

Error Correction

How:

1. Let the students make mistakes. They need to. We all learn best through making mistakes. Trial and error is the name of the game.
2. Give the students time to realize they've made a mistake and try to correct it themselves. If they can't, maybe someone else can help them. If nobody can help then you can either step in and give the correct form or make a note of it for later.
3. As far as possible, correct mistakes anonymously. Do this by making notes of students' mistakes as you monitor the students. Put the mistakes on the board later and give the students themselves the opportunity to correct them, either in pairs or small groups. If no one knows the right answer, give it to them, but only as a last resort. Anonymous error correction is a kind way to deal with mistakes. It isn't important who made the mistake originally - the point is, can the students all correct it? I tend to doctor the mistakes so that even the perpetrator doesn't recognize them as his/her own.

For example: Original error: 'I have been to California last year'. = On the board: *'I have been to Arizona last week'*.

Extra info:

Mistakes are good things and students need to know that they are. I explain like this: 'Please make lots and lots of mistakes in my lessons - new mistakes, mind you, not the same old ones over and over. I like mistakes because we can all learn from them and because if you don't make any I won't have a job.'

Learning English is like learning to ride a bike - You fall off a lot, but you get the hang of it in the end. You will make a lot of mistakes but you will be able to communicate effectively in the end. Very few people become successful international cyclists, and the chances are that even though you can ride a bike, you are not a professional cyclist.'

Yes, teachers can correct their students endlessly but how will that help the students when they go out into the big wide world - who will be there to correct them then? It's much better for the students if they get into the habit of listening to themselves when they are speaking and correct themselves as they go along. Obviously they won't be able to correct all the mistakes they make, but they will be able to correct a lot of them.