Cool 2 Kids

Cool Tips for Teachers

Richmond

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- Have students write their first names with a marker on three colorful index cards. Get them to tape the edges together to form a name card that will stand up on their desk. This will help you learn their names quickly but it will also help them to learn each other's names faster.

- It's not always obvious to a teacher when a student feels embarrassed. Be alert for potential difficulties, such as students who are left out of pair or group activities by their peers, students who cannot answer a direct question in front of the class or even students who are not comfortable doing certain activities like singing or role playing. Some solutions include always assigning pairs, groups and teams and encouraging voluntary participation. Finally, be willing to be silly sometimes. This will help students to feel more confident and they need confidence to experiment with using English.

- Encourage students to be independent learners. If possible, decorate the classroom with pictures of cartoon characters that students like. Many of these cartoons are available in English. Write some of the expressions that these characters use in English on the decorations and encourage students to watch the cartoons in English. In addition, many programmes offer websites with games and videos in English online. Write the website addresses for sites like these on the board and follow up by asking students about the sites at a later time. If students make English a part of their lives, it will help them long after they leave your class.

- One way to encourage students to use English for everyday communication is to assign conversation pairs every week or month. Students should talk to their partners at a specific time in class (the beginning or the end work well) for three or four minutes. They should try to say whatever they are thinking about in English. During this time, monitor and make sure students are participating. Avoid disrupting the interaction with feedback, although you can take notes of areas to review or vocabulary to explain at a different time. If a student's conversation partner is absent, have the student join another pair for that day.

- When you teach new language, either grammar or vocabulary, make sure that you teach any new concepts first. In the case of *Family* words, students need to understand that family relationships are different for each family member. They are probably not accustomed to thinking of their mother as a daughter or a sister, or their grandad as a father. Students may need to view the world differently to understand these new words. If you help them to understand this change of perspective, it will be easier for them to understand and use the new vocabulary.

- Students come in all levels and abilities so some students will have more difficulty with certain activities while other activities are easy for them. There are a number of things you can do if an activity is more challenging for your students. If the activity requires them to produce sentences with a particular structure, you can tell them to write the sentences first. This gives them time to think and ask questions. If the activity requires them to find information in a reading or audio text, you can model the thought process for them and break down the task into smaller steps. Likewise, to make an activity more challenging, reduce the time that students have to complete the activity or encourage them to modify the sentences to say new things. Get them to spell words rather than just identify them and have them make sentences with words rather than giving only the word. With a repertoire of these adaptations, you can keep everyone in the class engaged in the activity and making progress.

- There are a few strategies that can make monitoring students more effective. One is to make sure that students understand the task before they start. Otherwise, you will spend most of the time repeating the instructions to different students. Another important thing to consider is that the aim is never for students to have the correct answers in their books. Rather, they need to understand how to find or produce these answers. Give them prompts and hints and additional examples but avoid telling them what to write. Lastly, make sure to give all students an equal opportunity for feedback. Start on different sides of the room for each activity.

- Language cannot be learned as a series of facts. Rather, it is a combination of knowledge and skills that students must use in order to learn, similar to playing the piano or riding a bike. For this reason, students can learn vocabulary better if they relate the words to real-life objects. You can do this by bringing the objects to the classroom (in this case, accessories), by referring to objects students have with them at school and by encouraging them to think about the new language when they use the relevant objects at home.

- Ask students to participate in different responsibilities in the classroom: handing out materials, collecting papers, getting students' attention at the end of activities, or keeping score with games. Write the list of classroom duties on a sheet of paper and display it in every class. Change the assignments every week.

- Encourage students to practise their English over summer holidays. Suggest fun activities that they can do, like visiting websites in English, making signs to label things in English at home, and talking with friends in English. List the suggestions on a half-sheet of paper and give a copy to each student before the end of the school year.

- Create a learning environment in your classroom. Put up pictures or posters with images that students associate with English. Always have extra fun material on hand for the stronger students. For example: a fun text to read, vocabulary memory cards, vocabulary crosswords and the like.

- Make sure students understand your instructions before they do an activity. Give clear and short instructions. Then ask a volunteer to explain what they are supposed to do.

- Talk to small groups as they work. Remember that the more English students hear, the more they learn.

- Try to call on every student at least once during every lesson. Students will understand that you want everybody to participate and they will become more involved.

- When dividing the class into small groups, make sure there is a mix of stronger and weaker students.

- Reward students not only when they win a game, but also when they do something well: *Great work! I only heard English in this activity!*

- End your class by saying something positive about the lesson or by reminding students of what they learned: *The song was cool! Now you can ask about prices.*

- Explain to students that everybody makes mistakes when learning a language but that practice makes perfect.

- Involve the class in their learning. Ask students to suggest an activity they would like to do to practise English the following week.