

## TIPS FROM OUR TUTORS

### **Wait Time**

Remember to wait 6 or 7 seconds after asking your student a question to allow the student to process. Wait time is important. Processing needs to happen.

### **Music Makes the World Go 'Round**

Sharon brought in the lyrics to some popular songs and she and her student, Winnie, went over them together. Then Winnie (and her children) could sing with the radio at home for practice. Sounds like fun!

Clair also uses music with the student and feels that listening and singing along are beneficial tools to enhance listening and pronunciation skills. It has the added benefit of reducing stress and reducing anxiety that the learner may be experiencing.

### **Bag (Box) of Tricks**

Faye used "portrait" bags with her student to get to know each other and practice vocabulary and sentences. Faye brought a golf ball, a patch from Point Pelee, a song book, a book pin and a pack of seeds, all representing things she likes to do: golfing, watching birds, singing, etc. The next session was devoted to the things brought in a portrait bag by her student.

Pat suggests bringing a box of everyday, small items gathered from around the house to your sessions. At the end of the lesson, ask the student to reach in and pull out an object. Then ask the student to discuss it, "What is it? What would you do with it? Etc."

### **The Student Becomes the Teacher**

In order to increase a student's motivation to do more work outside class, one tutor gave her Chinese student a homework assignment to plan a lesson teaching her, (the tutor), Chinese or something about China. About 15 minutes was spent on her lesson. The student responded positively and the tutor learned something as well.

### **Post It**

Encourage your student to use Post-It notes to label things in his/her house. This is a great way to reinforce vocabulary.

### **Stories from Korea**

For tutors with South Korean students, Nancy suggests books by Sook Nyul Choi. They should be read in the following order: *Year of Impossible Goodbyes*, *Echoes of the White Giraffe*, and *Gathering of Pearls*. Reading books by authors from the country of the student's origin offers encouragement and familiarity.

### **Emergency Situations**

Recalling her own “learning” experiences, tutor, Vesta, felt that her student would benefit from the same lessons, specifically, the meaning of a tornado siren. This and other emergency signals/warnings are important lessons for our students.

### **Telephone Skills**

In addition to regular sessions, Roberta telephones her student twice a week to practice conversation skills.

### **Happy Holidays!**

Tutors may find it helpful to share holiday traditions with students. It is a good way to enhance conversation skills, pronunciation, etc. and allows students to share things they are familiar with.

### **Creating Flashcards**

Lynn suggests an easy way to create flash cards: If you use the address label format in your word processor, you can create labels with words and definitions separately and create flash cards with 3x5 cards. With clip art readily available, you could do the same thing with pictures and vocabulary.

### **Sharing Experiences**

After passing the citizenship exam, Pat asked her student to describe what the event was like and what happened. It gave the student the opportunity to share the experience and practice speaking skills.

### **Repeat After Me**

Use an old fashioned tape recorder or smart phone to record your student’s reading. This is a good way to practice inflection, intonation and pronunciation. Or try Echo Reading, (See *Echo Reading* in your LitStart).

### **All in the Family**

Create a family tree to help generate conversation. Write sentences and eventually stories from it.

### **Reading Biographies**

Jenny worked with her library’s Youth Room librarian to find biographies at her student’s reading level. Oral reading and discussion of the material helps increase her comprehension and vocabulary. Biographies are an excellent choice for students of all levels.

## **Plug In To The T.V.**

Some ESL students find watching shopping channels, cooking shows and children's shows like Sesame Street to be very helpful in learning the English language. It makes sense: they use visual examples, descriptive language and acting out to get their message across!

Kristin's student, Sena, says *Modern Family* is a popular television program in South Korea. Sena had an English class there, where the students would watch an episode and discuss it in English afterward. Programs that were used for this purpose showed American family life and were not boring to watch over and over again. (Other recommended series were: *Everybody Loves Raymond*, *Friends*, *Desperate Housewives*, and *Gilmore Girls*.)

Sena watches the show in English at home, and then downloads the dialogue onto her phone and Kindle.

<http://modern-family.hypnoweb.net/episodes/saison-1.192.3/>

Choose left menu "Saison 1" -> (subject) "pilot" -> "Script VO" (It appears to be a French website, but if you follow directions, English dialogue comes up!)

The student bought the first season on disc to watch whenever she wanted.

During their lessons, Sena reads the dialogue to Kristin, as Kristin reads along on the Kindle. Kristin helps Sena with words and understanding American culture and innuendo. Then the Sena watches the episode again at home and understands and enjoys it!

## **Print Concept**

Your student's print concept might be different than yours. Some languages are meant to be read right to left or up and down. Be sure to discuss this with your student if you think it might be an issue. Use of a pointer in might be helpful for reading in such cases.

## **Journaling**

One tutor gave her student a journal to use for homework each week. The student took it home and wrote a paragraph or two on a page about an experience here in the United States. At the end, the student noted how long it took her to write. At the lesson, they corrected spelling, vocabulary choice and grammar. The student then copied it over and mailed it to her father in their home country. He used to be the only one to read and speak English in the family and now could see how well is daughter was doing! (See *LitStart* for additional journaling ideas.)

## **Fieldtrips**

Field trips help students gain knowledge about daily living. The supermarket, post office, dry cleaners, etc. can help students learn about fulfilling daily needs and offer opportunities for discussion. (Remember: Students and tutors must provide their own transportation to tutoring sessions and fieldtrips!)

## **New Language, New Country**

A tutor purchased a sticker book map of the United States and a book of fun facts about the states. She says, "We started with Michigan and do one new state every session." Her student is learning about capitals, trees, flowers, state birds, insects, cities, rivers, etc.

## **Authentic Listening Practice**

Many of our ESL students need practice hearing and interpreting the English language. A great way to give them that experience (while also giving them the opportunity to hear a variety of people speaking) is by using National Public Radio's *This I Believe* series. This series features the unique voices of individuals from all walks of life who share their personal philosophies and core values that guide their daily lives. Using these stories provides *authentic* listening practice for students. Here is one way tutors can incorporate this practical experience into their lessons:

- Go to <http://www.npr.org/series/4538138/this-i-believe>
- Choose a story.
- Print it. (Or read it directly from the website.)
- Read it with your student.
- Discuss vocabulary and content to ensure comprehension.
- Listen to the story online as you follow along on the printed version.

## **Keeping it Local**

The free local weekly papers are excellent tools for students to get involved and informed in their community.

## **Tongue Twisters**

Carol suggests using tongue twisters as a fun way for students to practice making difficult sounds, or sounds they are not used to making in their own languages. (You can find many examples by simply searching "tongue twisters" on your computer.)

## **Words with Friends**

One tutor reports: I've had great success using the board game *Words with Friends* with my student. She gained confidence and now wants to buy the game to play with her family. We don't keep score--we just spell and then keep a log of our words. We also use the word in a sentence as part of our turn. (You could also use *Scrabble* titles!)

## **Virtual Tutoring**

Several tutors have reported using both Skype and FaceTime to stay in touch and practice with their students when one of them is away. Keeping their tutoring appointments, even when they are away from home, provides the continuity and consistency that students need to maintain and increase their skill levels.

## **Happily Ever After**

Cherie loaned her student her copy of *Ever After: A Cinderella Story*, along with the following fun assignment. When they met, they had a great time discussing the movie, the story and the vocabulary! Here is the assignment:

Watch the movie *Ever After: A Cinderella Story* on DVD. It might help to watch it in 15-20 minute segments. To help with comprehension, turn on the English subtitles.

## **Two Minute Talk**

Millie's ESL student, Heajung, needs practice using her English skills. Each week Millie gives her a "Two Minute Talk" assignment. Here is how it works: Millie gives Haejung a topic to think about, and then next time they meet, Haejung needs to be able to talk about it for at least two minutes. She always tries to find something her student is interested in and will be able to use in future conversations. Some of their past topics have included: *Why do you like to travel?*, *Why do you enjoy driving your new car?* and *Nice things about the month of May*. Millie is considering having her write her ideas down next time in order to give her practice in that area too. The possibilities are endless!

## **Crossword Puzzles**

Pat likes to use puzzles to reinforce and review vocabulary with her student. She records a list of words that her student struggles with each week, it could be a word he has trouble pronouncing or is unsure of the meaning. Then she goes to [puzzlemaker.com](http://puzzlemaker.com) and selects the "criss cross puzzle." Separately, she makes a list of the words with a brief definition. She tries to use words they have used before in the definitions. When the puzzle is complete, she prints it. She then hand-prints the list of words (all mixed up, not in order they come out in the puzzle), along the side. This way her student is not overwhelmed by the task. He loves the puzzles!

## **Stone Soup**

Frances' student is improving her English vocabulary by reading the book, *Stone Soup*. Frances tells us that the sentences in the book contain words which are very descriptive, which provide opportunities for her student to learn many new words. They write down the definitions, review them, play a matching game, use new words in their own sentences, then her student re-reads the story with more comprehension

## **Comics**

Comics from the newspaper are good conversation starters. They are short and can lead to a story starter for the student to write about. They can be cut apart, mixed up and put back together for sequencing activities. Or, the captions can be covered and the student can make up the wording.

## **Idioms**

*Amelia Bedelia*, a children's book series, is an example of a humorous way to talk about idioms, (i.e. "draw the curtain"). This is 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading level.

### **Using YouTube**

YouTube is available as an aid to illustrate a particular situation. Start with the student's concerns and interests, like learning to pump gas for example, and go to YouTube for demonstrations and explanations.

### **Keep Asking**

It is very important to ask students if they understand what they read and/or what you are saying. Ask questions in many different ways, having the student explain back to you, so the understanding is clear. (See *Questioning Techniques* in *LitStart*.)

### **Pop in a DVD**

Have your student check out a DVD from the children's section of the library, (i.e. American Presidents, baseball, etc.). At your next session, ask your student for a summary, ask questions and discuss.

### **Letter of the Week**

Ask your student to find and bring in words that start with a specific letter for the next week.

### **Let's Talk!**

Encourage your student to join a conversation group. This is a great way to practice speaking in a comfortable and casual setting. OLC has a conversation group every Thursday from 10:00 – 12:00. Students can come alone or with their tutors.

### **Current Events**

*VoiceofAmerica.com* streams international news online. A caption of what is said shows so the student can see and hear at the same time. Students can tap into news from their own countries.

### **Question Box**

Kristin shares that one of her student, Claire's, favorite activities during their tutoring sessions is the "question box". She writes five questions on strips of paper. Claire draws them out, one at a time, and answers the questions. The trick is to avoid "yes/no" questions or at least follow them up with "why or why not". It makes for some good conversation and insight to both of their cultures. Some of the questions that she has used include:

- Do you think libraries will be around in 20 – 30 years? Why or why not?
- Tell me a little about the oldest person you have known. How old was he or she?
- If you had guests come visit from Korea, what three places in Michigan would you choose to show them and why?
- Do you watch television news? Why or why not?
- June is a popular month for weddings. Tell me about your wedding.

### **Staying on Track**

Tutor Faith Winn and her student, Cecillia, really enjoy their meetings together. To ensure that they are focused, on track and meeting their goals, Faith says they periodically "...review, discuss and solidify our going-forward strategy. We write a summary of our meetings to discuss/ verify what we heard from each other."

### **Pure Michigan**

Su's student, Yunmi, is having a wonderful time exploring Michigan. To enhance her learning and enjoyment of the places she is visiting, Su will assign Yunmi an episode from *Under the Radar Michigan*, ([www.utrmichigan.com](http://www.utrmichigan.com)), to watch. This website has episodes from the PBS series that features particular Michigan cities and the people, places and things that make them great. She then has to report back at least three things that she has learned.

Another time Su used the *Anthony Bourdain, Parts Unknown* show on Korean cooking. They watched it together and then Yunmi explained what was going on in the episode. She became very animated and excited as she educated Su on what was happening!