

HOW TO TEACH GRAMMAR: A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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Abstract. Grammar is more than just a set of rules-it's what holds a language together.

For teachers, the challenge lies in making grammar instruction meaningful, engaging, and relevant to learners' real-world communication. This guide provides a step-by-step approach to teaching grammar effectively, offering practical techniques suitable for classrooms, private lessons, or teacher training contexts.

Keywords: grammar, communication, activity, method, definition.

1. Start with Context, Not Rules

Why It Matters:

Learning grammar in isolation can feel abstract and disconnected. When students see grammar being used naturally, they're more likely to understand how and why it's used.

How to Do It:

Present a dialogue, video clip, or paragraph using the target grammar.

Ask comprehension questions first to ensure understanding of the content.

Highlight the grammar structure within the context.

Guide students to notice patterns or repeated forms.

Example Activity:

Before teaching the present continuous tense, show a video of people doing various activities. Ask, "What are they doing?" Elicit responses like "She is running," "They are playing," and so on. Only after this, introduce the structure: subject + be + verb-ing.

2. Use the Inductive Method

Why It Works:

The inductive approach helps students become active participants in the learning process.

When learners discover rules themselves, they are more likely to internalize them.

Steps:

1. Show multiple examples of a grammar structure.

2. Ask guiding questions: "What do you notice?" "What's similar in these sentences?"

3. Let students articulate the rule.

4. Confirm and refine their understanding.

Example:

Give students a list of sentences using comparatives:

My house is bigger than yours.

This book is more interesting than that one. Ask: "What happens to adjectives in these sentences?" Help students form the rule.

3. Keep Explanations Simple

Tips for Clarity:

Focus on one point at a time.

Avoid unnecessary terminology (e.g., use "-ing form" instead of "present participle")

Use examples over definitions.

Use visuals like timelines or charts to show tense usage.

Provide just enough information to get started; more details can come later.

Helpful Visual:

Use a timeline to explain the past perfect:

"I had eaten before she arrived." → Past action before another past action.

4. Provide a Balance of Controlled and Free Practice

Controlled Practice:

Builds accuracy. Helps students focus on form.

Gap-fills, Matching exercises, Multiple-choice quizzes, Sentence reordering Error correction, Free Practice:

Builds fluency. Encourages real-life use of grammar.

Role-plays (e.g., job interview using conditionals)

Storytelling (use of past tenses)

Group discussions

Writing prompts (e.g., describe your dream home using "there is/are")

Tip: Always transition from controlled to freer tasks to build confidence.

5. Correct Mistakes Gently

Why It's Important:

Over-correction can discourage learners. The goal is to promote fluency, not perfection.

Strategies:

Reformulation: Repeat the student's sentence with the correct grammar.

Elicitation: Ask the student to try again: "Can you say that another way?"

Delayed Correction: Note common errors during speaking tasks and address them afterward as a group.

When to Correct:

During grammar-focused tasks: Focus on form.

During fluency tasks: Prioritize communication, correct later.

6. Integrate Grammar with Other Language Skills

Grammar becomes more meaningful when it's part of a real task.

Ideas:

Listening: Use audio clips to introduce grammar in context.

Reading: Highlight grammar structures in a story or article.

Writing: Assign a paragraph using a particular tense or structure.

Speaking: Conduct interviews or debates using target grammar.

Example:

To teach modal verbs for advice, students read a problem letter and write responses using "should," "could," and "might."

7. Make It Fun and Memorable

Engaging Tools:

Grammar quizzes (Kahoot, Quizizz)

Online quizzes (e.g., Kahoot, Quizizz)

Interactive PowerPoints

Songs and music videos (e.g., using “If I Were a Boy” to teach conditionals)

Drama/skits to practice dialogues

Why Fun Works:

Enjoyable activities lower anxiety, increase participation, and make grammar “stick.”

8. Differentiate for Learner Needs

Not all students learn the same way. Tailor your approach by:

Providing extra practice for those who struggle.

Offering challenges for advanced learners.

Using mixed media: audio, video, kinesthetic tasks.

Adapting explanations to suit age and language level.

9. Review and Recycle Grammar Often

Why Review Matters:

One-off grammar lessons are easily forgotten. Regular recycling deepens understanding.

Review Techniques:

Warm-up games with old grammar.

“Grammar auctions” where students bid on correct/incorrect sentences.

Cumulative writing tasks that incorporate previous grammar points

10. Reflect and Improve Your Teaching

Self-Improvement Tips:

Record your lesson and reflect on what worked.

Ask students for feedback.

Observe other teachers or attend workshops.

Try new methods and tools to keep your teaching fresh

In conclusion, Teaching grammar isn’t about memorizing rules—it’s about making grammar meaningful, useful, and engaging. By using context, encouraging discovery, and balancing practice types, teachers can help students develop a solid and confident command of grammar in real communication.

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