**ESL Classroom Routines**

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Several years ago, when I was doing my teaching practicum in my MATESOL program, I had the opportunity to teach a community ESL class. Most of my students were immigrants who were taking the course in order to increase their proficiency level. The class followed an integrated approach, and, frankly, my coteacher and I found it difficult at times to balance “the right amount” of speaking, reading, and writing. Since for both of us it was our first experience teaching ESL, we were afraid that the course would seem to appear a bit unstructured. Our practicum supervisor suggested implementing classroom routines to help us keep the course more organized. And he was right!

Establishing classroom routines not only helps the teacher organize the course, but it also facilitates learning and motivates students. In addition, for many learners studying English in a different country (so-called *ESL environment*), the classroom can be a new and oftentimes frightening experience, so an interesting regular activity that they do in class will help them get used to the learning context.

Here are some examples of activities that the teacher can use as routines (daily, weekly, or every other day).

* **In-class journal:** Students freewrite (for about 7-10 minutes) in their journals on a given topic or a prompt.
* **A vocabulary activity**: Examples are numerous.
* **A speaking activity:** The teacher gives students a topic to discuss with a partner. Variation: A controversial topic can be used for a small class debate.
* **Oral presentations:** Students do weather reports, news reports, social life reports (depending on their proficiency level).
* **A reading thought:** Each Monday, students will share an interesting idea from the readings that they did over the weekend.
* **A pronunciation activity:** Practicing a particular sound, teaching a song, a tongue twister, or a short poem.
* **Writing-to-learn activity:** Students do an impromptu writing activity (for prompts, see my blog, “[Writing to Learn Activities](http://blog.tesol.org/writing-to-learn-activities/)“).
* **A phrasal verb presentation:** Students present a phrasal verb by explaining its use and providing examples.
* **Reading-based freewriting:** See the description in my blog, “[Reading-Based Freewriting for English Learners](http://blog.tesol.org/reading-based-freewriting-for-english-learners/).”
* **A video activity:** The teacher plays a short interesting video on a given topic for students to discuss. The teacher can also ask students specific questions before the video to have them look for the answers while watching the video.
* **An idiom of the day:** The teacher (or students) presents an idiom related to the topic of the lesson and gives examples.
* **A joke of the day:** The teacher tells a joke (related to language, local culture, etc.).
* **A short cultural moment:** The teacher presents a small aspect of the local culture. In the case of ESL students: Students can present an interesting aspect of their own cultures.
* **Surveys:** Surveys can be a great tool to help students practice their speaking skills and get to know their classmates. They can be done at the beginning of the class (for about 7-10 minutes). The teacher gives students a specific question and students will walk around and survey as many classmates as they can in a given time. It can be a great review of the material from the previous lesson (grammar, vocabulary, or a particular topic).

What classroom routines do you implement in your teaching? Which ones work the best for your particular context?

Reference:

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