

## Teaching Tips

Teaching children can be particularly challenging simply because it's difficult to get their attention and keep it for an extended period of time.

It is said that you double a child's age and subtract two to get the maximum activity length. So if you're teaching 5-year-olds, they can pay attention to one activity for 8 minutes (5 times 2 is 10, minus 2 is 8). In addition to keeping the activities short, there are other tips to keep in mind when teaching children, just take a look below.

### Change Activities Often

Break activities up and create a couple of activities rather than just one long one. And create different type of activities as well. For example, if you're going to teach introductions, you could start with a song while standing up, then drawing a picture while sitting on the floor or at their desks, and end with a conversation race.

### Get Up and Move

Total Physical Response (TPR) is great for children. Many websites have tips for using TPR in class. In the *Links'* section, you can find the *Total Physical Response* link. Kids love to move around and if you can let them learn while moving, they'll love you for it. TPR is often used in songs (such as *Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes*) and games (such as *Simon Says*). However, it can also be used during regular classroom activities. Having students move to different sides of the room (see the *Likes and Dislikes* activity) or find an object (see the *I Spy* activity).

### Playtime

Ask kids what they want to do and most often than not they say that they want to play. Children learn by playing, so incorporating games into your lessons will make students more eager to participate. Board games and card games can be laminated or stuck into clear plastic covers and reused in your other classes. Take a look at MES English in the *Links'* section for game ideas and templates.

### **Use Different Groups**

Pairs can sit side-by-side, face-to-face, back-to-back, or even on opposite sides of the room. Small groups work well around a table or sitting on the floor. Larger groups work well for competition or whole-class games.

### **Positive Reinforcement**

Try to reward students for good behavior rather than punishing students for bad behavior. Try complimenting a student on working quietly and you'll find the other students will be quick to do the same. Stickers and stamps are great ways to reward students. Don't forget to praise students. Telling a student they did a good job can work just as well as stickers. See more tips in the *Classroom Management* section.



## Activity: Create a Comic

Students don't generally like writing assignments, but this is one that they will enjoy and have fun doing.

### Before Class

Find a comic. It doesn't matter what language it's in. It's good to get a famous comic strip from the country that you're working in, but any comic will do. White out the words in the speech bubbles. Photocopy it so that there's one for each student. Alternatively, you could have students work in small groups. If you're going to do that, you'll need one comic per group.

**Alternative:** Instead of having everyone work with the same comic, you could find different comic strips and allow students to choose which one they want to work with.

If possible, you could get some comics in English and bring those to class as well. You should have no problem finding them on the internet. This will help introduce the topic and help students if they're stuck for ideas.

**Homework before the assignment:** Have students find a comic in their language and bring it to class.

### In Class

Have your students pass around the comics that they found in their language. Ask them what they like about the comic and why they chose it. If possible, you could have them explain it in English. (If not, don't worry, the goal isn't for them to translate, but to introduce the idea of working with comics in class.)

If you were able to find some English comics, pass them around the class. You could ask students which ones are their favorites and why. Now tell your students that they're going to create their own comic. Pass the blank comics out, or have them choose a comic if you made copies of different ones. Then give them time to write in the dialogues.

When students finish, they should put them on the wall or on their desks. Then they can walk around and read the other students' comics or help their classmates if necessary. Make sure all students are done about 5 or 10 minutes before class is over so that they have time to walk around and read other students' work. This is a really great alternative to normal writing assignments.

## Games

### **The Circle Game**

Stand in a circle and put a vocabulary card in front of each student. Have the students walk in a circle until you say stop. Pick a few students and depending on their English level tell them to name the word on a vocabulary card or use it in a sentence.

**Variations:** Sing a song while walking. Have a student say stop.

### **Catch**

Sit in a circle and throw a soft ball at a student. Depending on their English level have the student answer a question or name the word on a vocabulary card.

**Variation:** With smaller children you can roll the ball instead of throwing it.

### **Timed Races**

This works well with boys. You can do this with just about anything. All you have to do is give students a time limit to finish their task.

**Variation:** Have students record their times and try to beat them.

### **Tic Tac Toe**

Make tic tac toe boards with different pictures on them. Put students in pairs. Give one board to each pair. They have to name the vocabulary word or use it in a sentence in order to put an X or O in the square.

**Variations:** Have students make their own tic tac toe boards. Do this as a whole class activity.

### **Memory**

Make a set of cards with two of a kind for each picture. Put students in small groups of 3-5 students. Put the cards face down. Students take turns turning two cards over. If they match they have to name the vocabulary word or make a sentence in order to keep the pair. The student with the most pairs at the end wins.

**Variation:** Play face up with very young students.