

ESL/Special Education Teaching Strategies

ESL Strategies-

Hangman:

This game can be used to practice spelling and vocabulary. Instead of playing the typical “hangman”, try drawing a shape or cartoon as a “hangman” may be too sensitive to students. Students can play in pairs or as a class.

How to use:

1. Pair students in groups of 2-6.
2. Give each group a white board or chalk board.
3. Have students take turns drawing from a bowl of vocabulary words.
4. The other students have to guess letters of the word.
5. Each wrong guess of a letter, a piece of the cartoon or shape gets erased.
6. When the whole word is spelled or the group guesses the vocabulary word, they win!

When to use:

- Reviewing for a test or quiz
- Reviewing key vocabulary words
- After teaching a lesson with new vocabulary words
- Before beginning a lesson to assess prior knowledge
- When a unit is complete to review concepts/terms

Variations:

Mystery Sentence: Students will guess letters to a complete sentence or definition rather than a single word. Teacher may choose to allow “hints” for students in order to better guess the definition or sentence.

Competition: Each group is guessing the same word; whichever group guesses the word/phrase the fastest wins!

Entire Class: Teacher will use the black board, the entire class will take turns guessing letters, teacher will play on black board so all students can see the word/phrase and what letters have been used.

Word Tennis:

This game can be used to practice vocabulary and encourage students to think outside the box. This game can be tailored to any theme or subject.

How to use:

1. Write a category on the board (countries, vegetables, animals, body parts, etc).
2. Split class into two teams.
3. Each team has to say a word in the category, one after another (this should be fast paced). A timer should be used to ensure no student takes too long in responding.
4. If someone says a word that does not fit into the category or repeats an answer already said, the other team gets a point.
5. Play with a new category after each point.

When to use:

- Reviewing for a test or quiz
- After teaching a lesson with new vocabulary words
- Before beginning a lesson to assess prior knowledge
- To relate prior knowledge to a new topic
- As a warm-up to review lesson from prior class

Variations:

Vocabulary Volleyball: This can be used for advanced students. Make a net with chairs/tables in the middle, instead of timing the responses the students will hit a beach ball over the net with each word they say. They lose points if the ball touches the floor or repeats a word.

Scatter-gories: The teacher will give a list of categories and student will write down words that go with each category. Students can play in two groups or smaller groups. If both teams write down the same word, neither gets a point.

ABC: On the board the teacher will write the alphabet, each letter can only be used once for each category. Teacher will cross off letters as they are used.

Card Sort:

Students sort cards with terms and concepts into categories based on meaning. This strategy gives opportunity for students to discuss and debate why they chose the sorting they chose.

How to use:

1. Select with concepts or terms the students will learn.

2. Put students into pairs or small groups.
3. Have the students sort cards into groups they think are meaningful.
4. Groups may discuss and debate where and why each concept/term belongs.
5. Ask each group to discuss why they sorted the cards the way they did.

When to use:

- Before beginning a lesson to test prior knowledge
- After introducing new vocabulary
- After learning about categories and classification
- When a unit is complete to review
- After learning the proper way to discuss and debate topics that may be controversial

Variations:

Concept Sort: Ask students to sort the cards various times, each time into new categories with different connections. Have students write down the name of each category and place on top of each pile.

Story Sort: Before reading a story, have each student sort cards into groups like: character, setting, problem, and solution. After reading the story the students can adjust their terms into the correct category.

Wild Card: Students come up with terms they learned from the past lesson and write it on a piece of paper. Each group draws a word out of a bowl and must place that word into a category they already have. Students must explain why they chose that category.

Special Education Strategies-

Non-Verbal Signals:

This may be used as a form of communication between student and teacher. Signals allow the teacher to immediately know the students needs, rather than stopping to respond to general raised hands.

How to use:

1. Determine non-verbal signals that may be used in the classroom that are not distracting to other students.
2. Create a sign poster that displays examples of the signal as well as what it should be used for. Display this sign in the classroom for all students to look at as needed.
3. Teach non-verbal signals at the beginning of the school year and review them frequently.

When to use:

- Communicate physical needs like restroom, drink of water, hungry
- Allow students who are non-verbal or have a hard time communicating to communicate easily with the teacher.
- Students need assistance with assignment
- During quiet time in class
- During nap time, as not to disturb/wake other students

Variations:

Teacher Signals: This is a less intrusive way to get students back on track to what they should be doing. Signaling to students rather than an oral request may allow students to respond more readily. This also prevents students from becoming embarrassed in front of the class.

Attention Signal: An attention signal may be the most powerful form of non-verbal communication. This will get the attention of the entire class without shouting at or to the class.

Signal Lessons: Apply non-verbal signals to lessons that are being taught to help students memorize and better comprehend information being taught.

Affirmations:

This can be used to create a positive and supportive environment by teaching students to support one another. Used consistently, affirmations can change moods and actions.

How to use:

1. Choose an affirmation or set of affirmations that you would like to use in the classroom.
2. Teach the students what the affirmations are and what they sound and look like.
3. Establish guidelines on how these affirmations can be earned.
4. Target and acknowledge the desired behavior. Say out loud exactly what they did so other students will see the correct behavior.
5. Lead the class in giving affirmation to students who have completed/displayed proper behavior.

When to use:

- Increase desired behavior
- Acknowledge a desired behavior
- Create an atmosphere of respect among students
- Teach others to recognize proper behavior

- Reduce bad behavior

Variations:

Written Affirmations: Place an affirmation board in a prominent place in the classroom. Post written affirmations for the students and parents to view. Students may also add positive notes to the affirmation board.

Positive Note Home: Send home a positive note on a card or paper with a special logo like "Good News from School".

Phone Call: Make a fake phone call to a famous person telling him/her about the positive behavior in the classroom.

Guided Notes:

This is a way to engage students while teaching a lesson and allows them to look focus on what you are saying rather than writing every word down.

How to use:

1. Decide what is most important for the students to understand in the lesson.
2. Create a set of notes that contain essential information. Underline/highlight key concepts/facts/information. Replace those concepts with blanks for students to fill in.
3. Explain the hand out to the students.
4. Review the correct answers as the presentation is in progress and encourage questions.

When to use:

- Provide framework that students can reflect back on
- Keep students focused and engaged
- After a lecture to serve as a review
- Help you monitor student comprehension
- Serve as a review document for quizzes/tests

Variations:

Student-Created Guided Notes: Students will be assigned a section from text and are asked to compose a set of guided notes based on the content.

Context Clues Cloze Exercise: Teacher prepares a paragraph with missing words. The cloze tool can be used to evaluate the use of context clues.

Student Choice: Give students a template with the main points of the lesson and leave blanks for students to fill in what they believe is important information.