

How to Teach English to Beginners

Who do we call Beginners?



Types of Beginners



**Absolute
Beginner**

**False
beginner**

The beginner
with/without second
language learning
experience

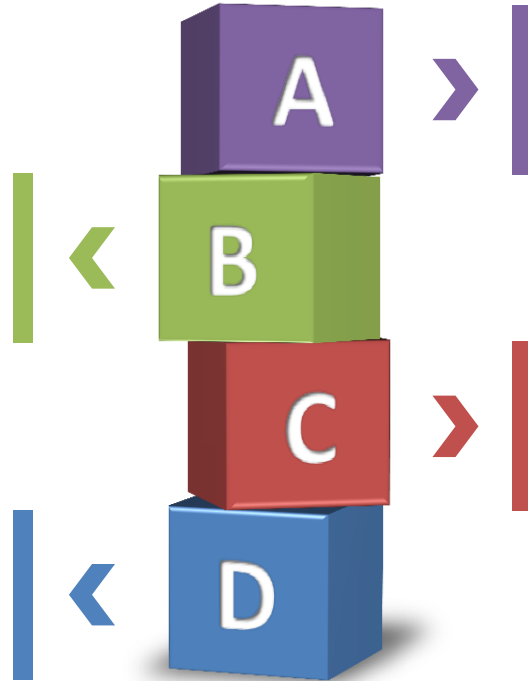
**Young
Beginner**

**Adult
Beginner**



What are the difficulties?

- ❖ Frustrating
- ❖ cannot understand anything
- ❖ different expectations



- ❖ different previous experience
- ❖ low sense of self-esteem
- ❖ feel infantilized
- ❖ illiterate in Roman script



How do we teach them?

Teacher Talk



Keep it simple!



Mime



Use gestures



Be silent if you can!



Prepare your speech beforehand!



Giving and checking instructions



- ☀ **Brief!**
- ☀ **Separate the instructions with pauses**
- ☀ **Simplify!**
- ☀ **Use gestures**
- ☀ **Demonstrate rather than explain**
- ☀ **Check!**
- ☀ **Prepare them beforehand!**



Giving Instructions

e.g.

“What do you think this is?” → **“What is this?”**

“OK, so now what I’d like you all to do, if you don’t mind, is just to stand up for a moment and come to the front of the class. Oh, and please bring your book with you. Could we all just do that?”



“Everybody – take your book, please. Stand up. Now, come here, please. Thank you.”

To use or not to use L1?



- ☀ **Putting learners into groups or pairs**
- ☀ **Explaining a grammar point**
- ☀ **Giving instructions**
- ☀ **Getting students to pay attention and listen**
- ☀ **Teaching vocabulary**



Drill, repeat, drill, repeat, drill...



Back chaining /back-drilling

breaking the sentence down into manageable units and then building it back up, working backwards from the end of the sentence to the beginning

T: coffee?

Ls: coffee?

T: a cup of coffee?

Ls: a cup of coffee?

T: like a cup of coffee?

Ls: like a cup of coffee?

T: Would you like a cup of coffee?

Ls: Would you like a cup of coffee?

Drill, repeat, drill, repeat, drill...



T: I usually go to the supermarket on Friday.

Ls: I usually go to the supermarket on Friday.

T: always

L1: I **always** go to the supermarket on Friday.

T: Mosque

L2: I always go to the **mosque** on Friday.

T: the park

L3: I always go **the park** on Friday.

T: Monday

L4: I always go to the park on **Monday**.

T: she

L5: **She** always goes to the park on Monday.

T: Do you?

L6: **Do you** always go to the park on Monday?

Substitution

Drill, repeat, drill, repeat, drill...



Disappearing Dialogue: Students repeat the whole dialogue and then teacher erases one sentence at a time.

Tourist: Excuse me

Pedestrian: Yes?

Tourist: Is there a movie theater near here?.

Pedestrian: Yes. There's one on the corner of Bloor Street West and Albany Avenue.

Tourist: Thanks a lot!.

Avoid metalanguage



DOWN



✘ No point in students knowing the terms *past simple, irregular verb or adverb of frequency* if they can't use the actual structures or words they refer to.

Show, don't tell.



UP

- ✓ Show them.
- ✓ Give as much context as you can

Instead of saying, “Let’s learn the passive tense” , GIVE clear examples of the target language structure with simple drawings, pictures, short skits, or exaggerated gestures.

Always check for understanding.



UP

- ✓ make sure you check they have understood by asking questions that test their comprehension

DOWN



✗ Never ask “Do you understand?”

Always use positive reinforcement.



Never, ever embarrass a student in front of the entire classroom. Instead, try to create a friendly atmosphere in the classroom by praising your students often, even when they make mistakes.



e.g. if they get the word right but just mispronounce it, say something like, “Okay, good!” and then repeat the word with the correct pronunciation so that you don’t shame the student and the rest of the class gets to hear the right way to say it.



Don't be boring.



- **Use lots of games to encourage your students to practice and produce the language you've taught.**
- **Incorporate your students' interests so they want to learn!**
- **The sky's the limit regarding how to teach basic English: trawl the interwebs for awesome ideas that will keep your students engaged throughout the lesson.**



Nothing's more dull than making students read from the textbook and fill in lame worksheets with lots of text and zero images.

by SUZANNE BHAGAN - Published June 4, 2018

Examples



Vocabulary



Vocabulary



Grammar



Grammar



What to teach?

1. Greetings
2. Useful phrases
3. Personalized language
4. What do they need?
5. Functional language
6. Basic grammar (situational PPP)
7. Vocabulary
8. Basic dialogue building
9. Easy listening
10. Very short reading passages

