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continued on the next page
8 Things that Will Give Your Teaching Confidence a Boost

“My students are not learning.” “I’m not a good ESL teacher.” “I don’t have enough teaching experience.” “My students can tell I’m not an experienced teacher.”

And the list goes on... If you have ever thought or even said any of the above out loud, then you lack teaching confidence. In teaching, communication is key, and a lack of confidence can be a real barrier to communicating effectively and helping your students improve their English skills. A lack of confidence is quite common in new ESL teachers, but even the most seasoned ESL teachers have a crisis of confidence every now and then. So here are some tips that will help you boost your confidence and never doubt yourself again!

HOW TO GIVE YOUR TEACHING CONFIDENCE A BOOST

1 CONSIDER YOUR STRENGTHS

Take a good hard look at yourself. What abilities do you have? What do you think you do better than most? Are you funny and engaging in class? Do you know English grammar backwards and forwards? Are you great with young learners? Are you a patient teacher? Every teacher has strengths they bring to class, and weaker areas to work on, but the goal of this exercise is to boost your confidence so focus on your positive qualities. Make a list and then ask a colleague to add some more. Focus on the things that make you unique as a teacher, whether they are personality traits or knowledge you’ve gained through the years.

2 GET SOME PERSPECTIVE

So, you’re faced with the task of teaching absolute beginners, who don’t know a thing, and you’re expected to “make” them speak English by the end of the course. First of all, when faced with a teaching challenge that seems insurmountable (“Get absolute beginners to speak English”), try to break it down into feasible goals. In this case, you’ll have an estimate of the number of words they will have learned by the end of the class, and you know they will learn to greet others in English and manage in simple day-to-day situations. Focus on helping them achieve these goals, and when they do, your confidence will shoot through the roof! You will have placed knowledge where there was none before. How awesome is that?

Second, in today’s world, we have it much easier than ESL teachers 20, or even 10 years ago. We have an amazing wealth of resources right at our fingertips thanks to the Internet, from audio to video tools, as well as hand-y little work-sheets you can download for your class with only a click (hint, hint).

3 LOOK FOR EVIDENCE THAT YOU’RE AWESOME!

Nothing is more rewarding than when a student tells us we are good teachers. Do you have a box with the little cards your young learners made for you? Or birthdays cards? An email from a happy student? How about prizes or awards? Your TEFL certification? Look back at the achievements that made you proud. No matter how small they may seem, they made you the teacher you are today.

4 REMEMBER A TEACHER THAT WAS NOT SO AWESOME

Did you have a college teacher that literally put you to sleep? Remember your 7th grade Math teacher who never smiled? Well, you’re a lot better than that! If you’re reading this article, then you’re one of the many teachers who care about their students and care about becoming better teachers. We’ve all had teachers in the past who didn’t seem to care about anything except getting their paycheck and their summer vacation. You are not like them!

5 STEER CLEAR OF NEGATIVE NELLIES

Do you hang around teachers who do nothing but complain about wages, about the school infrastructure or the educational system in general? Although in many places educators face real problems, it doesn’t help you to constantly focus on the negative. This is classic “glass half empty” attitude. If you notice you are surrounded by these Negative Nellies, try to find another group to hang out with, one with a more positive outlook on things. What is the positive? Your students, of course! And how tremendously rewarding it is to teach them.

6 CELEBRATE YOUR STUDENTS’ ACHIEVEMENTS

Naturally, it doesn’t make sense to have a party every time your students learn something new, but why not have a special celebration every now and then? End the course with a special event and go through everything they’ve learned. Remember when they couldn’t ask a simple question correctly? Now they can ask plenty! Thanksgiving is the perfect holiday to celebrate this.

7 CHEER YOURSELF ON!

“I have a Business English class tomorrow, and I know nothing about business. My students will see I know nothing.” That’s exactly the kind of thought you need to avoid. Say to yourself, “Tomorrow I have a new group and my class will rock!” Say it out loud! Do this often. Say, “Damn, I’m a good teacher!” After you finish a class say, “Nailed it!” (Say it out loud, but when you’re alone in the room – remember you want to cheer yourself on, but there’s no need for students to find out...)

8 TEACH AS MUCH AS YOU CAN

The best way to boost your confidence in teaching is simply by teaching, and teaching and then teaching some more. The more you teach, the more confident you’ll feel. If you’re a new teacher, there’s no way around it. Experience does wonders to your confidence.

It’s great when someone else gives us a pat on the back and an instant confidence boost, but we can’t depend on others to keep us feeling confident. You are responsible for developing and nurturing your self-confidence. Try these tips or others — whatever works best for you. Just make sure you don’t neglect your biggest cheerleader — yourself!
He Said What?” Top 9 ESL Activities for Reported Speech

He said...She said...He asked her if, when, where or what...Reported speech, also known as indirect speech, is not one the most fun to teach.

What ESL teachers usually do is simply have one student supply a statement or ask as question and then have another student report on what was said/asked. However, there are other ways to practice Reported Speech, more creative and engaging ways, which should prevent students from tiring out and help them tune into the lesson.

Try These Top 9 ESL Activities for Reported Speech

1. Reported Speech Card Games

For some students, the best way to learn Reported Speech is by reading the statements they have to report. This is why we often write them on the board. Try these card games instead! For the first game, prepare a set of index cards each with a direct speech statement on one side and the indirect statement on the other. Divide students into pairs. Student A picks up a card and reads the direct statement. Student B must report on what they just said. Student A checks B’s reply on the back of the card. The team with the most correct points wins.

You may also try this other, easier version. Write the direct statements on index cards and their indirect versions on another set of cards. Divide the class into two teams. Each student must pick up a card and find the matching statement. You can make this more challenging by using statements that are similar but in different tenses.

2. What Did They Ask You?

Ask students to brainstorm a list of people who might ask them questions: a police officer, their mother/ father, a teacher, a taxi driver, etc. Then a student reports something that someone asked, without revealing who it was. This person asked me if I had my driver’s license. Students must guess it was the police officer. The police officer asked you if you had your driver’s license.

3. Words to Live By

Give students snippets of things that famous people have said about their lives and experiences. Students read them out loud and then take turns reporting what someone said: Einstein said peace could not be kept by force. He said it could only be achieved by understanding.

4. Celebrity Buzz

Hand out several copies of entertainment magazines or the showbiz section of the newspaper. Students must read through them and find at least one juicy bit of celebrity gossip to report to the rest of the class: Miley Cyrus said she was officially engaged to her boyfriend. To make this into a game, ask students to withhold the celebrity’s name and have the other students guess: Which famous celebrity said she was engaged to boyfriend Liam Hemsworth?

5. Story Time

Take advantage of story time by asking students to report on what some of the main characters said/asked: What did the Evil Queen ask the magic mirror? She asked him who the fairest of them all was.

6. Student Reporter

Any budding reporters will have the chance to show off their reporting skills with this fun activity. Divide students into pairs. One student will be the reporter and the other will be someone worthy of an exclusive interview: the mayor, a famous actress, a rich entrepreneur, an Olympic athlete, etc. The celebrity answers a series of questions and the reporter reports back to the class: In an exclusive interview, the mayor promised he would rid the streets of crime.

7. Dear Abby

Ask each student to write Dear Abby letter asking for advice on a problem: ask them to use Reported Speech in their letter: My parents said we were moving to another country but I don’t want to move. Students then exchange letters and reply to a classmate’s problem: Don’t be afraid to tell your parents how you feel. Students get their original problem letters back and report to the class on what Dear Abby said: Dear Abby told me not to be afraid to tell my parents how I feel. With this activity you are giving your students two opportunities to use Reported Speech.

8. I Heard It Through the Grapevine

One student whispers something to a classmate: I love chocolate more than anything else. This student whispers it to another: Juan said he loved chocolate more than anything else. The whispering continues through the grapevine, until it reaches the last student who must then say the original statement in direct speech. If there are differences, they must find out who made the mistake: Karen said Juan loved chocolate more than life itself. - I said he loved it more than anything else.

9. Comic Strip Gaps

To prepare for this activity cut out comic strips from a newspaper or print some you find online. Then use some liquid paper to white out what some of the characters say in their speech bubbles. Write these lines down on separate cards. Students pick up a card and try to match it to a character: Garfield said he wanted to eat lasagna.

Try Not to Give Your Students Random Direct Statements to Report.

Each of the activities suggested above should establish a situation, a context that should help your students see just how useful Reported Speech really is.
How to Teach the Passive Voice – While Being Active!

IT MAY SEEM LIKE A CONTRADICTION, BUT THERE’S NOTHING “PASSIVE” ABOUT LEARNING THE PASSIVE VOICE.

Students need to be as “active” as ever and fully engaged in their learning. But it is the teacher who must engage them. How do you get students actively engaged in learning something as tedious as the passive voice? With action, of course! By showing them that there is plenty of action involved, but that the focus is not on the actor, the one who is carrying out the action, but rather whoever or whatever is acted upon. Here is one of the best ways to teach the passive voice:

HOW TO PROCEED

1 CARRY OUT AN ACTION!

Stand in front of your class. Drop a pen on the floor. Ask your students to tell you what has just happened and ask them to begin the sentence with your name. Someone should be able to say: “Ms. Rodriguez dropped a pen on the floor.” Write this sentence on the board. Ask students to identify the subject and the verb in this sentence: they should say the subject is “Ms. Rodriguez” and that the verb is “dropped”.

2 REPEAT THE ACTION - INTRODUCE THE PASSIVE VOICE

Drop your pen on the floor one more time. Tell your students that you’ll tell them what has just happened, but this time your sentence will begin with, “The pen” Go to the board and write, “The pen was dropped on the floor.” Ask your students to identify the subject: they should say it is the “pen”. Ask them to identify the verb: they should say it is “was dropped”.

3 COMPARE THE TWO SENTENCES

Point to the first sentence and ask if the subject is doing the action. They should say it is. Make sure they understand that subject is active, the one responsible for carrying out the action. Point to the second sentence and ask if the subject is doing the action. They should say it isn’t. Make sure they understand that the subject is passive, the one who is being acted upon.

Compare what happens to the verbs. Ask students what tense they see in the first example. They should recognize the past simple. Show students what happens in the second sentence: the auxiliary verb “to be” is used in the past tense (“was”) with the past participle, in this case “dropped”.

Teacher drops some papers on the floor. S: Pens weren’t dropped on the floor. Papers were dropped. Teacher closes a door. S: A window wasn’t closed. A door was closed.

4 GIVE AN EXAMPLE WITH “WERE”

This time drop several pens at the same time. Ask students to tell you what has just happened. Tell them to start the sentence with “The pens” See if students figure out they should use “were” instead of “was” this time.

5 PRACTICE WITH MORE PASSIVE VOICE EXAMPLES

Carry out more actions and encourage students to describe what has happened in the passive voice.

Teacher puts some books under a chair. S: Books were put under a chair. Teacher closes a book. S: A book was closed.
Teacher writes some words on the board. S: Some words were written on the board.

Give enough examples to make students comfortable with the use of the past simple in the passive voice.

6 PRACTICE PASSIVE VOICE WITH NEGATIVE STATEMENTS

Continue carrying out actions around the classroom, but this time challenge students to make negative statements followed by affirmative statements:

FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES, THIS ARTICLE Focuses ON THE PAST SIMPLE IN PASSIVE VOICE.

Introduce the passive voice in other tenses: actions work very well with the present perfect, too (“Some books have just been put away”) – and don’t forget modals!
123. CHAIN FAIRYTALE

All Ss must start their fairytale with the words, “once upon a time,” followed by a sentence. Ss should write this sentence at the top of a piece of paper and then pass their paper to the next student. Each student will pass their paper and receive a paper. Ss must write a new sentence to continue the fairytale, before passing the paper on again. Repeat this process, until all Ss have written a sentence for each fairytale. The last student to write a sentence must then write the words, “The End.” Have each student read the fairytale that they have completed.

124. HEALTHY HABITS

Perform a class brainstorming activity about healthy habits. In small groups, Ss must then design a poster promoting healthy habits. This can include eating and dietary habits, fitness and exercise, germ avoidance, and other lifestyle habits.

125. RAP

Let Ss listen to parts of several different (age appropriate) rap songs. In groups, have Ss devise their own rap song. Have a performance of all the class raps.

126. BREAK THE CODE

In small groups, Ss must create short sentences, replacing one obvious word with a completely nonsensical word that begins with the same letter as the original word. Aim for about five sentences per group. Groups then read their sentences to the rest of the class, who must guess the real word based on the context of the sentence.

For example:

- Last night she watched a good film on the teapot. (Television)
- I bought a new dinosaur to wear to the party on Saturday. (Dress)
- He loves reindeers so I bought him a new book. (Reading)
- His favourite sport is fancy. (Football)
- They had fish and chinchillas for dinner. (Chips)

127. UNHEALTHY HABITS

Perform a class brainstorming activity about unhealthy habits. In small groups, Ss must then design a poster discouraging unhealthy habits. This can include eating and dietary habits, smoking, alcohol / drug use, fitness levels, and other lifestyle habits.

128. HOT AND COLD GAME

Ss work in pairs. One student mentally chooses an object in the room, and must guide the other student to it using words from the temperature scale. Hot equals nearby and cold equals far away. When Ss correctly find the object, swap.

Students may use words such as boiling to indicate that their partner is very close, freezing to indicate that they are very far, warmer to indicate that they are going in the right direction, cooler to indicate that they are moving away from the object, etc.
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<th>Questions</th>
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<tr>
<td>If you could change one event in your life, what would it be and why?</td>
<td>Would you ever buy a drink for a desperate, homeless alcoholic? Why or why not?</td>
<td>What is your biggest achievement? What made it so important to you?</td>
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<td>Do you think the present would be different?</td>
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<td>If you were a superhero, what would be your kryptonite and why?</td>
<td>If you won the lottery, what would you do on the first day you got your money? Why?</td>
<td>If you could learn one musical instrument, what would it be and why?</td>
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<td>Would you turn in a family member if they had committed a murder?</td>
<td>If you could have your ideal job, what would it be and why? How would your working day go?</td>
<td>Imagine you were given a free wish, but you had to wish something for somebody else. What would you wish, for who, and why?</td>
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<td>Why or why not?</td>
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<td>If you could have one day repeat over and over again for the rest of your life, which day would it be and why?</td>
<td>What if you were only allowed to receive one type of gift (such as books, computer games, clothes) for Christmas for the rest of your life? What would you choose and why?</td>
<td>If you could have one superpower, what would it be? What would you do with it?</td>
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<td>What if scientists found that an asteroid was going to destroy the planet in one month? What would you do with your last month of life?</td>
<td>If you were a type of sauce, which sauce would you be and why?</td>
<td>Imagine you get robbed at knifepoint and then the thief gets hit by a car. The car speeds off, nobody else is around, and he is in extreme pain but not dead; do you help the thief and why?</td>
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<td>If you were a two-dimensional shape, what shape would you be and why?</td>
<td>If you could smash one thing in your house with no repercussions, what would it be and why?</td>
<td>If you could spend 24 hours locked in a room with any person throughout history, who would it be and why?</td>
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<td>What is the worst thing you've ever done in your life? Why was it so bad?</td>
<td>If you could freeze time whenever you wanted, what would you do and why?</td>
<td>If you were a drink, which drink would you be and why?</td>
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<td>If you could change or invent one law that had to be implemented across the world, what would it be and why? Do you think it would make life better?</td>
<td>Imagine that you could choose one type of weather for the rest of your life. What would you choose and how would it affect your life?</td>
<td>Who is the wisest person you have ever met, and why?</td>
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<td>If you could be attractive and stupid or intelligent and ugly, which would you prefer? Why?</td>
<td>If you had to listen to the same song ten times every day or never listen to music at all, which would you choose? If you chose the song, which would it be?</td>
<td>Imagine you found evidence that humans were created as an experiment by an ancient alien race. Would you tell the rest of the world, and why?</td>
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<td>If you could make one animal extinct, which would it be and why?</td>
<td>If you were allowed to erase one book from existence, in the past, present or future, which would it be and why?</td>
<td>Imagine you could program a robot to perform one day-to-day task for you for the rest of your life. What task would it be any why?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you think the world would be better?</td>
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What Is It? Top 10 Guessing Games for Young Learners

THE CROWD IS ROARING. THEY'RE GOING MAD WITH ANTICIPATION. EYES ARE WIDE OPEN. HANDS ARE UP. SOCCER FANS AT THE WORLD CUP FINAL? NOPE. A GROUP OF YOUNG LEARNERS TRYING TO GUESS THE RIGHT ANSWER.

Guessing games are engaging and make them think – the ideal way to practice key vocabulary and grammar.

TOP 10 GUESSING GAMES FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

1. GUESS THE ANIMAL
   Give students an animal flashcard or have them take one from a bag. They must give their classmates clues as to what animal it is: This animal lives in the jungle. It eats bananas. It’s brown.

2. GUESS WHO?
   This guessing game is very similar to the classic game Guess Who? Use the real board game if you’ve got it or print copies of this sheet (http://busyteacher.org/8638-describing-people-guess-who.html) to hand out to teams of two students. Separately print out strips of paper with the names. Student A draws a name from the bag. Student B has to guess who they are by asking questions: Do you have brown hair? Do you have blue eyes?

3. CELEBRITY GUESS WHO?
   This game is very similar to the above. Simply use celebrity photos instead.

4. GUESS MY JOB
   Print out a sheet of clues like this one (http://busyteacher.org/8638-describing-people-guess-who.html). If students guess the profession after the first clue they get three points, if they guess after the second they get two points and after the last clue they get one point. You may be using language your young learners may not use themselves, but they are capable of understanding a lot more than you think. In any case, you may adapt the clues to suit their level, and even use this point-giving strategy for any type of guessing game.

5. LISTEN UP – AND GUESS!
   A fun spin on the guessing game is playing short audio files and having students guess what it is. FreeSFX.co.uk has hundreds of sound files to choose from. Can your class tell the difference between a mouse squeaking and a bird chirping? How about a bear’s growl and a lion’s roar? Find out!

6. GUESS THE MYSTERY OBJECT
   This is a classic in my young learners’ classroom and one of my personal favorites. Take a big cloth bag and place one item in it. Students put their hands inside the bag and feel the object to guess what it is. You can do this with classroom objects, animals, toys or any piece of realia.

7. LANGUAGE HANGMAN
   Who hasn’t played this classic whiteboard game? But try this variation to help students review any expressions they’ve recently learned. Draw enough number of blanks to represent each letter of the words contained in the expression. For example, for “thank you” you’d draw blanks like this: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ . You may choose to add the first letter or the last one to get them started, or a random letter in the middle. Students have to only guess the correct expression or phrase, but also use it with a partner.

8. GUESS WHAT I BOUGHT!
   Another great way to review vocabulary. Tell your class you went shopping yesterday and that they must guess what you bought. Describe each object in terms they can understand: It’s warm. It’s brown. You put it on your head (it’s a hat). If they guess correctly show them a flashcard or magazine cutout of the item.

9. GUESSING RHYMES
   Rhymes are great for practicing pronunciation. I’m thinking of an insect. It rhymes with sea (bee). I’m thinking of a fruit. It rhymes with beach (peach).

10. RIDDLES
    Children love riddles so feel free to try some out in your ESL class. ESLMOBI (http://esl mobi.com/3i/a_riddles.html) has a great list you can use. If some are too hard for students to guess, try giving them additional clues. These animal riddles are also great (http://busyteacher.org/7139-animal-riddles.html)!

BONUS GAME: I SPY
   This is a classic that children love and has variations throughout the world in different languages. Choose an object that is clearly visible in the classroom. Or an object from a large illustration. Say, “I spy with my little eye something green/that you wear on your feet/that you use to write”. The student who guesses correctly first gets to choose an object and continues the game by saying “I spy...”.

ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR GUESSING GAMES:
   - Divide the class into teams. Students take turns giving their teammates the clues so that they can guess for points.
   - Allow them a limited number of clues, say three. If the team guesses with those three clues they get 10 points. It teammates still can’t guess, they’re allowed to ask additional questions, but each additional question subtracts two points.
   - Switch roles! Have students give you the clues and guess what they are describing. You can have lots of fun with this. Pretend you have no idea so students are forced to come up with extra clues.

GUESSING GAMES LIKE THESE ARE GREAT WARMERS OR FILLERS, AS WELL AS A FANTASTIC WAY TO END THE CLASS ON A FUN NOTE!
Top 10 Tips to Deal With Indiscipline in the Classroom

It happens to every teacher at some point. Sometimes it is with the first class. Other times a teacher gets a few good years under his or her belt before it hits. Sometimes it seems like it happens in class after class. The problem that all too often rears its ugly head is lack of discipline. Every teacher experiences it, and no teacher likes it. The good news is that there are ways to handle indiscipline in the classroom. Here are some tips to try with your students.

HOW TO DEAL WITH INDISCIPLINE IN THE CLASSROOM

1. SET EXPECTATIONS EARLY
   Set expectations early in the year. The old adage that a good teacher does not smile until after Christmas may or may not be true, but it is easier to lighten your leadership style as the year goes on rather than get stricter after being lenient. If it is too late to start the year off with a firm hand, you can always make a new start — with either a new calendar year or a new month or a new unit. Make sure your class knows that your are wipping the slate and that your expectations of them will no longer be compromised!

2. MAKE RULES TOGETHER
   Let kids be involved in making the rules. Before dictating a set of classroom rules, ask your students how they would like their peers to behave. Have them discuss what kind of an environment they would like to have in class. By directing a class discussion, your students will define a set of rules that meet both their criteria and your own. Because they have set the expectations, they are more likely to follow the rules and to keep one another in check, freeing you to do things that are more important.

3. CONTACT PARENTS
   Depending on where you teach and where your students come from, their parents may be an unexpected support when it comes to good behavior in the classroom. Often American parents will side with the child when it comes to conflicts in school, but if you teach students from other cultures, and it is very likely that you do, your students' parents will not automatically take their children's side of things. In fact in many cultures, parents will automatically side with the teacher against their own child if there is a discipline issue. That is not to say that you should take advantage of either your students or their parents, just do not be afraid to approach your kids' parents if the situation necessitates it. Be warned, though, you may not want the child to act as interpreter if one is necessary.

4. INVITE VOLUNTEERS
   Depending on the age of your students, you may even choose to ask parents into the classroom as volunteers for a day. Children may behave better if their parents are in the classroom with them. Not only that, if your parents interact with each other, the stories of how a certain child may behave in class could get back to mom and dad through other channels ultimately saving you an awkward and unpleasant conversation!

5. INVITE ANOTHER TEACHER
   Trading teachers could be helpful in your quest for a composed classroom. If your students have gotten used to the way you operate class and what behavior you may let slide, having a different teacher for one or more periods of the day may spur them to act a little more restrained. Not only can the atmosphere of class change, your students will benefit from listening to another voice and another style of speech when another teacher stands in front of the class.

6. WHY, OH WHY?
   Think about the reason behind the rudeness. Is it possible that your ESL students may be acting up to make up for a self-perceived inadequacy in their language abilities? If there is even the slightest possibility that insecurity may be behind classroom misbehavior, try to look past it and address the real issue. Does your student need confidence? Does she need a feeling of success? Does he need to feel equal to his peers? By addressing the issue rather than the symptoms, you will have a healthier and better-behaved set of students.

7. QUICK LEARNER DETECTED
   It is also possible that a misbehaving student is bored with class because he is a quick learner. Though it may seem counterintuitive, putting that child in a leadership role may give him the extra challenge he needs to engage in the classroom activities. He will not only not be bored: he will have some investment in making sure the other students in class behave.

8. ATTENTION SPAN
   Remembering the attention span of children can also help you keep your calm when kids act up in class. As a rule, estimate a child's attention span to be one minute for every year of his age. That means a seven year old will max out on attention at seven minutes. Keep the pace moving in class without spending too much time sitting in one place. Let your kids move around, go outside or work independently to keep the (stir crazy bugs from biting.

9. RESPOND, NOT REACT
   It is extremely important for teachers to remember to respond and not react. There is a big difference between the two. A person who reacts acts impulsively and out of emotion. The person who responds, on the other hand, takes more time before acting and separates his or her emotions from the decisions he makes. It is a good rule to follow in all areas of life, but it is especially important to remember when your class is just plain getting on your nerves. Do not let your emotions get the better of you but instead stay calm and make logical and intentional responses.

10. DISCIPLINE IN PRIVATE
   Still, moments will come and days will come when one or more of your students will misbehave. The best way to address the situation is quickly and with as little disruption as possible. Refrain from disciplining any child in front of the class. Choose instead to have those conversations in private. If you respect your students, they are more likely to respect you.

ULTIMATELY, NO CLASSROOM IS PERFECT. YOUR KIDS WILL HAVE GOOD AND BAD DAYS, AND YOU WILL, TOO. Do your best to keep your cool when your students start getting out of control. Tomorrow will be a new day with limitless potential and it may just be the right day to get off to a new start!
Silence Is Golden: 20 Tips on What Not to Say in Class

SOMETIMES KNOWING WHAT NOT TO SAY IS MORE DIFFICULT THAN KNOWING WHAT TO SAY.
That is never truer than in an ESL class. When you teach a class of mixed internationals, people from all corners of the globe, it's easy to slip and do or say something you shouldn't. That's not about English -- that's about culture. If you are an American, imagine a stranger walking up to you on the street asking you how much you weigh, how much money you make, and what your political affiliations are. Needless to say, it would be awkward. It just so happens that every culture has topics that are best left unmentioned in class, taboos you will. And that's exactly why ESL teachers have to be careful what they choose to say and do in class. The following are some tips on cultural taboos you might run into in your ESL class.

20 TIPS ON WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT SAY IN CLASS

1. AGE
Age is probably something you will naturally shy away from if you are an American teaching ESL. There are other countries in which talking about age is also inappropriate (Indonesia and Sierra Leone). But in other cultures knowing someone's age is very important. It affects how you address them and what type of relationship you can have with them. If you have students from Korea or Vietnam in your class, be sure to allow some discussion of age since knowing a person's age will impact a person's relationship and interactions with them.

2. WEIGHT
In China, it's not considered rude to talk about a person's weight. So being called fat by someone from China isn't something to be offended at. You may need to point out to your students that Americans find it offensive to talk about weight though talking about height is generally okay. Other places in the world don't have a problem with weight talk, either. These include Ecuador and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

3. HISTORICAL EVENTS
Historical events can be big taboos in certain cultures. For example, in Spain, teachers would do best to avoid talking about the Spanish civil war, the Catalan independence movement, and the Spanish Empire. Likewise, the best ESL teachers will avoid these topics in their classrooms as well.

4. POLITICS
For the most part, you will probably avoid topics of politics in your classroom. You probably don't want to talk about them, and neither do most of your students. However, if you have students hailing from Nigeria, they will be perfectly comfortable talking about politics, religion, and social issues with people they don't even know. Be aware and sensitive to this cultural expression and intervene between students when necessary, explaining the different cultural norms.

5. THAI ROYALS
In Thailand, it's against the law to criticize the royal family, so don't expect your Thai students to chime in on ways to improve their government. In fact, it's probably best to avoid the topic completely.

6. MIXING ASIAN COUNTRIES
Do not assume the history of Asian countries is similar, and don't mix different countries up. It will especially offend students from Thailand, Korea, China, and Japan.

7. RELATIONSHIPS
Family! We all have them, and they are often a great topic to discuss. So don't be afraid to talk about family will make them uncomfortable if they feel as though they are well acquainted with the person or people they are talking to.

8. MARITAL STATUS
For most countries, it's not a problem to ask about someone's marital status, but if you have female students from Afghanistan, avoid it. It is considered rude to ask a woman if she is married there.

9. MONEY
U.S. teachers won't normally feel comfortable talking about how much money they make, and students from Germany and Croatia will be on the same page. However, that's not the case in China and Ecuador where it's perfectly natural to discuss a person's income.

BE AWARE OF EYE CONTACT

10. CHINA
Chinese students may not hold eye contact with you for any length of time. You can respect that part of their culture by not keeping eye contact with any one student for very long, either. You might also have to explain English speaking culture's expectations for making eye-contact.

11. FRANCE
For French students, you may need to take a different strategy when it comes to eye contact. Refusing to make eye contact with a French person communicates that you think you are of a higher status than them. While this may not be an issue if you teach young children, adult English learners may be offended by lack of eye contact.

WATCH YOUR BODY LANGUAGE

12. FRENCH
Are you trying to choose