

“What materials should I have on hand?”

Acquire frequently used tutoring tools.



As an efficient, well-prepared tutor, you need to have a selection of texts, supplies, and equipment readily available to facilitate the teaching of all language skills. For example, the basic tutoring classroom, whether portable or fixed, should include an erasable board for you to write on, appropriate texts for the various language skills and levels of your students, stimulating visual aids, audiotapes featuring a variety of speakers, and writing materials for the student.

You may already possess (or can easily make) many of these items, and you can purchase texts and audiotapes at a minimal cost. If you plan to be an itinerant tutor, simply buy smaller models of some of the suggested items so that everything you need fits easily into a standardized briefcase. Following is a more detailed description of materials you may wish to acquire (see also the reproducible shopping list at the end of this chapter).

Remember to save your receipts for all business purchases because such expenses may be tax deductible.

Classroom Supplies

Classroom supplies you might have on hand include

- a freestanding blackboard or dry-erase board—one of the most important tools. If the board is magnetized, you can also attach magnetized visual aids or manipulatives to it.
- writing tools, such as chalk, pens, pencils, felt-tip markers, and dry-erase pens
- a board eraser and correction fluid
- a notebook folder with pockets for handouts and work completed in your sessions. Attach your business card to the front of the folder, or simply write your name and telephone number on the cover, in case a student needs to call to cancel a class.
- a stapler for organizing handouts related to the same topic
- looseleaf paper for writing activities
- small (3-in.-by-5-in.) index cards to create flash cards with words or pictures
- large (5-in.-by-8-in.) index cards to record important information about your students. These can be filed easily in an index card box for future reference. If index cards are beyond your budget, you can make your own out of construction paper.
- a day planner, lesson planner, and address book. You can assemble your own inexpensively by purchasing a small looseleaf binder and 5-in.-by-8-in. paper.
- divider tabs for the binder. Write the student's name on the tabs, and use them to keep lesson plans for each student separate. When the student ends lessons with you, move those lessons to the back of the binder. If the student later calls you to resume lessons, you will have a valuable record of your work.

Electronic Equipment

An audiotape player is essential for teaching listening and speaking skills and for providing the student with the opportunity to hear the accents of various speakers of English. You should also have an extension cord or extra batteries on hand as well as blank audiotapes to record the progress of your students. A good AM-FM radio and audiotape player combination can be a useful, inexpensive purchase.

Another invaluable piece of equipment, which is a bit costly but soon pays for itself, is a small copier. Toner cartridges may be somewhat expensive but usually supply 1,000 copies or more. Remember that using your own copier is still far less expensive than taking handouts to someone else to copy. In addition, carrying copies is much easier than carrying full-size texts in a portable classroom.

If possible, use a computer with access to an Internet service provider. The Internet can provide the student with many ready-to-use ESL lessons that are graded online. If you commute to your student's home but cannot afford many of the classroom supplies and equipment, ask your student to provide as many as possible.

Reference Books

You can be an effective tutor without a huge library, but it is essential to have a dictionary and grammar book appropriate for the level of your students and a text that can be used to teach every level of the language skills that you wish to teach (see Figure 1 for tips on choosing an ESL textbook). The texts we mention here represent a sample collection for teaching ESL students of various ages and abilities. Additional resources can be found in Appendix A.

Although you can create many of your own materials and use household items in your lessons, the inclusion of a reputable text adds credibility to your teaching methods. You do not need to obtain all of the suggested texts and materials at once, only those you need. Local ESL teachers may have materials they are willing to share with you or give to you.

◆ Vocabulary and Grammar Texts

Advise your students to use an ESL dictionary designed especially for their language needs. *The Oxford Picture Dictionary* (Shapiro & Adelson-Goldstein, 1998) is an excellent resource for beginning- and low intermediate-level students of all ages. A software version, *The New Oxford Picture Dictionary CD-ROM* (1997) is also available, along with workbooks containing exercises for each picture. For high intermediate- and advanced-level speakers, the *Longman Dictionary of American English* (Stern, 1997) provides easy-to-understand definitions, grammar explanations, pictures, and exercises.

Figure 1. How to Choose an ESL Textbook

Using a good textbook can make tutoring easier for you and your student by providing structure, continuity, and reinforcement. To choose an appropriate text, look for the following features:

- visual aids such as pictures, graphs, and charts
- highlighting of important vocabulary in each chapter
- vocabulary reinforcement activities in each chapter
- an outline of the contents of each chapter
- a gradual increase in difficulty as the book progresses
- comprehension questions or activities at the end of each chapter
- more visuals and less text for beginning-level students
- a large, legible font
- appropriate subject matter, language, and approach for your student's age and level

Longman's Azar Grammar Series is popular with many teachers and students because each grammar rule is clearly summarized in a chart for easy reference. Although the focus is on grammar, the series includes activities that develop writing and conversation skills. Prentice-Hall Regents' Side by Side series uses guided conversation to teach grammar and communication skills to beginning- and intermediate-level students.

◆ Pronunciation and Speaking Texts

Pronunciation is taught most effectively when combined with the teaching of other skills. Speakers of all ages and levels enjoy practicing English vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation by reciting Graham's *Jazz Chants* (1978, 2001) and *Small Talk* (1986), which enable students to imitate the stress and intonation of English through music. *Pronunciation Pairs* (Baker & Goldstein, 1990) uses games, dialogues, and other listening/speaking activities to help beginning- and intermediate-level students develop American English pronunciation skills. *Well Said* (Grant, 2001) comes with a text and audiotape that offer practical suggestions to help more advanced-level, adult speakers of English improve their oral communication and pronunciation skills. *A Conversation Book: English in Everyday Life* (Carver & Fotinos, 1997) helps students who range from the beginning to the intermediate level learn to conduct two-way conversations and group discussions.

You can get the names of ESL texts and their ISBNs from the Web sites of ESL publishers or from an online bookstore. You can order many of the resources mentioned here from a local commercial or college bookstore or from a Web site (see Appendix C).

◆ Integrated Series

Some textbook series teach all language skills in an integrated fashion. For example, McGraw-Hill's Interactions and Mosaics series consist of communicative texts for high school- and college-age students from the high beginning to the advanced level in grammar, reading, writing, and listening/speaking. The series has four texts for each level, each text focusing on one language skill but including activities that involve all language skills. For example, if a chapter in the grammar book uses vocabulary related to education, then so does the corresponding chapter in the reading, writing, and listening/speaking texts. Thus each text reinforces the vocabulary and language skills of the other three texts. Steck-Vaughn's Real-Life English, another integrated series, includes audiotapes. These texts are designed for students in Grade 8 through adults who range in level from preliteracy to intermediate.

For adult learners, the LifePrints and Laubach Way to English series (published by New Readers Press) teach language for surviving in an English-speaking environment, finding a job, and becoming a citizen. The series include texts and audiotapes in three levels from low beginning to intermediate. You can obtain teacher's manuals with suggested strategies for all of the above texts to make your job easier.

The Rosetta Stone (2000) is a popular software program designed for all ages and levels. Students learn many language skills and can progress at their own pace. PBS Adult Learning Service's *Crossroads Café* (2001) television series contains 26 half-hour episodes for many levels, all using real-life situations. It has been shown on the Library Channel and at the time of writing was soon to be available on videotape.

◆ Cultural References

To understand more about the native cultural and linguistic factors that may affect your student, you can refer to texts such as *Learner English* (Swan & Smith, 2001). This text explains the grammatical, phonetic, and behavioral features of language speakers from around the world and predicts specific problems that speakers from different areas might encounter when learning English. You can also purchase flyers called *Culturegrams* (2001), which give brief descriptions of the language, history, culture, and customs of people from more than 150 countries. These informative publications can be purchased individually or in bulk.

Many texts that are not labeled *ESL* can be good for ESL students if they follow the guidelines listed in Figure 1.

Common Household Items

You may already have some of the best teaching aids in your home. For example, games such as Pictionary, Outburst, and Bingo are excellent for relaxing the student; are easy to explain and play; and are useful for teaching vocabulary, verb tenses, and numbers, for example.

You can use the pictures and the articles in magazines and newspapers to create lessons for every language skill. Some newspapers in large cities offer booklets with sample lesson plans to teach reading comprehension and other skills. You can create your own picture dictionary by collecting pictures from advertisements, coupons, and catalogues.

Teach your students how to shop for food and order in restaurants by using cookbooks that contain pictures of food items and by collecting menus from various restaurants. In some cities, restaurant delivery services (e.g., Takeout Taxi) provide a complimentary booklet of menus and prices from the various restaurants.

The teaching possibilities with ordinary objects are endless. For example, you can

- teach a student how to tell time by creating a clock with a cardboard package liner, a straight pin, a felt-tip marker, and cellophane tape
- teach a beginning-level student how to write numbers and letters by using a child's discarded writing book with upper- and lowercase letters of the alphabet written in both manuscript and cursive

- teach students how to read the directions and warnings on medicine bottles
- teach the alphabet and numbers by using a telephone directory
- teach telephone listening skills by asking students to call the time operator to get the current date, time, and temperature
- use a calendar to teach students to read and write days of the week, the numbers 1–31, and the date

Community Resources

Many free or inexpensive resources available within your own community can become teaching materials for all language skills within the tutorial setting. Adult students can benefit from, for example, application forms for a job, a Social Security card, a driver's license, a credit card, a library card, or a bank account. You use them much as you would a textbook. An added benefit of these resources is that they not only help students increase their language skills but also teach something about how to function within the community.

To find such materials, look in local libraries, bookstores, and toy and game stores, and ask literacy councils, commercial businesses, and government agencies. Even the television can provide free materials for language acquisition, and the Internet is an especially good source of materials, including lesson plans, exercises, and readings (see chapter 8).

◆ Libraries

The local public library is a wellspring of resources. Public libraries often carry a variety of ESL texts for various levels and needs as well as bilingual reading matter. In addition, libraries carry many complimentary resources that are helpful to ESL tutors, such as tax forms, housing information, and other government forms that an adult student might need. Other resource materials include instruction manuals to prepare international students for standardized tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL®) and the Test of Spoken English (TSE®).

Librarians are often familiar with textbooks designed for instructing ESL students in grammar, reading, and writing, and may also direct you to *high/low* reading materials (i.e., materials that are of high interest to adults but are written at a low level of English for easy comprehension). You can often borrow videotapes from libraries for a nominal fee. The reference section, of course, has newspapers and magazines from which you can select and copy articles appropriate to your students' needs and interests.

Many libraries have space available for tutors to meet with students who are unable or unwilling to meet in a private home.

◆ Bookstores

Commercial bookstores carry instruction manuals for ESL students who are preparing for the TOEFL[®], the TSE[®], and other standardized tests. In addition, bookstores offer a selection of dictionaries especially designed for ESL students (see the list of dictionaries in Appendix A). If you cannot find a book but know the title, author, and publisher or the ISBN, a bookstore can order it at your request. The store may also carry books that list free materials and how to obtain them.

If your local bookstore cannot obtain the books you need, check with a local university bookstore, which may have used books for sale at reasonable prices. One advantage to shopping at a university store is that books are usually organized according to the English level of prospective college ESL students. In addition, employees of a college bookstore may be more familiar with ESL materials than employees of a commercial bookstore.

◆ Toy and Game Stores

As mentioned in chapter 2, toys and games help students relax and enjoy practicing communication skills in English:

- Use a doll or toy for role playing with elementary school students.
- Consider purchasing a deck of cards and a book of rules for such games as Old Maid or Go Fish, which make your student practice asking questions.
- Play Wheel of Fortune or Hangman, using words your student knows.
- As mentioned, Pictionary, Outburst, and Bingo are great icebreakers with students of all ages who are not ready to communicate orally but who have some knowledge of vocabulary.

Almost any word game or guessing game can be adapted to the proficiency level of an ESL student. If you are working with a small group, have one of the students explain the rules of a game to the other students. If working one-on-one, have your student teach you how to play a game from that student's native country.

◆ Literacy Councils

Most cities have a literacy council that offers free instruction to people who wish to become literate in English. Some councils sponsor organizations such as Laubach Literacy or Literacy Volunteers of America (see Appendix D). These organizations can meet some of the needs of nonnative speakers of English and may even offer a complimentary training program for prospective ESL tutors. From such agencies you can often obtain teacher education manuals with detailed lesson plans, dictionaries, texts, and activities for your student at a reasonable cost.

◆ Local Businesses

The materials you get from businesses bring realia—real-world items, such as flyers, brochures, pamphlets, applications, and maps—to the tutoring sessions. With these free materials, you can plan lessons on such topics as getting a job; taking prescription drugs correctly; opening and depositing money in a bank account; writing a check; filling out a job application; shopping for sale items; and becoming familiar with local museums, zoos, parks, and other places of entertainment. Place these collectibles in separate large, labeled manila envelopes so they will be easy to locate when you need them.

- A local travel agent may have a city map you can use to teach your student how to give and receive directions. The agent will also be glad to give you travel brochures with pictures and descriptions of popular attractions and airline schedules to help teach your students learn how to read timetables and prices. Some travel agencies even provide travel videotapes.
- Banks provide customers and visitors with materials such as deposit slips, forms for opening accounts and securing loans, and information on buying automobiles and houses.
- Drugstores give customers flyers on the appropriate use of prescription drugs and materials designed to educate the public on health issues.
- The post office has forms for sending packages, notifying the postal service of a change of address, or sending a postal money order.
- Department stores provide sale flyers that can be a good source of material for an individual picture dictionary that labels clothes, appliances, furniture, and household items. These stores also provide job application forms for potential employees and credit card application forms for customers.
- Grocery store flyers that advertise weekly specials often provide visual representations of grocery items and always list prices.
- Your local Visitors and Convention Bureau and Chamber of Commerce have materials designed to familiarize new arrivals with the local community and its entertainment and business offerings.

◆ Government Agencies

The federal government publishes more material than any other private or public agency does, much of it free and available to the public. The topics of pamphlets, brochures, and other informational materials include, for example, arranging a government mortgage loan or visiting a national park. Many libraries are repositories for government documents, and a quick search on the Internet will help you locate materials that are free of charge.

The federal government (and many state education agencies) publishes helpful materials for low-literacy populations and those who are learning English. Your librarian can help you locate such items.

The state educational agency in your area also offers many useful resources. *State Education Agencies* (2002), part of the U.S. Department of Education's *Education Resource Organizations Directory*, at <http://www.ed.gov/Programs/bastmp/SEA.htm>, lists agencies that can give you "information, resources, and technical assistance on educational matters to the schools and the residents" (n.p.).

◆ Television

Television is a particularly good medium for language learning, particularly listening, because it presents language with visual cues.

- Shows that encourage language development provide interesting "homework" for your students.
- The many children's shows that encourage native-English-speaking children to develop literacy are helpful for young learners of ESL, too.
- Literate adults can benefit from watching close-captioned television, which allows adults to make a strong tie between what they see and what they hear.
- Any show that takes the viewer through a step-by-step process is helpful. Cooking shows, home improvement shows, and animal or safari adventure shows present language within an immediate context and are highly motivating for adults.

In conclusion, if you gather and organize the materials you need in the above five categories, you will be able to construct many commonly needed and requested ESL lessons, as illustrated in Case Studies: Points of Interest below.

Case Studies: Points of Interest

◆ Case Study 1

- Ms. Freeman has chosen materials that allow her to plan numerous beginning-level lessons.
- Her materials can be used in real-life situations.
- She uses manipulatives and realia (e.g., coupons, pennies, newspaper ads) because they help beginning-level students acquire language faster.
- She uses Bingo as a way to enhance interest and motivation in learning numbers.
- She will use complimentary coupons and flyers obtained from her local grocery store to teach the women the shopping skills they have requested

◆ Case Study 2

- Ms. Hawkins places the responsibility to bring materials on Omar, but she is still prepared with materials of her own in case he forgets to bring what she has requested.
- She has her audiotape recorder, audiotape, and copy machine available at all times to use for backup activities.

- She requests copies of Omar’s textbooks and a syllabus of his classes to keep on hand for future lessons.
- She plans to obtain supplementary materials from the local library and the Internet to help Omar with social studies.
- A local travel agent has offered to give her complimentary maps and brochures on any country she desires.
- She will ask Omar to teach her how to play a video game to develop his speaking and social skills in English.

◆ Case Study 3

- Ms. Rogers knows that Kim Su wants to work on pronunciation, but she is not sure exactly what Kim Su needs.
- Ms. Rogers prepares by having her audiotope player and an audiotope available. She has also selected a text with analysis aids and practical oral activities for social and professional settings.
- She purchased a secondhand copy of *Well Said* (Grant, 2001) after talking to a well-informed sales person at a local university bookstore who knew that it was popular with ESL instructors and students.
- She plans to recommend that Kim Su watch soap operas or reruns of shows such as *The Cosby Show*, which feature clear, typical family dialogue.

Observe and Reflect

1. Make a list of the materials you will need to begin tutoring and the places where you can obtain them.
2. Make a budget for the money you are prepared to spend on materials.
3. Make a list of materials you can obtain from the Internet (see chapter 8) and other complimentary sources.
4. Using items such as bus and movie schedules, create questions to help your student gather information.
5. Choose books and magazines on topics of interest to your student to stimulate an interest in reading.

Shopping List

◆ Classroom Supplies

blackboard or dry-erase board
chalk, pens, pencils, felt-tip markers, dry-erase pens
board eraser, correction fluid
notebook folders
stapler
looseleaf paper
index cards (3-in. by 5-in. and 5-in. by 8-in.)
day planner, lesson planner, address book
tabbed dividers

◆ Electronic Equipment

audiotape player/recorder
audiotapes
extension cord
batteries
copier
computer and Internet access

◆ Reference Books

(See Appendix A or chapter 2 for suggestions.)

dictionary
grammar text
pronunciation text
conversation text
integrated text
cultural background text

◆ Miscellaneous Items

games
magazines, newspapers, catalogues
cookbooks
menus
telephone directory
calendar
application forms (e.g., job, bank account, credit card)
maps
travel brochures
airline schedules

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