

Your First Lesson

If you have not yet entered the classroom, then this next section is especially for you. If you have already done some teaching then imagine that you are about to start with a new elementary level adult group, who are learning English at night school in Italy. This is their first lesson and they do not know each other. Think about the following questions:

As the teacher, how would you feel before the class?

How do you think the students might feel?

You do not speak any Italian. How would you approach the first few minutes of the lesson?

GO TO ANSWER BOOKLET, QUESTION 20 (3 marks)

What type of things would your students expect to learn (e.g. grammar points, vocabulary, dialogues etc.) in the first lesson of an English course? Would you provide your students with any handouts?

GO TO ANSWER BOOKLET, QUESTION 21 (2 marks)

If the first class is a strange and nervy experience for the students, then you can imagine how you will feel as the teacher facing your first lesson. Some experienced teachers still get a few nerves before teaching a new class. Nerves are natural and you should expect to have some before you walk into the classroom. But here are some ideas to keep in mind as you prepare to teach your first class. They will help you feel more confident and you can use them as a checklist for every new class you teach.

1 – Make Initial Introductions

Introduce yourself and get your students to introduce themselves to each other. Play 'Getting to know you' games if appropriate. Arrange the class in a way that facilitates communication. This not only gets them participating, establishing the mode in which you wish the classes to continue, but helps to break down some of the shyness barriers.

Say 'Hello', look around and smile at your class. Maybe put your name on the board. Introduce yourself with some basic facts; name, age, country/town of origin, hobbies etc. Keep it fairly general. (The braver among you may wish to get your class guessing such things.) Now put your class in pairs. Get them to talk together to find out similar information from their peers.

After 10 minutes, each person takes it in turn to introduce his or her partner to the class. You can take this further and ask for more information but don't get too bogged down in detail. Keep it light and flowing, inviting comment where appropriate.



For a variation on a theme of introducing one another and to illustrate the ideas above, again take a look at the following clip, where you will see how the teacher starts a lesson with a new group with a simple information sharing activity (also **Part 1** of the 'Train to Teach English' CD-ROM):

<http://www.youtube.com/user/globalengishtesol#play/uploads/12/zpqVI8qbGGw>

2 – Getting to know you activities

A good way of starting things off is the 'Find someone who...' game. Write the following on individual strips of paper:

<i>find someone who</i>	<i>likes football</i>
<i>find someone who</i>	<i>has visited London</i>
<i>find someone who</i>	<i>likes horror films</i>

Hand one out to each student. Students go around the class asking until they have found someone who fits the criteria on their piece of paper. They write the name of the student on the slip. Invite feedback and elaborate. 'Who else has visited London?' etc.

3 – The Course book

Introduce the textbook and get students to find their way around it. Many course books are divided so that each of the four skills and a grammar point is practised in each chapter. Put some focus questions on the board to be discussed in pairs before feedback. Here are some ideas:

How many chapters are there?
What is the grammar point examined in chapter 4?
Where can you find a glossary of terms?
'The look.' Does the book appear interesting in terms of layout?

Final thoughts on the first Lesson

Give your students something useful to do but keep your teaching aims to a minimum in the first lesson. Perhaps pitch the level slightly lower to give them confidence and use any tasks as a way of discovering their strengths and weaknesses. Anything they find difficulty with is a potential lesson for the future. You could set up a dialogue around simple social situations such as buying things in a shop or ordering in a restaurant. Where appropriate ask them **why** they want to learn English and **what** they wish to learn. Again this could be done by putting them in pairs and then inviting feedback. Put the varying reasons on the board. Do not make rash promises at this stage about incorporating all their aims into future lessons as you may already have a differing brief from the Course Director/parents or may be limited by school materials. Children will put 'games' on their list and you will never play as many as they would like. Similarly a class may overwhelmingly desire speaking practice. If this is an exam class you will need to ensure that all their skills are practised to the same level.

Teaching One-to-one

You should aim to spend longer on the aims of your students in these lessons. You may want to prepare a handout, such as a needs-analysis chart. 'One to One, a Teachers' Handbook' (1987, Language Teaching Publications and Peter Wilberg) has some excellent examples of this. One Needs Analysis asks the student to detail the type of person they will be speaking to. Another asks for the types of situations they will speak English in. You'll find we have a specialist module on this area, which you might find extremely useful if you are doing a lot of teaching one-to-one. Details here:



<http://www.global-english.com/one-to-one.htm>

Noisy Classes

We have assumed that your class will comprise shy strangers. You are just as likely to be faced with young groups who know each other well, making you the only newcomer. In the first lesson you may have to set the ground rules. On the board write: 'In my class...' then have 2 columns: **Do's** and **Don'ts**. Either write them in or elicit from the class. At the end, check back:

'Marco, in my class you **don't**, what...?'

Remember the cliché that first impressions count. So if you smile, know the material and have an objective/lesson plan, you will do well.