

Modification Tips and Techniques for ESL Students

Instruction

Tip: ESL students need modified instruction to learn both English and content.

Modifying instruction is critical to ESL students' success. However, modifying instruction doesn't mean creating a second lesson plan or curriculum; it just means changing some of the ways you do things. Most of your native English-speaking students can benefit from modifications as well.

Technique: Use various teaching styles and tricks of the trade.

- Teach to varied learning styles
- Encourage students to participate in class
- Have high expectations of your students
- Give students more wait time: at least 15-20 seconds
- Assign students a bilingual or English-speaking study buddy
- Use cooperative learning and put students in groups with English-speaking students
- Use lots of visuals, like graphic organizers and pictures
- Use physical activity: model, role-play, act out
- Repeat and rephrase often
- Emphasize the 5-8 most important vocabulary words of a lesson
- Focus on the 2-3 key concepts of a lesson
- Give students an outline of the lesson that highlights the key concepts
- Let ESL students copy your or someone else's notes
- Write in print unless specifically teaching the manuscript alphabet
- Give simple instructions
- Use concrete language and questions
- Simplify complex questions
- Use children's literature/lower grade level materials to teach content



- Incorporate the 4 skills of language acquisition: reading/writing/listening/speaking
- Check understanding using "show me" techniques

Class/Homework

Tip: ESL students experience greater success when class-work and homework is modified to fit their capabilities.

Modifying class-work or homework tasks to fit ESL students' capabilities doesn't mean expecting less from them. It means giving them realistic tasks to complete that increase their chances for success.

Technique: Allow for flexibility in the tasks you assign.

- ✓ Reduce assignments
- ✓ Simplify complex tasks
- ✓ Give ESL students extra time to do work or complete projects
- ✓ Adapt the task to the students' skill levels
- ✓ Ignore spelling or grammar errors except for when explicitly taught
- ✓ Allow students to take breaks when working: their brains tire quickly!



Assessment Modifications

Tip: Assess ESL students according to what they can do rather than what they cannot do.

Standardized tests or even teacher-created tests can't always measure ESL students' progress accurately or authentically. Instead, measure ESL students by what they can do at any point in time, keeping in mind what they could not do earlier. Have they shown progress? Have they sincerely made an effort to learn? Have they demonstrated their learning?

Technique: Modify the tests you give.

- ❖ Test key concepts or main ideas
- ❖ Avoid test questions asking for discrete information



- ❖ Make a simplified language version of the test
- ❖ Simplify instructions
- ❖ Provide word banks
- ❖ Give students extra time to complete tests
- ❖ Give students objective tests: matching, multiple choice, etc.
- ❖ Make all or part of the exam oral.

Technique: Use alternate assessment strategies for ESL students.

1. Non-Verbal

- physical demonstration (point, gesture, act out, thumbs up/down, nod yes/no)
- pictorial products (manipulate or create drawings, diagrams, dioramas, models, graphs, charts; label pictures; keep a picture journal)
- KWL Charts using pictures or native language

2. Oral and Written Strategies

- interviews, oral reports, role plays using visuals cues, gestures or physical activity
- describing, explaining, summarizing, retelling, paraphrasing
- thinking and learning logs
- reading response logs
- writing assignments
- dialogue journals
- audio or video recordings of students
- portfolios