

Thanks to S.U.C.C.E.S.S. (<http://esl.fis.edu/teachers/support/faq1.htm>) for these really great Dos and Don'ts for ELL students

DO

Use clear, normal speech in communicating with ESL students. Moderate your speed if you are a fast talker. It may be necessary to repeat yourself or rephrase what you said. Help to shape what the student wants to say.

Use non-verbal cues (such as gestures, pictures and concrete objects) in your teaching to assist comprehension.

Make sure that ESL students are seated where they can see and hear well. Provide them with maximum access to the instructional and linguistic input that you are providing. Involve them in some manner in all classroom activities.

Fill your classroom environment with print and with interesting things to talk about and read and write about. Creating a language-rich environment will allow your ESL students to learn even when you aren't directly teaching them.

Keep in mind that the English to which ESL students are exposed in your classroom is of crucial importance to their language development.

Encourage ESL students' efforts to participate by celebrating their contributions and searching out opportunities for them to take part directly in learning activities. But allow for the "silent period" that some students go through.

Correct the content of what they say, if necessary.

DON'T

Don't use unnatural speech with ESL students, such as baby talk, shouting or excessively slow talking. Avoid using too many idioms or colloquialisms.

Don't assume that ESL students always understand what you are saying or that they are already familiar with school customs and procedures (even if they act as if they do!)

Don't separate and isolate students away from the rest of the class - physically or instructionally.

Don't limit your ESL students' access to authentic, "advanced" materials (like library books or magazines) in the belief that these materials are too "hard" for them. If materials are interesting, students at all levels will be able to use them to learn English.

Don't treat English as a separate subject for ESL students to learn only in ESL lessons.

Don't put ESL students on the spot by asking them to participate (e.g., give an answer in front of the rest of the class) before they are ready.

Don't directly correct the grammar or pronunciation of what they say. This may lead to decreased participation and learning.

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Provide opportunities for ESL students to use the language and concepts you are teaching them in meaningful situations. Include a variety of ways of participating in your instruction, e.g. in cooperative groups. Encourage all students to work with and help ESL students.

Don't feed your ESL students on a diet of worksheets.

Try to create opportunities for ESL students to be successful. Praise their achievements.

Don't laugh at their mistakes, however well-intentioned you may be, or make jokes at their expense. Do not allow other students to belittle ESL students.

Treat ESL students as full members of the classroom community. Help them to feel comfortable and integrate them as quickly as possible. Refer to them often and make it clear to them (and to the class) that you expect them to work and learn just like everyone else. Then ask for more and more participation and work as these students become able to accomplish it.

Don't confuse low English proficiency with low intelligence or lack of experience. Most ESL students are normal cognitively and bring the same rich set of feelings, experiences and ideas to the classroom as their native-speaking peers. They also bring many first language literacy skills that can be transferred to their work in the English language.

Learn as much about ESL students as you can. The more you learn about them and their backgrounds, the easier it will be for you to incorporate them into your classroom, and thereby enrich the lives and learning of all the students.

Don't confuse low English-speaking proficiency or lack of knowledge of the classroom culture with uncooperativeness. If students can't understand what you want them to do or they have never done it before, they will have difficulties in carrying out your wishes.

To help ESL students understand what they read, visit <http://esl.fis.edu/teachers/support/commun.htm>.

To help ESL students understand what you say, visit <http://esl.fis.edu/teachers/support/listen.htm>.