

# A Crash Course in Teaching EFL

## What is EFL?

ESL. EFL. TESOL. What do these letters stand for? Is there a difference? ESL stands for “English as a Second Language.” Your first language is probably English. If you speak an additional language—Spanish, Swahili, Thai—that is your second language.

Another term often used is EFL. This stands for “English as a Foreign Language.” Though EFL and ESL are often used interchangeably, EFL is more specific. While ESL can refer to anyone anywhere learning English as their second (or third or fourth) language, EFL specifies someone learning English where it isn’t regularly spoken.

This difference is important for you, the English teacher. If your students are from Somalia, but live in Minneapolis, they are ESL students and have a chance to practice English almost every time they step outside. If they are from Somalia and live in Somalia, they are EFL students. Their only opportunity to speak English may be with you and their fellow students. Your job is to create a place where students can hear and practice English for themselves.

The only other term you really need to know now is TESOL, or “Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.” This section of our curriculum could be considered a “mini-TESOL course.” Here, you will learn more about TESOL.

As already mentioned, this course assumes you are teaching English as a foreign language: You’ve traveled across borders and are surrounded by a language other than English.

## Why EFL?

If you speak English as your first language, you are uniquely suited to pass on this skill. Over a billion people speak some English, but only 360 million speak it as their first language. For many, the ability to speak English unlocks a world of opportunities for their future success.

Countries that refuse entrance to tourists are delighted to welcome English teachers. Communities skeptical of Western culture embrace those willing to teach their mother tongue. Far from

a coincidence, your ability to speak English is a gift you can use to show love and build relationships with people around the world.

## Three rules to guide your teaching

Teaching someone to communicate in a second language is more than merely speaking it, and more than teaching a set of rules. An EFL teacher helps students to acquire a skill, rather than simply to memorize content. Approaching this task with careful thought to your students’ needs will increase the chances that they will succeed.

Many EFL strategies have focused on passive listening, grammar rules, reading, and writing. But there’s another approach—communicative language teaching. The communicative approach in this course is built upon these three principles:

1. **Student-centered communication:** In a traditional class, the teacher stands at the front of the room telling students what to do. Students memorize, fill out worksheets, and decrypt complicated grammar rules. But if communication in English is a skill to be acquired, something more than lecture is needed. This course assumes that if students are not using English, they are not truly learning English. A successful lesson is gauged by how much time students spend speaking, not how many worksheets they complete.
2. **Activity-based practice:** Since this course centers around student communication, each class period will provide ample opportunity for students to practice. This classroom atmosphere will not resemble the traditional American classroom. Prepare to abandon your comfort zone. Expect a lot of movement, conversation, laughing, and student interaction. Though you may feel like you’re out of control, if the students are speaking English, you can rest in knowing that they are learning.
3. **Teacher-modeled learning:** A teacher using the communicative approach will have to

demonstrate the new content. Simply telling the students that “S makes words plural” does not ensure they understand. New words, dialogues, and instructions are more effectively

taught using actions, objects, and models. If you are not afraid to look silly when you teach, your students will not be afraid to look silly when they practice English.

## Getting Ready for Class

### Consider your teaching context.

As you prepare your lessons, keep these key questions in mind:

- ♦ How old are my students?
- ♦ What is their educational background?
- ♦ What is their cultural background?
- ♦ Do I need to adapt the vocabulary to make it applicable to their lives?
- ♦ What supplies and technology are available?
- ♦ What is my teaching space like?
- ♦ Will I have a bilingual assistant?
- ♦ What are the host school’s expectations?
- ♦ If my students are illiterate, how can I make the worksheets into oral exercises?

### Preview the lesson.

As you preview the lesson, picture how you will present it to your class. Consider such things as how much time to spend on each exercise, how you will illustrate each concept, and what games or activities you will use. We left a lot of white space in the Teacher’s Guide for you to personalize the lesson plan.

### Prepare the materials.

- ♦ Print, cut, and organize the flash cards.
- ♦ Collect the objects and materials needed to teach the new vocabulary.
- ♦ Consider prewriting the dialogue models on the board.

## Teaching the Lesson

Our lessons begin by building on previous lessons, providing an opportunity for students to make connections between the familiar and the new.

After the introduction, new material is presented and practiced. You may go through this present-and-practice cycle more than once, until the students have mastered the material. Many lessons conclude with a final review of the key vocabulary and dialogues.

Let’s walk through the lesson components in detail.

### Presentation

When you think of teaching English, you may have a mental picture of a bespectacled lecturer explaining fine grammatical nuances. But as mentioned, a good EFL teacher will *show* his students what to do, not merely talk about it. Here are some things to keep in mind as you present the lesson:

- ♦ **Teach vocabulary in the context of a phrase or sentence.** Rather than holding up a flash card and saying, “Pencil,” teach them the whole phrase, “This is a pencil,” or “What’s this? A pencil.” Only if students are struggling to pronounce or spell a word should you isolate it from a natural context.
- ♦ **Get the students speaking as soon as possible.** When you are presenting, students are not actively involved. Many TESOL instructors recommend a 30 percent teacher talk time to 70 percent student talk time ratio. Keep track of how much time your mouth is moving and remember—when students are speaking English, they are learning the language.
- ♦ **Practice the spoken form of the vocabulary and dialogues before introducing the written form.** Many EFL learners benefit from feeling the

words in their mouth before seeing what they look like.

- ♦ **Make a splash!** Demonstrate the vocabulary and dialogues. Use real-life props. Be funny. Do whatever it takes to make the most boring part of the class—you talking—engaging and memorable. Along with creativity, speak with confidence. A timid, hesitating presentation will immediately bore your students. Project your voice and articulate your consonants. Regardless of your delivery, students will struggle to understand your foreign language, but they shouldn't have to struggle to hear it.
- ♦ **Use simple, correct, and repeated language.** Consider the difference between “Okay, now I think I'd like us to open our books and turn to page 17,” and “Please open to page 17.” Simple speech doesn't mean broken English, however. Always model proper usage. Finally, repeat sentences rather than rephrasing. When a student doesn't understand what you said, likely he needs to hear the same thing again, rather than a similar thing said differently.
- ♦ **Leave the writing on the board and illustrations on the walls.** This will give students the support they need to practice with confidence.

## Conversations

Most of your class time will be spent practicing dialogues and playing games. An effective game will involve the maximum number of students speaking English. For this reason, games involve role-playing and small group work. With everyone talking and running around, a communicative English classroom may seem chaotic. Embrace creative chaos. As long as students are practicing English, the noise and action should be welcome.

## Games

It can take a long time to introduce a new activity and have students understand the process well enough to enjoy it. Thoroughly model how the game should be played, using previously learned content rather than overloading students with both a new game and new vocabulary. Pause the activity if students begin to get confused part way through.

Many games can be repeated every other lesson or so. You can easily adapt games to new learning objectives and tweak the process to freshen it up. We have many suggestions in the lesson plans for adapting games, but don't let them limit your creativity.

## Stations

Stations take conversational learning activities to the next level. To use them, set up three or four tables for doing different activities. After explaining each station to the students, divide them into groups and assign each group to a different station. For example, two stations could be more intense practice like worksheets, reading practice, or flash card drills. The third could provide a lighter break, such as playing a game. As with introducing new activities, establishing stations will require an initial investment of time and chaos, but will pay off in dividends of language learning.

## Worksheets in Student Book

With such an emphasis on communication, our worksheets may seem out of place. We agree! If at the end of the lesson you never got to the worksheets, but your students mastered the lesson objectives through conversation, well done. Some material is best taught with the aid of pencil and paper, but most of your objectives could be accomplished without worksheet practice.

Illiterate students can successfully use this course by using the worksheets as an oral exercise.

The secret is that both students and teachers usually love worksheets. Worksheets are familiar and safe, giving a sense of accomplishment when finished. They provide an easy way to measure some kinds of progress, and help keep the chaos at bay.

So use worksheets, but use them prudently. We have developed worksheets to complement conversational activities, rather than replace them. As the lesson plans note, peer checking, group review, and working in pairs can help turn a worksheet into a speaking and listening opportunity. Many worksheets are also designed to be used in games or oral drills. Make sure you take the extra step to utilize the communicative potential of your worksheets.

Instead of assigning the worksheets and walking away, show students how to do the work. Most of the worksheets do not have sample problems with the answers. Reproduce the first problem on the board and fill it out together.

Use the quieter activities—like worksheets and board games—as a chance to catch your breath

and restore order. While students are working, walk among them to ensure all students are participating. Some students love worksheets, and others will be desperate to go back to the relay race. The variety will keep everyone engaged most of the time.

## Evaluate

Each lesson has several checkpoints for you to evaluate whether or not your students have met specific objectives. Remove “crutches” by erasing the board, turning off the projector, and telling your students to close their workbooks. Repeat the activity and see how they do.

If students demonstrate mastery, check the box off in your teacher’s guide and congratulate your class. If they stumble, restore the “crutches,” go back to the previous activity, and keep practicing.

Don’t be frustrated when you hear your mother tongue butchered by EFL speakers. There are usually only two situations where correction in

the EFL classroom is genuinely helpful: when the error is directly connected to the current lesson, or when the error renders communication impossible. Don’t derail your lesson focus. Resist the temptation to correct students. Correct them too often, and they will lose the initiative to speak. However, if you hear a repeated error, make note of it and incorporate it into a later lesson or mention it outside of class.

Spend the last few minutes practicing something that will leave students smiling, confident in their success as language learners. Do not end a lesson in confusion or failure.

## Additional Considerations

- ♦ While most adult learners have clear reasons for learning English—graduation, job opportunities—children rarely have intrinsic motivation for studying a foreign language. You may want to provide the younger learners with small rewards for their mastery of a lesson or unit. This can be a point system, performance chart, or a promise of a party or field trip after a unit quiz.
- ♦ A powerful motivator is genuine love for your students. Showing unconditional love for a slow learner may not improve his test scores, but it can make a huge difference in his desire to be in your class.
- ♦ You can also show interest in your students’ lives, language, and culture. Communicate respect for their values. Find out what they like to do outside of class. Ask if you can visit their parents and get to know their friends.
- ♦ Don’t take it personally when students misbehave. It’s not a reflection of your ability to teach, but is likely due to circumstances beyond your control. You might make a special effort to show love to these students in practical ways.
- ♦ Students with limited access to education may struggle with basic tasks like holding a pencil, sitting at a desk, or counting. Consider simplifying your objectives, and slow down as needed.
- ♦ Not every student will advance at the same pace, but they should all feel that they are included, that their success as a learner is important to their teacher.
- ♦ A bilingual assistant can occasionally be helpful in explaining difficult concepts. If you use a bilingual assistant, speak directly to the students in clear English. Then let the assistant interpret. This will maintain your role as teacher and give the students opportunities to listen to English, followed by the translation.

# Using the Teacher's Guide

The big moment had finally arrived. We had traveled for two days up and down muddy mountain trails in rural Thailand to reach a school where over 200 children waited to learn English from expert teachers. I looked at my team—six young people with no training or experience: We were the expert teachers the children were anticipating. After all the hours we spent brainstorming, cutting out flash cards, and copying coloring sheets, I desperately hoped these students would not be disappointed.

As we divided the team into smaller groups, I thought through the lesson—the names of eight fruits, three sentence structures, and games to play. A little English, a lot of fun—that's the main idea, right? We followed the native teacher into a classroom packed with 50 students. The teacher led them in a carefully recited greeting: "Good morning, Teacher. I am fine, and you?"

Now it was our turn. The students sat down on the floor, legs crossed, and waited for us to begin. Suddenly, my careful preparation seemed entirely inadequate to the situation. I had flash cards and songs, games and worksheets, but how would I tell them what to do? In all the planning, I had failed to consider the most basic problem: How would we communicate?

The lesson went downhill from there. The local teacher was friendly, but she didn't speak much English either. My games and worksheets—cobbled together from various places—seemed worthless, without the ability to explain things to my students. Though they recognized some of the fruits and could say their names in English, North American fruits like cherry and peach didn't seem to exist in their country!

For many of us, the phrase "teaching English as a second language" conjures feelings of fear, frustration, and futility. Can I help someone learn English? I don't have the resources I need! Often, teachers must scrounge for ideas and tools that produce an uneven mishmash of materials that the students don't find useful. This teacher's guide

is designed to ease your frustration and maximize language learning.

This course provides tools for teaching young beginners who are learning English in a foreign context. We emphasize three things:

- ♦ **Communication.** If you are a native English speaker, your greatest asset as a teacher is your ability to speak English well. You can teach the students to speak English naturally. While you may want to supplement this curriculum with a study of phonics, our focus is getting your students to practice speaking. We introduce words, phrases, and dialogues that are useful and easy for your students to learn. Each lesson centers around a speaking task—real-life dialogues—rather than an arbitrary word list or grammar point. These dialogues are the heart of the course, providing learners with an empowering framework to begin speaking English right away.
- ♦ **English conversation in an international context.** Our focus on dialogue and conversation gives students practice in using English in regions where the language isn't spoken. At the same time, the course could strengthen conversation skills of those learning in an English-speaking setting.
- ♦ **Careful preparation.** Studying the principles in this mini-TESOL course can help even the beginning teacher know how to prepare for and successfully teach a class.
- ♦ Each lesson is designed to take 40-60 minutes. Activities can be expanded or modified based on your teaching context, as long as lesson objectives are met and material is thoroughly reviewed.

You can also spread a lesson over multiple class sessions if the students need more time to process the material. Or teach multiple lessons in one class session if your students are more advanced.

## Flash Cards

This section lists the vocabulary words for the lesson. Most words are illustrated on the first page of the student book. Flash cards for these words are available.

## Other Words

Words taught in context, rather than with flash cards, are listed here.

Lesson 1: What's your name?		
Flash Cards	Dialogue Models	Objectives
sit stand name write say	<b>Model 1</b> What's your name? My name is (Alex). Nice to meet you!  <b>Model 2</b> What's his/her name? His/her name is (Alex).	At the end of this lesson, your learners are able to:  1. Ask each other their names, and answer.  2. Write their names.  3. Respond to verbal classroom commands.  <b>Advanced Learners:</b>  1. Discuss various ways to say hello.
<b>Other Words</b> boy girl your my his what's her	<b>Classroom Commands</b> Quiet, please. Say it together. Stand up. Sit down.	
<b>Materials Needed:</b> Flash cards; name tags (See Appendix 9 for reproducible name tags); I.D. card or driver's license  <b>Preparation:</b> Draw a blank name tag on the board. If you have actual name tags, use them with Section A.		

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<b>Other Words</b>	What's his/her name? His/her name is (Alex).	
boy girl your my his what's her	<b>Classroom Commands</b> Quiet, please. Say it together. Stand up. Sit down.	
<b>Materials Needed:</b> Flash cards; name tags (See Appendix 9 for reproducible name tags); I.D. card or driver's license  <b>Preparation:</b> Draw a blank name tag on the board. If you have actual name tags, use them with Section A.		

## Objectives

Goals you want your students to achieve are listed as objectives.

## Materials Needed and Preparation

This tells you what things you will need to collect before class and the preparation you will need to do before the students arrive.

Additional Activities

You will find this section helpful for reinforcing the concepts your students learn. Not all the activities listed will be used every time, but some should be used each time.

Additional Activities

- ☐ **Picture Bingo** for Lesson 1 (Appendix 5)
- ☐ **Line Interview** (Appendix 6) Use today's **Models**
- ☐ **Mingle Review** (Appendix 6) Ask and collect each student's name
- ☐ **ABC Song** (Appendix 7)
- ☐ **Discussion:** Show an ID card or driver's license with your full name. Write it on the board and ask questions such as these:
  - My full name is Jane Marie Smith. What is your full name?
  - Jane is my first name. What's your first name?
  - Marie is my second or middle name. What's your second or middle name?
  - Smith is my last name. What's your last name?
  - My name means \_\_\_\_\_. What does your name mean?
- Expand this as far as possible using the pronouns *his* and *her* with the same questions in reference to other students and family members.

Appendices

The appendices are a collection of resources: games, songs, maps, etc. Many activities will refer you to a section in the appendix where you will find direction lines and materials for that activity.

Warm Up

This section is designed to capture students' interest, while subtly introducing vocabulary or sentence structures. Because foundational concepts are often taught here, it is an integral part of the lesson.

Warm Up

Using the Second Sentence in Model 1

- Use the second line of **Model 1** to introduce yourself, saying, "My name is \_\_\_\_\_."
- Write your name on the board. Use it to build connections between you and your name.

Activities

In this main part of the lesson, letters in the Teacher's Guide headers coordinate with letters in the student book.

TEACHER'S GUIDE

A. Filling Out Name Tags

- Distribute worksheets and pencils.
- Tell students, "Write your name." They fill in the four name tags in Section A.
- Fill out real name tags and stick on shirts. (Or use copies of name tag from Appendix 9.)

STUDENT'S BOOK

**A** Write. \_\_\_\_\_


My name is

My name is

My name is

My name is

## Activities Symbol

Activities preceded by a boy symbol  are conversational and not based on the student's workbook. These activities are designed to reinforce the concepts taught in the lesson and are vital to the student's comprehension.



### Line Review (Appendix 6)

- ♦ Line up students.
- ♦ Point to the second student in line and ask the first student, "What's his/her name?" If the student doesn't answer correctly, answer for him and send him to the back of the line. Work through the line as many times as needed for all the students to answer correctly.

## Dialogue Models

Any time the teacher's guide mentions **Models**, there is a box containing the model at the bottom of that page.

### Model 1

What's your name?

My name is \_\_\_\_.

Nice to meet you!

## Check Boxes

The questions by the check boxes remind you to evaluate if your students have grasped the concepts you have just taught them. If most of them still aren't comprehending, use an activity from **Additional Activities** or repeat the section before you move to the next concepts.

☐ Can most of my students introduce themselves?

## Cultural Tips

These cultural tips are generalizations, typical in many areas of the United States.



### Cultural Tip

People in English-speaking countries often greet one another with a firm handshake.

