

Teaching Tips: Student-Made Materials

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Did you ever wish you had more time to spend making handouts, visuals and other materials to use in your classes? Well, why not let your students help you? Students of all ages love to do manually oriented and creative assignments. A student who might "forget" to do Exercise 5 on page 37, will spend an hour or more drawing a map to use the next day in class.

Here are some ideas of how to use student-developed materials in class.

- 1) Have students draw maps of their neighborhoods or floorplans of their houses or bedrooms and use them in class to practice prepositions of place (*next to, in front of, etc.*) and/or "*There is/are.*"
- 2) Students can draw pictures of their family, friends or classmates to use in class for practicing descriptions or talking about other people (*My father is a doctor.*).
- 3) Ask students to bring in magazine pictures illustrating different vocabulary groups, such as foods, cars, occupations.
- 4) In groups, students can write fill-in-the-blank exercises or other types of practices to use when reviewing many different grammar points. All you have to do is check them for obvious errors before giving them to other groups to fill in.
- 5) Have students draw pictures to illustrate sentences with comparatives, superlatives, action verbs or if clauses but without including the written sentence. Exchange pictures and have other students write a description of what they see.
- 6) When practicing giving suggestions (*Why don't you...?*) or commiserating (*Oh, I'm so sorry that...?*), have students think up various humorous "problems" (*My pet elephant has a head cold.*), write them on slips of paper and exchange them. Students can then use these "problems" for the functional practice.

7) Have students write the name of a famous person on a card or bring a picture of a famous person to class. Use these materials to practice introducing (*Pedro, I'd like you to meet Michael Jackson.*) or talking about likes and dislikes (*I don't like U2 because...*).

8) When learning food vocabulary, have students bring a favorite recipe to class and share it with the others. They could also bring ingredients and make a salad or even *tostadas* in class.

9) Why bring individual clocks to class when you are teaching students to tell time? They can draw their own clocks showing their favorite hour or even make more sophisticated clocks with moving hands.

10) Students can write letters to each other and answer them. For example, the first week students write letters ordering some item and put the letters in correctly addressed envelopes. The second week these letters are given to different students who imagine they work for the company selling the item and must write a letter informing the potential buyer that the wanted item is out of stock. This letter is also put into an envelope and returned to the original author during the third week. This student must again answer the letter. If necessary, the student representing the company writes another answer the fourth week.

11) Students can write original stories and, after correction and rewriting, make copies for the entire class. Students can even include vocabulary lists and comprehension questions.

12) If your students are lucky enough to have access to a video camera they can make their own "video dramas" which can be used in class for practice. Again, students can include their own comprehension questions.

Let your students participate in their own classes. They will enjoy it and you will be surprised how well they do.