

SUPPORTING ESOL LEARNERS IN FUNCTIONAL SKILLS AND GCSE ENGLISH CLASSES

TEN TOP TIPS

IN FUNCTIONAL SKILLS (FS) AND GCSE ENGLISH CLASSES, YOU CAN FIND VERY MIXED GROUPS OF LEARNERS. HOW CAN YOU DIFFERENTIATE EFFECTIVELY IN THIS CHALLENGING SITUATION?

FOR FURTHER READING AND LINKS TO RESOURCES VISIT:

ESOL.EXCELLENCEGATEWAY.ORG.UK/VOCABULARY/EGAUDIENCE/PRACTITIONERS

01 Find out about your ESOL learners' language and educational background

- Find out which languages your learners speak and write.
- Find out about their experiences of learning and using English.
- Ask about their previous education and qualifications (UK and overseas).

02 Be aware of different expectations of learning

- Talk openly about the culture of learning and encourage ESOL learners to participate in discussions.
- Put learners into groups so they can reassure and encourage each other as they may feel uncomfortable about expressing their opinions.

03 Differentiate according to the needs of the class

- Consider what you need to differentiate, e.g. lesson objectives, content and activities.
- Encourage learners to work together and mix ESOL learners with native speakers.
- Seek advice and support from ESOL colleagues.

04 Be aware of the language you use

- Use clear and simple language that learners are familiar with.
- Use checking questions that require specific answers rather than just 'Yes' or 'No'.
- Ask learners to summarise key points and instructions.
- Write new words and phrases on the board for learners to record and provide a glossary.
- Allow more 'processing' time for ESOL learners.

05 Support your ESOL learners' reading skills

- Consider the vocabulary, cultural and other background knowledge required to understand a text, and simplify as necessary.
- Allow more reading time for ESOL learners and check understanding thoroughly.
- Differentiate the questions and tasks.

06 Support your ESOL learners' writing skills

- Be explicit about the kind of writing required and the importance of accuracy.
- Use model texts and 'writing frames' with headings and content suggestions.
- Use contextualised gap fills, dictation and spelling games.
- Provide extra handwriting or keyboard practice, if necessary.

07 Support your ESOL learners' listening skills

- Expose ESOL learners to a range of listening opportunities, including typical accents.
- When using video and audio, set the context before playing, then replay several times.
- Highlight differences between written and spoken English, e.g. 'She is' or 'She has' = 'She's'.

08 Support your ESOL learners' speaking skills

- Be explicit about the pronunciation of individual sounds and how we use intonation, stress and rhythm – marking stressed syllables can help highlight this.
- Use role play and discussion to help learners recognise and use natural speech patterns in meaningful contextualised activities.

- Give feedback and guidance on choosing appropriate language for the context.
- Flag up and discuss cultural norms and expectations including non-verbal communication and body language.

09 Familiarise ESOL learners with varieties of English

- Use recordings to introduce ESOL learners to different varieties of English.
- Give clear guidance on Standard and non-Standard English.
- If your learners have learned English in a formal setting, provide opportunities for informal speaking practice.

10 Give support with grammar

- Encourage ESOL learners to identify significant grammatical differences between English and their main language.
- Involve learners in self and peer correction.
- Direct learners to online resources or reference books that they can use independently.