

# Classroom routines



Teacher Education  
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Support in India  
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## What this unit is about

This unit is about developing your routines for using English in the classroom. The focus is on the key language skills of speaking and listening.

You are probably the most important source of English for your students, especially if they are not exposed to English in their homes or their community.

Maybe you do not feel 100% confident about your own English. But English is acceptably spoken in a very wide range of accents, and with different levels of competence, everywhere in the world.

Everyone can learn English with encouragement and practice. The activities, case studies and resources in this unit are designed to help you get started with using more spoken English in your classroom.

## What you can learn in this unit

- To increase classroom routines for English speaking and listening.
- To use English language games with your students.
- To practise English at your level.

## 1 Using teacher talk

You start by thinking about ‘teacher talk’ and how you can use this for English.

### Activity 1: ‘Teacher talk’: a planning activity

Have you seen small children play ‘Teacher Teacher’? Maybe you played this game as a child. Students like to imitate the teacher and can learn ‘teacher talk’, or the language of ‘classroom management’, even though no one actually ‘teaches’ them these words and phrases. So whatever you say and do in the classroom, your students will also begin to say and do.

Read the sentences below in English. Read them aloud, to yourself or with a colleague.

Tick the ones you already use in the classroom with your students.

- ‘Good morning/good afternoon/good evening, students/class.’
- ‘Please sit down/Yes, you may sit down now.’
- ‘Please stand up. Thank you!’
- ‘Please stand up when you speak.’
- ‘Who knows this word?’
- ‘Put your hands up, please! Those who know the answer!/Those who have finished their work! Hands down!’
- ‘Yes, come in, please.’
- ‘Please wait.’
- ‘Let the others speak!’
- ‘One at a time, please.’
- ‘Please come to the board and write the date.’
- ‘Thank you. Please go back to your place now.’
- ‘Open your books/notebooks. Close your books.’
- ‘You may go out.’
- ‘See you tomorrow.’

Are there other words or sentences in English you already use that are not on this list?

Now choose sentences from the list that you have not tried out before. Practise these sentences aloud, at home or with a fellow teacher.

Gestures will help students understand you. How would you mime sentences such as 'Open your books', and 'Come in'? Practise the gestures as you say the sentences.

When you are confident about a phrase, try using it with your students. Gradually increase the number of English phrases you use with your students each week. Don't give up if at first they don't respond to you – by using gestures the students will slowly learn these English phrases.

In Case Study 1, see how a teacher tries to improve his own English so that he can practise along with his students.

## Case Study 1: Mr Pradeep practises English

*Mr Pradeep teaches all the subjects to his Class III students. They are all first generation students. When Mr Pradeep started his job as a teacher, English was not taught at primary level. But after a few years, the state government decided to introduce English from Class I. All the primary teachers of the state were given five days of training in the methodology of teaching the English language.*

Even after the training, I still felt insecure. My own knowledge of English was very limited and I felt uncomfortable speaking English, worrying that I was making mistakes. I decided to listen to English language radio programmes every day. I also asked my wife to converse in English with me every evening, because her English was better than mine.

I also practised speaking simple sentences in English such as 'How are you?', 'My name is Mr Pradeep', 'I am a teacher' and 'I live in Bhubaneswar' by recording these sentences on my mobile phone. I would play them back, listen to them and re-record myself to improve further. I must admit, sometimes I felt a bit silly 'rehearsing' like this, but I found that it really did improve my English and made me feel more confident.

I prepared a list of everyday classroom instructions with another teacher in school, for example: 'Sit down now, please', 'Everybody up', 'Can you come to the board?', 'I want you to make two lines' and 'Can you make a big circle?' I practised saying these instructions loudly and clearly at home. I started giving instructions in English in the classroom, speaking slowly and using gestures and actions.

The students responded well. I try not to worry about the mistakes I make or the students make – I don't want them to be afraid to take part. I know that mistakes happen when we learn anything new. I try to make sure my students feel rewarded for having a go rather than punished for getting it wrong.



### Pause for thought

- What were the sources of English for Mr Pradeep?
- What else could Mr Pradeep do to improve his English?
- What do you do to practise English?
- Who can you practise with?
- What sources of English can you listen to regularly?

## 2 Establishing classroom routines to use more English

### Activity 2: Increase your use of English

Think about the activities that you routinely do in the class and what you say to students before, during and after these activities. Rework what you usually say in Hindi or the local language to English.

Make a copy of the table below and fill in what you would say on the right-hand side. We have provided one example for you.

Getting ready for a game	'Are you ready to start?'
Beginning a lesson	Let's recite a poem / Let's listen a story.
Instructions for using a book	
Maintaining discipline	
Ending a lesson	
Organising students to move	Get into the line slowly and move.

Practise saying these words in English, aloud, slowly and then a bit faster. Work out appropriate gestures or actions for each instruction or comment. Practise with a friend, relative or colleague.

When you feel confident, try out your new English sentences in the classroom. Use gestures, and encourage students to respond in English or in Hindi or in the local language.

Make it a habit to greet students in English, and to give instructions in English for things that you do every day in your classroom.

Teach students to say 'thank you', 'please' and other polite words for requests by using these words yourself when you speak to them. Also, teach them to say 'good morning', 'sorry' and 'excuse me' to you and to each other; and to use the appropriate expressions for permission to enter, go out or speak – for example, 'May I ...?' and 'Can I ...?' When you do this regularly, your own confidence in English will also improve (Figure 1).



Figure 1 Informal and unplanned language practice will improve both your English and your students'.

When you evaluate students listening and speaking in English, you may observe that they understand the general meaning without understanding individual words. For example, when you say ‘See you tomorrow’, every day when school time is over, students will pick up this phrase. They may understand that it is a form of saying ‘Goodbye’, because of when you say it, but they will not know the meaning of each word in isolation.

You can note, over time, students who remember words and sentences they have heard repeated or routinely, and students who start to use their learning in new situations. Students who recall ‘See you tomorrow’ will learn the word ‘tomorrow’ and will start to use it in new ways – for instance, ‘Tomorrow I go to the city.’ Or they might say ‘See you’ as a way of saying ‘Goodbye’.

You can assess these informal, unplanned opportunities for language practice. Support students’ speaking by encouraging all the efforts that they make to speak English, no matter how small. Try to listen carefully when they speak, and do not interrupt to correct small errors. For evaluation, keep a large notebook with a page or two for each student. Use this to build evidence for records of achievement. Note down which students speak easily and confidently, and which students are still too shy to speak. Give the shy ones more opportunities and encouragement to say something in English, and praise them for doing so.

If you have a large class, you can prepare a simple table of checklists to evaluate the students’ progress:

**Table 2** Student progress checklist

Students’ names	Uses words occasionally	Uses sentences occasionally	Uses words frequently	Uses sentences frequently	Feels too shy to speak

See Resource 1, ‘Talk for learning’ to learn more about the value of classroom routines for speaking and listening.

### Activity 3: Record yourself in the classroom

Take your mobile phone into your classroom and record the first ten minutes of a lesson where you normally use English. (It does not have to be a language lesson.)

Listen back to what you recorded two or three times and answer these questions:

- How much English did you speak? What words or phrases did you use?
- Were you surprised at how much English you used? Was it more or less than you predicted?
- Did the students use English in response to you? How did you know that they understood what you said?
- Did you switch to Hindi or a local language during the ten minutes? When did you do this, and why?
- Listen to the sections where you used Hindi or the local language. Can you now think of words and sentences in English that would say the same things? Write these down – use a dictionary if you are not sure about the words, or ask another teacher or friend. Your challenge is to start using these English words in your lessons.

### 3 Using games

One way of introducing routines into the classroom is to use language games. In Case Study 2, a new teacher introduces a language game as a way to improve her and her students' English speaking and listening.

#### Case Study 2: Miss Alaka introduces games in English

*Miss Alaka was a new teacher who was not very confident in English. She also wanted to improve her classroom management skills.*

I decided to have a daily listening activity in English, but a fun one. I introduced the game 'Do What I Say' (see Resource 1). It uses simple commands and requires the students to listen carefully and respond to what I say. I started by doing gestures with the words. When students became familiar with the commands, I gradually began to just say the words.

With this game, I reinforced my role as teacher (giving instructions) and the students' attention was on following my instructions and listening carefully. They learned the names of simple actions and parts of the body, and they enjoyed the game. I could also feel my own English confidence improving as I practised the instructions.

My class was large, so once I made sure that students understood the game, I made smaller groups of eight to ten students. In each group one student took the turn of a 'teacher' and gave instructions to the rest of the group. I was surprised to see Shekar, who is normally withdrawn, participating with enthusiasm in the game. I realised that we had labelled him a 'slow learner'. He must have realised that with English all of us were beginners – and this could have given him confidence to participate.

One day after school, I was walking through the village and I saw a group of my students playing 'Do What I Say' in English. They were teaching the game to their younger brothers and sisters.



#### Pause for thought

- Miss Alaka used the game for language teaching. What were the other benefits of the game?
- Are there students like Shekar in your class? Do you think games will give them opportunities to participate?
- What is the significance of her students playing the game after school and teaching it to other students?
- Do you use any games that involve English with your students? If so, is this a regular routine or something you do infrequently?

Students like to play games with words and actions. You can use simple games in the classroom for English language learning. When you do this, your own English skills and confidence will improve.

#### Activity 4: English language games

Take time to read carefully through the games and activities in Resource 1 and Resource 2. Maybe you can share this reading with a colleague and exchange ideas.

After you have read through them, choose one that you would like to try out in the classroom. Practise the words and phrases with a fellow teacher, or with someone at home. Think about how you would organise the class for the game. Would you play it inside or outside?

Try out your chosen game, from Resource 1 or Resource 2, with your students. When they become

familiar with the game, you can introduce a new game to practise English. If students like a game, encourage them to play it outside class.

Keep one day of the week for a language game, or play a game twice a month.

For evaluation, note which students are careful listeners, and who can respond with good understanding even if just by shaking their head. Make a note of students who make good guesses, and who try to form their own questions or statements in English.

## 4 Summary

In this unit you have been introduced to active and participatory language learning, for yourself as much as for your students. The focus has been on the key language skills of speaking and listening, reinforced in daily classroom routines.

To learn English well, your students need frequent speaking and listening practice – not just in the language lesson. Try to increase your use of English at different times of the school day. Your classroom routines offer regular opportunities to do this.

Other Elementary English teacher development units on this topic are:

- *Using the textbook creatively*
- *Songs, rhymes and word play*
- *Learning English in the creative arts*
- *English and subject content integration*
- *Community resources for English.*

## Resources

### Resource 1: Two English language games

You can encourage active listening in English with your students, and prompt them to respond to the English that you use. You can observe how much students understand what you say. Students can also learn by observing their peers.

#### **‘Do What I Say’**

The teacher gives instructions orally and the students must listen and do the actions.

Start with simple instructions.

As students make progress, make the game more advanced. You can also adapt the game to different topics.

- ‘Touch your nose.’
- ‘Touch your partner’s back.’
- ‘Hold up five fingers.’
- ‘Point to someone who has long hair.’
- ‘Put your pencil on the floor.’
- ‘Put your pencil under the chair.’
- ‘If you like mangoes, clap your hands.’
- ‘If you don’t like bananas, make a face.’

- ‘If Delhi is capital of India, put up your hands.’
- ‘If plants grow with the help of sunlight, nod your head.’

Some students would copy others, of course, but the point of the game is that everyone is hearing and responding to English. As students do this, they can learn vocabulary for physical descriptions, for positions, likes and dislikes, language for specific subjects, and language for general knowledge.

When you try out this kind of activity in your classroom, make sure that you choose actions and situations appropriate for the students and their level of knowledge. You may demonstrate the actions linked to the English, especially when these are new words, or when the students are having difficulty. Give the students time to listen and respond. They do not need to produce any English – they must only show that they understand you.

## ‘Guess Who’

Divide the class into two groups. Group 1 has to secretly think of a thing or a person; Group 2 has to ask questions to guess who or what is it. Group 1 can only answer only ‘yes’ or ‘no’. As the teacher you must help Group 2 to ask their questions. Prepare for the game in the following way:

Think of six things and people that Group 1 can choose as their secret – these can be familiar to the students, such as a chair, a table, a spoon, a tiffin box, a water bottle or a book. For people, think of professions like postman, driver, cook, teacher, doctor, nurse or policeman/woman. Then think of all the words that could be used to describe these things and people. Next, think of how questions could be asked using these words.

Let Group 1 choose one of the six things or people as their secret. Remind the students in Group 1 that women as well as men can be found in all the occupations. Here are some examples:

- For people (postman, driver, cook, teacher, doctor, nurse or policeman / woman):
  - ‘Is it a man or a woman?’
  - ‘Does the person wear a uniform?’
  - ‘Is the uniform white?’
  - ‘Does the person use chalk/a stethoscope/a thermometer / a bicycle?’
  - ‘Does the person work in a hospital / school / kitchen / police station?’
- For things (a chair, a table, a spoon, a tiffin box, a water bottle, and a book):
  - Size words: ‘Is it big? Is it small?’
  - Shape words: ‘Is it round? Is it square? Is it long?’
  - Colour words: ‘Is it white? Is it black? Is it coloured?’
  - Material words: ‘Is it made of plastic/paper/wood/leather/steel?’
  - Used-for words: ‘Is it used for writing/reading/cutting/keeping things?’
  - Location words: ‘Is it here in your bag/in this room/in school/in every house?’

Before you play the game in class, most importantly, make time for yourself to practise the words in English. If possible, play ‘Twenty Questions’ with a fellow teacher, as a partner.

## Game 2

One of the children, Gopal plays the role as Wolf. He stands at a little distance with his back towards the children. The game starts with the children. All the children shout ‘What’s the time Mr. Wolf? The wolf turns out and faces them calling out a time 6 A.M. The teacher asks the children to act out the word “get up”. Again the children ask what’s the time now, Mr. Wolf? He again turns and faces them, and shouts 8 AM. The students go eight steps ahead and act out “taking breakfast”. Then one of the children asks what

the time Mr. Wolf. Mr Wolf shouts its 10 AM. The children go 10 steps ahead and act like going to school. Again one of the children ask what's time Mr. Wolf? Mr Wolf shouts its lunch time and immediately starts chasing the children. Children run here and there and Mr. Wolf catches one of them. He is Mr. Shyam. One of the children declares Shyam is the next Wolf. In this way the game continues for 20 minutes.

Activity: As soon as the game is over, you ask the children to go to the class room and feel in the work sheet as mentioned below. Read the table and make statements according to the time.

Time	What you do.
6 AM	I get up and wash my face.
6.10 AM	
10 AM	
11 AM	
12 NOON	
1 PM	
4 PM	
5 PM	

*Adapted from the Britannica Learning, the English Channel (Practice Book-3)*

### One Rhyming Game

Wash wash wash your face  
Boys and girls wash it everyday  
Brush brush brush your teeth,  
Boys and Girls brush them everyday  
Comb comb comb your hair.  
Boys and Girls comb it everyday

*Adapted from NCERT source book on assessment for class-I-V*

Instruction: Listen carefully and what I say show in / Act out the following

1. Show me your face.
2. Wash it
3. Show me your teeth.
4. Brush it.
5. Touch your hair
6. Comb it.

The teacher may think of other items on body parts to do an action with it and ask the students to do.

## Resource 2 : Activities to encourage speaking and listening in English

*(This is an extract from Krishna Kumar's book The Child's Language and the Teacher.)*

These are just some of the dozens of activities any teacher can organise in any ordinary classroom. Each time an activity is repeated with some little change, it will be received with even greater enthusiasm by the children than it got last time. So do each activity any number of times, adding something new each time. Keep a record of the variations so that you can introduce your innovations to a new colleague. Nearly each activity described here can become the starting point of a dozen variations.

## 1 'What Did You See?'

**Stage 1:** Ask one child to go out of the room, see what is happening outside, and tell the class what he saw. For instance, he might report that he saw a truck, two shops and a bicycle.

**Stage 2:** Now the rest of the children, preferably sitting in a circle, will ask him questions, one by one, and one question per child. For instance, a child may ask: 'What was hanging from the bicycle's handle?' The reply may be: 'A basket.' The next question may be, 'What colour was the basket?'

**Stage 3:** When one round of questioning is complete, the teacher will ask the child who has gone out: 'Who asked the best question?' Supposing he says, 'Shashi asked the best question; the teacher will ask: 'What was the question?'

**Stage 4:** The next round starts with Shashi. Ask her to see something that the earlier child had not seen. When she comes back, ask children to come up with new questions – not the ones they have already asked.

## 2 'Asking the Explorers'

Send a small group of children, no more than five or six, to study some specific object or place near the school or even inside the school building. For example, they may be sent to examine a cluster of trees, a tea stall, a broken bridge, or a nest. Ask them to explore it carefully and discuss among themselves everything they notice.

While the explorer group is away, tell the rest of the class about the object in some detail. For example, if the explorers have gone to examine a tea stall, tell the class about the things available at the stall, who runs it, where do the things available there come from, etc.

When the explorer group comes back, it will face questions from the class. The teacher can also have her turn. Next time, send a different group.

## 3 'Guess What I Saw'

One child goes out, stands at the door or at some distance from the class, and selects one of the hundreds of things she sees around (it could be anything – tree, leaf, squirrel, bird, wires, pole, grass, stones). When she comes back, she says just one sentence about the thing she has in mind. For example, she might say, 'What I saw is brown.'

Now every child in the class gets one chance to ask more about the thing and guess what it was. For example, questioning may go like this:

Child 1: 'Is it thin?'

Answer: 'No.'

Child 2: 'How big is it?'

Answer: 'It's quite big.'

Child 3: 'Is it as big as a chair?'

Answer: 'No, it's smaller than a chair.'

Child 4: 'Can it turn?' ...

Finally when the thing has been guessed correctly, some children may object to the answers they got for their questions. For instance, someone may point out that the colour was not brown but clay-like. In such situations, the teacher's role is very important, as someone who can help children establish subtle distinctions between meanings.

## 4 'Doing What Was Said'

Ask children to listen and do what you tell them to do. Start with simple things to do, and ask the whole class to do them together. Examples:

'Touch your head.'

'Close your right eye.'

'Clap on your head.'

Divide the class in two groups. The teacher will give instructions to the first group, and the children of this group will now give similar instructions to the second group. Gradually make your instructions more complicated, for example:

'Touch your head with both hands, then touch your right ear with your right hand.'

'Close both eyes, touch your neighbour, ask him to give you his left hand.'

When children of one group give instructions to the other group, they need not repeat everything they have heard. Encourage them to make up new instructions.

## 5 'Comparing'

Make sets of similar-looking things, such as leaves of two or more trees, flowers of different plants, stones, pieces of paper cut in different shapes, etc.

Ask children to listen to the description you give of one of the things in a set, and on the basis of the description they must decide which one you are thinking of. Example:

'I'm thinking of a leaf that is smooth and long, and it has even edges.'

After doing this activity a few times, ask children to take turns to choose and describe. Change things each time you do this activity. Identify more subtle features each time.

Resource 3: Key resource – involving all

## Additional resources

- Teachers of India classroom resources: <http://www.teachersofindia.org/en>
- Children talk their way into literacy' by Gordon Wells: [http://people.ucsc.edu/~gwells/Files/Papers\\_Folder/Talk-Literacy.pdf](http://people.ucsc.edu/~gwells/Files/Papers_Folder/Talk-Literacy.pdf)
- Britannica Learning, the English Channel (Practice Book-3)
- NCERT source book on assessment for class-I-V

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