

Tips for Working with Beginning Level ESL Students

- Model everything – directions, instruction, questions, read alouds, etc.
- Use visuals for support.
- Model correct pronunciation of words.
- Teach about American customs and expectations.
- Read aloud often and talk to them as much as possible.
- Do not force them to speak, especially in the beginning. This may actually do more harm than good. It is normal for ELLs to remain in the silent phase for about three months, sometimes even longer.
- Allow them to work in cooperative groups and encourage talking and interaction with peers.
- Provide a peer tutor or “buddy” that can help the child feel more comfortable.
- If you have more than one ELL and they speak the same language, do not forbid them to speak to one another in their native language; but do encourage them to use English.
- Teach phonics in context and be aware of phonological differences in English and the native language.
- Teach sentence structure. Use picture cards to help students learn to build sentences.
- Do lots of modeled writing. Allow the student to tell you while you model correct writing. After they watch you do this, have them attempt to copy what you have written.
- Use word banks and word walls. Word walls with pictures provide great support.
- Review prepositions of place often.
- Be careful when using idioms, figurative language, and sarcasm. They do not get these.
- Use small white boards to assist students’ immediate needs when writing. By doing so, you can provide direct, one-on-one assistance to the student without involving the rest of the class.