



# Reading Counts



## Teaching ESL Learners: Where Do I Even Start?

Noelle Rich

Team Leader - Geneseo

As our country becomes more diverse, the likelihood of encountering a student whose first language is *not* English becomes greater and greater. It is not terribly difficult to make adaptations for students who have a bit of trouble with English, but what can you do when your student literally knows only a few words? Here are some tips that will hopefully make a difference in your times spent with your ESL learners.

### 1. Don't assume anything!

We must keep in mind that many ESL students come from cultures that are very different than those that we were raised in, so concepts that may seem innate to us are (for lack of a better word) foreign to them. Also, keep in mind that students from certain countries are taught that asking for help (or asking questions in general) is a sign of disrespect, or weakness. Just because your student doesn't ask you questions, don't presume that he or she understands the concept that you have just taught.

### 2. Keep it simple.

Try and think back to how you learned basic skills, such as addition. You didn't just write down  $2+2=4$ . First

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Stacy Jusaniec with a Dansville Class

## Transition Time

Stacy Jusaniec

Team Leader - Dansville

Ever find yourself at a loss of activities or games to pass the time? Working with a student and waiting for another student and need an activity to just pass the time? Don't know what to do or how to transition into a new topic? With these activities, transition time and those few minutes in between classes/lessons will no longer be a burden.

Ideas when working with one or a few students:

### Odd/Even Game:

Play the odd and even finger game- have each student and yourself hold out one fist, you ask each person 'odd or even', after everyone has made a choice, each person holds out their fingers with their number, 1-4 (no thumbs). Have the children count everyone's fingers to see what the outcome is and if it is even or odd. Whoever is correct in determining odd or even wins and they put a tally mark down or however you want to keep track.

### Dice Game:

Have the students roll two dice, add up the numbers to see who has the highest number. You can alter the directions and in place of adding, subtract the numbers, multiply, and even guess before rolling if the sum will be odd or even.

**Working with the whole class or a group of students and have a few minutes to spare? Don't know what to do? Here are a few ideas to help pass the time, and still incorporate math facts:**

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you had to learn how to count, and then you had to learn how to write numbers, etc. Likewise, you would not expect an ESL learner to be able to read a Dr. Seuss book until they knew their alphabet and letter sounds. Make sure your lessons are broken down into the smallest possible steps.

### 3. Make good use of pictures.

Cards that demonstrate pictures of actions, concepts, or things can be extremely helpful to ESL students. If you are trying to explain an idea, images are sometimes much more effective than words. On that same token, students can use the pictures to express their thoughts as well. They may occasionally forget how to say a word, such as "drink", so a picture of a drinking fountain at their disposal can be a lifesaver.

### 4. A few obvious ones.

Try to remember that most ESL students are particularly nervous about speaking in front of people, which explains why they may seem very shy at first. It is your responsibility to create an environment where they feel safe enough to take risks. Be positive, and look for success in small measures. Also, pay close attention to your own speech patterns. There is no need to speak louder when addressing an ESL student, but you will want to make sure that you speak clearly, and if necessary, slower than you would with a native speaker. Lastly, try to limit your usage of colloquial expressions that may confuse a non-native speaker; there will be plenty of time for them to become more familiar with our language's idioms once they are more comfortable with English.

A few helpful websites:

<http://iteslj.org/questions/>

<http://www.lingolex.com/userpages/Ernie.html>



## What to Expect from the Average Preschooler

Julie Calingasan

Team Leader – Preschool programs

Children three to five years of age are typically known as preschoolers. This age is a time of growing independence and learning. Preschoolers are learning to use their bodies and understand the world around them. Anyone who has interacted with a preschooler would agree that they are very busy and active individuals.

When playing and interacting with the preschool child, we should understand what to expect from their unique minds. All children are different in what they can do and what interests them, but they all develop along a common path. Most children of this age:

- learn through their senses (such as: smell, taste, sight and touch)
- can hold a conversation with you
- are curious about everything
- need to move
- want the company of other children
- like to join in and do what you do
- revert back to toddler like behavior (ex. thumb sucking, crying, hitting, baby talk) when they are shy or upset, especially in new situations

Below are several lists of common characteristics you will find in a preschooler concerning growing/moving, expressing feelings, talking and thinking, and being with others.

#### Growing and Moving:

- gain greater control over their movements as their bodies change
- do not like sitting or standing still for long periods of time
- need outdoor physical activity everyday
- some children may seem a bit clumsy or uncoordinated; sometimes there is an obvious reason

#### Expressing Feelings:

- instead of crying when they are upset, they may tell you how they are feeling, be very quiet or cling to you
- learn new ways of handling situations by watching older adults
- emotions are usually extreme and short-lived, need to be encouraged to express their feelings with words

#### Being with others:

- sharing, playing, talking, saying their names, saying goodbye
- need the company of other children

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## Ideas and Activities

### Activities to Promote Fun Math

Emily Tatar

Team Leader- Avon/Perry

Math seems to be a subject that young students learn to either love or hate. As tutors, we can give students a break in their day to learn or practice math skills in several different ways. Students tend to remember skills that they had the most fun with. This is why it is relevant for us as tutors to present students, who love *and* hate math, with the opportunity to play fun games that assist in learning essential math skills. Offering a prize for the winner provides great motivation for the child to pay attention and actually do the activity correctly. Here are a few different activities that will stimulate math fun!

- 1) **Adding "War"**: This game is similar to the card game "War". The only difference is that you have adding flashcards as your playing cards. The greater sums of each problem are the winners. If sums are equal, a war takes place. This can also be done with subtraction, multiplication, or division cards for different grade levels.
- 2) **Place Value Bingo**: If practicing ones and tens place values, the number selected is a number with a tens place and ones place. Ex) 54...the student can put a marker on their board in either 5 tens *or* 4 ones. This provides practice for recognizing specific place values. This could also be done at higher level with different place values in decimals.
- 3) **Hershey Bar Fractions**: Giving each student a Hershey's Chocolate Bar (with divisions) is a good introduction to fractions. It is a hands-on way to get students to understand and practice what  $\frac{1}{2}$  or  $\frac{3}{8}$  looks like. Hershey's Bars can also be used for adding, subtracting, multiplying, or dividing fractions.
- 4) **Reading Recipes**: Use simple trail mix or snack mixes with different fractions of ingredients. This allows students to add/subtract certain ingredients from the recipe. They can keep this snack after successfully filling the recipes requirements. Fractions seems to be a difficult concept for kids of all ages to grasp, therefore, several different ways might help them to truly understand fractions.

### America Reads: Looking For Some Ideas?

Laura Amidon

Team Leader- Livonia

I am sure all of you are coming up with wonderfully creative and effective activities to use with your students, but just in case you need a little help, I would like to talk to you about a few resources and activities that are also beneficial to use.

The internet is a wonderful resource for teachers to use and a large component in the classroom today. It is especially relevant for students to work with computers in school because there is a large number who are accustomed to working with them at home. Even if a computer isn't an everyday tool for students to use at home, they should have all the opportunities to use it in their classroom. An exceptionally wonderful website to use is [www.toonuniversity.com](http://www.toonuniversity.com). Although some areas require a membership, there are other games and stories that do not require this. When you enter the website, choose the subject you would like to work with and then the grade level. There is an array of wonderful, interactive games and activities for students to work with. Some of these topics include, opposites, parts of speech, comprehension, alphabetizing, spelling, and even reading a story. The story is really great because a student can choose to have the computer read it to them, while they follow along. There are also highlighted phrases that can be clicked on to show action parts within the story. If a child chooses to have the story read to them, yet clicks on the appropriate phrases at the right time, comprehension and understanding is evident. I would highly recommend you to explore this website.

Other activities that you can use during your tutoring time are Hangman and Letter Jumble. Hangman works the same as you have probably played it in the past. You can choose a word or sentence for the student to guess. Depending on what you are focusing on, Hangman can be used to assist in spelling, comprehension, and sentence structure. Letter Jumble shows a set number of letters to a student and then they must rearrange them to create words. This could be timed or done in pairs. After the words are found, students could then compare similar words. Similarities could range from rhyming to both words having a long "O" sound. The tutor could even pick two words that are similar and have the students guess why.

The last two activities are especially useful because they can be adapted to fit any age level, as well as focus on many different components of literacy. The website also offers many varied activities per grade level. I highly recommend that you give these activities a try or explore your resources even more to find those perfect tutoring ideas!

## Top Ten Tutoring Tips

**Jennifer Joseph**

Team Leader – Mt. Morris

1. Encourage active learning. Have the student involved in learning.
2. Check and recheck learning. Don't just ask, "Do you understand?" See or hear that they do!
3. Don't do the students' work for them. Allow for failure and learning to take place.
4. Make learning fun. Try incorporating trade books and hands on activities.
5. Keep the children's individual interests, skills, and characteristics in mind! Children work better when they can relate to the activity.
6. Offer genuine praise for efforts and accomplishments! Children love to hear that that are doing well and to keep up the good work!
7. Be enthusiastic and energetic about the activities you are working on! Your energy will motivate kids to have the will to learn!
8. Make sure you get to know your student and adapt lessons to fit their needs.
9. Be delightful with both your students and the cooperating teachers. They can be a big resource for you!
10. Have fun with your students! Value your time with them!

\*Keep these tips in mind for your next tutoring session!  
You are making a big difference in these kids' lives! Thanks for all the time and effort you put into America Reads/Counts!  
You are changing lives each time you tutor!

## Preschool – *con't from page 2*

- care what their friends think and often have one or two special friends at different times
- may still have trouble getting along with each other and sharing may be difficult

### Talking and thinking:

- skills will rapidly increase, each child will develop at their own pace
- re-tell short stories
- listen while others talk
- talk about imaginary friends
- explain simple cause and effect relationships

This is just a short list of what to expect from preschoolers. For more information on these topics visit: [www.learnwhatsup.com](http://www.learnwhatsup.com), [www.nncc.org](http://www.nncc.org), and [www.vh.org](http://www.vh.org)



Thank you teachers!

## Transition – *con't from page 1*

- Have the students line up from shortest to tallest. They'll enjoy this because it gets them off of their seats and moving around. During the activity, incorporate vocabulary words short, shorter, tall, taller, etc. Encourage them to use these words while speaking to one another and when figuring out the heights of everyone.

- Have the students find someone with the same shirt (same color, pattern, style). Have them stand next to that person and once everyone has a partner, have them go around and explain what the similarities are. This enforces concepts of color and patterns and vocabulary words of same and different.

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