

Teaching Grammar - Advanced

Teaching grammar to advanced learners is not simply a matter of introducing more difficult rules. At advanced levels, learners often already know many major grammatical forms, but they need help using them more accurately, appropriately, and flexibly in real communication. This means grammar teaching should move beyond isolated sentence practice and focus on how grammar works in context, in spoken and written discourse, and across different situations, purposes, and registers. Advanced learners benefit from analyzing authentic texts, noticing patterns, comparing grammar choices, and using grammar to express subtle meanings such as certainty, emphasis, politeness, attitude, and argument. In this way, grammar becomes not just a set of rules to remember, but a resource for making meaning.

KEY PRINCIPLES

1. Grammar + Discourse (not just sentences)

Core idea

Grammar meaning depends on **context, purpose, and text type**, not just form.

Example (Passive voice)

- **Active:** Police arrested the suspect.
- **Passive:** The suspect was arrested.

👉 Same event, different **focus**

Classroom task

Give students two news openings:

- “The politician was found guilty...”
- “The judge found the politician guilty...”

Ask:

- Why choose passive?
- What is the writer focusing on?

👉 This moves from **form** → **meaning** → **discourse**

2. Spoken vs Written Grammar

Core idea

Spoken grammar is:

- less complete
- more repetitive
- interactive
- full of discourse markers

Example

Written:

I would like to request further information regarding your services.

Spoken:

Um, I just wanted to ask about your services.

Classroom task

- Give transcript + “clean” textbook version
- Students identify:
 - fillers (um, you know)
 - ellipsis
 - repetition

👉 Then:

- Which sounds more natural?
- When would you use each?

3. Authentic Language Exposure

Core idea

Students need **real language**, not simplified textbook English.

Example

Restaurant transcript (from chapter idea):

- interruptions
- incomplete sentences
- reformulations

Classroom task

- Students underline:
 - hesitation (uh, erm)
 - repairs (“I mean...”, “no wait...”)
- Then:
 - rewrite it into “textbook English”

👉 This shows:

real vs ideal language

4. Grammar as Meaning Choice

Core idea

Advanced grammar = **choosing between options**

Example (modals)

- He **must be** at home. (very sure)
- He **might be** at home. (less sure)

Classroom task

Give situation:

Your friend is late and not answering.

Students choose:

- must / might / could / can't

👉 Then justify:

Why this choice?

5. Inductive Learning (not over-explaining)

Core idea

Students should **notice patterns first**, then explain.

Example

Give 10 sentences:

- I've lived here for 10 years.
- I lived there for 10 years.

Students figure out:

- difference in meaning

👉 Teacher confirms after

TASK TYPES

1. Consciousness-Raising Tasks

Goal

Make students **notice grammar patterns**

Example

Give sentences:

- She gave him a book
- She explained the law to him

Students discover:

👉 different verb patterns

2. Information Gap

Goal

Force communication using grammar

Example (Reported speech)

Student A:

“She said: I'm tired.”

Student B:

“She said: I will come later.”

Task:

- Exchange info and report

👉 “She said she was tired.”

3. Problem-Solving Tasks

Goal

Use grammar for **decision-making**

Example

Plan a trip:

- If we go to Japan, we'll...
- If we had more money, we would...

👉 encourages:

- conditionals
- reasoning language

4. Dictogloss (very strong for advanced)

Goal

Reconstruct a text → focus on grammar

Example

Teacher reads:

A short story with passives and reported speech

Students:

- take notes
- reconstruct text

👉 Compare versions → notice grammar differences

5. Surveys (but advanced)

Goal

Combine grammar + communication

Example (future perfect)

Ask:

- By the end of this year, what will you have done?

Then report:

- He said he will have finished his degree.

6. Role-Plays (advanced focus)

Goal

Use grammar in **interaction**

Example

Situation:

- Giving advice

Target grammar:

- should have / could have / might want to

👉 Real conversation → grammar emerges naturally

7. Projects

Goal

Longer, integrated grammar use

Example

Plan a travel brochure:

- passives
- conditionals
- persuasive language

8. Values Clarification

Goal

Discuss opinions using complex grammar

Example

Topic:

- “University should be free”

Students must use:

- hedging (might, could, seems)
- conditionals

9. Sentence Sequencing

Goal

Understand discourse + cohesion

Example

Jumbled paragraph:

Students reorder using:

- connectors
- reference words
- logical flow

Teaching Insight

Weak approach:

- Teach rule
- Do exercises
- Check answers

Strong approach:

- Show real language
- Let students notice
- Use tasks to explore meaning
- Use grammar for communication