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Ten Ways to Begin an ESL/EFL Lesson

There are many ways teachers can choose to begin an ESL/EFL lesson. The beginning of a lesson is important as it sets the tone for the class, and helps to engage the students and focuses the students' attention. A good start to the class will also insure the lesson goes smoothly. Here are ten engaging ways you can start your class.

1. Greeting the students

Greeting your students helps them to get ready to learn English. This simple interaction also helps to build a rapport between you and the students. There are many ways to greet someone in English. You can take this opportunity to teach your students the various ways people greet each other by presenting a new phrase or expression at the beginning of class each week. This would bring a lot of exposure to the students on how people greet each other in real life and move away from the generic 'Hello. I'm fine thank you and you?' response students usually give. Greeting the students also helps to fill in time, while you are waiting for everyone to get settled.

2. Talking to the students

Chatting to your students helps to build their confidence to communicate in English. You also get to learn about the students and what they are interested in. This in-turn helps you create more interesting ESL/EFL lessons for them. Always keep the topics of conversation light and fun. Don't worry about error correction. Instead, help build their confidence to converse. Talk about easy topics or just talk about yourself. Remember to be patient and smile. Leave any problems you have at the classroom door. A smile and positive outlook provides the students with reassurance and creates a nice atmosphere in the classroom.

3. Fulfilling a required role

A required role is some kind of admin duty that is required by the school or university. Normally, this will be something like checking attendance. This doesn't necessarily have to be done at the start of class. You could check attendance or participation throughout the lesson by asking the students to participate in the class in some way. You could ask each student a question, get them to present, read a text, etc. After they have done that, you check their name.

4. Previewing the lesson

Previewing the lesson gets the students thinking about what they are going to study. It lets the students know what to expect in the lesson. Tell the students the objective of the lesson and how they are going to achieve this. You may also want to explain the significance of the objective and how it will benefit the students. In this way, the students will focus their attention on the subject matter.

5. Playing a game

Playing a game is an excellent way to begin an ESL/EFL lesson. It makes the students energized and brings enjoyment to the whole class. It also gets the students involved in producing English by doing something fun. Playing games also helps to instill confidence in the students' ability to speak English. Remember games are not supposed to be used just for the sake of it. Games should help to introduce or practice the topic or subject matter of the lesson. Most games can be easily adapted to introduce any language point or topic. Check out our [Games Section](#) for enjoyable games to play with your students.

6. Doing a warm-up activity

Doing a warm-up activity helps to create a lead-in to the ESL/EFL lesson. It is usually a short activity based on what the students are going to study. It helps students understand what they are about to learn in an indirect way. Furthermore, warm-up activities focus the students' attention and bring out any existing knowledge the students already have about the topic. You can find many ideas for warm-up activities in our [Resources Section](#).

7. Reviewing the previous lesson

You may find students easily forget what they did in the previous lesson, so it is always worth reviewing what they have studied in the last class. This helps keep the material fresh in the students' mind and helps them recall the vocabulary and language they have studied. Furthermore, it gives you the opportunity to combine the past topic with the new topic and show how they relate if applicable. Regular reviewing of previous lessons will also put less pressure on you and the students when it comes to testing. Reviewing is a wonderful opportunity to consolidate what your students have learned. To make reviews fun for the students, try creating a quiz game where the students answer questions for points. A Jeopardy style game works great for reviewing previous lessons, because you can choose the topics you want them to practice. You could also have a student teach something they have studied, or to clarify a point, ask a student to answer a question from a classmate.

8. Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a very easy way to begin a class and is very simple to do. Basically, you [elicit](#) everything the students know about a topic. You do this by writing the students' background knowledge and ideas on the board. Write up any vocabulary or information that is useful to the lesson. Try to connect ideas or content together to give the students a platform to work from. The students can work in groups or together as a class to think of words and associations relating to the topic.

9. Class discussion

Discussions can be used to begin a class with higher-level students. Pose a question or questions to the students about the topic you are going to teach in order to generate discussion and debate. Give the students five minutes or so to think about the answer(s) first. Students feel more comfortable expressing ideas and answering questions if they have some time to think about them first. Class discussions help to improve the students' critical thinking skills and get the students thinking about what they know about the subject and what they want to know. This in turn helps them retain more information. To make class discussions run smoothly, delegate roles to all the students, e.g. discussion leaders, summarizers, etc.

10. Using a picture

A picture paints a thousand words. Pictures are important for creating interest in the topic you are about to teach. You can use photos, drawings, cartoons, paintings, symbols, flashcards, magazine ads, etc. Today's world is very visually-oriented and using pictures is a natural aid to learning. Students also learn in different ways. Pictures help visual learners understand the subject matter being introduced. Pictures allow students to be creative as they are open to different interpretations. You can use pictures to introduce vocabulary, predict a reading or listening activity, understand a main idea, etc. Pictures provide a talking point and help students give their opinions and ideas.