

Everyday challenges and eclectic solutions for teaching English

Secondary teacher orientation workshop

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A large class challenge: How can I provide meaningful feedback on students' writing?

A possible solution: Feedback *before* correction and grading

Marking doesn't help much. Don't be in a rush to take out your red pen. Instead, try the following:

- Collect in students' writing, but don't mark it. Instead, read through it, and notice common problems:
 - common misunderstandings of the task
 - common errors in grammar
 - common errors in spelling
 - common omissions (what they've forgotten to do)
- Explain about these problems next lesson. Give them their writing back (unmarked). Ask them to improve it based on your feedback.
- Next lesson, first their partner checks their work, then they hand in their books for assessment and grading.

A small class challenge: Half-empty classrooms

A possible solution: Circle lessons



- Taken outside, in shade, sitting on ground or mats.
- All students are close to the teacher, so...
- Only one 'resource set' is needed.
- Natural resources are all around.
- Climate is often better for learning.
- 'Break-out groups' are possible.



A challenge for all classes: How can I improve speaking skills among my students?

A possible solution: Discourse role plays

Lower grades: Basic introductions

A: Hello. My name is _____.

B: Hello. My name is _____. Pleased to meet you.

A: Pleased to meet you, too. Are you a student?

B: Yes. I study at _____ school, in _____. What about you?

A: I am also a student at _____ school, in _____.

B: What are your favourite school subjects?

A: I like _____ and _____. What about you?

B: I like _____ and _____. They are very interesting.

A: What job would you like to do when you grow up?

B: I'd like to be a _____.

A: Why?

B: Because _____.

_____ . And you?

A: I'd like to be a _____ because _____.

B: Thank you. It's nice talking to you. Goodbye.

A: And you. Goodbye.

Mid-grades: Clothes shop

A: Good morning _____.

B: Good morning. I'd like to buy a _____, please.

A: Of course. What size are you?

B: My size is _____.

A: Thank you. And what colours do you prefer?

B: I like _____ and _____, but not _____.

A: I see. How about this one? Do you like it?

B: Yes. It's nice. Can I try it on?

A: Let me help you... That looks very nice!

B: Yes. I like it. How much is it?

A: It costs _____.

B: Sorry! That is too expensive!

(Customer and assistant negotiate price)

Higher grades: Provide the structure only

Target language - Assistant

*What style are you looking for?
How about these?
These are very fashionable.
Would you like to try them on?
What size are you?
Here you are.
How do they feel?
They really suit you!
Maybe you need a different size?
Those ones cost £55.*

1	Assistant greets customer
2	Customer says what s/he wants
3	Assistant shows customer some shoes
4	Customer chooses 2-3 pairs to try on
5	Assistant asks for size and gets the shoes
6	Customer tries shoes on, makes comments
7	They discuss fit / style / colour
8	Customer makes a decision

Target language - Customer

*Could I try on those ones?
My size is...
They're (a bit) too tight.
They're not big enough.
I don't like the colour.
They're very comfortable.
Have you got...
...the next size up / down?
...something a bit cheaper?
How much are they?
I think I'll take them.
I think I'll leave it.*