

ESL Essentials for the New Teacher or Tutor*

So, you're going to start teaching or tutoring ESL learners! Working with newcomers to Canada is extremely rewarding, and it helps us build strong and inclusive communities. But sometimes it's hard to know where to start! There's just so much they want to know, and only so much you can accomplish in a limited amount of time. This tip sheet will whet your appetite for the wide world of ESL: resources, activities, tips, tricks, and more!

Focus Areas

Four Skills

The four skills are Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. The following three focus areas support these skills.

Grammar and Vocabulary

Commonly understood as the mechanics of a language, grammar includes verb tenses, conditionals, pronoun usage, and more. Specialized vocabulary and idioms are also useful for learners.

Pronunciation

Practising pronunciation includes individual sounds, intonation, linking words, and phrasing.

Pragmatics

This is the study of the social use of language. Learners need to understand politeness, levels of formality, turn taking in conversation, and more.

Steps to Success

1. **Plan**
Know your students' needs and develop a detailed lesson plan that addresses their immediate and long-term goals. Include a variety of focus areas and activities to keep students motivated.
2. **Implement**
Teach or tutor according to your lesson plan, but don't be afraid to be flexible and respond to emergent learner needs!
3. **Assess**
Evaluate your students' progress informally and formally, making sure that your assessments are as "real world" as possible. Keep organized records.
4. **Reflect**
Constantly think about your teaching style and the way the learners are reacting to it. Don't be afraid to adjust as you go.

What Are the Canadian Language Benchmarks?

Normally referred to as the CLBs, the Canadian Language Benchmarks are the national standard for describing language ability from basic to advanced. There are 12 benchmarks in total. Learn more at www.language.ca

Interviews

A great way to assess and practise language, and best done one-on-one or in small groups

Pair and Group Work

Have learners work together to complete a task – not only will they practise pragmatics but language skills as well!

Sequencing/Ordering

Have learners collaborate by listing, writing instructions, or discussing rankings.

Error Correction

Learners really like to see their progress by seeing whether they can find and fix mistakes.

Cloze/Fill in the Blanks

Practise grammar or listening by leaving words blank for learners to fill in.

Questions and Quizzes

Multiple choice and short answer questions can work well for grammar, reading, and listening activities.

Writing Samples

Get a sense of learners' writing through journaling or tasks such as filling out forms, and writing letters or notes.

Role Plays

Give guidelines for a real world task and practise and present it, e.g., making an appointment or a complaint.

Activity and Assessment Ideas

Presentations

Allow learners time to plan and practise and then share.

Portfolios

Portfolio Based Language Assessment (PBLA) demonstrates the learners' language learning journey.

Recommended Resources

Teaching Methods

Language Teaching Methodologies

<http://esl.fis.edu/teachers/support/method.htm>

An overview of the most common teaching methods

Communicative Language Activities

<http://www.educ.ualberta.ca/staff/olenka.bilash/best%20of%20bilash/communicative%20activities.html>

Examples and explanations

Task Based Learning

<http://www.educ.ualberta.ca/staff/olenka.bilash/best%20of%20bilash/taskbasedlanguageteaching.html>

Examples and explanations

Activity and Lesson Ideas

Internet TESL Journal

<http://iteslj.org>

A wide variety of resources

WyzAnt

<https://www.wyzant.com/resources/lessons/english/esl>

Lessons on a variety of topics

Using English

<http://www.usingenglish.com>

Lesson plans, worksheets, and online quizzes

ESL Flow

<http://www.eslflow.com>

A large collection of printable lessons and worksheets

TEFL.net

<http://www.tefl.net/esl-lesson-plans/>

Worksheet generators, lesson plans

Online Activities

ESL Video

<http://www.eslvideo.com>

Regularly updated video quizzes

Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab

<http://www.esl-lab.com>

Basic, intermediate, and advanced quizzes

LINC Language Training E-Activities

http://wiki.settlementatwork.org/index.php/LINC_1-4_Classroom_Activities

Top Tips

Prepare

The secret to being flexible and addressing student need is to over-prepare, especially when you first start out. Having a variety of activities at your fingertips will make you confident and ease transitions between activities.

Model Your Activities

Don't expect your learners to understand instructions right away. The best way to explain is to do an example!

Be Aware of Cultural Differences

Culture influences behaviour, so try to understand why learners act a certain way before assuming anything!

Don't Be Afraid of Silence

Give learners time to answer, and don't feel compelled to fill the silence with teacher talk.

Opportunities for Professional Development

Rural Routes

<https://eslruralroutes.norquest.ca>

Visit our site for an extensive collection of resources, links, and tip sheets. You can also get information about webinars and request a workshop or information from a consultant.

ATESL

<http://www.atesl.ca>

The Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language is a professional organization that offers support, membership, and accreditation. Keep updated at the annual conference or join one of the local chapter meetings or mini-conferences. ATESL also offers information about jobs and upgrading your education.

Tutela

<https://tutela.ca/>

Join the largest, national online community for ESL professionals. You can join groups, participate in forums, and attend webinars on a vast array of topics.

* Created June 2016 by Linda Manimtim. For information about accessing our FREE services, contact your Rural Routes consultant or visit our website at <http://eslruralroutes.norquest.ca>