TEACHER'S CORNER – JUNE 2016
COMMON CHALLENGES IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

For most of us, teaching English is an enjoyable experience, and helping our students is rewarding. However, the English language classroom also presents challenges that can test our patience and ability to be effective.

English teachers around the globe face many of the same difficulties. Our classes can be large, sometimes with over 100 students! We often have multiple English proficiency levels in the same classroom, which makes planning lessons and meeting all our students' needs troublesome. Some of us have limited materials, or have to adapt or create our own. Providing opportunities for students to practice the language can also pose a challenge, especially if we have shy students or big classes.

This month in the Teacher's Corner, we will present strategies to address some of the most common issues in English language classrooms. We will suggest ideas to help you manage large classes, teach students with multiple levels in the same class, and adapt and find teaching materials.

MAKING THE MOST OF LARGE CLASSES BY USING LEARNING TEAMS

Enrollment in English language courses is often high for many reasons. Studying English is compulsory in many parts of the world, but some students make a personal choice to take classes as well. Whether students are fulfilling a requirement or want to study English to meet a specific goal, the popularity of the language has filled some classrooms to capacity or beyond.

Large class sizes can make teaching a challenge. This week in the Teacher's Corner, we will examine how to make the most of a large class by using learning teams and assigning tasks that require students to apply what they have learned.

LEARNING TEAMS

One challenge of having a large class is ensuring that all students are engaged and participate in the lesson and activities. Whether we have 25, 55, or 95 students, it is hard to deliver instruction and circulate around the classroom to be sure every student is being attentive and understands the content.

One way to increase student participation is to organize learning teams with specific roles for each student. Smaller teams provide more opportunities for students to participate and keep each other focused. The ideal number for a team is between 4 and 6 students. Many teachers choose to keep the same teams for a designated period of time such as a month, a marking period, or a semester. How frequently you create new learning teams depends on the needs of your class.

It is imperative that you thoroughly explain the purpose of learning teams and the responsibilities of each role to students. It is important to provide opportunities for the class to practice working in teams and fulfilling each of the roles. If you invest time in communicating expectations and practicing procedures, the process will become effortless and students will easily be able to change roles and teams as needed. The roles are described below and can be adjusted depending on how many students are in each group.

TEAM MEMBER ROLES

Moderator: This member is responsible for guiding the group's discussion. This includes making sure that all members of the team are focused on the topic and being sure that all members participate. The moderator must ensure that each team member has a chance to contribute his/her ideas to the

discussion or task. If needed, this can be accomplished by allowing each member to talk individually for a set amount of time.

Timekeeper: The timekeeper ensures that the team adheres to time constraints. If needed, the timekeeper can divide the total time allotted to the team into sections, such as time for discussion, time for summarizing, and time for completing the final product. He/She can also work closely with the moderator to keep track of time so that each team member is able to share ideas.

Supply Manager: The supply manager's job is to determine what supplies are needed for the team to complete the assigned task. This person also gathers the supplies, or divides responsibility for bringing supplies amongst the team's members. The supply manager also ensures that the supplies are returned and everything is cleaned up properly at the end of the team's work time.

Recorder: The recorder is responsible for taking notes on the team's discussion and ideas. Before the team creates a final product, the summarizer (see below) will work with the team to synthesize the information. Then, the recorder will write ideas or information for the team's final product.

Summarizer: After each team member has had a chance to contribute ideas, the summarizer will provide an overview of what the team discussed. The summarizer can use the recorder's notes and extract any common themes or information. The summarizer should present an overview to the team and help members reach an agreement about what to include in the final product.

Reporter: The reporter's job is to present the team's final product and answer any questions from the audience. Depending on the task that is assigned, this may be an oral presentation, a poster, or another type of project. The reporter is the "voice" of the team and represents everyone's ideas in a presentation to others.

Note: If your learning teams have 4 or 5 members, some of the roles can be combined. For instance, the moderator can easily act as timekeeper, and the supply manager can also be the summarizer.

SUGGESTED TASKS FOR LEARNING TEAMS

For students to benefit from working in teams, it is important that they are assigned a task which requires each member to contribute and play an active role in creating a product that demonstrates their learning.

For this reason, activities like worksheets or textbook exercises are not the best to use with learning teams. Students in learning teams will benefit most from completing tasks such as the ones suggested below.

Poster: Have students create a poster summarizing a lesson or unit. For example, after teaching a specific verb tense, ask students to describe when the tense is used, describe the morphology, and provide example sentences with illustrations. After teaching new vocabulary words, students can make a poster with definitions, illustrations, and sentences containing each of the words. These can be displayed in your classroom for students to refer to throughout the course.

Story/Composition: Ask each learning team to write a story, short text, or sample dialogue to demonstrate their learning. Require students to include specific parts of speech, vocabulary, tenses, or language structures that you taught in the lesson.

Skit: Learning teams can write and perform short skits to demonstrate their understanding of concepts that you taught. For example, after students learn about adjectives, ask them to create a skit that requires them to describe something. Students can also demonstrate their knowledge of new words or grammatical concepts by creating a script that requires them to use specific vocabulary, tenses, or language structures specific to a certain topic about which they are learning.

Lesson Reflection: Have a set of about 5 questions prepared for learning teams to answer after your lesson. Questions that require students to apply their learning work best. Example questions are outlined in the table below.

Use with new verb tenses, vocabulary, or grammar concepts:	Use with literature to reflect on characters and events:	Use with nonfiction texts:
Describe a situation in which you might use the _____ tense. Describe how a word changes when it is in the _____ tense. Describe how a word changes when it is an adjective, ordinal number, possessive, etc. List 5 examples of words in the _____ tense. List 5 examples of words that are adjectives, related to a certain topic, etc. Note: The number of words you require can be adjusted to the specific needs of your students.	After reading this part of the story, how would you feel if you were _____? Why? Would you take the same actions as _____? Why or why not? What do you think will happen in the next chapter/section of the story? Why? Create a timeline of important events in this chapter/section of the story. (This can be an ongoing task after reading each assigned section of a text.)	What is the main idea of this text? Name two interesting facts that you learned from reading this text. Do you interact with this topic in your life? How often? How does it affect you? Can you think of people who would find this topic interesting or important? Was this text trying to inform, persuade, instruct, or entertain? Why do you think so?

Write 5 sentences that show you understand how to use _____ tense, the new vocabulary, or the new grammatical concept. Note: The number of sentences you require can be adjusted to the specific needs of your students. How would you explain this tense/vocabulary/grammatical concept to someone else so that they would be able to use it correctly?	Which event in the story do you think has been the most important so far? Why?	If you had to give someone else a summary of the key points from this text, what would you tell them?

Dictogloss: To complete a dictogloss activity with students, you should select a passage or short text you would like to use. The text can be fiction or nonfiction. Select about 10 words from the passage that you want to emphasize. The steps for this strategy are:

1. Read the text out loud to the whole class. Ask students to listen closely.
2. Inform students that you will read the text out loud again. This time, students may take notes, draw pictures, or write down anything that helps them remember the events or concepts from the text.
3. Write the list of vocabulary you selected on the board. Have a student read it aloud, or have students repeat the words.
4. Tell students that they must work with their learning team to recreate the text. Inform teams that they must include all of the words from the list.
5. Allow teams to assemble and compare notes in order to recreate the text.
6. After the allotted time has passed, have teams present their recreated text to other teams or the whole class. Students can provide feedback if vocabulary or important details are missing from the teams' recreated texts.

Other Projects: Learning teams can also create other types of projects to demonstrate what they have learned. Depending on the topic, you can ask students to create a grammar book, print advertisement, poem, commercial, song, diorama, or visual representation.

The tasks described above can be presented in several ways. Some assignments can simply be turned in and evaluated by the teacher. Others can be performed or presented to the whole class or another learning team. Learning teams, or the whole class, can assess the projects based on a rubric or checklist.

For assessment tools and ideas, see the October Teacher's Corner, [Collecting and Using Data](). A benefit of team-based assignments and peer assessment strategies is that it can help reduce the amount of time teachers spend evaluating students' work. This can be especially helpful with large classes.

Learning teams can be an excellent way to address a large class. Because students are required to participate in a team-based activity at the end of the lesson, they are more likely to be engaged when you provide instruction. Clearly defined roles and accountability to peers help students stay focused within the team.

Additionally, the performance-based tasks suggested above require students to do more than just recite information. Instead, they must use higher order thinking skills to apply their learning in order to create a final product. Reviewing concepts by discussing and creating something helps learners form new ideas and retain information better than many lower-level individual tasks.

MULTI-LEVEL CLASSES PART ONE: DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION WITH LEARNING STATIONS

Last week in the Teacher's Corner we looked at how to use learning teams to manage large classes. Another common issue that many English teachers deal with is having students from multiple levels in the same course. This makes planning for and meeting the needs of individual students quite difficult. This week in the Teacher's Corner we will explore how to set up learning stations to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students from various levels.

LEARNING STATIONS

Stations are an excellent way to provide students with activities that are tailored to their abilities. Setting up stations and training students in proper procedures does take time, but the investment is worth it because it can help you meet students' needs more effectively.

There are many different ways to include learning stations as part of your instruction. Some teachers choose one day of the week to use stations while others designate a portion of the class period every day. Before you get started, consider the amount of time you have, the number of students you have, and how many learning stations you plan to set up.

GROUPING STUDENTS AND CREATING A SCHEDULE

Once you have decided which stations you plan to set up, you can divide your class into groups according to the number of stations. For example, if you have five learning stations, divide your class into five groups. To address the different levels in your class, plan to have one station where students work with you, the teacher. For this purpose, create groups based on English level so that you can create activities in your teacher-led station based on what each group of students needs. (See more about teacher-led groups below.) Give each group a name, create a chart like the one below, and post it in the classroom so students can refer to it.

Learning Station Groups				
Blue	**Red**	**Yellow**	**Green**	**Orange**
Jose Emilia Kristin	Miguel Li Bardan	Anaam Sarah Catherine	Juan Ayden Tomas	Yasin Sarmila Maryan

Ali Fin	Jeffrey Marisol	Viet Suchita	Cing Ginny	Alahama Beth

After forming groups, determine how often you would like students to work in learning stations and create a schedule to post in the classroom. Two examples, one for daily learning stations and one for a single day of learning stations, are shown below.

Learning Station Schedule (Daily)					
<u>Stations</u>	**Monday**	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
Writing	Blue	Red	Yellow	Green	Orange
Reading	Orange	Blue	Red	Yellow	Green
Games	Green	Orange	Blue	Red	Yellow
Listening	Yellow	Green	Orange	Blue	Red
Teacher	Red	Yellow	Green	Orange	Blue

Note: Teachers who have students work in learning stations for part of each day usually divide the class period. Part of the time is allotted for the teacher to deliver a lesson and the other part is used for students to work in learning stations. The amount of time you spend on each of these activities depends on the needs of your class. Many teachers also create station activities based on the content they are teaching each week.

Learning Station Schedule (Single Day)					
<u>Stations</u>	**Time**	**Time**	**Time**	**Time**	**Time**
Writing	Blue	Red	Yellow	Green	Orange
Reading	Orange	Blue	Red	Yellow	Green
Games	Green	Orange	Blue	Red	Yellow
Listening	Yellow	Green	Orange	Blue	Red
Teacher	Red	Yellow	Green	Orange	Blue

Note: For a single day where groups rotate through all of the learning stations, you will need to divide the class period into equal amounts of time. This way each group will spend the same amount of time working in each learning station. When you are planning, it is important to add transition time (time for students

to clean up and move to the next station) into the schedule. Keep in mind that younger students require more time to transition. You can label each column in the schedule above with the amount of time that works for your class.

Setting clear expectations and rehearsing the procedures ahead of time will help your stations run smoothly. It also helps to use a timer that makes a sound, such as a kitchen timer or one on a mobile phone. Alternatively, you can loudly and clearly utter a consistent phrase such as, "Groups please rotate!" or "Change stations!" so that students become accustomed to your signal.

IDEAS FOR LEARNING STATIONS

The table below suggests learning stations that do not require a lot of materials or planning. Of course, any activity that you can train your students to work on independently can be used as a learning station. The goal of the stations is to have students practice English, whether they are listening, speaking, reading, or writing. Usually, working in a group on the activities described below allows students to use multiple skills at the same time.

Station Name	Materials	What Students Do
Writing	Photos/illustrations, old magazines, picture dictionaries and/or regular dictionaries, previously studied vocabulary word lists, nonfiction books on familiar topics, graphic organizers (such as beginning-middle-end, main idea and details), posters describing previously studied types of writing (narrative, poetry, informative, persuasive, etc.), specific questions or topics you want students to write about (can be written on the board or posted in the writing area)	Create lists, cut out magazine photos and label them or use them create a story, write essays/stories using vocabulary words, use graphic organizers to plan fiction or nonfiction pieces of writing, research a topic and write about it, respond to specific prompts or questions, write journal entries, or create posters.
Reading	A classroom library (if available) or books selected by students or the teacher, printed reading passages and response questions, tablets for students to access e-books or online reading resources, any books or reading materials students are currently studying, graphic organizers	Use the reading materials in the station to read independently, read aloud to or together with a peer, or take turns reading parts of a text (if sharing materials). Respond in Learning Station Journal by drawing, writing about the text, or answering specific questions. Complete a graphic organizer based on the chosen text.
Listening	Any device (stereo/boom box, phone, tablet, computer, etc.) that can be used to play a recorded text or dialogue for students using headphones or speakers. Recordings can be teacher-created, found online, or materials specifically created for a listening center.	Listen to the text or dialogue at least two times. Respond in Learning Station Journal by drawing and labeling, listing words, writing a response, or answering specific questions posted by the teacher.
Technology	Tablets, computers, mobile phones, or other technology and internet access if available	Use educational apps or games, research a specific topic, use educational software to practice specific skills, or visit teacher-selected websites for specific

		purposes.
Games	Items needed to play familiar games used in the classroom or other learning games such as board games, cards, bingo, crosswords, or puzzles.	Play a single game as a whole group, or choose games to use with a partner or portion of the learning station group.
Teacher	Lessons or activities prepared for each group of students based on English level. The activities can be use to teach new concepts, review concepts that students need extra help with, or provide a challenge to advanced learners.	Work with the teacher to learn, review, or reinforce a specific skill or concept. Complete an activity or task tailored to the group's needs and abilities.

COLLECTING AND GRADING STUDENTS' WORK

To keep track of the work your students complete in stations, provide a composition book or notebook for each student. Write the student's name on the front and then designate sections of the notebook to each of the stations the student will visit. The pages can be divided by using sticky notes, paper clips, or by simply folding a page at the beginning of each section. Train students to use the appropriate section of the notebook in each learning station and to write the date on each entry they make.

Notebooks can be stored in one area of the classroom, such as a specific shelf or in bins. They can be stacked according to station groups so that a group member can easily distribute them each time students work in learning stations. If you prefer, students can keep track of the notebooks individually. Since the notebooks will only be used in class, there is no need for students to take them home.

Work that students complete in the teacher led station can be assessed for a grade. To keep students accountable and monitor their progress, you should also choose to grade some of the work they complete in stations. This can be accomplished by choosing a date or station and then checking each student's notebook for completion for that specific day or activity.

MULTI-LEVEL CLASSES PART TWO: DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION WITH TEACHER-SUPPORTED GROUPS AND LEVELED TASKS

Last week in the Teacher's Corner, we presented the basics about how to address the needs of students from multiple levels in your classroom through learning stations. This week, we will focus on suggestions for how to use teacher-supported groups either in conjunction with learning teams or learning stations, or as a stand-alone strategy. Additionally, we will discuss how to create leveled assignments to differentiate instruction for your students.

TEACHER-SUPPORTED GROUPS

If you are using the learning teams described in Week One of this month's Teacher's Corner, you can differentiate instruction by assigning only a portion of your class to learning teams. While more advanced students can benefit from a learning team that works without teacher assistance, beginners have different instructional needs. For these lower proficiency students, create a teacher-supported group. Note that this group can still be called a learning team so that students do not feel singled out. The difference is that you will work directly with this teacher-supported "learning team" rather than the students completing work independently. You can include this group on a list of learning teams posted in the classroom so that the difference is less obvious to students.

Once you have given the signal for learning teams to assemble, the students you have selected for the teacher-supported group can join you for an alternative activity. This group can meet in a designated area of the classroom, such as a specific table or open area where everyone can sit comfortably. Use the extra time with lower level students to provide additional instruction or practice, review challenging concepts, or provide an alternative task that is better suited to their level of English. Gathering these students in a small group will also make them more comfortable. They may be more likely to participate and ask questions than they are as part of the whole class.

If you are not using learning teams, you can still provide additional support to your beginner level students in a small group. After you present a lesson, give the class a practice activity to work on independently. Then, simply gather the students who need extra support or an alternative assignment in the area you have designated. Teacher supported groups can also be used to challenge more advanced students. Follow the same procedure, but instead gather your most advanced students to work on a more complex task or assignment.

When using teacher-supported groups to differentiate, you will be more effective if you decide which students to include ahead of time. You can create several different groups based on the levels in your classroom. Then, make a schedule of which group you will meet with each day. Use the groups and schedule to plan the activities and type of support you will give to your students. A sample schedule is shown below. If you plan to post the schedule in your classroom, give each group a name rather than listing the students' levels.

Day	**Monday**	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
Group	Beginner: Miguel Li Bardan Jeffrey Marisol	Advanced: Anaam Sarah Catherine Viet Ro	Beginner: Miguel Li Bardan Jeffrey Marisol	Advanced: Anaam Sarah Catherine Viet Ro	Beginner: Miguel Li Bardan Jeffrey Marisol
Activity	Review vocabulary from the unit by playing concentration as a group.	Create a skit using new vocabulary from the unit. Start writing script.	Match vocabulary words and definitions and then write sentences with words as a group.	Create a skit using new vocabulary from the unit. Finish writing a script and practice it.	Review vocabulary words and definitions. Use words to fill in the blanks in a short passage on the unit topic.

Creating several groups and scheduling time with each one works well for classrooms with many different levels. However, sometimes a majority of students in a class are at the same level, and there is a smaller portion of beginner or advanced level students who have different needs. In this situation, it works best to create a group (or a few groups) with the students who are outliers and meet with them more frequently. How often you meet and with which students can also be adjusted based on the content of your lessons. For instance, if you know certain students struggle with a particular verb tense, you can give them extra practice in a teacher-supported group.

If you are planning to include a teacher-supported group as one of the learning stations described in Week Two of this month's Teacher's Corner, the same idea applies. Plan the activity based on the needs of the students you will work with according to the learning station schedule. This is a great opportunity to provide targeted instruction to small groups of students.

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Another option to address multiple levels in the same class is to assign different tasks on the same topic. Planning for this is similar to creating different assignments for a teacher-supported group because you base the task on the needs and abilities of your students.

Let's use an example class with 5 beginner-level students, 23 intermediate students, and 7 advanced students. As teachers with limited time, we often do what will benefit the majority of our students. Therefore, we might give this class a task suited to the intermediate level since they are the majority. If we do this, the advanced students might find the work too easy and become bored while the beginners might struggle.

The 5 beginner-level and 7 advanced students could definitely benefit from work that is better suited to their capabilities. While our curriculum or government standards may require that we teach certain topics and skills in a set course, we can support all of our students by considering their abilities when we plan lesson activities. Below are some sample topics you might teach in an English course and examples of how you can create leveled tasks for each one. Note that these example tasks would be assigned to students after you have provided a lesson or series of lessons on the topic.

Topic	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
Poetry	Give students a poem with one or two words missing per line. The words should all be the same part of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives) or from the same category (colors, animals, foods). Have them choose their own words to fill in the blanks and create a new poem. If needed, provide a word bank.	Provide students with an example poem similar to the one you want them to create. Provide a document with the first one or two words of each line followed by a blank. Allow students to create their own poem by writing the rest of each line independently, referring to the example as needed.	Ask students to create their own poems independently. Examples of poems you have studied in the lesson can be referred to for support if necessary.
Post Reading (Fiction)	Give students a simple graphic organizer with three sections, one each for the beginning, middle, and end of a story. Low beginner level students can draw pictures to represent what happened in each part of the story or chapter you have read. They can add words or simple sentences, or orally retell the events.	Have students write 3-5 sentences for each part of the story or chapter (beginning, middle, and end). Have students identify the setting, characters, and major events. A graphic organizer can be used if needed.	Ask students to write an essay describing the events in the text you have read. Require them to include sequence words such as *first*, *next*, *then*, and *finally*, as well as to identify the characters, setting, and major events. Ask them to include a paragraph predicting what they think will happen next or providing an alternate ending.
Post	Provide students with a graphic	Give students the same graphic	Give students a blank graphic

Reading (Nonfiction)	organizer appropriate for the text being used, such as a timeline. The graphic organizer should be partially completed (at least half of the dates and events filled in). Ask learners to work in pairs or small groups to fill in the missing information using the text.	organizer as the beginner level students, but with less information provided (perhaps only the dates). Have students work in pairs or small groups to fill in the missing information using the text.	organizer. Provide them with instructions about how it should be completed. Have students work independently to fill in the missing information. For an extra challenge, ask students to summarize the information in writing.
Vocabulary	Give students a matching activity where words and definitions must be correctly paired. Then, have them refer to the words and definitions to fill in the blanks in sentences with the vocabulary words missing. This can be completed independently or in pairs.	Require students to fill in the blanks in sentences with vocabulary words missing. Then, ask learners to write their own original sentences using the new words.	Provide students with a list of the vocabulary words. Ask them to create a cohesive composition or short story using all of the new words correctly.
Grammar Concepts	Ask students to identify the new concept in a text or choose from several options. For example, if you have taught the future tense, ask them to highlight verbs in the future tense in a story. Have students explain why they chose the words.	Provide learners with a list of verbs to change to the future tense. Have students write sentences that correctly use the future tense of each verb.	Ask students to create a poster explaining the future tense and giving examples. The poster should include when and why the tense is used, how the verb changes, and sample sentences. Students can work in small groups and present the posters when they are finished.

Teaching students with varying English levels and abilities in the same classroom can be overwhelming. However, with a bit of planning, teacher-supported groups and leveled assignments can help you provide instruction that is more appropriate for all of your students.

TEACHING EFFECTIVELY WITH LIMITED MATERIALS

So far this month in the Teacher's Corner, we have discussed how to use learning teams, stations, teacher-supported groups, and leveled assignments to address some of the most common challenges in English language classrooms. In addition to working in large, multi-level classes, many teachers and students around the world must try to teach and learn with limited access to materials.

With the demand for English classes growing, some teachers are not provided with enough textbooks or resources for the students in their classes. Using learning teams can help alleviate a shortage of materials by allowing students to share the items needed to complete a task. Learning stations and teacher-supported groups can also reduce the number of students that need to use books or other materials at the same time. This week, we will consider some specific ways to provide effective instruction and plan engaging activities with limited teaching materials.

TEACHING WITH SONGS

Songs are a great way to teach English to students of all ages. Music is not only fun and engaging, but singing songs also helps learners remember phrases or key information.

An easy way to help your students learn from music is to write songs about the content you are teaching. Type out the lyrics and make copies for students, or project them in your classroom. Alternatively, write the lyrics on paper large enough for learners to see, or have students copy the lyrics from the board into their notebooks. Songs should include key vocabulary, verb tenses, or other concepts you want students to review. Frequently practice the songs so that your students will remember the information. As an extension, challenge students to work in groups and write their own songs as a way to reinforce the topic. When students have finished, each group can perform for the class and even teach their song to others.

Popular music is another great teaching tool. Popular songs often contain words and phrases that can be extracted to demonstrate collocations, verb tenses, or vocabulary related to a specific topic. Songs can also teach about values, social issues, and common themes. Many popular songs can be accessed on the internet via artist websites, YouTube, or streaming services such as Pandora or Spotify. These can be played with a computer or mobile device in your classroom. Additionally, you can download songs, lyrics, and teaching tips from the *Sing Out Loud American Rhythms* collection on the American English website.

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For more great ideas about how to use songs in the classroom, see the *English Teaching Forum* article [Beyond the Gap Fill: Dynamic Activities for Song in the EFL Classroom](#).

SKITS AND READER'S THEATER

Skits and reader's theater are easy activities to implement and do not require many materials. Learners will need pencils and paper to create a script. Props and costumes can be used, but are certainly not required. Both of these activities are completed in a group and require learners to use all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

A skit is a short performance depicting a situation where students interact with and speak to one another. You can use skits to review any content that you have taught. Skits are useful to help students practice everyday interactions in English or more specific skills such as key vocabulary, verb tenses, or other concepts. You can determine characters, roles, and write a script for a skit yourself, or have students complete these steps in groups. As a scaffold, you can work with your class to create a list of useful phrases or words related to the topic on the board before they begin. Once students have had time to practice, have each group perform for the rest of the class.

Reader's theater is similar to a skit, but the script depicts a story or is adapted from a text. Reader's theater is a great way to build reading fluency, increase vocabulary, and teach students to read with expression. There are many pre-made reader's theater scripts available in books or online. You can find reader's theater scripts on [Dr. Chase Young's website](#) and [Teaching Heart's Reader's Theater page](#). These scripts can be used by dividing your class into groups with the appropriate number of characters, allowing students to practice, and then having groups perform the reader's theater for the class. If your students study a text in class, you can also create your own script based on the events in the text. If students are more advanced, they can write and perform their own reader's theater scripts. Each group can be assigned a different part of the text to portray in their reader's theater performance. Again, props and costumes can be added but are not necessary. For more ideas about how to implement reader's theater in your classroom, take a look at the Shaping the Way We Teach English Webinar [Introduction to Reader's Theater for EFL Classrooms](#).

GAMES

Many familiar games can be adapted for the purpose of practicing English. Here are some easy ways to use games that do not require a lot of materials in your classroom.

Charades: This is a game where one person performs actions in front of a group and the audience must try to guess what the actor is trying to convey. The actor must not speak or give any clues. It can be played by the whole class (split into competing teams), or in small groups of students with each person taking a turn to act something out. If there are specific words you want students to practice, prepare a set of word cards for actors to choose from before playing the game.

To practice verb tenses, have the actor(s) perform action verbs. Require audience members to use a particular tense in their guesses. For example, if your class is learning past continuous, students must say, "You were _____ing" to the actor. If they are learning future continuous, they say "You will be _____ing" or "You are going to be _____ing."

Charades can also be used to practice vocabulary words. Feelings/emotions, animals, types of weather, words related to daily routines, sports, adjectives that describe people, and other similar categories work well for playing charades.

Guess the Picture: This game is similar to charades, but rather than acting, the student draws pictures to try to get the audience to guess a word. This can be done on the chalkboard or whiteboard, on paper, with chalk on pavement, or by drawing in sand or dirt with a stick. The student who is drawing must not speak or give any clues, and also cannot use any letters/words or numbers in the drawing.

Playing Pictionary can practice the same concepts and skills described above for use with charades. Require students to guess using a specific tense or structure that they have learned and that you want them to practice.

Card Games: There are many games and activities that can be played using only index cards. Each time you present a new concept or new vocabulary in class, create a set of cards that students can use for different activities such as the ones described below.

Matching - Students can play concentration or you can distribute the cards and have students find a classmate with a match by moving around the room. This activity works well with vocabulary words and definitions, synonyms and antonyms, and regular or irregular verbs in two different tenses (such as present and past).

Sorting - Students can use cards to sort words into categories such as parts of speech, verb tenses, or synonyms and antonyms. Vocabulary words related to different topics like weather, occupations, foods, or sports can also be great for sorting.

Activate Games for Learning American English - The American English website features a collection of free board games that can be printed and used in your classroom. The games have different themes and offer students a chance to practice different language skills, even if they play more than once. To use the games in your classroom, you will need dice and game pieces. For ideas about materials to use, watch the Teaching Tip that goes with this resource.

STUDENT-CREATED MATERIALS

Students can also get involved in creating materials for use in your classroom. Many of the suggested activities for learning teams from Week 1 of this month's Teacher's Corner will result in posters, advertisements, stories, poems, or scripts that you can use to teach or display in your classroom for reference. Another idea is to have students create vocabulary charts with words, definitions, pictures, and example sentences. These can be displayed and used throughout the course. Lists or charts can also be made for parts of speech, question words, sentence starters, or any other concepts you want students to remember.

Creating materials also helps students review and process what they have learned. A great way to engage students with creating materials is to have them design worksheets or quizzes for their classmates. This often motivates learners because they have a chance to fulfill a different role. You can do this in your

classroom if you use learning teams, or with small groups of 2-3 students. Tell each team or group that they must design a worksheet or quiz with a specific number of questions based on the topic you want students to review. They can include things like multiple choice questions, true/false questions, fill in the blank, short answer, riddles, crossword puzzles, or any other type of exercise that suits the topic. Also have students create an answer key. Then, have groups exchange worksheets or quizzes with a different group. When they are complete, groups return their work to the students who created the activity for assessment.

For more ideas about how to get your students involved in creating materials, try the article Encouraging Learners to Create Language-Learning Materials from *English Teaching Forum*.