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Research Article

HOW TO TEACH ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS

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Abstract: Grooming the spongy minds of kiddos to absorb the wonders of English takes a whole lot of patience and creativity. If you've taken language classes both as a child and adult, you'll know how vastly different your lessons might have been. Knowing how to teach English to young learners is a whole other ball game.

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Teaching English to young learners requires a delicate balance of fun and work. While writing out verb conjugation tables twenty times over is an effective strategy for adults to learn, you'll be hard-pressed to get first graders to sit still long enough to do same. Likewise, encouraging your business English class made of professionals and university students to sit in a circle and clap along to a song about colors would raise a whole lot of eyebrows. Good luck getting a 50-year-old businessman to play Simon Says willingly!

It can sometimes be difficult getting your young learners to stay focused for an entire class. However, you can use that energy and curiosity to your full advantage. Here's how to teach English to children using engaging games and activities!

This combination means that you'll have to pay particular attention to he way you present information and engage students. Engagement and fun is key to setting a strong foundation for their future education.

1. Turn lessons into songs. Every English learner, both native and not, is familiar with, at the very least, one classic jingle. Yes, the ABCs are what we turn to for a reminder of what letter comes after Q. Although the middle part (something about eliemenopee?) requires a bit more brain power, the song offers English speakers a comfortable reference point for all their alphabetical needs.

Turning vocab, grammar, and dialogues into catchy tunes is a fabulous method for teaching English to young learners. If you're reviewing common material, try turning to YouTube to see if there's already a suitable song out there. Otherwise, you can hone your inner Beethoven to compose a musical masterpiece using the tune of another easy song, such as Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.

2. Create visual diagrams to illustrate new vocabulary. Head, shoulders, knees, and toes. These are a whole lot easier to point out on a smiling stick man than to write out in a vocabulary list. Visual devices provide a double whammy, too. Students can enjoy coloring or even adding on to pictures, while also absorbing what the new words they are learning look like.

Highlighting, underlining, and circling are all common visual tricks use to recall snippets of information. Creating visual diagrams is the same basic idea, so that the little ones can start to visualize what English looks like. As a bonus, students can more easily locate learning aids with distinct colors and illustrations among their folders of messy papers.

3. Encourage mnemonic devices to memorize grammar rules. Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally, or PEMDAS, is a popular mnemonic devoce for recalling the order of operations in math. When it comes to teaching English to children, memory aids make it easier to remember hard-to-spell words or complex grammar points. Whether that means creating a mnemomic device in students' native languages or breaking it down into simpler English words, the goal remains the same: better memory!

A useful mnemonic for all levels of English learners is "-i before -e, except after c". Once you can get your students to recite that phrase on command, expect those pesky i/e spelling mistakes to poof away! (If all else fails, turn to essential ESL resources to gain even more insight on how to teach English to children.)

4. Weave in spontaneous or consistent dialogues throughout the lesson. What did you do this weekend? By kicking off class with an expected question, you can get your students thinking about what they'll say long before class even starts. Natural dialogue also introduces students to everyday vocabulary relevant to their own lives and interests.

If you're working with a class, rather than a single student, you can also sprinkle in some side conversations with students as they work diligently on differentiating between I and me. Ask what's for lunch, how the last soccer game went, or anything at all that gets them excited to share!

5. Break up solitary study sessions with games. Ah, the holy grail of how to teach English to young learners – games. Childhood education without games is like chicken wings without seasoning or sauce. You simply can't have one without the other. Games are especially effective teaching methods for young learners (or for any kind of learner – think back to your own TEFL certification program!), because kids are able to learn without realizing it. Active games let them expel some bottled up energy and quiet ones challenge and require concentration.

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