

Teaching & Practicum Tips

Giving Instructions

Giving instructions and setting up activities is a very important part of teaching. In the practicum you will be assessed on your lesson plan and the way that you teach it, including giving instructions.

There are some common components that are found in most classroom instructions. These are:

1. Get attention

“Ok everyone!” “Are you done?” “Is everybody ready?”

2. Transition

“Next we’re going to...” “Let’s look at this now...” “Here I have...”

3. Identify the materials

“On this worksheet...” “On the board...” “These flashcards...” “I have some sentence strips...”

4. Explain the class organization

“With your partner” “In pairs” “Make groups of three” “First do it by yourself”

5. Explain the activity

“I want you to match the pictures with the words” “Listen and put them in the right order”

6. Model the activity

“Can I have a volunteer to help me show you?” “Watch us do this” “Let me show you with Jihyun”

7. Checking questions

“Let me check” “Where do you write?” “Will you show your partner?” “What do you match?”

8. Time limit

“I’ll give you 1 minute” “You have 5 minutes so take your time” “Tell me when you’ve finished”

9. Execute

“Are you ready?” “Go!” “Start!”

Practice

Choose one of your activities and write a teacher script of the instructions you will give. Practice on a friend or classmate. Don’t forget to model the activity and ask checking questions.

Checking Questions with Instructions

“Do you understand?”

This is not a great question to ask when you are teaching. It doesn't really check that students understand. It's better to ask specific questions about the instructions that you have given. The responses from the students will allow you to check that students have really understood. These are often called ICQs (Instruction Checking Questions). It's good to ask a mix of right and wrong questions. Checking questions can be asked near the end of the instructions after modeling to check students remember the key points of your instructions.

Here are some examples:

“Work together with your partner... **Ok, do you do this alone?**”

“Don't turn it over. Wait until the other team guesses... **When do you turn it over?**”

“Choose three cards... **How many cards do you choose?**”

“Think of a word but don't tell the other team... **Do you tell the other team?**”

“Read and circle the animal words... **Which words do you circle?**”

If you are teaching high level students, you may not want to ask too many checking questions because students might understand most of what you are saying. In this case you can ask the students to repeat the instructions back to you.

Checking Questions with Vocabulary

Checking questions can also be used with vocabulary to check students understand the meaning and use of a new word. The checking question should be simple but should not contain the target language in the question. When planning checking questions with vocabulary, think about what a word refers to, what it means, what it doesn't mean, related words, antonyms, synonyms, how we use it and any other ways you can use to check. Again, it's good to ask a mix of right and wrong questions to really check that students understand.

Here are some examples:

“This is sunny weather”

“Is it sunny today?”

“Is it sunny in the night time?”

“Is sunny weather hot or cold?”

“Do you wear a scarf and boots on a sunny day?”

“What do you wear on a sunny day?”

(Point to a rainy picture) “Is it sunny?”

“This is a shark”

“Where does it live?”

“Does it live in a tree?”

“Is it big or small?”

“What color is it?”

“Does it have legs?”

“How do you say this in Korean?”

(Point to a monkey) “Is it a shark?”

“Let's look at this word ‘comfortable’”

“If something is hard, like a table, is it comfortable?”

“Can you think of another word for ‘comfortable’?”

“What is comfortable in your home?”

“How do we feel when we are comfortable?”

“Shoes can also be comfortable, let's look around the room and find who has the most comfortable shoes.”

“Think about this word ‘unexpected’, what does this mean?”

“If it is unexpected, do you know it is going to happen?”

“Is your birthday unexpected?”

“Is a surprise birthday party unexpected?”

“What happened to you that was unexpected?”

Checking Questions with Grammar

Checking questions can also be used with grammar. This is a little more complex because you need to think about what kind of questions will check understanding of a grammar point.

Here are some suggestions:

- Time lines to establish tenses and changes over time.
- Truth lines to establish probability e.g. must be / could be / might be / can't be.
- Reality lines to establish degree of reality or imagination e.g. conditional sentences
- Clines to show grades or scales e.g. yellow-amber-orange, frequency adverbs
- Pictures to distinguish between similar objects e.g. cup / mug, lane / road / highway
- Discrimination to check function and register e.g. Do I say 'hey!' to my boss?
- Negative checking e.g. Do I say 'I were'?
- Translation (where appropriate and possible).

Here are some examples:

“He went to the shop on Monday.”

“Is he at the shop now?”

“Is it in the past or the future?”

“He’s too small to press the button.”

“Is he tall?”

“What does he want to do?”

“Can he press the button? Why not?”

“If it rains, she will take an umbrella?”

“Do we know what the weather will be?”

“Does she need the umbrella in sunny weather?”

“Then when she takes the umbrella, how is the weather?”

“When he was 24, he had never been to China. He has now lived in China for 6 years.”

“Did he go to China before he was 24?”

“Is he living in China now?”

“How can we change this sentence with ‘since’?”

Modeling language

It's important to model tasks for students so that they can see how a task should be done, but we should also model the language that is needed for an activity or task.

Modeling language means that the teacher uses the language so that students can hear an example of how they should use the language.

The easiest way to do this is for the teacher to answer any questions that are posed to the students.

Here is an example with a warm up question:

“We are going to talk about your favorite music. Look at the question here: What is your favorite kind of music, and why? First let me tell you my favorite music, I really like jazz because it helps me relax and focus when I study. I first heard it at high school. I like all types of jazz, old jazz and modern jazz. My favorite musicians are Miles Davis and John Coltrane. My favorite album is Kind of Blue by Mile Davis. How about you? What's your favorite type of music? Talk with your partner, and don't forget to say why!”

While the teacher is modeling the answers to the questions, students have time to think about what they are going to say.

Here is an example with some target language:

“Here is the question: How often do you eat pizza, ice cream, cake? Remember, this time you are going to say your real answers. Hmmm, let me answer first. Everybody ask me the question: How often do you eat pizza? ... Good! I eat pizza once a month. Everybody ask me the next question: How often do you eat ice cream? ... Can you guess? I never eat ice cream. Now, ask me the last question: How often do you eat cake? ... I eat cake twice a week.”

Notice how the teacher is reviewing all of the language needed for the activity and showing students that they must answer from their real life experience.