

ESL Tutoring Strategies

Reading:

A. **Pre-teaching new vocabulary:** If you teach new/unfamiliar words before reading, the student will have more success during the lesson. Pick out words that you know the student won't recognize or be able to sound out. If you are new, don't worry, you become familiar with what your student already knows as you go. If there are pictures, talk about them, as this will be a natural way to bring up new vs. familiar words. It will come in handy with writing activities later if you have the student write the new words on the picture.

B. **Correcting/Self-Correction:** Ask the student to "back up" or repeat a sentence if something is incorrect. Don't allow the student to keep going without correcting. Use a signal: say, "Try again" or "Repeat", or hold up an object. After you've done this for a while, your signals can become more and more subtle. The goal is for the student to eventually not need signaling and to correct himself or herself, i.e. "Self-Correction".

C. **Sounding out words:** Rather than telling the student words that are misread, have the student sound out the word and reread that sentence. You can help with making the sounds, if needed, but make sure the student makes the sounds too. You should model what the student should do himself or herself, but with the goal that the student will become independent.

C. **Sight Words:** These are commonly used words that are necessary for basic literacy, but are usually above a student's current ability to sound words out. The strategy for these words is to memorize how they look in order to instantly recognize them. Flashcards are a good way to teach them. It's a good idea to have the student keep a list of sight words. It's also possible that the book you are working with has a list for each story or at the back of the book.

Example Sight Words: the, what, they

For an explanation and lists, go to the following website and keyword search "sight words"
www.esltrail.com

D. **Point out when a student uses a strategy.** Always catch a student (i.e. point it out) doing something correctly and using good strategies. This will help the student realize that he or she is learning reading skills. This is where you want to get with a student so he or she can go to the next level.

E. **Questioning Techniques:** You can use "Yes/No" questions to make sure a student has basic comprehension, and then ask open-ended Wh- questions with "Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How" to go deeper.

Ex. A student has just read a story about a child's first day of school. You ask, "Is Jon at home?" If the student answers "Yes", then reread the story. If the student answers "No", then change to a Wh- question and ask: Where is he? Where are we? What is he doing? etc.

F. Rereading for Answers: When a student answers a question uncertainly, you should have the student look back at the story and find the answer. You may have to model how to do this. Watch out for "guessing"! Challenge the student to show you or tell you where the answer is in the story. For each answer, whether right or wrong, say, "Show me the answer" without giving away if it is correct or not. This will help the student learn the valuable skills of finding and verifying information.

G. Retell: This can be very useful in showing the tutor what the student knows about the story. Have the student tell the story back for you, but in his or her own words, not "reciting". Sequencing is a good learning strategy for this skill. Ask the student to tell you what happened first, last, then go through it again with all the steps in the story. A basic format is "First, Next, Last". Use questioning techniques to guide a student back through the story if he or she is having a difficult time: Who is the story about? Where is he or she? What happened first? etc.

Writing Tips:

Many of the above strategies will set a student up well for a writing activity that follows reading. Writing is also a good way to check comprehension and to synthesize what a student has learned. It is helpful to use the pictures from the story with the new words written on them, a list of sight words, and the student's notebook.

A. Have the student try himself or herself first, and then have the student try to identify his or her own errors. In this way, you turn a small exercise into a "mini lesson".

B. Focus on previously learned items when correcting a student, not on new and difficult words. It's important to balance encouraging a student to try to speak and write without help and also correcting in a helpful way.

C. If the student needs a new word while writing, have the student participate with you by saying the sounds of the different syllables and guessing how to write the word. Say, "Try first". If you get into the habit, then the student will know that correction will follow and won't always need it up front.

D. Have the student tell you a sentence before writing it, many times if necessary. You repeat it and then have the student repeat it again and write it. For beginners, it helps with separation of words to have the student count the words as he or she recites. When finished writing the sentence, the student can read it out loud to you. It will then be very easy for the student both to see and hear if any words are missing.