

Teaching English to Children Through Age 14

"If the child is not learning the way you are teaching, then you must teach in the way the child learns."

Rita Dunn, professor



I have to teach? What should I do?!

(Also known as lesson-planning and maintaining order.)

✓ 6- to 10-year-olds (through fourth grade)

- Focus on listening, speaking and vocabulary-building.
- Use a conversational approach: Trick kids into learning grammar by using dialogues and repetition.
- If the student studies English at school, use the textbook as a guide for what order to use. If there's no book, a good place to start is greetings, then vocabulary. Teach words in chunks that will allow the kids to make sentences before too long – animals, then colors, for example.
- It's impossible to review too much.
- Do lots of art – draw and label new words, concepts, etc. Make books.
- A busy, engaged child is (generally) a well-behaved one.
 - ◊ Have a routine.
 - ◊ Always plan more activities than you think you'll need.
 - ◊ Take into account the students' age and have reasonable expectations about what they can do, how long they can do it, when you might need to change activities, etc. Planning is great, but you can't be so devoted to your plan that it becomes more important than the students' progress.



- Web sites with letter sheets: www.kindergarten.com, www.bogglesworld.com, www.learningpage.com
- Web site with interactive phonics and learn-to-read activities: www.starfall.com

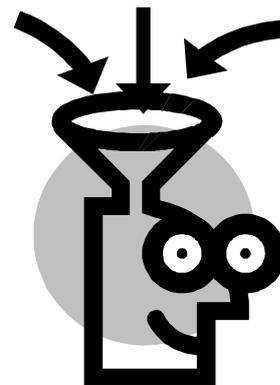
✓ 11- to 14-year-olds (fourth through eighth grades)

- Include all four skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing), but give more time to speaking and listening.
- With this age, you can explain grammar: It will help some kids to see it as a system.
- What material should you cover? The four main tenses for this age group are present simple and progressive, past simple, and future. With more advanced students you may get to present perfect.
- The hardest grammatical concept is the helping verbs we use in English. Reinforce their use by having students make positive, negative and question sentences. Every time you teach a new tense, review the ones they already know. Helping them make some kind of reference chart in a notebook is a good idea.
- Balance review with new material.
- In terms of behavior, the same goes here as for younger children – have a routine, keep them busy, etc. The added challenge is that this age is when children start to mature at very different speeds, so you may have kids with no attention span in the same group as those ready for college.

Teacher, can we play a game?

(A few amusing ways to learn and practice English.)

- **Charades:** One student acts and others guess. Depending on ability, they can just say the word, or ask: "Is it _____?" "Yes, it is." For verbs, have the student act out any action, and then ask the class what the action is, using the question form of the tense you're working on. A student must answer using the proper tense.
- **Tic-tac-toe:** Divide the group into two teams. In a tic-tac-toe grid on the board, write the infinitives of nine verbs. Give students a tense and tell them whether to make positive or negative sentences, or questions. The first team tries; if it's incorrect, the second team gets a chance to steal. For vocabulary, students can use words in a sentence, or even just say what the word means in Bulgarian.
- **Five in a Row:** Like tic-tac-toe, only this works with bigger groups. Students play in groups of three; the grid is 25 squares. A group wins when they get five squares that touch, including diagonals.



- **Board games:** Create a board game with basic actions that you can have students play with any tense. Just tell them what tense and whether to make positive or negative sentences, or questions. Could also be used for vocabulary. See www.bogglesworld.com for some board games and a blank one.
- **Time game:** Played like a regular board game, only students can play it in their notebooks. They write the times of the day in half-hour increments, then have to say what they usually do, were doing, etc., depending on the given tense. First player to get to the end of the day wins.
- **Create stories:** Give students two or three funny photos. They must make up a story that links the photos, using given vocabulary words and/or a given verb tense. It's funnier if you ask them to list their favorite words without telling them what they're going to do with them.
- **I Know Everything** (for questions): Students choose magazine photos, and become the expert on them. One student comes to the front of the room and has to answer all questions asked about the photo – they make up answers as necessary.
- **Ball:** Toss a small ball to a student – you say a word in the native language and they say it in the target language, or you can do the reverse. Also works for sequences – numbers, days, months, alphabet, etc.; also verb conjugations or tense changes, even lines of a simple dialogue. Variation: Students toss the ball to each other.
- **Bingo:** I use a grid that is 16 squares that the students draw in their notebooks and fill in themselves – it lets them practice writing. For more advanced students, you can give words in the native language, or give definitions of the English words they have written in the spaces.
- **Group races:** This works best for reviewing categories of vocabulary. Students have a limited amount of time to list all the words they can think of for a particular category – rooms in the house, food, clothes, etc.
- **“I'm going on a picnic ...”:** First student says, “I'm going on a picnic and I'm taking an apple.” Next student repeats, and adds something for the letter B, and so on. (Doesn't have to be all food.)
- **Categories:** Sort of a variation on Scattergories. In a 6x6 grid (the upper-left square will be empty) write five categories in the first column and a five-letter word with no repeating letters across the first row. Students fill in the grid with words that start with the word's five letters. Scoring ranges from one point per word to points based on how many other groups didn't have the word – it's up to you.

They don't call it the “entire-net” for nothing!

(A few of the innumerable Web sites out there, plus other places to find materials.)

✓ Internet sites

Sites with ideas for activities/games:

- <http://www.eslcafe.com/ideas/index.html> (Ideas divided into topics.)
- <http://www.englishpage.com/grammar/> (Variety of activities.)
- <http://www.pc-tefl.hit.bg/> (Peace Corps Bulgaria TEFL site.)
- <http://puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com/> (Make crosswords, word searches.)
- <http://iteslj.org/links/TESL/Lessons/> (Endless ideas for lessons.)
- <http://www.handoutsonline.com/index.shtml> (Good handouts geared toward TEFL.)
- <http://www.onestopenglish.com/lessonshare/archive.htm> (Lessons, grammar.)
- <http://www.bogglesworld.com> (Worksheets, activities, etc.)

Sites with grammar explanations:

- <http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/grammar.htm> (University of Victoria, B.C.; good explanations and visuals.)
- <http://cctc.commnet.edu/grammar> (A community college site with a good index.)
- <http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/verbtenseintro.html> (A tutorial of verb tenses.)
- <http://www.edufind.com/english/grammar/toc.cfm> (An index of grammar topics from EduFind.)
- <http://esl.fis.edu/index.htm> (Frankfurt International School's ESL site with explanations, quizzes, etc.)
- <http://www.impact-english.com/Grammar.asp> (Explanations, visuals, quizzes.)
- <http://grammar.englishclub.com/> (Also has quizzes.)

Links to more links:

- http://iteslj.org/links/ESL/Grammar_and_English_Usage/
- http://www.yellowwallet.com.br/english_grammar.htm

✓ **Books from the Peace Corps office (downstairs or in TEFL offices):** Textbooks, ideas for games, etc.

✓ **Authentic materials all around us:** Travel brochures, product packages, etc.

