

Ideas for pre-teaching vocabulary

Before reading and listening tasks, it's often necessary to make sure students understand a few key words. This is called 'pre-teaching'. There are a number of ways to do this. Here are some ideas:

Give a definition: Use a short sentence to explain the meaning of a word. If you wish, use the definitions given in the rubrics or Vocabulary support boxes throughout the Teacher's Notes. You could also use a learner dictionary to find on-level definitions, e.g. *dive – to swim under water, usually with breathing equipment* (from *Cambridge Essential English Dictionary*, Second Edition).

Draw/Show a picture or object: One of the easiest ways to teach students new words is to draw a picture on the board, or show a picture on the interactive whiteboard or on a computer or tablet. Using (or drawing) funny and/or interesting pictures is a good way to ensure students remember the new words, e.g. to teach the word *dive* you could find a picture of a diver with a big shark behind him.

Act it out: It can be useful to show the word by acting it out, rather than giving definitions which may use above-level vocabulary.

Elicit it: Elicitation allows you to check what words students may already know. Don't tell them the word you want to teach. Elicit it by asking questions or saying open-ended sentences, e.g. *What is the activity when we swim under the sea and look at fish?* or *When we swim under water and look at fish, we ... ? (dive)*.

Gapped sentences: It's useful for students to see the word in a sentence to understand the context. Write a gapped sentence(s) on the board (this can be one from the text), e.g. *Cristina _____ in the Mediterranean Sea every summer. She loves to see the beautiful fish under the water.* (dives). Allow students to guess what word goes in the gap, but don't confirm if they're right or wrong. After they read the text, they can guess again. Then confirm their answer.

Discussion questions: With stronger students you can write discussion questions containing the new words on the board. Then give students one or two example answers to these questions. Students try to guess the meaning. Give more example answers, if necessary. You may then wish to allow students to ask and answer these questions for themselves.

Pre-teaching for listening: You can use any of the above ideas, or others you may have, to teach new words before students listen. It may also be useful to model the pronunciation of the words so students are used to hearing how it sounds. This is particularly useful when a word has an unfamiliar spelling rule. If you don't want to model the word, it can be useful to write the word in IPA on the board (you can find this in all dictionaries).

Extra ideas – how to ...

Class survey

Use: to revise tenses, verb patterns, verb collocations, conversational language

Dynamic: whole class

Procedure:

- Write a list of questions which practise the target language. Ideally, each student will have a different question, but if this is difficult, aim to have one question per two students.
- Photocopy the list and cut up into strips to give out. Make sure each student has a question, even if the question is the same as another student's. Alternatively, dictate each question to one (or two) student(s) in turn.
- Ask students a question as an example and elicit a response which uses the target structure. Write the response on the board.
- Set a time limit for the activity, e.g. 10 minutes. Students move around the class and ask their question to as many other students as they can. They write down the responses in their notebooks.
- When the time is up, divide students into smaller groups and ask them to compare their most interesting responses.

Running dictation

Use: to revise vocabulary

Dynamic: whole class

Procedure:

- Choose a short text or a list of sentences/questions which you wish to revise. Around six to ten sentences should be adequate, depending on how confident your students are. Choose a text of the appropriate level for your students and which does not contain unfamiliar words.
- You will need one sheet for each pair of students, plus a few extra sheets. Put the extra sheets on a far wall of the classroom or just outside the classroom door. Mark the halfway point on the text.
- Divide the class into pairs: Student A is a reader and Student B is a writer. A has to go to the text/list and memorise as much as he/she can. Encourage students to remember a few words accurately rather than try to memorise too much. Student A goes back to Student B and dictates what he/she can remember. Student A must walk over to Student B before dictating and not shout the text out! Student A is not allowed to do any writing at this stage. The dictation continues until Student A has reached the halfway point of the text.
- The students swap roles, with Student B dictating and Student A writing.
- As each pair finishes, give them a copy of the text and allow them to check their text against the original. Students should correct their mistakes. Monitor and help students to decide whether any differences are grammatically correct or not.

Grammar auction

Use: to revise a specific grammar area or general grammar

Dynamic: whole class (in teams)

Procedure:

- Prepare 10–15 sentences containing items of grammar from the unit you are currently working on or areas of grammar which you know students find problematic. Some of the sentences should be correct and some incorrect.
- Write the sentences on the board and explain what an *auction* is (when you sell something to the person who offers the most money).
- Put students into small groups and tell them they have £100 and they need to buy the correct sentences. In their groups, students discuss which sentences they think are correct and decide which to buy and how much they are prepared to pay for each. Don't help or allow students to look at their notes or the Student's Book.
- Take the role of auctioneer and sell each sentence to the group which offers the most money. Keep track of how much each group has spent. Remind students that once they have spent all their money they can't buy any more sentences, so they shouldn't spend too much too soon.
- After all the sentences have been sold, go through them one at a time, revealing which are correct and which are incorrect. Ask students to correct the mistakes.
- The winning group is the one which has bought the most correct sentences. If it's a draw, then the group which has got the most money left wins.

Guess who?

Use: to practise question forms, present simple, present continuous, past simple, etc.

Dynamic: whole class (with optional group/pair extension)

Procedure:

- Tell students that you are thinking of a person and that they have to guess who it is by asking *Yes/No* questions.
- If you wish to practise a specific grammar area, you might tell students that this person is living (for present tenses) or dead (for past tenses). Alternatively, you can use this activity to practise question forms in general by not specifying anything about the person.
- Put students into pairs or small groups to brainstorm possible questions. Specify a total number of questions, between five and ten, for the class to try and guess who you're thinking of. Students then take turns to ask you some of the questions they thought of.
- Make sure you reply only with *yes* or *no* (not *Yes, he/she is.*) in order not to give away if the person is a man or a woman.
- Students win if they guess the person within the specified number of questions. The teacher wins if students can't guess the person.
- Continue the game either as a class, by asking a student to choose a person and take over from you at the front of the class, or by putting students into pairs or small groups to play.

Classroom whispers

Use: to revise tenses, verb patterns, verb collocations, pronunciation and listening skills

Dynamic: whole class

Procedure:

- You will need a list of short sentences and/or questions which practise the structures you wish to revise. You will need one sheet per three students in the class.
- Divide students into groups of three. All the Student As go to one part of the classroom, all the Student Bs to another, and Student Cs to another.
- Model the activity by standing with the Student As and showing them the first sentence on the sheet. The Student As then walk to the Student Bs and whisper the sentence they have remembered. Make sure the Student Cs can't hear. The Student Bs then go to the Student Cs and repeat the sentence and the Student Cs write down what they heard. Write the correct sentence on the board. Student Cs compare this with what they have written.
- Start the activity by showing the second item on the list to the Student As. The activity then continues as per your model. After the Student As have had two or three turns, they swap roles with the others in their group. The activity continues like this until they reach the end of the list.
- When the students have finished, give each group of three a copy of the sheet and they compare this against what they have written. The group with the fewest mistakes wins.

Sentence chains

Use: to revise a specific lexical set, e.g. items to take on holiday, etc.

Dynamic: groups/pairs

Procedure:

- Before the class, decide which lexical set you're going to test students on and decide the best sentence to lead in to this. You can use: *Before I went on holiday I packed ... (my ticket, a guidebook, my clothes, a map).* However, if you want to revise a different tense as well as the target lexical set, you could amend the sentence as appropriate, e.g. *I came home from holiday and I had spent all my money. I had ... (bought a lot of souvenirs, done a lot of sightseeing, stayed in a luxury hotel).*
- Demonstrate the activity with the lead-in sentence and then the first item, e.g. *Before I went on holiday, I packed my ticket.* Gesture to a student to repeat your sentence and add a new item, e.g. *Before I went on holiday, I packed my ticket and a guidebook.* Nominate the next student who repeats the sentence and adds another item and so on until the entire set has been used.
- Put students into groups of three to five to play together.
- Depending on your students, you may wish to adjust the difficulty of the activity, e.g. ask students to include information about a list of nouns, e.g. *my plane ticket, a heavy guidebook, my beach clothes, a local map.*

Backs to the board

Use: to revise a specific lexical set or general vocabulary

Dynamic: whole class (in teams)

Procedure:

- Put students into small groups of four to five. If possible, mix stronger students with weaker students so no group is noticeably stronger or weaker than another.
- Tell students in each group to sit close together, leaving space between the groups so they can't easily hear one another. Tell one student in each group to sit with their back to the board and the others to sit so that they can see the board.
- Explain that you're going to write a word or phrase on the board and that the students who can see the board have to communicate the meaning to the student who can't. They can use any method to do this, drawing pictures, mime, synonyms, simple explanations, etc. However, use of their own language will mean they are disqualified.
- When the student(s) with their back to the board think they know the word, they put their hand up. Ask the first student to put their hand up to say the word and, if they are correct, award their group a point. If they aren't, the other teams continue. Any student who shouts out the answer is also disqualified.
- The winning group is the one with the most points at the end of the game.

Tennis

Use: to revise specific word pairs, e.g. opposite adjectives, past simple / past participle forms, collocations

Dynamic: pairs

Procedure:

- Explain which lexical set you're going to work on, e.g. *travel collocations*. Demonstrate the activity by asking a stronger student to help you. Say the first word of the pair, e.g. *pack*, and ask the student to respond with the second, e.g. *a bag*. The student continues with a different first word and you respond with the second, e.g. **A pack B a bag – stay at A home – stay in B a hotel –**, etc.
- Tell students that, just like in a real game of tennis, it's important not to pause for a long time. If one of the students pauses too long between items, they lose that round, e.g. in **A travel B abroad – make A plans – plan B ummm ahhh ... a holiday**, B would lose.
- Put students into pairs to play together. Tell them they should continue for as long as possible. If one student loses the round, they start again.