

Teaching tips for *Four Corners*

Classroom management

- § To help students work more effectively in groups, assign a job to each group member (facilitator, note taker, timekeeper, grammar judge). This will help students take turns, stay on time, and use the grammar correctly.
- § When students are having group conversations, monitor from a distance. It's important to pay attention and provide feedback on students' conversation skills, but if you stand too close to the groups, they will be focused on you rather than on speaking to each other.
- § To make sure students understand instructions, check comprehension by asking questions (e.g., *Are you going to find one or two expressions in the conversation? Where are you going to write these expressions?*).
- § To get students' attention while you explain the instructions, vary your technique and position in the classroom (e.g., give the instructions from the back of the classroom sometimes).
- § To prevent some students from dominating a lesson, divide your class into rows or sections. Explain that you will accept an answer from each group in turn.

Listening

- § To improve listening comprehension, have students read the questions before they do the exercise. Reading the questions before they listen will help them focus on key information.
- § To help students anticipate the order of events in a story, have them look at the pictures and guess which comes first, second, and so on.
- § Students sometimes feel overwhelmed when listening for the first time. To help students feel more confident, remind them to focus on only the key information.
- § Point out that knowing where conversations take place can help students understand what they hear more easily.

Pronunciation

- § During choral repetition, it is difficult to hear if students are using the correct pronunciation. It is important to interrupt the choral drill occasionally and do individual drilling (ask individual students to repeat the words or sentences).
- § To help students learn to sound more like native speakers, have them pay attention to where speakers pause between words in longer conversations. Have them mark pauses with a slash (/).
- § To help students notice stress, say the sentences and really exaggerate stressed words. Or, demonstrate stressing different words in the sentence so students can see how the stress can change the meaning.
- § Reducing vowel sounds helps students use word stress correctly and makes their speech sound more natural. When teaching new vocabulary, have students underline stressed syllables, and point out the schwa sound in unstressed syllables.
- § Encourage students to keep a log of stress patterns.

Reading

- § Explain that a *topic* is a subject that you write or talk about. In a reading passage, each paragraph usually has a different topic. Often, the paragraph topic is expressed in a *topic sentence*, usually the first sentence of the paragraph.
- § When students read material such as posters, ads, and brochures, encourage them to use the pictures, captions, maps, and other visual information to locate information. Sometimes information is not presented in a linear way.
- § Having students think of possible titles for reading passages encourages them to think about the main idea and improves reading comprehension.
- § Encourage students to reread a passage quickly with keywords from a question in mind. This skill is called *scanning for information*.
- § Encourage students to use the sentences around a new word in a reading passage to guess the meaning of the word.
- § To help students follow connections between ideas in a reading passage, have them pay attention to repeated words and pronouns. Point out that they can use pronouns to follow connections between ideas. For example, *my family and I* and *we* may refer to the same thing.

Speaking

- § When you ask a question that requires some thought, give students a minute to think about it silently before you put them in pairs or groups or call on them individually.
- § When students have prepared to say something more than two or three sentences long, allowing them to tell their stories a second time can help build fluency and make their preparation time worthwhile. You can follow this procedure to create new groups: After they have shared their stories in a group of four, give each group member a number from 1 to 4. Tell them to form new groups of all 1s, 2s, 3s, etc.
- § To give students more speaking time in the classroom, have them practice conversations a few times with different partners.
- § If your students tend to speak too quietly when they perform role plays or conversations for the class, have them stand on opposite sides of the room to say their lines.
- § Students will sound more fluent if they connect their ideas as they speak. Encourage students to use *and* when adding similar information, and *but* when adding different information.

Vocabulary

- § To help build vocabulary, have students keep a vocabulary log and list new words with definitions and forms (noun, verb, adjective, adverb). Encourage students to write sentences using the new words.
- § Throughout the semester, write each new vocabulary word that comes up on an index card. Once or twice a week, choose five or six of the words to review with the class.
- § Explain that words that go together are called *collocations*. Students will remember vocabulary better if they practice collocations (*ride a bicycle / bike / motorcycle; take the train / bus / subway / taxi; drive a car*).
- § Have students notice the endings for different parts of speech. For example, adjectives often end in *-ous*, *-ful*, *-ic*, and *-ing*.
- § To expand vocabulary, have students generate lists of words in the same word families as some of the words (e.g., *pollution* [n.], *pollute* [v.], *polluted* [adj.])

Writing

- § Talking about a topic first can help students prepare to write.
- § Encourage students to keep a journal where they can do pre-writing activities. Tell them not to worry about grammar or spelling. The point is to get their ideas down on paper.
- § To encourage coherence in writing, have students take notice of transition words or phrases and encourage them to use them in their own writing.
- § Encourage students to think about an audience, or possible readers other than the teacher, when they write. Thinking about an audience encourages students to write in different styles and to come up with fresh ideas.
- § For activities in which you want all of the students to see each other's work, set up a gallery. Have students display their paragraphs, pictures, etc. around the room. Then have the class walk around the room looking at the work.