need to make enlarged photocopies of the pages.</i>
Two-Man Show	<i>Use the HRT (homeroom teacher) as your "fall girl." Before asking the students to repeat or perform an action, ask her to do so, and either applaud her performance or look concerned and check to see if the class can do better. Even if the students aren't comfortable responding, they can enjoy the show.</i>

## Special Needs Classes

Teachers are increasingly taking part in Special Needs classes at both junior high and elementary school. With a Special Needs class, information is vital. Due to the variable number, age, and specific disabilities of the students, every Special Needs class is a unique situation unto itself. Consider:

- The students will likely be of mixed ages.
- There may be as few as 2 students in the class.
- Physical and mental abilities may vary drastically from one student to the next.
- Some students may be unable to read and/or speak in their native language.
- Some students may have physical disabilities that restrict their movement.
- Some students may have personality disorders that lead to extremely short attention spans and/or erratic behavior.
- Some students may need one-on-one assistance from a Special Needs teacher.

First and foremost, remember: all that is expected is that the students enjoy themselves. The key is to find out what activities they normally enjoy and what they are interested in, and then to be flexible enough that you can go with the flow in the classroom. Have a large array of backup activities—some active, some passive—and introduce new activities frequently. As in kindergarten, do not necessarily expect the students to repeat after you or coordinate well with one another.

## Activities for Special Needs Students

Songs , Storybooks and 2-Man Shows (ES level)	<i>Songs with simple actions work as well as in kindergarten, with a similar level of non-coordination. Storybooks are particularly effective with students with limited mobility. And even if the students can't participate fully, they can at least enjoy a show.</i>
Regular In-Class Games (Any level)	<i>Ask the Special Needs teacher what games the students enjoy, and modify them to incorporate a modicum of English. Also find out what the students enjoyed in your previous classes, and use those activities repeatedly.</i>
Making Things (Any level)	<i>Even students with low attention spans often enjoy drawing, coloring, cutting and pasting. Have them make their own flashcards or other resources to be used in activities.</i>
Starter Reading Text (Junior high)	<i>Acquire a basic reading text that progresses step-by-step through the process of learning how to read and write. Use it as your textbook throughout the year, building activities around the content. <u>American Start With English</u> is quite good.</i>

# Class Management

The key to good class management is preparation. Being one step ahead will allow you to pre-empt most discipline problems; it is in the moment of uncertainty that the greatest opportunity for trouble arises. But first and foremost, *ensure that your material is appropriate to the students' ability and interests*. If the material is too difficult or simply uninteresting, no amount of preparation will compensate.

## Elementary Class Management

As much as teaching English, your first few lessons in Elementary school should focus creating a positive learning environment. Taking a few minutes to do things properly at the beginning can save a lot of time later on.

### Class Management Tricks

Have a clear start and finish	<i>Establish a regular opening and closing routine for your lessons to focus the students' attention on the class.</i>
Establish a recognized "stop" signal	<i>This could be used regularly in games, such as a chant, song or funny sound. Once the students become accustomed to it, they will know what to listen for.</i>
Keep students at desks when not engaged in active games	<i>A desk or chair ties the students to a "base" location and keeps them from wandering.</i>
Subdivide regularly	<i>Putting students in groups encourages them to engage their peers and self-manage.</i>

Establish “reset” activities	<i>Develop a set of simple activities that can be used as a short break during the lesson. These should ideally be completely unrelated to the topic of study.</i>
Prepare quiet activities as well as active ones	<i>Quiet activities should be a regular part of your lessons—not as a punishment, but as just another way to work with English.</i>
Reward good behavior	<i>Students who demonstrate positive behavior get bonus points for their team or extra cards for a game you’re about to play.</i>

## Reset Activities

### Songs & Chants (2-3 min, Grades 1-3)

Any simple song or chant can work as a reset. Ideally, use one that the students are familiar with, and encourage them all to join in. This is easiest if your reset song is established right at the beginning, in your first lesson.

### Stand, Sit, Run & Sit (3-5 min, Grades 1-3)

Students stand and sit a few times at your command. Then suddenly call “run!” and have them run around at random. When you give the stop signal, they must all come back and sit in their original positions as quickly as possible. If they take too long to settle down, do it again. Alternatively, the students could run around in the style of a chosen animal.

### Drum Roll (2 min, Grades 1-3)

Clap your hands, and encourage the students to clap along as you gradually get faster and faster, building to a big finish. Then suddenly call out a color, say, “Blue!” All the students have to run and touch something blue. Instead of clapping, you could stomp your feet or roll your arms atop one another.

### Go Team! (3 min, Grades 4-6)

Put the students in groups, with each group in a huddle formation. Each student in the group places a hand in the middle, counting as each hand is put in, one atop the other like a pre-game pep rally. They continue until each student has put in both hands, then raise their hands as they say, “Go-o-o team!” The first time may take longer to explain.

## Corrections

Accuracy should never be enforced to the extent that it lowers the desire to speak for fear of making a mistake. When it is required, enforce it consistently: while doing drills or taking up answers, we do not want students to learn the incorrect answer. But when fluency is the focus, be wary of interrupting the flow of language unless absolutely necessary.

The key concern when correcting students is to do so without damaging their self-esteem or reducing their motivation to study English. If this seems self-contradictory... well, it is. Some teachers advocate avoiding correcting students altogether, and while this may be a valid position to take, let us first consider the options available to us.

## The Three Main Methods of Correction

Self-Correction	<i>The student recognizes his/her error and says the correct answer.</i>
Peer Correction	<i>Other students point out the error, allowing the student to say the correct answer.</i>
Teacher-to-Student Correction	<i>The teacher provides the student with the correct answer, which the student repeats.</i>

## How & When to Correct

Consider the following situations. In each case, how should you engage the student? The answer may change depending on the circumstances.

<b>Situation</b>	<b>Educator Engagement</b>
<i>You hold up a picture of a banana and ask, "What fruit do you like?" A student raises his hand and answers, "I like a banana."</i>	
<i>When repeating after you, a group of first-year students consistently say "dis" instead of "this."</i>	
<i>When repeating after you, a group of second-year students get lost halfway into saying, "He never really thought about it."</i>	
<i>When going over the homework, a student raises her hand and answers, "When I am go to home, mother slept." You were expecting "When I got home, my mother was sleeping."</i>	
<i>While playing a card game in groups, you overhear a student say, "Do she play soccer?"</i>	

<b>Situation</b>	<b>Educator Engagement</b>
<i>In the hall after class, a student asks you, "What do you like, movie?"</i>	
<i>In the teachers' room, the history teacher asks you, "Tomorrow, vacation... Are you go to some place?"</i>	

## Lower Level School Activities

### Fruit Basket (15-20 min, Grades 1-6)

All the students put their chairs in a circle, while one person does not have a chair and stands in the middle of the circle. Each student is assigned one piece of fruit, and if the person in the middle calls their fruit, they must change seats, while the person in the middle also tries to find a seat. The one student left standing calls the next fruit, and so on. If the person in the middle calls “fruit basket,” everyone must change seats. This game can be modified for any vocabulary.

### Color Touch (5-10 min, Grades 1-3)

Call out a color. Students run around the class and try to find something of that color to touch. When they’ve all found something, use your stop signal and then call out another color.

### Duck, Duck, Goose! (10-15 min, Grades 1-3)

Students sit in a circle on the floor while you walk around the outside. Touch each student on the head, saying “Duck, duck, duck...” Then tap a student and say “goose!” That student must then run one way around the circle while you run the other way. When you encounter each other halfway, you must stop and perform a dialog, then continue around the circle and race to sit back in the empty seat. The slower person becomes the next “tapper.” Note that “duck” and “goose” can be replaced by any vocabulary.

### Puzzles (Variable, Grades 1-3)

Cut up one or several items of vocabulary and allow the students to attempt to assemble them in groups. This is not a communicative activity, but it directs the students’ interest toward the items to be learned.

### Hot Potato (10-20 min, Grades 1-4)

Students sit in groups and pass an items around the circle while music plays, performing a dialog as they do (you could use balls and “Here/Thank you” or pieces of fruit and “Do you like apples/Yes I do”). When the music stops, students holding the items must stand and change groups. In a smaller class, you could have all the students sit in a big circle, and students run around the outside of the circle when the music stops.

### Rock, Paper, Scissors Evolution (10-15 min, ES Grade 2-4)

All students start as cockroaches. They must find another cockroach and perform a dialog, then play rock-paper-scissors. The winner progresses one level up the evolutionary scale, from cockroach to, say, fish, then to frog, dog, monkey and human. But they can only play RPS with another student at the same evolutionary level, and they must make a distinctive action associated with their animal as they move around. To win, students who reach human must defeat the teacher at RPS to become the “king” or “queen”—but if they lose, they fall back down to cockroach. It can be fun to let the students choose the animals on the scale before you begin.

### Head & Shoulders, Knees & Toes (5-10 min, Grades 2-4)

Sing the head & shoulders song, doing actions as you go. First drill the body parts, then sing and have the students do the actions, then have everyone sing and do the actions together. It’s fun to try going faster, but then try going super-slow before returning to regular speed, double speed, and super-speed. “Super-slow” can help catch kids who aren’t able to follow along.

### Simon Says (5-10 min, Grades 3-4)

Students stand. Call out “Please... touch your head,” or “Please... touch your ears.” Students must do as you say. However, if you simply say “Touch your knees,” students who do so are out, because you didn’t say “Please.” Students who are out must sit down. However, they are only out until someone else goes

out—at which point all the previous “out” students are allowed to rejoin the game. (If you don’t allow “out” students to rejoin, the game can go forever, and weak students will spend most of the time sitting out.)

#### Bingo (20-30 min, Grades 3-6)

Students receive grid sheets (3x3, 4x4, or 5x5) and select from a set of vocabulary items to write, draw, or paste those items in their grids. Then walk around the class with a box filled with those vocabulary items, and allow students to draw from the box and call the words out to the class. Students cross off items as they come up, and the first student to get a line is the winner (or better, the first student to get three lines). You can play up to the first winner, the third winner, or until the whole class has won—or you can put the class in teams and give points for each team member’s “bingo.” Be forewarned that the students will likely want to play again.

#### What Time Is It, Mr. Wolf? (10-20 min, Grades 3-6)

The students all stand in a line at the back of the room, while you stand at the front. They all call out, “What time is it, Mr. Wolf?” and you reply, “It’s \_\_\_ o’clock.” If you say “one,” they take one step forward; if you say “two,” they take two steps forward, and so on, up to twelve o’clock. If you say “It’s dinner time,” they must all run to the back. If a student is touched by the wolf before reaching the back, that student becomes the next wolf. To make things interesting, you can add rules for minimum step sizes, and allow students to take steps back if they reach the front. Just be careful that the kids don’t injure themselves when they run away.

#### Rock, Paper, Scissors Train (10-15 min, Grades 1-6)

Students perform a dialog, then play rock-paper-scissors. The loser falls in line behind the winner, who becomes the “leader.” The leader then goes to another student, and the game continues. In the normal version of this game, students continue merging until the entire class becomes one giant train, but it’s far more interesting if *only* the leader joins an opposing train, and all other train members are free to start again if the leader loses (The ordinary version will elicit groans from grade 5-6s, but this modification gets their attention).

#### Crossfire (5-25 min, ES Grade 4 and up)

There are three variants of Crossfire, all with the same basic function:

Variant 1: All students stand. You then ask a question or display a flashcard, and the students raise their hands if they can answer. Students who answer correctly may sit, as may their entire row. However, when you get to the last row, each individual student must answer in order to sit (or they can each choose one friend). When there is only one student left standing, all students horizontally to his/her left and right must stand, and the game begins again, with each student having to answer. If a student is the last one standing more than once, rather than having the same row stand again, go diagonally. This version may continue indefinitely.

Variant 2: All students stand. Students who answer correctly may sit, as may the four people directly in front of, behind, and beside that student, thus creating a + pattern. Takes about 10 minutes.

Variant 3: All students stand. Students who answer correctly select front, back, left or right, and all people on that side of the student may sit. Takes 5-10 minutes for one round.

#### Rock, Paper, Scissors Card Games (5-20 min, ES Grade 3 and up)

Students each receive three point cards. They perform a dialog, then play rock-paper-scissors, and the winner receives one of the loser’s cards. When a student runs out of cards he/she must come to you and perform the dialog to get more. The cards can be used only for points, or they could include conversational cues such as actions or emotions. Another option without cards is to simply have the students race to see who in the class will be the first to get ten points by winning RPS ten times.

### Memory/Concentration (10-20 min, ES Grade 3 and up)

The goal of this game is to find pairs of cards from a set placed face-down in a grid. It can be played with teams guessing coordinates, in groups competing against one another to find any card, or in pairs competing to be the first to find a card called by the ALT. Students must say the name of the card in order to obtain it. If a player finds a pair, he or she gets another turn.

### Dracula Game (10-15 min, ES Grade 4-JHS Year 1)

All the students put their heads down and close their eyes. Tap several students—they are the secret vampires. Everyone stands and they whisper, “What’s your name?” to one another. Normal students give their own names, but vampires reply, “My name is Dracula.” If a human meets a vampire, the human becomes a vampire. If a vampire meets a vampire, however, both revert to being human. This game also works with “Where are you from?/I’m from Transylvania,” although students tend to have trouble remembering “Transylvania.”

### Number Bomb (10 min, ES Grade 4 and up)

Introduce a sequence of numbers, and choose the last one to be the “deadly” number. In groups, each student says one, two or three numbers in sequence in order to force one of the other students to say the “deadly” number (i.e., S1: “One, two, three.” S2: “Four.” S3: “Six, seven.” And so on.) Students who say the deadly number are out, and play continues until there is one champion per group. Then you can have the group champions come forward for the Championship Round.

### Quiz Games (20-40 min, ES Grade 4 and up)

Prepare questions or flashcards and arrange a point-ranked grid on the board. For control, it’s advisable to limit the students who can respond by some form of rotation within each team. Students who answer correctly select the next category and point value.

## Higher Level Activities

### Writing Relay (5-10 min, any JHS)

Divide the board into one column per row and provide the front student in each row with a piece of chalk. Students run to the front and write on the board, then hand the chalk to the next student in the row. The game can be played using a set number of items, such as the alphabet, to see which team finishes first, or you could see which team writes the most in a set amount of time. You could use words related to a topic (i.e. “things that are red”) or write words based on the last letter of the prior word, or do word association.

### Word Scramble (10-15 min, any JHS)

Write words out of order on the board. Students work in groups to formulate a sentence from the words, then hold up their response. Encourage all teams to finish by allotting three points for the first team, two for the next, and one for all subsequent teams. Have the groups change writers after each round.

### Interview Activities (10-20 min, any JHS)

Students talk to classmates to fill in a worksheet. The worksheet could simply have blanks, or it could be arranged in a “Bingo”-style grid where students try to get several answers in a row (or several rows). Students’ responses could be free, or they could be dictated by information on their sheets.

The following ideas are based on the “Happy House” series, Oxford University Press. You may use “hand-made” flashcards or you can buy them. Whatever your flashcards are, here are some ideas of how you can use them.

- **Listen and respond** – Either stick the flashcard around the room or ask some of the Ss to hold them up. Say a word and ask the children to point to the flashcard. Instead of just saying words, you can say the word in a short sentence. Ex. I like bananas. Tell the Ss to listen for the key word and point to the flashcard.
- **Stop** – Use about 5 flashcards. Say a word, then show the Ss the flashcards one at a time. The children shout “Stop!” when they see the picture. You can do this slowly at first and then speed up.
- **Help the teacher** – Hold up a card for the Ss to see without looking at it yourself. Guess what the picture is. Is it a banana? Tell the Ss to answer Yes or No.
- **Jump** – Ask the Ss to stand up. Show them a flashcard and say a word. Tell the children to jump if the word is the same as the picture on the flashcard or to stand still if it is different.
- **Say the name** – Hand some flashcards out around the class. Ask the children with the cards to hold them up for all to see. Say Who’s got the banana? And tell the other children to answer with the name of the child who has that flashcard.
- **Echo** – Ask the Ss in L1 what an echo is. Ask them to be your echo. Show them a flashcard and say the word. Ask the Ss to echo it by repeating the word several times, becoming quieter and quieter. You can make it more fun by saying the word in different ways.
- **Repeat** – Ask all of the Ss to stand up in their places. Show the flashcards one at a time saying a word. Tell the Ss to repeat the word if it is the same as the picture on the flashcard and to remain silent if it is different. Tell any of the children who get it wrong to sit down and to help you to spot any children who get any other words wrong.
- **Bit by bit** – Cover the flashcard with a piece of white paper. Reveal the picture bit by bit and ask the children to guess what it is.
- **Flash** – Flash a flashcard, at first very quickly and then more slowly, until someone says the word.
- **What’s in my right hand?** – Show two or three flashcards and ask the children to say the words. Put them behind your back, swap them around a few times and ask the Ss which card is in your right hand.
- **Guess** – Choose a flashcard without the Ss seeing which one and ask them to guess which one you have chosen.
- **Who’s got it?** – Hand out some flashcards around the class. The Ss with the cards hold them up for all to see. Say the name of a child. The rest of the Ss say the word on their flashcard.
- **Disappearing words** – Put several flashcards on the board. Point at them one at the time and the Ss say the word. Remove a card and repeat the process until pupils are chanting all the words with no prompts.
- **Memory** – Put five flashcards on the board. Give the Ss time to memorize them then take them away and ask the Ss to say the words.
- **Extra** – Put five flashcards on the board and say four of the words. Tell the Ss to say the extra word.
- **What’s missing?** – Put five flashcards on the board. Ask one student to go out of the room. Remove a flashcard from the board (or ask a child to do this). Tell the child who went out to come back into the room and say which word is missing?

- **What I am thinking of?** – Use about four cards. Put them where everyone can see them. Think of one of them and give the SS two guesses to find out which one you are thinking of. If they guess correctly, they get a point. If they don't, the T. gets a point.

## Seven Teaching Strategies for Classroom Teachers of ELLs

by Judie Haynes

[http://www.everythingsl.net/in-services/seven\\_teaching\\_strategies\\_clas\\_06140.php](http://www.everythingsl.net/in-services/seven_teaching_strategies_clas_06140.php)

In *Teaching English Language Learners Across the Content Areas* (ASCD, 2010), Debbie Zacarian and I listed seven teaching strategies for mainstream teachers of ELLs. These seven strategies are designed to help teachers meet the needs of all the students in their classes and to help make the mainstream classroom more inclusive for ELLs.

1. Provide comprehensible input for ELLs. Language is not “soaked up.” The learner must understand the message that is conveyed. Comprehensible input is a hypothesis first proposed by Stephen Krashen. (Krashen, 1981) He purports that ELLs acquire language by hearing and understanding messages that are slightly above their current English language level. When newcomers are assigned to a mainstream classroom and spend most of their day in this environment it is especially critical for them to receive comprehensible input from their teachers and classmates. If that teacher provides information by lecturing in the front of a classroom, the English language learner will not be receiving this input. Teachers need to speak more slowly, use gestures and body language to get across the meaning to ELLs.

2. Make lessons visual. Use visual representations of new vocabulary and use graphs, maps, photographs, drawings and charts to introduce new vocabulary and concepts. Tell a story about information in the textbook using visuals. Create semantic and story maps, graphic organizers to teach students how to organize information.

3. Link new information to prior knowledge. Teachers need to consider what schema ELL students bring to the classroom and to link instruction to the students’ personal, cultural, and world experiences. Teachers also need to know what their students do not know. They must understand how culture impacts learning in their classroom.

4. Determine key concepts for the unit and define language and content objects for each lesson. Teachers write the key concept for a unit of study in student-friendly language and post it in the room. New learning should be tied to this concept. Additionally, teachers should begin each lesson by writing a content objective on the board. At the end of the lesson, students should be asked if the objective was met. Classroom teachers also need to set language objectives for the ELLs in their class. A language objective might be to learn new vocabulary, find the nouns in a lesson, or apply a grammar rule.

5. Modify vocabulary instruction for ELLs. English language learners require direct instruction of new vocabulary. Teachers should also provide practice in pronouncing new words. ELLs need much more exposure to new terms, words, idioms, and phrases than do English fluent peers. Teachers need to tie new vocabulary to prior learning and use visual to reinforce meaning. Content area teachers should teach new vocabulary words that occur in the text as well as those related to the subject matter. Word wall should be used at all grade levels.

6. Use cooperative learning strategies. Lecture style teaching excludes ELLs from the learning in a classroom. We don't want to relegate ELLs to the fringes of the classroom doing a separate lesson with a classroom aide or ESL teacher. Working in small groups is especially beneficial to ELLs who have an authentic reason to use academic vocabulary and real reasons to discuss key concepts. ELLs benefit from cooperative learning structures. Give students a job in a group. Monitor that they are participating.

7. Modify testing and homework for ELLs. Content area homework and assessments need to be differentiated for ELLs. Teachers should allow alternative types of assessment: oral, drawings, physical response (e.g., act-it-out), and manipulatives as well as modification to the test. Homework and assessment should be directly linked to classroom instruction and students should be provided with study guides so that they know what to study. Remember that the ELLs in your class may not be able to take notes.