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## Teaching Small Classes

Students benefit greatly from small class sizes as they have more one-to-one time with the teacher. Small ESL/EFL classes can range from just a few students to around twenty, depending on where you are in the world. Some teachers enjoy teaching small classes and others find it more challenging as activities and tasks are usually finished quickly.

Small ESL/EFL classes are a lot more communicative than normal classes, because the students have a lot more opportunity to speak. Small classes are also more student-centred. Students can have their lessons tailored to their needs and the lessons can be focused on the interests of the students. Furthermore, students in a small class get to know each other very well, which makes them feel more comfortable. This means students open up more, ask more questions, and give opinions freely. In small classes, attendance improves and the teacher receives more completed homework assignments. The teacher also has more time to give feedback to the students and this helps them develop their English skills. Students also have more opportunity to go outside of the classroom and use English, because there are fewer students for the teacher to control. You can also say 'goodbye' to spending hours at the photocopier with smaller classes, and everyone should turn up with a textbook.

One problem teachers commonly have with teaching small ESL/EFL classes is that the students burn through activities. Activities are usually completed quickly and you have to prepare more materials and games than in a normal class. Make sure you have lots of games and fillers on hand for when this happens. Many games, warmers and fillers can be found in the [Games Section](#) of this website. Playing games will also help keep the class energy up.

Classroom dynamics can take a hit if students are absent, because you may not have enough students for a planned activity or game. A backup plan for pair work or group work needs to be addressed if attendance is low. Boredom may also become a factor as students work with the same people week after week. To combat this, mix up the classroom dynamics. Make sure students are paired or grouped differently in each class. Put stronger students with weaker ones and rearrange the seating now and again.

Shy students can have problems adapting to a small class, as they are easily noticed. Try to make your students feel as comfortable as possible to help them communicate better. Instill confidence in your students in the first few classes by giving them lots of praise. Get them to feel relaxed not only with each other but also with you. Give shy students time to feel comfortable before putting them on the spot.

When you are teaching small ESL/EFL classes, find out what topics the students are interested in and incorporate them into your lessons. Customize the class to the students' needs and interests. Use activities that have been proven to work well with classes of this size, such as role-plays, projects, activities incorporating movies or music, etc. Take advantage of the small class size and do activities outside of the classroom, e.g. an interview project. This will get your students using English in the real world. Also, make sure you often review the content you have been teaching, so the students don't forget the language and vocabulary you have taught them. Don't forget to get feedback from the students on what they like and dislike about the class. This helps you deal with any issues or problem areas immediately.