

Let's Enjoying Adult Eikaiwa Classes!

Teaching English to Adults

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Ohira JHS

So you successfully navigated the JET arrival obstacle course, landed at your BOE, all good, and they hand you your schedule. “eeeEEEEEEHHHHHHHHH???” I hear you scream, “Teaching adult classes??? H-E-E-E-L-L-L-P-P-P!!!”

Natural reaction, it was definitely mine. But you can relax. Teaching English conversation to adults has become one of the most enjoyable times of my week. Here are some tips and tricks to get you started which, by all means, are open to any and all interpretations and permutations... there are no real rules.

“*Eikaiwa*” means ‘English conversation’, so we’re really aiming for communicating in a primarily verbal medium.

You can use a textbook...

The standard set comprises:

- Student Textbook (necessary)
- Student Workbook (optional -styled more as homework)
- Teachers Handbook (vital! It has the lesson plans already done for you)
- dialogue CD’s (again optional, as scripts are printed in the books)

Most formats cover the following as standard:

- a grammar point
- individual and pair information gap tasks
- pair and group Interviewing
- matching and translation exercises
- games and activities

Some texts on the market:

- the Passport Series (travel and work/office-place language)
- Just Talk and English Firsthand (daily life and domestic conversation)
- World View (office and business related English)

My preference is a 70/30 mix of text/my own ideas and activities.

Or your own ideas...

where the only limitation has been the extent of my creativity.

Designing your curriculum:

Start with a standard self intro lesson & make desktop name cards in the first lesson (much easier if you can ask someone by name), then follow the intros with an interview game or activity.

Handy hint!

Because Japanese people naturally tend to be loud, extroverted and uninhibited, an easier, 'softly-softly' first lesson helps to build their confidence and lull them into a sense of relaxation.

Your classroom:

Is an elastic space:

Change the seating plan/room orientation. A circular format works much better than rows

Get out of the classroom!

Kominkans have kitchens! York Bennimaru (excellent results), an Izakaya (one of my students owns 'Fu' Bar in Taiwa, we held an 'ordering in a restaurant' lesson there), a Buddhist Temple, the home of a student who teaches teddy bear making, Spring Hanami party outside under the Cherry Blossom Trees.

Parties:

Christmas, Birthdays, Halloween, Easter, White Day, Valentine's Day, Hanami.

Some Ideas and Activities I've used:

(forgive any lack of originality you may encounter here, I'm not reinventing the wheel...)

The Sugoroku Game

a board game with dice and questions where players move forward or backward according to a correct or incorrect answer, good for reviewing

Mystery Box

take item/card from a box, and then explain it, write about it, guess what it is, etc.

Pictionary, Charades, Scrabble, Scattergories, Hangman

'My Treasure'

students bring in an item and describe it in various ways; why is it special, etc.

Magazine/Newspaper Scavenger Hunts

Let's Write a Postcard

We made our own postcards in class based on our 'favourite place in Japan', and decorated them with magazine cuttings and marker pens. I had them post them all to my mum in Australia and she replied back to them all - let's enjoying a bit of cultural exchange

Creative Writing

short stories/poems/etc.

X-words/Find-a-words/word scrambles

puzzlemaker.com

Card games

Go Fish is still good with adults and a grammar point

Skit-making

pairs or groups of 3+ write skits based on a topic or situation, eg 'you are at a swimming pool', and create 1-5min skits which they then present to the class

Writing a journal/diary

what is typically written in a diary and why? Cover things like the date, your emotions, where you are writing it, the topics you write about in a diary

Single Topic Lessons

eg 'Chocolate' (history of, types of, tasting of, a x-word puzzle, etc.)

International versions of an occasion

eg Valentine's Day - how do other languages say 'I love you'? and celebrate this day?

Weddings (a wedding in your home country, or any other country/ies compared to a Japanese wedding -outline differences in ceremony, dress, religious denominations)

Use the TV

a movie, a TV show (a sitcom like *Friends* which uses simplistic language), or a series of ads (with a quiz; what are the products/prices/sizes/colours? Is there a J-equivalent?)

Recycling

what are the English names for everything (paper, plastic, carton, aluminium can etc), what days is each collected on etc.

Japanese Culture lessons in English

Craft Activities

X'mas cards & decorations, Easter Eggs, teddy bear making

What time is it now?

worksheet explaining 1/4 past, 1/2 past, 1/4 to and o'clock etc.

Board Games

great as a review as you would use with school kids. Adults still like them!

Phonics, Verbs, Nouns, basic grammatical structures

I tend to lift these kinds of lessons straight from my textbooks, and I usually do them when I see a gap in the students' knowledge

The Big Class Project

A 3-lesson 'major project'. Examples: a map of Ohira Village (basically a tourist guide), a 4-panelled poster of 'the seasons in Ohira', and a book of short stories.

Handy hint!

Institute a tea break in your lesson. Encourages the verbal communication

Kominkan Year 2 Program

► *Here's part of the program I made up for my class last year, with the lesson ideas expanded. The bold is the program I gave to my students, the additional explanation is for you...*

1. **Let's meet and introduce each other**
(as outlined above)
2. **Holidays & Spring Vacation! How was yours? Mine was...**
I went to Bali, so I gave them a presentation of my trip. Photos, sarongs, currency, a *Gamalan* music CD (traditional Balinese music), then I gave them a worksheet on travel with the GP "Have you ever..." I also taught them some basic *Bahasa Indonesian* greetings
3. **What...?**
This was the first in a 5 lesson series to give them a strong grounding in the basics. I've attached one of the plans to give you an idea. Depending on your students' level, you might be able to condense all 5 into 1 lesson, but I have tried that before and found it to be too much. I tried to use a different theme for each of the lessons here, with a corresponding activity
4. **When...?**
Following the theme of the above lesson...
5. **Where...?**
6. **How...?**
7. **Why...?**
8. **At the supermarket...Shopping**
9. **Cooking # 1.**
Shepherd's Pie in a nabe (always good to fuse a Western dish with a J-utensil!)
10. **Greetings and Emotions**
11. **My family and the Family Tree**

12. **Let's watch a movie in English**
13. **At the airport...traveling and overseas**
14. **Word Week**
Using the GP "Do you ever...". I lifted this straight from a textbook, which was a set of "Do you ever..." questions. They had to answer (firstly) on their own, (secondly) with a partner, and (finally) with a 3rd partner. Answer patterns were "Yes I do/No I don't"
15. **Respect For The Aged Day...Birthdays**
Discussion of what it is, how it's celebrated, what it means to them. How birthdays are celebrated in Japan & Australia (Kids/Adults, types of presents etc)...
16. **Cooking # 2**
Chilli Bean and Sweet Potato Soup. Very tasty!
17. **Japanese Culture Lesson...The Furusata Festival**
This was basically an open forum discussion about the Furusata Festival in Ohira
18. **At the Doctor**
19. **Let's Write a Journal!**
Analyzing keeping a diary/journal. We workshopped the construction of an entry (date, place, emotions, topics) and then they wrote their own
20. **English newspapers and magazines**
I gave them all trashy gossip mags from home & a quiz; what is the name of the mag? What are the recipes? They kept the mags
21. **Weddings**
22. **Speaking on the Telephone**
23. **Creative Writing 1,2 and 3**
(as outlined above)
24. **Christmas Lesson**
Made 3D X'mas Tree decorations, had X-word and find-a-word puzzles, and then planned the party for the next week
25. **Christmas Party**
26. **Holidays and New Year Vacation! How was yours? Mine was...**
A presentation of my X'mas trip home. Showed photos, described X'mas and New Year's Festivities, the weather (seasons are opposite Down Under)...

27. **Aboriginal Australia**
Presentation of the culture of Native Australians; the flag, art, craft items, food, language, photos etc. Activity: we made paper boomerangs
28. **Word Week**
Looked at past tense verbs, under the theme of 'What did you do in Matt's vacation?'. I watched/went to/photographed/ate/washed/opened etc.
29. **Speech Writing**
30. **Final class...PARTY!**
Theme: SPRING!

(here's an example of my lesson plans)

Lesson 2... Let's look at *WHAT!!!*

What is "*what*"?

What is always used in a question. We use *what* when we are asking about someone, or something ~

<i>What</i>	are you	eating/drinking/watching?
<i>What</i>	did you	eat/drink/watch?
<i>What</i>	can you	play/see/do?
<i>What</i>	do you	like/think/want?
<i>What</i>	does it	smell like?
		taste like?
		sound like?
		feel like?
		look like?

Today's Activity:

Let's look at *what*! First, take a card from the box, and then answer these questions. Then we will all try to guess *what* it is!

1. *What* colour is it?
2. *What* shape is it?
3. *What* can it do?
4. *What* do you use it for?
5. *What* does it smell like?
6. *What* does it taste like?
7. *What* does it sound like?
8. *What* does it feel like?
9. *What* does it look like?
10. *What* do you think of it? (I love it...I like it...I dislike it...I hate it...)

Lesson Planning

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1) *Aims and objectives of lesson planning*

For ALT purposes, lesson planning has two main parts - long and short term. The long-term planning covers all the main topic areas and if you're lucky it will already be in place, either left behind by your wonderful predecessor or on the contents page of your text book. If you don't have one, read the curriculum planning section of this book as once this is in place you are ready to start on the short term planning - the individual lessons themselves.

If you've never taught before, you may be wondering if you even need to plan. Obviously, that's up to you, but I can think of 5 really good reasons to put a bit of thought into what you will do before you stand in front of 40 new people who can make your life heaven or hell....

- a) ***(Most importantly) So students actually learn something useful.*** Let's be honest, a lot of your students will use very little English after they graduate high school so why not plan to teach them things which are useful for the times when they do need it - e.g. entrance exams, making foreign friends, travelling abroad.
- b) ***So you don't repeat the same lesson/subject matter.*** Without any long term planning in place you could quite easily just stand in front of a class and regurgitate what you did 3 months ago. I'm not sure which would be worse - if the students/JTE notice and you have to think of something else on the spot, or if they don't notice, showing how little they learned the first time you taught it!
- c) ***So you can write tests.*** Many of us at least have to help with writing tests - and boy do they have them often here! You may be lucky enough to do it in tandem with a JTE but they may just say, "Please write the oral part of the exam" (mine do) so having a long term plan in place and lesson plans to look back on will be a life saver. After all, whatever we may think of the system, that's how things work here - they learn for the tests.
- d) ***So you don't run out of lesson ideas.*** How many times have we seen messages on MJETs saying, "Help! I have a lesson in an hour, what can I do?" If you have already planned your lesson the week before and given a copy to the JTE to check, there should be no problem. If your JTE rejects your plan at the last minute and asks you to come up with something else, this is a different issue and needs to be discussed with them. Even if you don't know what kids you'll be teaching (if you travel between schools), make some basic plans and keep them with you for emergencies.
- e) ***So you don't look like an idiot.*** Doing a lesson off the cuff may work once in

a while if you are desperate, but the students will soon realise that there is no flow to your lessons and the JTE will be totally frustrated at not knowing what is going on. You can end up looking like a total idiot standing in front of the class saying, “Errr, so what did we do last time?” and, “Who knows how to play bingo?” again. Kids aren’t stupid. They’ll soon pick up that you don’t know what you’re doing and eat you alive.

2) Flow

The flow and pace of your lesson will decide whether it sinks or swims. Too slow and the students will switch off, too fast and they just won’t get it and you’ll have to do it again. When thinking of the flow of your lesson, try to take the following into consideration.

- a) **Warm-ups.** Don’t waste your first ten minutes! Most warm up games can be adapted to fit the topic you are studying for the rest of the lesson, or recap on the previous one. Make it interesting but relevant too. I often use homework from the previous lesson, encouraging students to read out what they have written and finding a way to make it into a quiz (e.g. - self-introductions/descriptions = “guess who it is”, key vocabulary = bingo/ karuta/ group snap).
- b) **Timing.** Often my teachers give me lesson plans which seem to cover the whole text book and then are amazed when we don’t get it finished. Be realistic with your timings. Always plan a little too much but know what you can lose or postpone if need be. Also don’t waste your time planning loads of cool things to do for the bell to ring in the middle. Practice things first if you really don’t know but usually your first class will be the experiment. If you’re lucky enough to teach the same lesson a few times you can learn by this. Be aware of how your JTE can affect timings between classes by, for example, deciding to translate everything you just said, or alternatively saying it all in Japanese before you have a chance to give the English. Also, be realistic about how long explanations take - they can be longer than the activities sometimes!
- c) **Lay out.** The classic lesson plan layout is like a menu “starter - main - round-up (dessert)”. However, I find that a lesson with many short activities centred on the same topic is a much better way to keep students’ minds on the task at hand. Students have notoriously short attention spans so use this to your advantage. It will help relieve boredom in both the students and you.
- d) **Know your audience.** This is where your self-introduction lesson comes in handy as it is a way to see which the quiet classes are, who is the loudmouth, etc. Try to add this into your planning. Text-books often want students to make up their own sentences on the spot and read them out. At least in early lessons, most of my students would chew their own arm off rather than do that so find something they can and will do, e.g. writing frames, cloze exercises (put the word in the gap), etc. to gain their confidence. Reading out work prepared in this way will also build their confidence in what they can and can’t do.

- e) **Learning styles** - everyone learns in different ways but we can be broadly grouped together as readers, writers, listeners, doers/speakers or watchers, and the style we use can vary from situation to situation. Even in oral communication lessons try to incorporate all these styles into your lesson plans, into each activity if possible, to ensure you reach the maximum audience. Even look at different ways of giving the answers to any quiz questions or homework, (e.g. - students write on the board/ read out/ role play/ listen to teachers or each other, etc.). This, too, should help to limit student (and teacher) boredom.

3) Making a script

How much you actually write in your plan can depend on you, but don't forget, the plan will be read by two and they both need to be able to understand it. I find I have to write things out fully as they may be perfectly clear in *my* head...

Find a standard blank that fits for you but realise that you may have to change this for different teachers/ classes and over time. I recently totally changed my lesson plan blank as the new teachers I was teaching with wanted clearly laid out roles for JTE and ALT so they knew what to do. My previous teachers had been much more laid back and happy to decide who did what on the spot. Find out what works for them and be prepared to keep changing!

For actual dialogues to be had in the classroom I would always write a script. Don't assume you know what your JTE or pupils will say. Those little off the cuff conversations they show you on the promotional video are great if you have the time to discuss with your JTE before hand exactly what you will say and what replies you need to get, otherwise you both end up looking like idiots. ("No, you were supposed to say...") Also be aware of what your JTE can pronounce and is willing to say.

4) Evaluation

Try to get *some* feedback from the JTE even if it's just 'that was good/ok/rubbish' when you are walking out of the lesson. I find most of my teachers don't have time to review properly but pick up on their vibes at least - are they smiling? You will see for yourself which bits worked and which didn't and then you need to be honest about teaching the lesson again. Just because you spent a whole day making up a really great activity doesn't mean you should carry on teaching it with other classes if the students (or the JTEs) don't get it.

Continually annotate your plans as you use them. Add more explanations, cross things out, maybe even rewrite them and **don't forget** to let your JTE know, with sufficient notice, what you have changed and why.

Questions to ask yourself/your JTE in your evaluation:

- Did the lesson flow well?
- Was your time scale realistic?
- Did students learn what they were supposed to? (very difficult to check except by tests)
- Was it enjoyable (for all involved)?
- Do you need to change anything for when you teach this lesson again?
- Do you need more/ different resources?
- Do you need to discuss it more thoroughly with your JTE?

5) Checklist

So, to summarise, what do you need to think about when writing a basic lesson plan? Here is a checklist of what I would say are the most important things:

- Long Term Planning - have you got an idea of what you will teach this year and how this lesson fits in? Do you know if you will have to give Xmas/ Easter/ special occasion lessons?
- Objectives - what is the purpose of your lesson? What do you want your students to learn? Include this then reviewing is easy
- Flow - do the ideas flow in a logical order?
- Timings - are they realistic? Have you rehearsed if you feel you need to?
- Roles - have you marked out roles for JTE and ALT if necessary?
- Learning styles - are you addressing as many different styles as possible, trying to use many different activities covering the same topic?
- Resources - have you listed everything you'll need - and attached all print outs, including dialogues, etc. from teachers' books?
- Extra activities - are they relevant? If you run out of time, can they be dropped, taught next time or given for homework?
- JTE - Do they understand it? (You may not get a chance to talk it through properly with them)
- Copy, copy, copy - have you made copies of all your plans and filed them - chronologically or by topic for both your own and successors' future reference (and so they are handy when you are asked to provide a lesson plan for the handbook)?

Making a Curriculum

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As an ALT, you are going to be significantly limited in your ability to implement any kind of order on the classes you teach. You are an assistant, after all, and one whose understanding of the school system where you are employed is likely rather limited. There are (seemingly random) schedule changes, different goals from school to school, class to class, and teacher to teacher. There are new teachers to work with each year. To some extent, each school will follow and use approved texts, but even here the degree to which texts are used in OC classrooms varies significantly.

However, let's get beyond this axiomatic "every situation is different" fog. Can you, or even should you, still try to create a curriculum for your classes? Despite the frustrations that will be involved, I think constructing some kind of curriculum is useful for you, for your co-teachers, and - most importantly - for the students.

In a perfect world, a curriculum might be expected to do the following things:

1. Define what students will learn and be responsible for knowing throughout the year.
2. Help teachers evaluate students, lesson by lesson and at testing points.
3. Provide a natural flow for classroom activities, following a model of some sort, such as:

Review previous material -> Introduce new material -> Practice new material ->
Summary/Questions -> Wrap-up

4. Help teachers prepare materials for lessons in advance (how far in advance is up to the teachers and their personalities), and make it frighteningly easy to re-use lessons after a year or two of preparation.

Of course, being an ALT is far from the perfect world. So, if points 1-4 seem a little too rigid to you, have no fear: running OC classes as an assistant teacher in a foreign country where you don't fully understand the culture, school system, or language will keep things from getting too predictable.

So what should you do if you want to set up a curriculum of some sort? Here are some basic steps, and a few specific comments to help you along.

Step I - Information Gathering

Without being too formal about it, gather some basic information about the school, students, teachers, and classes. For example,

- 1) How many classes are there in a year? In a semester?
- 2) When are the tests? When are the semester breaks?
- 3) Does each class have to take the same test?
- 4) Will you prepare the test?
- 5) How rigorously does the school follow the textbook?
- 6) What are the learning goals for OC class?

With the answers to these questions at hand, you can begin the next step.

Step II - Basic Layout

For this step, I am going to use an example case, based loosely on my own experience at one of the three schools I work at. This example provides these answers to the questions above:

- There are three semesters in a year, with a test at the end of each semester; there are an average of 8 OC classes each semester, since we inevitably miss a few weeks due to sports events, meetings, etc.
- Each class takes the same test, and the ALT writes and corrects the OC portion of the test.
- The text is used as a very loose guide for OC classes. We should cover the material, but the format is 100% free.
- Students are required to sit the Eiken test, and many students are motivated to do well on English college entrance interviews.

Based on this information, my basic semester layout looks like this:

Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4 - Review	Lesson 5	Lesson 6	Lesson 7	Lesson 8 - Review	TEST
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Of course, there would be three of these patterns in a single school year. It doesn't look like much yet, but even this is a lot more information than I had during my first 4 or 5 months here.

Step III - Basis

What will you base your curriculum on? If your school is absolutely strict in following the text, your answer is easy: the text. If not, you might still take a look at your text as a model. There are many ways you can choose to lay out a curriculum.

Topic-Based Curriculum

A topic-based curriculum associates learning with specific situations. This is the method many of the Japanese OC textbooks follow. There is a particular topic, such as "Going to a restaurant" or "Introductions," and the relevant grammar and vocabulary are introduced and practiced in this context.

This kind of curriculum allows for variety in lessons, perhaps providing some relief from the more rigid study of patterns and expressions in high school grammar classes. The ALT can be very useful in a topic-based class because it is relatively easy for students and JTEs to experiment with the patterns and check them with the native speaker. Additionally, while the topics in Japanese OC classes might be interesting, often the presentation in the book is really dull and even inaccurate. ("How's the climate?" one of my textbook characters asks another...) An ALT can correct, modify, and replace where necessary to keep the material fresh, accurate, and interesting.

Skills-Based Curriculum

A skills-based curriculum teaches certain skills in isolation before building on them to teach larger components. A classic example is the study of phonics. Students who are learning to read and write English might study phonic patterns first - both spelling and pronunciation. For example, the pattern "a - consonant - e" : *late, name, hate, tame, same...* Reading texts and written assignments then build on these phonic structures, and students have some basis for attacking unknown words or for guessing at spelling of words they can say but have never written

before. (Or, in the case of Japanese students, they can guess the pronunciation of words they have written a thousand times but have never spoken before.)

Choosing a method

I personally choose to use a topic-based format for my curriculum and lesson structure. This is partly a result of the way the text is laid out, and partly because I want OC classes to be completely different from the rote memorization of patterns that students have in grammar classes. Skills-based learning can be quite useful, however. For example, I've found it to be especially useful for practicing pronunciation in OC classes.

Both of these methods, as well as others, have their pluses and minuses, but if you're planning a curriculum it's probably best to use only one. Mind you, this is just the way to *organize* your lessons. Of course your lessons will sometimes wander from one methodology to another, depending on your lesson's specific goals and content. For example, an otherwise topic-based lesson might briefly morph into a skills-based lesson by focusing on a specific phonetic pattern for 10 minutes, only to return to a topic-based approach as the lesson winds down.

IV. Substance

You can now begin to flesh out your plan for the year, or at least for a semester. For the sake of this example, I am going to lay out my curriculum using a topic-based approach.

My semester plan might now look something like this:

Week	Lesson Title	Key points / notes
1	Self-intro / Introductions	My name is ~ His / Her name is ~ I'm (I am) from ~ * pronunciation: <i>I'm / He's / She's</i>
2	My Favorite (Kind of)	My favorite x is ~ My favorite kind of x is ~
3	What do you like to do? (What did you do? / What are you going to do?)	I like to ~ I usually ~ I ~ed last weekend. I am going to ~ this weekend. *pronunciation / listening: <i>I'm going to / I'm gonna</i>
4	Review	
5	How's the weather?	It's ~ Weather-related vocabulary * use of "good" or "beautiful" rather than "fine" * pronunciation: <i>rainy, dry, cloudy, gloomy...</i>
6	Directions, pt. 1	Directions-related vocabulary and expressions. <i>on the corner, about 1 block, intersection, to the end of the street...</i>
7	Directions, pt. 2	Pair information-gap activity using map and directions.
8	Review	
9	OC TEST	

Notes:

Slow is good - With a class of 40 students that I meet once a week, I have learned to expect slow progress. Regular review and summaries at the beginning and end of each lesson take time, but I find they really help students to remember.

Allow review lessons - Two years of this, and I still don't really know my class schedule more than a week in advance. Plan review lessons. Use them if there's time. Or catch up if you need to.

V. Connect The Lessons

Of course, a curriculum is only the outline. Each lesson still needs to be fleshed out and customized to suit your students, co-teachers, goals, etc. Designing an individual lesson is beyond the scope of this piece, but when you are designing your curriculum, you might give some thought to the connections between lessons.

Often, students in Japan study English in a very abstract, disconnected way. Again, I try to avoid this in the OC classes. So I usually try to have some kind of link between the topics or materials in my lessons. This doesn't need to be too developed. It can be as simple as a little review in the beginning of the new lesson, and then repeated use of last week's pattern or material.

For example, in the above curriculum, Lesson 3 uses "-ed" and "am going to ~" verb forms. Then Lesson 4 is a review class. And then Lesson 5 starts out on weather - quite a different subject. Our book presents weather using the basic "How's the weather? / It's raining" pattern. I changed this a bit and had the students practice "It's going to rain tomorrow" to build on the "am going to ~" pattern from Lesson 3. Is this too much review? I don't think so. The students still struggle to produce the basic sentence, but they have one more chance to practice it out loud.

Here are a few pointers I like to keep in mind as I consider linking up the lessons in the curriculum:

1. Always review - I'm amazed at what my students remember after hearing or saying something two or three times. And I'm equally amazed at how much they forget if there is no review.
2. Keep students active and engaged, even if it means a slower pace. The grammar classes are where they learn impossibly complex things they could never say, and will probably never hear. OC classes are for talking.
3. Adapt your English, and do it before the JTE jumps in with Japanese - even if they only understand very basic English and gestures, it's still *not* Japanese. It keeps them in "English land."

VI. Flexibility

It can be very frustrating to see all of your well-planned lessons dropped for a soft-tennis competition or because the first-years have to have their teeth checked. A curriculum won't stop these things from happening. What it will do (hopefully) is allow you to adjust to these unexpected situations effectively, making your job easier and at the same time helping you feel like the students *are* learning something in the OC classes. Even if it's slow, you will see progress and your students will learn.

Another point to mention here is: don't plan too far in advance. While it might be worthwhile to lay out a basic plan for the school year, I wouldn't start planning details for lessons 20 weeks out. More than likely, 20 weeks from now things will look very different from what you expected. The last thing you want is to be ticked off at the world because your well-planned curriculum is going to waste.

I generally plan a semester ahead, and then really flesh the lessons out 1-2 weeks in advance. For big projects - speeches, research projects, lessons that take 2 or 3 class periods - I plan a bit further out. I also usually make the OC test about 2 weeks in advance, so I'm pretty sure we will have covered the material in class.

Their flexibility

School schedules are notoriously flexible, which can be a frustration. But it can also be a boon. If you have 8 lessons planned, and nearly all of your classes have finished the lessons, but one class is a lesson or two behind, don't be afraid to ask to schedule a makeup class. Whenever I've done this, the class has been scheduled. And if even there's no space for the class, it stresses to the other teachers that you do have a plan for OC classes and they aren't just filler classes to be tossed out at the slightest hint of a festival.

OC Tests

That about does it for curriculums. One final word about OC tests. My goal with these tests is that the students pass. Or at least that the vast majority pass. English grammar study in Japan can be stultifying and excessively difficult. I want the OC classes to bring something positive to the experience of English and non-Japanese language and culture. Students who study hard and pay attention in OC class can easily get full points on my tests. That is my goal. Similarly, students who don't do so well at grammar but who do try in OC class generally pass the OC test. This is also my goal.

My classes and curriculum and tests might seem ridiculously slow and easy, but then I try having a conversation with some of the kids in the hallway and I remember it's not slow at all. It's way more appropriate to their actual English ability than yet another exercise in using the passive voice to say something that no native speaker would ever say.

Good luck and happy planning.

Internet Resources

Paula Jamieson
Shichikashuku BOE

Filed by category, the following websites are useful sources for ALTs working with students at all levels: elementary, junior high, and high school.

Clip Art:

- ✓ <http://www.aminet.or.jp/~yasu/illustrations/index.htm> - “English Conversation Illustrations” - loads of very good pictures for flashcards
- ✓ <http://school.discovery.com/clipart/>
- ✓ <http://www.school-clip-art.com>
- ✓ <http://www.google.com> - Google Image Search
- ✓ <http://www.sla.purdue.edu/fll/JapanProj/FLClipart/default.html> - “Royalty-Free Clip Art Collection for Foreign/Second Language Instruction” (page can be viewed in Japanese; has simple line drawings)

Flashcards and “Karuta Game Cards”:

- ✓ <http://www.englishrescue.com> (flashcards, powerpoint lessons, worksheets, membership cost ¥2000; is worth checking out)
- ✓ <http://www.sla.purdue.edu/fll/JapanProj/FLClipart/default.html> Royalty-Free Clip Art Collection for Foreign/Second Language Instruction (page can be viewed in Japanese; has simple line drawings)
- ✓ Alphabet Flashcards:
The following “Jan Brett” websites have alphabet cards with great illustrations.
 - http://www.janbrett.com/alphabet/cursive_alphabet_main.htm
 - http://www.janbrett.com/alphabet/alphabet_traditional_main.htm
 - http://www.janbrett.com/alphabet/flash_card_alphabet_traditional_main_page.htm
 - <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/themes/abc.shtml> - alphabet flashcards and worksheets

Games and Puzzles:

- ✓ “Puzzlemaker” - <http://www.puzzlemaker.com> (fast, easy, “design-your-own” crosswords, wordsearches, mazes)
- ✓ “Games Kids Play” - <http://www.gameskidsplay.net/index.html>
- ✓ “Boggle’s World” - <http://bogglesworld.com/wordsearches.htm> (ready to print wordsearches, are good vocabulary sources)
- ✓ “Boggle’s World” - <http://bogglesworld.com/crosswords.htm> (ready to print crosswords, have very easy clues)

Lessons Using Computers:

- ✓ <http://www.clta.net/lessons/index.html> - “Internet Activities for Foreign Language Classes” (gives great ideas for lessons that can be adapted for lower levels)

Lesson Plans:

- ✓ Karen Schrock’s Guide for Educators - <http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/>
 - Under “Subject Access” go to:
“Literature/Language Arts” or “World Languages/Regions”
- ✓ The Internet TESL Journal - <http://iteslj.org> - features lesson plans and ideas that change monthly. Great ideas that can be adapted to lower levels.
- ✓ Search tips:
 - For ESL beginner lessons, search : ESL lesson plan beginner
 - For useful internet links for lesson plans, check out teaching sites that are affiliated with school boards, schools, or university education programs.

- Be open to: Lesson plans that are designed for other languages that can be adapted to your needs.

Conversational English Lessons:

- ✓ Boggles World - <http://bogglesworld.com/survivalESL.htm> (contains lesson plans and activities with basic English needed for traveling; ** good ideas for Eikaiwa classes!)

Writing practice:

- ✓ For writing practice, find ready-to-print worksheets at Boggles World: <http://bogglesworld.com/worksheets>

Phonics - Teaching Methods, Ideas and Worksheets:

- ✓ <http://teacher.scholastic.com/reading/bestpractices/phonics.htm> - “Teaching Phonics with Wiley Blevins”; Blevins is a former teacher and phonics expert; extensive site has information for teaching phonics, plus lesson plans and activities.
- ✓ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/wordsandpictures/phonics/index.shtml> - go to “print and do” activities
- ✓ <http://www.englishraven.com/Phonics.html> - Phonics teaching guidelines and downloadable materials.

Holidays - Information on Traditions and Activity Ideas:

- ✓ <http://www.historychannel.com/> - around each holiday time, the History Channel website will usually have articles about the origin and morphing of holiday traditions. I found this particularly helpful when trying to explain Halloween and Christmas to my JTE and students.
- ✓ <http://kidsturncentral.com/holidays>

Ordering Books and Music:

- ✓ <http://www.amazon.co.jp> has English music, DVDs and books and ships for FREE anywhere in Japan if the order is ¥1500 or more.

General Sources for Teaching and Advice:

- ✓ Kathy Schrock’s Guide for Educators
<http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/>
- under “Subject Access” go to “Education Resources”
- ✓ Education Computing Services, Faculty of Education, Queen’s University
<http://educ.queensu.ca/~ecs/ecs-other.html>
- has links to other sites for: curriculum, classroom management, teaching articles, internet tutorials, students with disabilities, clipart
- ✓ <http://www.britishcouncil.org/home/learning/languageassistant.htm> - British Council Website - Information, tips, advice, and teaching ideas for language assistants.

ESL Teaching Links:

- ✓ International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language
<http://www.iatefl.org>

Online Thesaurus:

- ✓ <http://thesaurus.reference.com>

Helpful General Teaching Sites:

- ✓ <http://atozteachingstuff.com>
- ✓ <http://education-world.com>
- ✓ http://www.cln.org/subject_index.html - Community Learning Network
- ✓ <http://www.eduref.org/index.shtml> - The Educator’s Reference Desk

Classroom Management - Guidelines for Avoiding Trouble

Paula Jamieson
Shichikashuku BOE

Classroom management and discipline are not the same; classroom management is proactive while discipline is reactive. Effective classroom management involves *proactively* managing the classroom environment to support student learning, and to therefore avoid situations that require *reactive* discipline. If your classroom is properly and conscientiously managed, reactive discipline, ideally, should rarely come into play.

Reasons why students act out in class:

Many reasons why students act out in class are not intrinsic on the part of the student and are actually the result of the environment or the lesson itself. Some reasons are:

1. **The environment** - classrooms that are too hot, too cold, too bright, too dark, too loud, or next to a classroom or hallway that is too loud, all affect a student's ability to concentrate on the lesson.
2. **Time of day** - You will notice that students can be very energetic, and even loud, hyper, and distracted mid-morning, right before lunch or right before an event in the school that students are excited about. Conversely, first thing in the morning and right after lunch, students are tired, sleepy and unenthusiastic. Plan accordingly. Expecting students to sit still and quietly listen when it is last period on a Friday afternoon, right before a track meet, might not be effective and you could end up with students acting in ways that don't support your lesson.
3. **Lesson planning** - your lessons should be planned in accordance with the levels and abilities of the students. If a lesson is too challenging for a student, they may get lost, frustrated, give up and then act out. If a lesson is not challenging enough for a student, their boredom can also lead to inappropriate behaviour. In addition, routine, structure and interest should be taken into account. Lessons that are disjointed, and without structure or routine can be difficult for some students to follow. Lessons that are monotonous, and uninteresting, or that students find irrelevant to their lives and experiences can also be difficult to follow.
4. **Teaching style** - some students will take advantage of a teacher's lack of management and discipline in the classroom.

If a student acts out it does not necessarily mean that they disrespect the teacher or that they are a rude, horrible student. Note that nearly all of the above reasons are the teacher's responsibility.

In order to properly manage a class, it is the responsibility of the teacher to recognize that it could be their teaching style, their lesson, or the environment they are teaching in that is giving students a reason to act inappropriately.

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT:

Set a clear relationship with the students

You are the teacher, not the cool ALT who struts around being everybody's friend. Students want and need a professional, competent teacher who is more a good teacher than a cool friend.

Set clear expectations for behaviour and work habits and stick to your expectations!

Set expectations for behaviour that you expect with the students, and clearly explain these expectations at the start of each term, or when you start as their teacher. Be consistent and vigilant about your expectations and in your correction of inappropriate behaviour.

Correct behaviour immediately and don't let anything slide. Even simply making sure that students raise their hands to answer a question may be a behaviour that you have to consistently check. Simply put, some students have to be "conditioned" to follow expected classroom behaviour.

It is important to be in agreement with the JTE about expected classroom behaviour. In order for expectations to be followed, checking students' behaviour has to be a joint effort on the part of both the JTE and ALT and has to be consistent on both parts. If you have problems with student behaviour or questions about how to ideally handle inappropriate behaviour in class, privately discuss with your JTEs about how to manage the behaviour. You should then promptly implement the agreed solution starting with the next class.

Manage the Environment

Do your best as a teacher to make sure the classroom environment is one in which students are comfortable and able to focus. Ask yourself:

- ✓ Is the lighting sufficient? Do the blinds need to be open or closed?
- ✓ How is the temperature? Does the window need to be opened?
- ✓ Are all students able to see the board?
- ✓ Is there noise outside or next door that is distracting and can it be minimized?

Lessons - Planning for Effective Teaching and Student Involvement

- ✓ Be organized and prepared!!
- ✓ Keep activities and lessons in line with student level and ability. Lessons that are not challenging enough can lead to student boredom and acting out. Lessons that are too challenging can frustrate students, leading students to give up on understanding the lesson and then act inappropriately.
- ✓ Routine from lesson-to-lesson provides a sense of comfort and confidence in learning, and will especially help easily distracted students and students who have difficulty with the subject stay focused.
- ✓ Use a range of activities to keep kids interested. Variety in teaching can involve using variety in the resources and materials you use, incorporating different activities and games, using activities and games that encourage a variety of individual, pair and group work, and using activities that practice and test all the different skills involved in language learning - writing, listening, reading and speaking. *Note: While Japanese students are usually assigned to groups that they do all group work with for a semester, I have insisted with my JTE that we mix up the groups on occasion to give students a chance to work with other classmates. I have also had students form pairs with students other than those who are directly next to them, again for variety.*
- ✓ Be considerate of the time of day of a lesson. On a sleepy Monday morning, students may need a warm-up activity or review game to spark them into action.

Keys for great teaching and classroom management

- ✓ Smile
- ✓ It all starts with appearance - dress appropriately and professionally. Professional dress lets students know that you care about your job, that you are a professional, and that you mean business!
- ✓ Use positive body language.
 - DO:** stand up straight and use eye contact. Be positive.
 - DON'T:** cross your arms in front of your chest, look bored or look negative
- ✓ Show respect for your students - your organization and preparation show that you care about being a teacher, care about your students, and respect the importance of their education.
- ✓ Show care for your students - learn their names and try to learn things about your students such as the sports they play, their interests, or their goals for the future.
- ✓ Treat students fairly! This does not mean equally!
- ✓ Have “withitness”! This is a teaching term that basically means: know what is going on! Have eyes in the back of your head.
- ✓ Make sure students can always see you, and you can always see them - walk around the class, circulate, but don’t turn your back on the students.
- ✓ Include all of your students in your lessons - especially the quiet and shy students! Here’s a hint: When students are doing writing work that will be reviewed as a class, walk around the room and take a look at students’ work. Take note of the students that have correct answers for certain questions, and then when it is time to review as a class, ask those students for answers whether they have their hands raised or not. This way, you include all students, but don’t embarrass any students who might not have the correct answer.
- ✓ Be forthcoming with lots of praise for great work, good effort and good tries by students. With praise, focus on the student’s work rather than on the student’s abilities or qualities.

Behaviour Maintenance Tips

When speaking to students about inappropriate behaviour, single them out, use their name, and let them know that their behaviour is unacceptable, in front of other students, referring specifically to the behaviour that is inappropriate at that moment. If you speak to students as a group, you may be including students who are innocent by-standers to the “disrupters” and the by-standers may resent you for that. In addition, addressing students as a group could give them a feeling of “student group vs. teacher” and could empower them to act out further.

Show disapproval of inappropriate behaviour, rather than emotional reactions of frustration or anger. Always keep your cool.

Establishing that good behaviour is necessary for the benefit of all students and needed for all students to learn is a good way to let the “disrupters” know that their behaviour is negatively affecting their classmates and friends, and this can be highly effective as it could guilt them into behaving. Students can be a lot more willing to behave in accordance with your expectations if they see it as benefiting their classmates, more so than the teacher.

Keep in mind that stopping a class to address a student’s behaviour is itself a distraction. There are many small movements the teacher can make to stop behaviour without disrupting your class. Walk around the room and stand next to the “disrupter’s” desk. Make steady eye contact. If they are tapping a pen, quietly take the pen out of their hand and lay it on the desk (they will get the hint that they are being noisy). If they are writing notes or throwing something around, take it away temporarily, making sure you let them know you will give it back at the end of class.

Fully support your JTE in and out of the classroom. Disagreement or confusion in front of students could lead to students doubting your teamwork and respect for each other.

Classroom Management

Matthew Basey
Sendai Minami SHS/Izumi Shoryo SHS

“As for team-teaching, the Japanese teacher is responsible for discipline during the class period, and the homeroom teacher is responsible for the class in general. Discipline is not the ALT’s responsibility.”

JET Programme General Information Handbook

Classroom management is crucial to maintaining an ordered, effective class. Every teacher has their own style and way of managing the classroom, but I think there are some general principles I like to keep in mind when thinking about classroom management.

Be proactive

I think the best thing to do is to try to think of ways to solve any problems with discipline before they arise. A teacher must plan the lesson and be organized and enthusiastic. The students will respond to the teacher -if he/she doesn’t seem organized or in control it will show and the students will react to it. It is much easier to control the classroom if you are thoroughly prepared for the class with the necessary materials and handouts. Being prepared and walking into the classroom with a confident, but relaxed, authority will set the tone of the class immediately, and it will reflect back on the students and make classroom management much easier. If you walk into the classroom still stressed about whether you have enough handouts and what you are going to do in the class, then it will show and you will be fighting an uphill battle from the start.

Work with your JTE

Your main ally in the classroom is the JTE, so work to each other’s strengths and support each other in the classroom. It can be very hard to expect the students to know what is happening if the JTE doesn’t know either, so try to find time to make sure you are both on the same page. When planning a lesson or activity think about what will get the students interested. Knowing the students’ names, their likes and dislikes, who is confident, who is shy, who likes English, etc., will help you to keep the class flowing and to keep the students’ attention.

Approaches to Discipline

In the classroom it is better not to rely on the “strong hand” approach to discipline. You are there primarily to assist with English teaching and not to maintain discipline. The ALT is there to get the students to relax and to feel comfortable speaking English and communicating with foreigners. If you maintain a “strong hand” approach to discipline it may make you seem less approachable, and may make the students more hesitant to speak English in the classroom or to approach you outside of class. Try not to lose your temper -smile a lot, and give even the worst students a second or third chance!

There could be even more specific reasons to leave discipline to the JTE as much as possible. You will not be able to speak or understand Japanese fluently, and you may not know enough about the students and the Japanese educational system. You have been hired to assist with English teaching and to promote internationalization, not to keep discipline. If there is a discipline

problem let the JTE or homeroom teacher deal with it. There may be a reason for a student's misbehavior that you do not know about, such as a personal problem, a family problem, a recent family bereavement, etc.

I think there could be no worse feeling than having just scolded a student for something only to find out after from the JTE that their grandfather has just passed away. There will be times when you have to deal with rude, disrespectful, or even worse behavior in the classroom, and at times you will need to decide what course of action to take. However, it is better to give the students the benefit of the doubt and to presume they are innocent until proven guilty. A student may be talking because they are helping another student to understand the activity, or a student may be sleeping because they think that is better than disturbing the class by talking. Some students sleep in class because they are physically tired because they are under a lot of pressure with their academic and extra curricular activities. Some students sleep or do homework in class because they have no interest in English. It may not be the student's fault if classroom discipline breaks down, there may be times when you or the JTE are at fault, for example through a lack of communication or planning. I am not trying to excuse any of these things, but I do think it helps to try to rationalize and put things into perspective.

If you do find there is a problem with a student you should discuss it with your JTE and decide what to do before taking action.

What can ALTs do?

Although the ALT is not there primarily to keep discipline, there are still many ways that the ALT can help to keep the class in order by maintaining "light discipline". For example, by helping the JTE to get the attention of the class before starting an activity, by telling students to put away their cell phone, by stopping talking until students are quiet, by walking around the class and making sure the students know what is going on, etc.

If a student is misbehaving you can give them the "teacher stare" or go and stand near them to let them know that they are misbehaving, and this may solve the problem. If this does not solve the problem then tell the student about the problem in a calm way, without losing your temper, and let the JTE know about the problem if you need to. Don't be afraid to use Japanese -telling a student that they are "urusai" may be much more effective than telling them to be quiet. Knowing some simple classroom Japanese will help a lot to manage the classroom, and I think the students will appreciate the ALT trying to use it.

When students misbehave it is better to not lose your temper. This is easier said than done, but if do you get angry try to keep it controlled. Ideally, making a joke of the situation will help the situation much more than getting angry. Some students are going to sleep, talk or misbehave no matter how much planning or effort you put into making the lesson or activity.

Above all, if you find things get too much, just relax, take a deep breath and remember that the most important thing is your health and sanity. So, be flexible, keep your sense of humor and relax!

Classroom Management

Examples of Problems

Ben Shearon

Miyagi BOE

Here are some common problems you may encounter in the classroom. Please think about how you would deal with each one before it occurs. This will make it more likely that you will react in a calm and professional manner rather than emotionally if they occur.

Emotional reactions to problems in the classroom are seldom helpful.

- Students are noisy and don't pay attention to teachers
- Students are quiet and unresponsive
- Students are playing with cell-phones, mirrors, comics
- Students are surly and hostile
- Students are asleep in class
- Students pick on/make fun of other students
- Students don't have textbooks, notebooks, pen
- Students don't do the assigned task
- Students don't do homework
- Students leave classroom without permission

****For any problems you encounter in the classroom, you should first consult your team-teaching partner and discuss with them how to best deal with the problem. You should also decide what each teacher's response should be.***

Student Motivation

Krysta Banwell

Wakuya SHS

What is motivation?

Motivation is what you tease your students with to make them learn English.

How to increase student motivation

Figure out what your students want, would like, hope to accomplish, need, and use it to your own advantage.

Motivational Techniques

I teach at 2 Senior High Schools and have over 1000 students. I use the English Point Card system with each and every one of them (see the Point Card on the next page). Every time a student writes something in English on the board, answers a question in English, presents their work, etc. they get a point (which is actually just my initials). The motivation comes in when they get to 30 points. That's when I burn them a CD of popular English music, and they LOVE it! In some of my classes, the kids fight over who will go to the board, because they *want* the points so bad.

These points also figure into their overall grade at the end of the year, and the male & female students with the most points at the end of the school year gets a prize (which last year was a "Canada Pack" with key chains, pencils, stickers, candy etc).

It is a little like tricking the students into learning. All they want is the CD, but to get there, they must compose 30 sentences in perfect English, and they do!

The students in my classes, who regularly raise their hand for a point, have visibly shown an improvement in their spoken English. And if all it takes is a few burned CDs from me...then that's *my* motivation!

ENGLISH POINT CARD

NAME:

CLASS & NO:

"May I have a point please?"

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100



Win a CD!!!

Evaluation

Amanda Adams
Shikama BOE

What are you Evaluating?

If you are a super wonder person ALT, you could start keeping your own track record of students, noting which students are speaking English, which are having trouble writing, and whose attitude is getting better. You could even start evaluating yourself. For instance, have you memorized the student's names yet, how many times did you zone out in class today, and did you understand the Japanese part of the English lesson.

But without waxing too long on "evaluation" there are a few straightforward examples of evaluation that your JTE might ask you to do. These include:

1. **Checking Student Writing.**
2. **Checking Written Tests.**
3. **Conducting Speaking and Listening Tests.**
4. **Judging Skits.**

• NOTE: Japanese teachers use O's for correct answers and X's for wrong answers. If you use check marks, the students might think it means a wrong answer.

How to Evaluate and Examples of Evaluation:

Checking Student Writing

Checking paragraphs and sentences can be mind numbing at times, but you will also encounter some of the most innovative, funny, raucous English of your life in these papers. Some guidelines for yourself:

Have a Consistent Annotation Style

Parts of sentences will need to move. Word order will need to change. Spelling will need to be fixed. Decide if you want to use arrows, boxes, numbers, or X's and O's to indicate the need for a change. Also, try to make changes legible and easy to understand.

Make simple notes

Keep in mind, the students don't always understand your English notes

Even if it's wrong, it can still be right

Give the students credit if you can understand what they are trying to say, even if the English is all mixed up. Also, realize when they are trying to use patterns they have learned to invent new English.

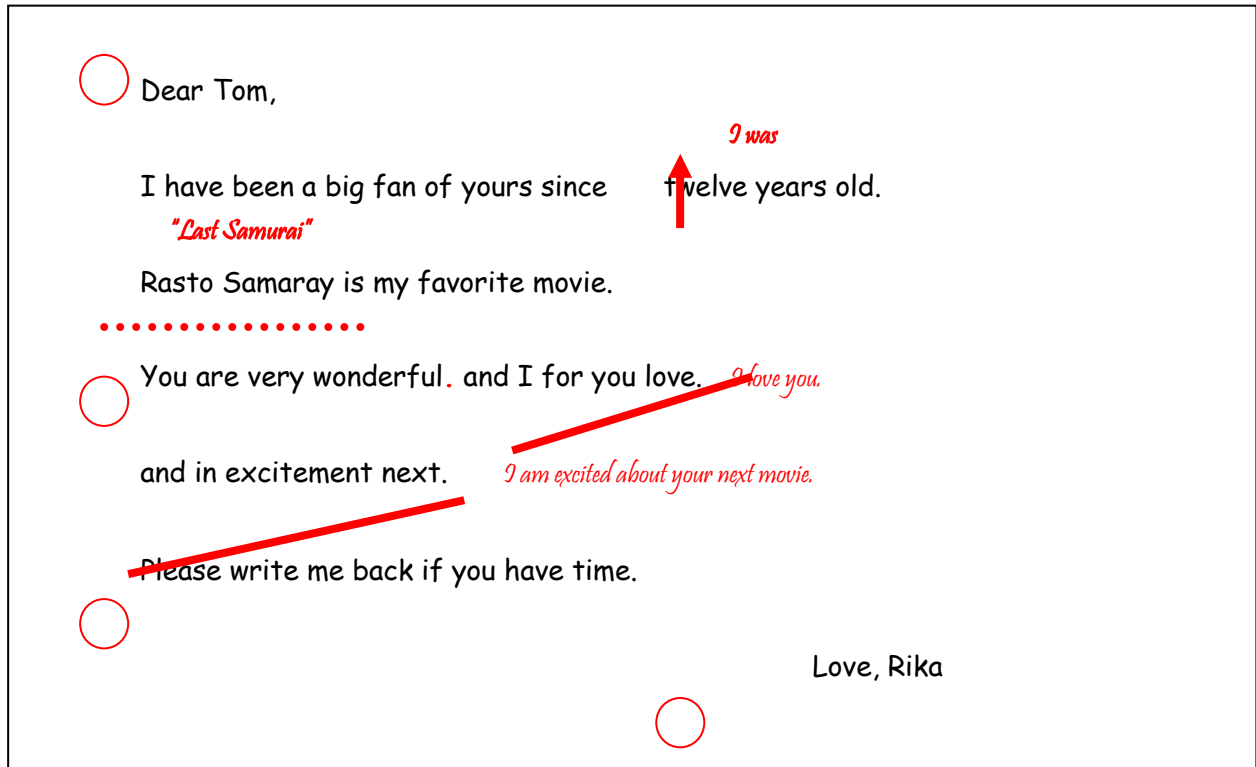
Penmanship and Punctuation

These two things are sometimes overlooked by the JTE's. Do as you will.

Using Different Pens, Stamps, and Stickers

Try using different colored pens, stamps and stickers for some marking flare!

Example of Student Writing



2. Checking Written Tests


Often Written Tests come with an answer key. There will be multiple choice, fill in the blanks, putting sentences in the correct order, translation from English to Japanese, and translation from Japanese to English. At first you will probably only be asked to check the written English. You may be asked to check the multiple choice answers in Katakana.

It is a good idea to **look at the test as well as the answer key**. Sometimes a student's English answer will make sense, even though the teacher has a different answer written in the answer key. Most JTE's are cool with marking these answers as correct as well.

Remember, **X's for wrong answers and O's for correct answers**. Sometimes the JTE will ask you to only mark correct answers and to write corrections for answers that are wrong. In other words, to not mark X's on the papers. This is so the JTE can mark partial credit later.

Usually, you need to use a **Red Pen** for tests.

Example of Written Test

<p>Test</p> <p>Jane went to America again last summer! The first time she went to America she visited New York City. This time she visited Disneyworld in Florida. She went with her grandmother and sister. Her favorite ride was Thunder Mountain. Next year she wants to go to England.</p> <p>Read the paragraph above and answer the questions below.</p> <p>1. Has Jane ever been to America?</p>	<p>Answer Key</p> <p>1. Yes, she has.</p> <p>2. She wants to go to England.</p>
	<p>Student's Answers.</p> <p>1. Jane has been to America two times.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>2. Next year, she to England (wants to go).</p>

Conducting Listening and Speaking Tests

Sometimes it takes a fine ear to mark these tests, especially when you have already listened to 50 students in the last two hours. Some guidelines for consistency:

- **Think about What You Are Testing**

Are the students memorizing a dialogue or paragraph? Are they answering questions? Are they making a spontaneous conversation? Are they working in pairs? Are they working on body language?

- **Make a Sheet with the Different Points You are Marking for Yourself**

Write down the points you are marking and think about how you will listen for each point. For instance, points may include:

Memorization	Did they have it memorized? Did they have to look at the text? How many times did they need prompting? For especially weak students, you can make different courses. For instance they can hold a cheat sheet and automatically get a lower score for memorization, but still have a chance to score well on other points. Try to make it impossible for a student to just stand there and be silent.
Pronunciation	How is their pronunciation? Are they making consistent mistakes? Do they have trouble with certain sounds? If you can, practice difficult words before the test begins.
Intonation	How well is their flow? Are they speaking clearly? Do they sound like a computer? How is their speed? How is their pitch? Can you tell when they are asking a question by their pitch?
Creativity	For non-memorization tests. Are they being creative in their answers? Are they not just responding to questions, but also asking questions?

	Are they expounding on their answers?
Gestures	Are they using appropriate gestures? Are they shaking hands for introductory speeches? Are they making eye contact with one another? How is their body posture?
Teamwork	Are they working as a team? Is one person whispering the answers to the other student? Does it seem like they practiced beforehand?
Attitude	Are they friendly? Are they looking the other way? Are they refusing to follow your instructions? Are they giggling nervously?
No Japanese	Are they still speaking in Japanese? Are they only using English? Are they using "Eto" and Japanese fillers? Are they using English fillers? Tell them if you want them to only speak English. And teach them to say, "I don't know," and "Pardon, once more please."

• **Make a Small Sheet You can Mark for Each Student**

Have them right their name and class on the sheet at the beginning of class. Go over the different points you will be listening for and marking. Have numbers 1-5 next to the points you are marking, and circle the students as they get different scores. Leave a space for making any notes you might want to make.

Judging Skits

There may come a day when you have to judge skits. You can roughly follow the guidelines are conducting listening and speaking tests, except this time you are doing it for different groups.

It can be fun to make awards for individual students and for groups. For instance, categories might include: Best Memorization, Best Pronunciation, Best Intonation, Best Gestures, Most Genki, Best Group Overall, Best Performance Overall, Most Improved English Speaker, and Most Valuable Actor/Actress.

This is a good opportunity to look out for weaker English students who do a particularly good job in one category. For instance, if a student who has really weak English skills, made an effort to truly memorize their part, they can win the Best Memorization award. The class and JTE love it when these students have a chance to win awards.

Example Award Sheet:

<p><i>You have been presented with the Second Year English Speech Award for:</i></p> <p><i>Most Genki Performance</i></p> <hr style="width: 50%; margin: auto;"/> <p><i>This is to certify that _____ of the _____ class at Shikama Junior High School on this date of March 4th , 2005 did a fine job in the category of Most Genki Performance. This award is presented by the following:</i></p> <p><i>Amanda E. Adams, A.L.T</i></p>

TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) by Distance Learning

Philip Wood
Sendai 3rd Boy's High School

Why train?

As an ALT, taking a TESOL course is a rewarding experience for many reasons. Firstly, it gives us a sound grounding in the teaching of English as a foreign language and will help answer those difficult questions where we may have previously said “well, we just say it like that”. Secondly, the ideas from taking a course will prove stimulating and help when creating lesson plans. Thirdly, it's a productive use of any free-time that you have at school and will really impress the teachers around you who see your dedication to teaching. Finally, it's a qualification that is accepted around the world and will help you gain employment after the JET experience.

What courses are available?

Cert (ES) TESOL

This is the minimum requirement to begin teaching EFL professionally. It involves about 150 hours of study and takes about 3 months to complete by part-time study. On this course you would gain a greater knowledge about grammar, lexis, phonics, learning blocks, motivation, the 4 skills, using authentic materials, error correction, lesson planning and classroom management.

Cert (Teaching Methodology) TESOL

This course covers that of the Cert (ES) TESOL but with an added theoretical study to give a solid grounding in study skills, linguistics, the practice of TESOL, phonetics, language awareness and lesson planning. The course takes about 250 hours to complete.

Diploma in TESOL

This course is designed for practicing English teachers with at least 2 years of experience and a TESOL certificate. This course will give you the professional qualification needed to progress to more senior roles, such as head teacher or director of studies. This is the minimum requirement for teaching jobs in the British Council. It takes about 450 hours of study to complete.

This course covers such topics as theories of language learning, principles and practices of a wide range of methodological approaches, current approaches to needs analysis, course organization and planning, teacher development.

MA in TESOL

If you are serious about a career in teaching English this is the qualification to get. It's a big commitment in terms of time (about 2 years to complete part-time) and money, but will open doors to those nice university jobs.

How much?

For a basic 40 hour course fees start at about ¥40,000, the Cert (ES) TESOL ¥90,000, Cert (TM) TESOL ¥140,000, Diploma (TM) TESOL ¥180,000 and MA ¥700,000. Some courses offer installments, though this usually adds about 10% to the course costs.

Of course shopping around will help, but you generally get what you pay for. If it's cheap, maybe you don't get good support and it's difficult to contact teachers. A more expensive course is probably well-operated and has a good support system. Some "expensive" courses also include reading lists, so you have a mini-library to help with your course.

Accreditation

"Accreditation is vital if you wish to gain a qualification that is internationally recognized." Intesol International

With regards to accreditation, there are four main accreditation bodies that are internationally recognised (using the British Council as a benchmark). These are Trinity College, College of Teachers, Cambridge/RSA and any UK University. The College of Teachers is the only one of these bodies that accredits distance learning courses.

The ACTDEC (Accreditation Council for TESOL Distance Education Courses) is also well recognized as an organization that accredits distance learning courses in the UK.

Further information

Courses

- <http://www.intesoltesoltraining.com>
- www.eurolinkcourses.co.uk
- www.englishtc.co.uk
- www.global-english.com
- <http://www.onlinetefl.com/>

Online TEFL offer a basic 40 hour course with a 10% discount for JETs.

- www.traininglinkonline.co.uk

General

- <http://www.edufind.com/english/grammar/>
- <http://www.cactustefl.com/>
- <http://www.learn4good.com>
- <http://www.actdec.org.uk>
- <http://www.trinitycollege.co.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=tesol.home>

*This article was written by a British ALT and reflects a UK perspective.

The School Year

What's Going On, and How Does it Affect Me?
Adapted from an article by Mark Hargreaves

The more you know about what's going on around you, the more opportunities you will have for interaction with your colleagues and students and the better your JET experience will be!

The following is a brief description of the major events that happen during the school year. The following schedule is meant solely as a guideline, as dates and events may vary at your school.

July & August

There are no lessons during July and the majority of August, but many of the students come to school for *bukatsu* (club activities). Joining in *bukatsu* is a golden opportunity to get to know your students and teachers in an informal setting. There are also many inter-school sports events in August. You may be asked to go cheer on your school's team.

During the last week of August, there will be an opening ceremony (*shigyoshiki*) for the autumn term (there are opening and closing ceremonies to mark the beginning and end of each term). You will be formally introduced to the students at this ceremony (i.e. wear a suit) and may be asked to give a short speech in English or Japanese.

September

The first week of September is usually the time for *undokai* (sports day). Many lessons are cancelled so the students can prepare for it. *Undokai* is often on a weekend and you will be expected to attend. You may also be asked to participate in some events. However, take note: early September is also the time for typhoons, so your *undokai* may be rained out and rescheduled (it is never cancelled).

October & November

Many lessons will be cancelled to allow for the school festival (*bunkasai*) preparation. The *bunkasai* is one of the main events in the school year, and is by the students, for the students! There are comedy shows, rock bands, etc. -basically, whatever the students decide to do!

In October, the Japanese often go to the countryside to watch the leaves change colour. This is called *koyo*. November is also the time for the SHS school trip, where 2nd year students go away for three or four days to Kyoto, Okinawa, or somewhere else in Japan or abroad.

December

Many schools have exams before the winter break, so lessons will be cancelled. Term

ends around December 22nd, with a closing ceremony (*shugyoshiki*). This is usually followed by the *bonenkai* (year-end party): often an overnight stay at a hotel or a hot spring resort.

January/ February

Term usually begins around January 9th with an opening ceremony. There are exams in January, so be prepared for some down time with no classes!

March/ April

Unlike back home, where school ends in June/ July, the Japanese school year runs April/ March. As the end of the school year approaches, there are plenty of changes afoot.

The single most important event in the school calendar is the graduation ceremony (*sotsugyo-shiki*) in the first week of March. It is a very formal occasion and some teachers will wear kimonos or black suits with a white tie.

Some of the teachers that we have come to know and love (or not) will be moving on to pastures new, because Japanese teachers typically have to change schools every 3-5 years. This situation is especially relevant if your JTE team-teaching partners are transferred.

March/April is drinking party season. The *sobetsukai* is the official farewell party for all of the departing teachers (of course, there are plenty of other non-official parties, too).

At the year-end there are many exams and staff meetings (to discuss the next school year). The year ends in late March with a closing ceremony, which is sometimes combined with a *rininshiki* (farewell ceremony), whereby all the departing teachers give a short speech in front of the assembled students.

After spring break, there will be a welcome party (*kangei-kai*) for all of the new teachers. The furniture gets moved in the staff room, so your desk will likely be in a different place. Your teaching schedule will be changed too, as will the make up of all of the classes, due to the students getting put in different classes from the previous year.

Hanami (cherry blossom viewing) is an important event in Japan, as is shown by the numerous weather forecasts predicting the start of cherry blossom season in every town and village. Your teachers may organize a picnic under the cherry trees.

May- July

The first week of May is Golden Week (four national holidays in one week). All of Japan seems to travel at this time, so accommodation can be booked solid and airfares are more expensive. If you plan to travel at this time, book early and good luck! Summer term ends in the last week of July, with a closing ceremony.

Working with JTEs

Krysta Banwell
Wakuya SHS

Making an effort

In many ways, you have to prove yourself as a teacher when working as an ALT. In order for the JTEs to trust you and give you more responsibility, you must make a huge effort towards gaining that trust and keeping it.

When you first start teaching with a new JTE, I recommend you sit down and get to know a little about them. About what they're responsible for at the school, perhaps at another school as well, and learn about their family, kids, wife/husband, hobbies etc. Once you know these details, factor that into your relationship with them. When you know how much other work they have to do, offer to make the handouts for your classes, then show them the draft to get their approval. With my head English teacher, we have an understanding that I will make all the handouts, and leave them on his desk for him to look at when he has time. He always returns them on the same day with little or no amendments to be made. I know this really helps him out, and also gives me the satisfaction of responsibility and of being helpful. Remember, your title is *assistant* language teacher, so assist your JTE!

Another way to make an effort is to adjust your speech/rate of speech etc to the level of your JTEs. Not all JTEs have wonderful English, so avoid making them feeling uncomfortable with you, and make it easy to speak together.

Good TT practice

I teach with 3 different JTEs for my 1st grade classes at my base school. One of them is the head English teacher. Every week we sit and chat about the *next* week's lesson: what we will study, format, who will say what and when, the handouts that have to be made, any corrections that have to be done etc. He then tells the other 2 JTEs the plan, and when I finish planning everything and making handouts, I go (myself) to the 2 other JTEs and we go over the lesson. Everyone needs to be on the same page.

In the classroom, it would be ideal that all JTEs taught the same way and expected the same of you. But since this will *never* be the case, be prepared that you might end up teaching 100% percent of 1st period, and then 4% of 2nd period. It might just happen.

Although my classes are not equal in my, or the JTE's teaching time, we have an understanding, and I'm confident I'm not stepping on any toes, or under-performing in class. Ask your JTE what they think your role should be in the class. Some will say everything, some might expect less, but either way, get their opinion as early on as possible, and hopefully find a happy medium that you are both comfortable with.

Dealing with a “brand spankin’ new” JTE

I find new JTEs a lot different to work with and/or become friends with than older, more experienced JTEs. Let me explain:

A new JTE is usually: in their mid 20’s, eager to learn the ropes, but scared of actually speaking English, and scared of *you*. I have taught with 3 brand-new JTEs in the last two years, and still don’t know how best to handle them. BUT...one sure way to get to know them better and make them more comfortable at their new school *and* teaching with you is English practice. Since new JTEs are *usually* closer to your age than others, use this to your advantage. Invite them to an ALT party or just out for a couple drinks with you, or have them over for dinner. Get them into a situation where they don’t have to be conscious of trying to impress Kyoto-sensei with their black suit. I recommend this because it’s worked for me, perhaps not perfectly, but it’s a good start. Another issue I have with new JTEs is that they act ridiculous in the classroom sometimes. I usually can’t help myself from laughing! This is when I try to remember back to when I arrived, and surely I must have made some stupid comments, so I remind myself to be more understanding. Since you’ll probably only experience a new JTE in April (when you’ve been in Japan for 8 months), you’ll have some experience to share with them. Explain how team-teaching works. They have a blank slate and you can help give them a good impression of ALTs (that they’ll remember for the rest of their teaching days).

Providing English Practice

As I mentioned before, not all your JTEs are going to have great English. Providing English practice for your JTEs is wonderful because it benefits you just as much as them, maybe more. On the way to class, I ask about my JTE’s past or upcoming weekend plans, how their kids are, if their wife is feeling better from her last cold etc. My JTE gets a chance to speak English and I become closer to him/her because they know I care enough to ask. I also like to throw in a couple of expressions/idioms on the way to class once in a while. Start with basics like T.G.I.F. (Thank Goodness it’s Friday), or weather conditions. Then move on to current events, music you like, something weird you saw on television/side of the road etc. Encourage them to speak with you in a comfortable manner, and they’ll start coming up to you with more and more questions. *All* of you should at least be speaking English to your JTEs on the way to class, but if your JTE needs, or wants more help with their English, find a space and time each week and *do it!* Sometimes I have a spare hour and have coffee with one of my teachers, and just talk. Other times, they can tell I’m not busy and come over with a snack and a question or two; we end up studying grammar or verbs, etc. Make the effort to be known as a helpful and eager-to-help ALT, and you’ll be much happier in your environment and it’s a good time-filler for those “no-class” days.

Making the best of YOUR situation, not some ideal

So, this “ideal” situation would be that everyone loves and accepts you as a fascinating person from a wonderful land, you’re always busy with classes, you never have a problem with any of your JTEs, all your kids are brilliant, perfect lesson plans fall from the heavens, all your JTEs speak perfect English, and you’ve managed to become fluent in Japanese within your first month. Hoorah! You’re in a perfect situation!!!!

THAT HAS NEVER, AND WILL NEVER, EXIST

The fact of the matter is, you’re going to have problems. There will be challenges you have to overcome, and obstacles to avoid or fix, and it’s *not* going to be a piece of cake. Heck, it’s life!

When you do have a problem, don’t think it’s the end of the world; chances are, another JET has had the same problem and can offer advice. If not, tackle the problem head-on and DO NOT let it snowball into a huge deal (this I can tell you from personal experience, read the next section).

Simply put, make the best of YOUR situation. Try not to compare your deal with another’s, because it won’t compute and it won’t make you any happier. MAKE THE BEST OF IT!

When things go bad

You’re not going to get along with everyone in your life, and Japan will be no different. In this section, I want to give you an example from my time as an ALT which came close to making me leave. Take from it what you’d like.

When I first arrived in Japan, I was met at the Board of Education on my first day in Miyagi by a woman claiming to be my supervisor who wouldn’t speak English to me. This was not a good start. I panicked inside, wondering if I was going to get lost in this country and never find my way out. She dropped me off at my apartment, told me to be at school at 8am the next morning, and left. I was distraught. I wanted to hit her, I almost wish I had! How was I supposed to find the school tomorrow morning not knowing Japanese?

The next morning, I just started walking. I didn’t know what else to do. I figured something would magically lead me to the school. Instead, I was “magically” led to a taxi stand! Thank God!! I managed to get to school *on time*, and met my supervisor there. She still wasn’t caring about how I got to school or that I was scared, nor did she realize I still wanted to hit her.

This went on from August to February. We didn’t communicate, she would *rarely* speak English to me, and I just felt lost. Luckily for me, the JTE who sat next to me was wonderful. She told me where to go, how to make lesson plans, trip forms etc. I thought she was my saving grace. That was until *she* became my supervisor at the beginning of March. All of a sudden, I wasn’t the same person to her. I was part of her job, a hassle, an ignorant, and I definitely didn’t deserve her help. I didn’t know why

at the time, but she pulled away, wouldn't help me anymore, and started deeply "sighing" when I asked her something. When she *did* speak to me, it was to make me feel bad and inquire as to why my Japanese *still* wasn't fluent. I just *didn't* understand how this relationship imbalance happened. At home, I would have just questioned her, and try to figure it out; but in Japan, I had already learned this was a "no-no".

Month by month, things got worse and worse. It got to the point where she wouldn't even return my morning greeting. I was unhappy and miserable. I taught classes with this woman who originally was my saving grace, and who now appeared to actually hate me. I would talk to friends about it, get advice from my parents, and even inquired how to rectify the situation from Japanese friends and JTEs at my visit school. But no answers were found. I decided to "kill her with kindness". I made her a CD of my favorite Canadian artists, I wrote her a note thanking her for all her help, and offered to talk anytime about anything if she wanted to. I put it on her desk, but she never acknowledged its existence.

The next incident happened at the October Area meeting. All supervisors were in one room, and all ALTs in another. After that meeting, it got back to me from *five* different people how she ripped me apart in front of everyone. She said some incredibly hurtful things which I still can't forgive today. She destroyed my reputation in my area and made me feel terrible. I still didn't understand why she hated me, but that was the last straw. I knew I was a good teacher, a good ALT, a good person and I was NOT going to take any more of this.

It was a week away from the re-contracting deadline when I sat her down and was completely truthful with her. I needed to get this off my chest before I committed to stay in Japan a 3rd year... because up to this point, she was my BIGGEST reason to leave. Two days before our sit-down, I had a rather emotional chat with my favorite JTE. He didn't understand her actions/words either, but had heard through the grapevine about her performance at the October meeting. After we talked, I told him the only way I would stay a 3rd year, is if he or another JTE became my supervisor; I would not work with her. He happily agreed and urged me to stay. This conversation gave me the strength and confidence in my self-worth to talk to "she who shall not be named".

I had reached a point where I didn't care about the Japanese rules of confrontation; I spoke to this woman like I would have in Canada. I told her how she made me feel when she was helping me, and then when she turned on me, and how she made me feel when I heard about the October meeting. I looked her straight in the eyes and was strong. I told her I wouldn't stand for her public destruction of my name and that whatever problems she had with me, she was to bring them to me in a mature and professional manner.

For the most part, her problems lay with the JET Program and foreigners, but she made it personal. I asked her if she wanted me to re-contract and she actually said “yes”. Because as much as we didn’t get along, I was still easier to “put up with” than a new (even less fluent) ALT. I told her I would stay if we could arrange for her to NOT be my supervisor anymore. She walked away, just as miserable as she is everyday; but I was satisfied that I finally dealt with the moronic tension between us.

I re-contracted for a 3rd year. After that meeting with “she who shall not be named”, another JTE took over my supervisor position, we get along fantastically, and I no longer teach classes with “her”. I was being emotionally and physically strained by that old relationship. She made me feel terrible, made me dislike Japan, and it wasn’t a healthy environment.

Everything has since changed, and although she still *never* speaks to me, looks at me, returns my morning/evening greeting, I’m so happy now. Things turned around completely, and I am happy to go into work again.

The “moral” of this story (and please learn from my situation) is that you won’t get along with everyone in this life, and I learned that lesson in Japan. Although we live in this strange country with their social rules, don’t forget your own rules. If I had spoken to her before everything snowballed, I know things wouldn’t have gotten so out-of-hand. But I learned my lesson, and everyday, I prove her wrong about how valuable foreigners are in this country and in the school system.

Good luck everyone.

Getting Along with Other School Staff (non-JTE's)

Amanda Adams
Shikama BOE

Who's Who in the School?

Principal Kocho-Sensei or	The Principal sits in their own office separate from the staffroom. They also have a desk to the vice-principal's right. The Principal is the ultimate authority and can hold sway with your Board of Education.
Vice-Principal Kyoto-Sensei or	This person sits in the middle desk at the front of the staffroom. You will see a lot of them. Usually, if you want to leave school, you will need to ask the vice-Principal and tell them where you are going.
Head Teacher	This teacher sits at the desk to the vice-principal's left. He or she is the busiest teacher in the school. In charge of A LOT of paperwork. If you need a schedule for something or a paper handout, he will have a copy. If Kyoto-sensei isn't around, tell the head teacher where you are going.
Office Lady	Usually a lady, sometimes a man. She sits in the office next to Kocho-sensei. She is in charge of coffee, phone calls, and some paperwork. She can help you with the printers. She also might be in charge of the time-off book.
Lunch Lady	She is in charge of designing the school lunch. Sometimes she has a lot of free time and will want to chat. Some smaller schools have joined this position with the school nurse.
School Nurse	She has a desk in the staffroom but is sometimes in the infirmary. These ladies are usually really nice and can help you with any injury or sickness you have.
Maintenance Man	He is the guy not in a suit. He is in charge of maintenance and fixing things. If you have a problem with your car or your apartment, this dude will probably be the most helpful. Usually the students and teachers love him.
Tech Guy	He is the teacher that knows the most about all the printers, computers, cameras, and electrical equipment. If you need anything techy for class, go to this guy. Also! He is the guy who can get your laptop hooked up to the school system, which will connect your computer to the school printers and to the internet!
School Therapist Cousellor	She or he will come to school once a week. And usually they don't have a lot to do, but like to chat.
Heads of Grades	These teachers are the ones who give the talks at the beginning of the day to the teachers in different grade levels. They are usually older teachers, and will be in the staffroom more often than homeroom teachers.
Homeroom Teachers	These people are busy! They keep close tabs on students in their homerooms, run club activities, and teach their own classes. Chances are your JTE is a homeroom teacher.

Also, schools have an **art teacher**, a **music teacher**, and a **physical education teacher**. If you want to participate in any of their classes or use their equipment, you can make friends with them too! These people are sometimes homeroom teachers as well.

Tips and Strategies for Making Friends

School life can be much happier if you make friends with the staff. If you speak Japanese this can be really easy. Just make small talk. Otherwise here are some strategies for starting conversations and keeping them going with your fellow teachers and staff.

The Omiyage Approach

They like coffee, tea, and chocolates. If you can put a little wrapped something on everyone's desk every once in awhile, you are on your way to buttering them up. You can do this after you go on a vacation or to celebrate a holiday from your home country. However, be aware that the teachers won't go on vacations as much as you. They might get jealous if you are always making a big deal out of the fact that you are an ALT and have the time and money to travel.

The Break Time Bonding Approach

For as much as they work, these teachers are pros at killing time. They like to chill and drink coffee. Most love to sneak outside and smoke a cigarette. If you smoke, join them! Conversations will start! Also, you can join them when they brush their teeth after lunch.

Help with Serving Tea, Making School Lunch, and School Cleaning Time

Just some tasks you can help out with to show you are making an effort to join the group.

Join a School Club

It isn't always easy finding the right club for you. But you can try a couple out. And if you enjoy one, stick with it. The teachers and students will like you better for it, and you'll have something to talk about even if you don't stick with it.

Study Japanese at Your Desk

If the teachers see you studying Japanese they are more likely to try to talk to you. They might even help teach you some Japanese. And they are sticklers for correcting katakana and hiragana.

Use Staffroom Japanese

When you leave early then everyone else, it is polite to say "Osakini shitsurei shimasu" which roughly translates, "Excuse me for leaving early!" Or you can develop your own English way of leaving. Some of the teachers want to speak a little English every now and again.

Vacation Time

Matthew Basey
Sendai Minami SHS/Izumi Shoryo SHS

As an ALT you may find yourself with a lot of free-time on your hands. Some ALTs enjoy having this extra time, while for some ALTs it can be difficult to find ways to use this time constructively.

I personally found myself with a lot of free time on my hands in my first year as an ALT because I only taught eight hours a week. In my spare time I would study Japanese, maintain a notice-board and try to think of new things to do or to get involved with. However, I found myself feeling quite bored sometimes, especially during the vacation or exam periods.

In my second year my schedule was busier because I started working at a visit school, so sometimes I wished I had more free time for planning lessons, doing Japanese study etc. Your free-time has both its good points and bad points, but hopefully it can be something you can make the most of and enjoy!

Here are some suggestions of how to make the most of your free-time as an ALT:

- **Prepare lesson plans and materials for your classes:**

This is probably the most important thing to do and the one you may spend most of your free time doing. The amount of work you have to do for this will vary.

For OCI (Oral Communication or Speaking) classes you may have to prepare everything, from making a lesson plan from scratch to making the handouts and materials.

Alternatively you might share the work with a JTE, and in some cases you might have nothing to do at all. I found that for OCI classes I did most/all of the planning and preparation. The JTE would have to read the lesson plan, and sometimes I would ask them to help with some part of the preparation.

Ideally both planning and preparation should be shared by the JTE and ALT and regular meetings should be held to discuss this.

- **Studying Japanese:**

The free time you have is an excellent chance to study Japanese. You are surrounded by Japanese people to help you and to practice with, for example in the library, the canteen, the administration office, the relaxation room - anywhere!

The “smoking room” or teacher’s relax room is an excellent place to chat and practice Japanese with your colleagues. I sometimes take something I am studying there, such as a manga book, textbook or CLAIR Japanese course book, and get other teachers to help me.

Alternatively, you can use the library to study in and get the students to help you! After you have studied sometime you will have an excellent chance to practice it in the staff room. Using your free time to study Japanese will also impress your colleagues when they see you making such an effort.

These are some useful links about Japanese study:

http://www.pref.miyagi.jp/kokusai/E/JET/april_05/RT_Japanese.pdf

http://www.pref.miyagi.jp/kokusai/E/JET/april_05/MW_Japanese.pdf

- **English Notice-board:**

Maintain a notice-board - put up photos, information, anything about you and where you come from. You could also add some useful information for students taking English tests, such as Eiken, display students' work, notices - anything. You could also make a weekly/monthly newsletter - your school may have a newspaper or photography club so you could join forces.

- **English Club:**

This is one of the most important ways to spend your free-time. Your school will probably have an English Club, and they will want you (in some cases you may be expected) to get involved. During my first year as an ALT the English Club was practically non-existent! It had only two members, both of whom were very shy, and a JTE who didn't have the time or interest to get involved. In my second year we got six members and an enthusiastic JTE and we have been able to have a lot of fun so far! The students who join English Club mostly join because they are really interested in English, so it is a good chance to help them. You could arrange for another ALT to come and visit your English club, or go and visit theirs. You can prepare for bunkasai, for the Skit Koshien (an English skit competition), make things, cook, watch videos, listen to music, or just chat.

- **Club Activities:**

Getting involved in the students' club activities is an excellent way to spend time after school. It's a good chance to get to know the students and vice-versa. Spending time out of the classroom with the students will help them to relax more and to try to communicate with you, especially if you try to speak some Japanese too! If you have an area of expertise why not share it - help coach a sport, if you can play an instrument or draw go to the music or art clubs. If you don't have any relevant area of expertise you could chose one of the clubs to go to and get involved with.

I am interested in kyudo (Japanese Archery), and although I have never tried it I go along to the kyudo club sometimes just to watch and chat. My school has a go club, and although I can't play it I play some shogi (Japanese chess) with the students there, and sometimes teach them how to play chess. It may take time to work out which clubs are more welcoming to you and easier to get involved with. Sometimes I feel a bit reluctant to go to clubs - I think the students or teachers won't be interested in me, or I feel like I am in the way or that it will be awkward to communicate, etc. However, many students and teachers will be glad to see you, even if this isn't always obvious. I think it's important not to spend too much time chained to the desk - get out and about.

- **Go to other classes:**

If you find you have a lot of free time and don't know what to do why not try going to another class, either to watch or to help teach it. I am interested in becoming a history teacher when I leave the JET Program so sometimes I go to the history class. I haven't done any teaching, but watching the class is a good chance to learn about history teaching and to practice/learn Japanese.

I don't go to many classes as I don't want to get in the way, but you will find teachers who will welcome you to their classes - especially sports, cooking, music or art.

- **Join in homeroom activities:**

If you get on well with a particular teacher or class why not try to get some kind of involvement in the homeroom (the time after lessons have finished for the day - like a form period, sometimes used for administrative things).

Occasional long-homerooms can sometimes be used for a barbeque, or you could make some

thing to do with the homeroom teacher such as cooking, introducing yourself to classes you haven't taught etc.

- **Make sure you are 'in the loop':**

Use the time to talk to your JTEs about the schedule, lesson plans, getting help with anything. As an ALT I sometimes felt like I don't know what is happening, so the free time is a good chance to find out what is going on!

- **Be active:**

Introduce yourself and talk to the other teachers and members of staff, talk to the students during lunchtime or after school. Walk around and explore the school - find out where the library is, how to use the audio visual room etc.

- **Radio broadcast:**

I do a weekly 20 minute radio broadcast at lunchtimes with the broadcasting club using the school PA system. I usually play some songs and chat for a couple of minutes.

- **Surf the internet**

- **Be thinking about the next step:**

Use the time to think about what you are going to do after you leave the JET Programme, for example, further education, jobs etc. This is a useful link about life after the JET Programme: http://www.pref.miyagi.jp/kokusai/E/JET/april_05/afterjet.pdf

- **Get a Qualification:**

Why not take a correspondence or online course in something, especially something TEFL related, or brush up on computer/language skills.

- **Write something for the Drum:**

(Miyagi Prefecture's own monthly magazine which was voted the best JET publication in Japan this year). Why not give it a go and share a story or experience about Japan (or anything!)

- **Make a website or online blog:**

This can be as simple as a geocities site, or more complicated if you are able! You could put lesson plans or materials on it, some photos and keep an online diary - why not keep an online blog in Japanese!

- **Relax:**

Why not - its your time! Read a book, listen to music, relax, take a nap if you like - anything to keep sane!

Above all, see the free-time as a good thing and something to use positively. Don't be shy or chained to your desk. Get out and about, be active and don't give up!

The following link offers some more ideas on how to use your spare-time at school:

http://www.pref.miyagi.jp/kokusai/E/JET/april_05/summer.pdf

Warm up activities

Eric McCarron
Shiroishi BOE

Often as an ALT our fun job involves a lot of activity design. This also involves designing warm up activities. These can be very fun and rewarding. Warm ups are great for achieving certain results:

- they can create a fun and interesting atmosphere
- they can be employed to review previous lessons' contents
- they give students a chance to use English in an active activity based approach (good for those students who are more suited to learning while moving)

Warm ups do not necessarily have to be at the beginning of the lesson. Warm ups are meant to prepare students for something (i.e. a main activity or a non-physically stimulating lesson focusing on the language skills of reading and writing). Warm ups can be used in the midst of a lesson or before other activities. Formally and ideally, the last part of the lesson is used to assess or evaluate the attainment of the lesson's objectives or to practice the objectives. However, reality does not conform to our assumptions and thus warm ups can take the meaningful role of time filler if one finds oneself with time to spare in class.

Warm ups are not necessary for a good lesson. They do help to make one though. In deciding to do a warm up, or better, in deciding what kind of warm up to do, there are countless variables that are useful to consider (i.e. the number of students, the students' mood, the overall lesson compatibility, the time of day, the previous lesson, the position of the moon, etc...). Judging such criteria will come with preparation and experience and can not be covered in summary here.

I have provided a small sample of warm ups to start you off. The majority of them are taken from a useful book called Team Taught Pizza. There are countless variations on all of these activities, so don't limit yourself. I hope you find these useful and discover more yourself.

The Warm up activities

Flash card race (practically zero preparation)

Materials: Flash cards (about 10 and over is sufficient) usually each grade has a box of these that complement the textbook. Grab some the students have done in a previous lesson

How to play: Each row is a team. If there are odd numbers someone can play twice or three times. Each front member stands up. Tell the students that if they know how to read the card they should raise their hand. Show them a flashcard. Usually I pick the fastest hand up but it's nice to give those slower kids a chance. The student to read the flashcard correctly then sits down and the next person in his or her row stands up. I usually play till the last person, but that depends on time. You can play

until the first team sits down. Try to make it close so that all students get excited. Even if it means picking students who are slugs.

You can up the level by asking them to translate into either Japanese or English (obviously showing them flashcards in Japanese). Or even harder is to use it in a sentence. Allow for teamwork and student coaching if you want.

Timebomb

Materials: a kitchen timer (cheaply bought at a 100 yen shop) and certain stuffed dolls or cards with certain grammar or vocabulary points written on them

How to play: Using a previously-learned grammar or conversation point (or for much lower grades use vocabulary points), set a time frame (known or unknown) and hand out the dolls or cards randomly around the class. When you set the time, the students holding the items should try to get rid of them by using the target English, (i.e. Q and A for 2nd year junior high school) “Did you watch TV last night?” then pass the item to someone close. For lower grades just saying something in English is fine i.e. `Hello` or `Apple`. When the timer goes off, TIMEBOMB, those holding an item stand up and answer a question or receive a penalty (i.e. sing the ABC song, answer some other questions or do some somersaults).

That’s it! You can reset and play again.

You can substitute a timer with a music player and use the pause button as TIMEBOMB!

Strip Story (Useful for upper grades that are learning to read)

Materials: Cut up pieces of a story, conversation or even a sentence and place them in an envelope.

How to play: Have an envelope per group. Lunch groups are an easy option. Hand an envelope to each group. Then they take a slip of paper out each and remember what is written on it (I find it useful sometimes to give a timeframe). Then they put it back in the envelope. They then arrange themselves to make a story or a sentence. Once they have all done so you can sound off and compare stories.

This activity is thought-provoking and requires teamwork. The students also come up with funny stories.

Line up

Materials: none

This game involves the students forming lines according to a specific order. For example, teach the student to ask, `When were you born?` Then ask them to form a line starting with the youngest and ending with the oldest. Check the line to verify correctness as some students might just join the line at random. You can use this game to create lines showing shortest to tallest, the person who lives closest to school, the person with the most pets, who plays the most sports, who has the most print club (*purikura*), anything you can think of. Try it as a warm up in winter to get everyone’s blood flowing!

Whispers (Chinese whispers)

Materials: blackboard and chalk

Ask the last student in each row of the classroom to stand up. Whisper a sentence or a word in their ear. They in turn must whisper to the person in front of them until the whisper reaches the front of the row. The front person then goes to the board and writes the `whisper` down. The next time you play, shuffle the students so that the second to last person moves to the back of the room to receive the next whisper. That way everyone has a go at starting and finishing the whisper.

Variation:

Have the students line up and wait in front of the class. After each team has their representative at the front, sound off one by one starting from the first to the last. Then award two points to those students who were fastest and correct and one point to the students who were slower but still correct.

Question Game

Materials: None but textbooks may be useful

Divide the students into groups and have them formulate 2 or 3 yes/no questions to ask either teacher or ALT. Tell them that they will receive one point for a `Yes` answer and two points for a `No` answer. The next time you play the game, change it around so that `Yes` is worth two points and `No` is worth one point. Give the students examples to work from, for example, `Do you play tennis?` or `In Canada, can you drive when you are sixteen?` Adjust the examples you give according to the students` English level.

Chain Game

Materials: None

Choose a student to stand up. Ask the student to spell a word, give a translation or answer a question. Once the student has done so, ask the student to call out the name of another student and ask them a question. If your students have trouble forming questions, write examples on the board that they can follow.

It may help to give the students two or three minutes to formulate their questions before they start the game. You can keep playing the game until everyone has asked their questions or spend five minutes at the start at each lesson having students ask the questions so that over three or four lessons, everyone has asked and answered a question.

Variation: Divide the class with the JTE and you can cover many more students that way. You can even ask the students to turn their seats around so that they can concentrate.

Karuta

Materials: a lot of cards

Students are broken into groups. Give each group a pile of cards with pictures or words representing verbs, adjectives, nouns, etc. that you wish to review. When you call out the word, the fastest student to grab the card gets to keep it. The student with the most cards at the end wins. Rather than just reading out the word, try

reading a sentence that represents or describes the words and pictures on the card. For example, if the picture is of someone swimming, you could say, `When it`s hot I like to go to the beach and do this`. To make the game a little more difficult, make the students sit on their hands or place them on their heads before you call out the word.

Musical chairs conversation practice

Materials: music and chairs

Make two rows of chairs with an alley between them. The students must be able to walk up and down the alley. Play some music that they can walk around to. When the music stops, the students must sit down in a chair and have a conversation with the person sitting across from them for two minutes. If you like, have two less chairs so one pair must stand and talk. Have a question written on the board that the students must ask each other or just write down a topic to get them started. You could also make a small worksheet with a series of questions and each time they sit down, the students have to ask one of the questions from the sheet.

Scrambled sentence game (similar to strip story)

Materials: cut up sentences for each group

For this game, students will be given a list of words and be asked to correctly form a sentence. Divide the class into groups and give each group a pile of cards that form a sentence, not forgetting to use a capital letter for the first word and include cards showing commas, question marks and full stops. Set a time limit. Students try to put the cards in the correct order. When the time is up, have each group come to the front of the class one at a time. Each student in the group must hold one or two cards and stand in a row facing the class so that the sentence is in the correct order. Have the class check if the sentence is correct or not and help make any necessary changes. If the sentence is correct, the group scores one point. If they can translate the sentence into Japanese they score two points. If they are holding a question and can provide an answer, they receive three points.

Row relays (similar to flashcard race, but with batons)

Materials: fly swatters or batons

These games are played in rows so they`re easy to do in the classroom. Have the front person in each row stand up and give them a swatter or baton of some sort. Try a fly swatter, a flag, or a ruler with an arrow on the end. Present a spelling word, translation problem, or a question to the students. The first one to raise their swatter gets to answer the question. If they answer the question correctly they get to pass their swatter to the person behind them in the row. If they`re incorrect the next person gets to try. The first row to pass its swatter to the last person wins.

Sometimes, one person in a row is left standing the whole time. Have a rule that after two or three questions anyone who hasn`t answered a question passes their swatter to the person behind them. If you play the game often, change the starting person to a different person in the row each time.

There are numerous variations of this game. Write a series of words on the board. When you call out the word, the students must run to the board and hit the word with their swatters. Or you can say the word in Japanese and the students have to hit the English version. Instead of the students holding a fly swatter, give them a piece of chalk. Call out a word in English and have the students write it in English or alternatively, in Japanese. Similarly, call out a Japanese word and have them write it in English. When you play the game, call out 6 or 7 words so that every student has a chance to play. When all have played, tell them that the words make a sentence and award bonus points to the first group that can correctly give the sentence. The sky's the limit when it comes to variations for this game!

Shiritori

Materials: blackboard and chalk

This is also known as the `Top and tail` game. The children play this game in Japanese so they'll be familiar with it. Divide the blackboard into the same number of rows as there are in the class. Write the starting word on the board. The first student from each team must stand up and write a word on the board beginning with the last letter of the word you wrote. For example, if you wrote `pencil` on the board, they might write `lake`. The next student in the row comes to the board and writes a word beginning with the last letter of the previous word. You can use various rules to determine the length of the game. Set a time limit and see how many words the students can write within that time, or set a number such as 15 and the first group to write that number of words wins. You could also have students write the meaning of the word in Japanese next to the English word. Another way to check the students' comprehension is to get them to draw pictures next to the words to make it more difficult, tell the students they can only use verbs, nouns or four letter words or tell them they can't use their textbooks' vocabulary section as a reference during the game.

True/False Blackboard dash

Materials: six cards

A useful and fun game! You will need to make six cards. Three cards will be marked "true" and be worth 1, 2 or three plus or minus points. Three cards will be marked "false" and worth one, two or three plus or minus points. Divide the class into six teams and have one student from each team stand up. Call out a phrase based on the textbook language. (These sentences can test context, collocation, word order and a number of other points). The students must decide whether the sentence is correct or incorrect. If it is correct, they must race to the board and try to grab the "true" card. If the statement is incorrect, they must try to grab the "False" card. If they grab the wrong card, they receive minus points according to the value of their card. Every player must grab a card, even if it's the only one left and they know it's the wrong one.

Introducing New Material

Ben Shearon

Miyagi BOE

Introducing new material is a crucial step within a lesson. If you do it well, you have the attention of the class and a great springboard to move on to practice and production activities. On the other hand, if your introduction is boring or unclear, you will lose the attention of the class and it will be difficult to move on to the next step of your lesson plan.

What is it that makes for a good introduction?

- Simplicity and clarity
- Use of examples, props, gestures
- Eliciting the answer from students
- Making sure students are actively involved in the introduction
- Providing students with spoken and written input
- Having a good relationship with the class

One of the best introductions I have seen recently was in a class where the JTE and ALT were trying to introduce the patterns: “is going to ~”, “is ~ing”, and “... has finished ~ing”. The teachers first produced a little kettle and a glass, and elicited the students to provide the English words for them. Then the JTE poured some water into the glass from the kettle. Next the ALT asked the students “What is he going to do?” and led them to the answer “He is going to drink (some) water”. They repeated this for “he is drinking water”, and “he has finished drinking water”. Throughout the introduction the students were actively involved in trying to figure out what was going on and trying to answer the ALT’s questions. After the introduction almost all the students understood the new material and were eager to move on to practice activities. Of course this worked because the teachers had a good relationship with their students.

Please plan your introductions rather than ad-libbing them on the spot. They deserve at least as much thought as the practice sections of your lessons, maybe even more. After all, how you start your lesson will pretty much determine how the whole thing will go, and a good intro is half of a good class!

Drill Activities

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Drill activities allow students to practice new language items mechanically, working on pronunciation, memorization, and understanding in a low stress environment. Choral repetition is an example of one drill activity commonly used in Japanese classrooms.

Drilling is important in order to provide students with the ability and the confidence to move on to more independent use of the language. It provides a step that bridges the gap between presentation of a new item and students using it (semi-)independently.

Drill activities are repetitive, highly structured, and often require little creative student input. While this can be boring or restrictive, it is also comforting and non-threatening, as students know what they are supposed to do and how to do it.

Some common drill activities include:

■ Repeating

Students repeat after teachers, either all together as a class, or split into groups (half the students as group A and half as group B, repeat in turn).

■ Questions and answers

Students ask or answer questions. Teachers ask questions and students all answer together or teachers provide stimuli and students all ask the question together (optionally, the teachers can then answer).

■ Changing

Students change elements of sentences, questions or answers. For example, teachers hold up animal flashcards and students chant: [picture of dog] “I like dogs.” [of elephant] “I like elephants.” [of chicken] “I like chickens.”

■ Completing

Teachers give students a base sentence, and students complete it in various ways. For example “this ____ was made in ____” [picture of boots and Italian flag] “these boots were made in Italy” [picture of computer and Chinese flag] “this computer was made in China”.

Production Activities

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Production activities are where students take what they have learned and use it to create original output. It typically involves speaking or writing, and is one of the most challenging aspects of language learning.

The most important preparation for production activities is to make sure that the students have had enough input and actually understand the target language. If students do not understand the target language or have not heard or drilled it enough to have memorized/remembered it, they will not be able to do production activities. This seems obvious, but I have lost count of the number of times I have set up a great, fun production activity, explained it to the class, started it and *only then* realized that the students aren't familiar with the language they are supposed to be using.

So before you try to do production, make sure you have successfully introduced the target language and given the students lots of drilling and controlled practice (things like reading dialogues, answering set questions, etc.).

Some examples of production activities include:

- Role-plays (where students are given roles or situations, and have to react accordingly)
- Surveys (students ask each other questions and collect the results)
- Skits (students create and practice skits in groups)
- Stories and dialogues (students write original stories or dialogues)
- Presentations (students talk about something in front of the class or teachers)

Anytime when students are creating new sentences and dialogues using the language they have learnt, they are producing. Production is important, as it allows the students to personalize the language and thus acquire it. Trying to use new language (as opposed to copying examples of it) is the best way to check whether you understand it or not.

Teachers can also use production activities to catch and correct mistakes.

Testing

Ben Shearon

Miyagi BOE

For some ALTs, testing may seem to be far removed from what they are trying to do in schools in terms of making English real and encouraging students to see it as a tool rather than a subject.

However, I believe that testing is essential for all teachers. Testing allows us to see whether our students understand our lessons, whether they remember what we taught them last week, and just what it is that they don't know.

Students also enjoy tests, especially tests that they succeed at. Tests can motivate students and give them a concrete goal to aim for.

Finally, tests force teachers to be more disciplined about actually planning their lessons in a structured way. Consider the following progression:

- Pre-test to determine whether students know the target material
- Make lesson plan to teach/review target material
- Test to determine whether students successfully learned the target material
- Make new lesson plan to teach target material again OR repeat process

Well-planned classes with clear objectives are much more likely to draw the students in and encourage/develop their interest in English.

Of course, there are a huge range of testing techniques. Consider how you would use the following to evaluate student knowledge or skill:

- Paper tests
- Interview tests
- Presentations
- Skits or dialogues
- Projects (research or writing)

The most important thing is that students succeed at tests. Make sure you have prepared the students to ace the test before giving it to them!

Preparing for Speech Contests

Jenn Chic
Shibata BOE

Preparing for speech contests can be a very rewarding experience. This is an opportunity for you to work one-on-one with a student. This allows you to get some very important insights into what your job in the classroom will entail -for example, students' disposition, attitude towards English and you, as well as problems with pronunciation. And this is your practice time, too. Experiment with teaching techniques, keep a journal of your lesson ideas, and of what is most effective for you. This can help you throughout your teaching career.

Concentrate on the fact that this one student is going to improve incredibly with your help. Not only are you working on their English ability but you are working on their confidence, which, in junior high, can use all the help it can get. Maybe you can be the one magic teacher they remember who gave them the gifts of attention and confidence that changed their life from that day forward... maybe. It's up to you.

Be patient, supportive, encouraging, positive, relaxed, and fun. Not only do you want your student to have fun, but you have to have fun too. This is your job, everyday, so you might as well have fun. And if you are having fun, your student will have fun too. Smile lots, as they will most likely be very nervous. Speak simply and slowly, you may not have a JTE with you to help translate. Don't forget, kids talk - this student is going to report back to all their friends about working with the new English teacher. If the report is positive when you start in the classroom you are going to have 30 friends on your side, acting like little sponges, open to your teaching and suggestions.

There are two types of contests within the speech contest - there is the recitation contest, which is the memorization of a story or dialogue chosen by the student and/or the JTE, the second is an actual speech contest, where the student writes a speech and it is translated from Japanese (or first written in English and then eventually corrected by the ALT) and memorized and then performed by the student. Training for both contests is virtually the same for the student, but for you there may be translation work and grammar correction involved with the speech in the speech contest.

Memorization, pronunciation, intonation and understanding are the elements that the student will be judged on, in that order. These are also the foundations for you to work upon when training for the contest. As well, it is a good idea to address these different elements as your training progresses, rather than all at once in the first day. For example, depending on how much time you have to practice, the “training tips” listed below could be addressed one week at a time.

TRAINING TIP #1

Make a cassette tape of yourself reading the speech (the teachers at your school should be able to help you with this). Make sure you pay attention to clarity of voice, speed, phrasing, intonation and expression. Give this cassette to your student on one of your first meetings and encourage them to listen to it ALL THE TIME. This will make your job much easier.

Practicing Memorization

This will be the easiest of the four to achieve because the student can work on memorizing their speech on their own, and I have found them to be great at memorizing (especially if they use your cassette tape). Through memorization they gain confidence. As you begin training, put the most effort on memorization in your meetings and as your practice schedule progresses, and once the speech is committed to memory, more time can be spent on the other 3 elements.

TRAINING TIP #2

Bring a mirror with you to help the student see that they have to use their mouth differently in order to make English words/sounds (ie: when pronouncing “TH” the tongue actually comes out of the mouth). Encourage students to use a mirror when they practice at home. If you have no mirror with you (they can be purchased at the 100yen shop, for you guessed it, 100yen) then encourage them to watch your mouth as you recite the speech.

Practicing Pronunciation

On your very first meeting with your student, have them read through their speech and don't stop them at all. This is for you to see where you are starting from - take note of their confidence, intonation, phrasing and, of course, pronunciation. On another copy of the speech, follow along with your student and mark all the words

that need improvement. You now have your warm-up activity for all subsequent meeting - practice these words with your student and as the words are pronounced better and better and finally perfect, cross them off the list. When they leave for the official contest, the list should be very small.

Break the list down into smaller lists according to the sounds that are common. You will quickly discover that most Japanese people have trouble with a certain set of sounds which are: R, L, B, V, F, TH.

Japanese and English use the mouth in two very distinctly different ways. In Japanese, sounds come from the back of the mouth, near the throat, while most English sounds come from the front of the mouth. The tongue is also used very differently and it up to you to explain and show this to your student (to pronounce “R” the tongue is curled back, with “L” the tongue is at the front of the mouth just behind the 2 front teeth). Re-assure them that this is a linguistic trait, not their own individual inability to pronounce certain sounds (the mirror and the tape will come in very handy here).

Phonics is paid very little attention to in the teaching of English in Japan, which makes reading and pronunciation difficult to manage. It’s not impossible though, it’s just a challenge. If you watched Sesame Street when you were a child, or yesterday, Grover and the gang give very good examples of how to sound out words and practice pronunciation. Break the word down, practice them in smaller parts, and practice similar sounds at the same time. Over accentuate each sound, practice them loudly and proudly and don’t be afraid to be silly. Silly is good.

TRAINING TIP #3

After meeting a few times, or depending on the ability of your student, on another copy of the speech, mark out all phrase breaks and intonation (for both phrases and words) together. Use different colour pens and make pictures to encourage emotive reading. It’s a good idea to have the phrasing clear in your own head before doing this as it can get a little tricky.

Practicing Intonation

Your cassette tape will have helped with this very much but you still may have to work very hard to get your student to use intonation, as Japanese is spoken very ‘flatly’ compared to English, and intonation is not something they are used to doing.

Lead by example. Explain the emotions of different sections of the speech and show them the difference a little bit of intonation makes. For each word, I use the idea of ‘punching’ each word at a different place. Each word is punched here or there and it is so important to get them to realize this. Your speech contest practice can now become a sparring session - as the speech is recited you can both punch the air (preferably) at the appropriate time. They may not win the speech contest, but perhaps you have the next Muhammad Ali on your hands.

TRAINING TIP #4

Change roles. After a warm-up, have the student be the coach, and you be the student. By this point you will probably have most of the speech memorized as well, and it’s fun for the student to prompt you and see how it looks from the other side.

Practicing Understanding

It’s dress rehearsal time. This is where you can begin to include gestures and fine tune their recitation. Make the decision to include gestures WITH your student. Help them to understand what a difference this can make. Perform the speech for you student with or without gestures to help illustrate their effect.

Each time the speech is practiced, the student should stand up, as if at the actual competition, and recite the speech in front of you. Sit at the back of the classroom to ensure that their volume is good. Invite other students to watch your student so that your student can become accustomed to reciting in front of other people. If you have the resources, than you can video tape your student and have them watch themselves. Or a mirror will suffice. They should be practicing in front of a mirror at this point anyway.

By doing all of this, your student can see how they look and how the speech comes across. Their emotions are important in getting across how they have come to understand their speech.

Judging

The first speech/recitation contest will most likely be with the schools in your town and the closely surrounding area. The winners of that contest (usually the top 2 students) progress to an area contest, then the prefectural (Miyagi) contest, and then the Tohoku contest. The speech contest continues on to an All-Japan contest, but the recitation contest ends here.

The judging in the first two contests is done by the JTEs and ALTs of the students attending, after that there is a panel of judges, who are usually university professors, Japanese and foreign with a (hopefully) strong knowledge of English. Although your school and your students want their representatives to go on to win as far as they possibly can, there is a huge flaw in this contest and it is the judging. There is no over-all set of rules on how to judge (score) and what to judge. The use of “gestures” seems to be a personal preference of the judges (therefore, you cannot know how important it is to use them or not) and “understanding” is weighted well below memorization. Sometimes a student is giving a fantastic, impassioned speech and then stumbles on only one sentence and loses out to a very bland recitation of a very boring speech because of this. It can be frustrating; therefore, I wouldn’t worry about how your student will be judged too much. Instill in them how the speech contest is about improving their English ability and not just winning.

And that’s that! Enjoy yourself in the wild and wonderful world of speech contests. It’s really a great opportunity for you AND your students. And...

WELCOME TO JAPAN!

For more information on this topic or many others please feel free to contact me at: pinholewizard@mac.com