

WARM UP!

for language class

Good coaches plan a physical warm-up as an essential first step in any training session. Good language teachers plan a brain warm-up for every language lesson. Warm-ups can help establish a positive learning environment to get the most out of learning and teaching.

ROUTINE

Routine is important for most students. Knowing what to expect from their teacher develops trust and helps students feel more confident. Select the elements will form your routine for every lesson. Possibilities include:

- greetings
- preparing for class
- roll call
- school or class notices
- song, prayer, poem or physical exercise
- connecting to students
- engaging prior learning

GREETINGS

In addition to the standard greeting and related behaviour if any, welcoming your students to the class is an opportunity to initiate a natural conversation with individuals.

- *Nice haircut.*
- *How is the swimming going?*
- *Was that your mum I saw in the canteen at lunchtime?*

PREPARING FOR CLASS

Ensure students know what they need on their desks and where their bags should be stowed. Teach the instructions and then practise getting different sets of gear out. Have it written on the board (in L2) if you have time to write it up. Give students time to get organised. At Melville SHS the whole school has adopted a *Do you have your 6 ready?* rule, the six being:

1. stationery
2. notebook
3. tablet
4. diary
5. folder
6. Student ID

What are the things you want students to have on their desks every lesson?

ROLL CALL

While you are learning students' names and they are practising how to repond, call everyone's name. Later, record in your lesson plan how many students there should be in the class, quickly count students while they are getting ready and then ask *Who are the X people missing?* (in L2 of course.)

CONNECT WITH STUDENTS

Students need to know that you recognise them as individuals. Use their names as often as possible as you get to know them.

1. If it's football season, talk about the weekend's results. This is an opportunity to teach/revise/practise
 - ordinal number (first, second, third ...)
 - numbers (scores; won by x points)
 - comparisons and superlatives (good, best, best; bad, worse, worst; high, higher, highest;
 - injuries
 - weather (rain, dry, mud ...)
 - days, dates and times
 - likes and dislikes (attending the game or watching on TV; food at the game; transport to and from)
2. Bring the outside world into the classroom with a little current affairs. A map or globe of the world is useful. Favourite things when you teach/revise/practise:
 - describing location using compass points (*Where did the earthquake happen? Does anyone have family living in that country? Is that north or south of xxxx? Which is the closest ocean?*)
 - identifying and describing people (*Who is this? Where does s/he come from? Why is s/he famous? Why is s/he in the news? Who likes her music?*)
 - talking about seasons (If it is winter where is it summer? Where would you like to go on holiday? What would you do there?)
3. Talk about favourite things. Ask students to think about and then nominate their favourite song / singer / TV comedy / TV drama / pizza toppings / beach/ sports person / cartoon character / season / ice cream flavour They will need to know how to say *My favourite xxxx is* which means you must teach this MCT first.

which brings us to . . .

ENGAGING PRIOR LEARNING

Rather than starting a new lesson 'cold', warm-up activities engage students in jogging their memory and strengthening the connections in the brain that help them to use previously learned MCTs, vocabulary and language learning strategies in new situations. The brain warm-up becomes part of the cyclical practice of learning a language.

Recommendation: tell students which MCT they will be revising, the approximate date this work was done in class and give them time to consult their notebooks. This provides a real purpose for maintaining an organised, legible notebook.

4. Listening. There is never enough listening practice in classrooms. Plan quick listening practice tasks and games that require students to
 - listen and do, such as Simon Says, fly-swats game, order the pictures, picture Bingo, count-the-words, missing word, draw-the-scene
 - listen and speak, such as spin and say, noughts and crosses, Q&A chain, Whispers, I-know-more,
 - listen and read, such as fly-swats with characters,
 - ~~listen and write~~. As soon as students pick up a pen, they think they are working, so don't include tasks like dictation in your warm-up.

Start well and have a great lesson.