

English Compass A2 Teaching tips


The following pages are to be used as a help for all teachers: some ideas for trying something new for teachers who have completed some formal teacher training, and a helping hand for teachers who haven't. Although many of the tips can be applied to any English-teaching situation, the examples given are all based on exercises found in *Compass A2*. This chapter can also be downloaded from the *Teaching Tips* section on the Internet: www.langenscheidt.de/englishcompass.

Vary your approach

Four ways of dealing with ...

Mixed ability classes

It is quite likely that not all of your students will be at exactly the same level, even though they have been tested and graded at A2 level. Some students have learned another language, some will simply be quicker learners. In both the *Compass* course book and this *Teaching Compass* at the A2 level, we have included some tools for helping you to work with mixed ability classes:

-  Those of you who have used *Compass A1* will recognise our 'helping hand'. We have made suggestions on how to support weaker classes or students in some exercises, for example doing an exercise in class instead of having students work on their own (see Unit 7, Part A, exercise 3c), or writing a memory jogger on the board (see Unit 11, Part B, exercise 11).
- ° Our new multi-option element in *Teaching Compass A2* offers three ways to complete an activity. Copy the three options °° from the book onto the board and let your students choose which level they would like to do (gentle, medium or °°° challenging). The choice may be between three different levels of information (see Unit 7, Part A, Starter) or to listen for different types of information (see Unit 16, Part B, exercise 4a).
- **Extension:** Some activities have an extension exercise, which can be given to more able students if they finish before the others or would like an extra challenge. An example of this is shown in the teacher's notes for Unit 1, Part A, exercise 2a, where a suggestion is made for students to write out the dialogues they have created in pairs.
- **Group / Pairwork:** Use group and pairwork to mix students of different abilities. Not only the weaker students will benefit from this, but also the stronger students as they have to explain and help their less able colleagues. All students will benefit from the atmosphere of support in the classroom.

Checking answers

The traditional method of checking answers is to ask around the class. This is useful for some exercises, but can mean that some students might 'switch off' as soon as they have answered their question. An alternative is to ask specific people in the group. This has the advantage of making sure that the students stay concentrated. Asking for volunteers, on the other hand, is good for not putting any students on the spot.

The suggestions below are less teacher-centred than the more traditional methods and make checking answers a little more interesting.

- **Put the answers on the board** while the students are finishing the exercise. Students can then check their own answers. Your role is to be available to answer any questions that students might have after checking their answers against yours. This method means that students can work at their own pace. You might like to have an extra question or two ready for the very fast students.
- **Have the questions and answers on a sheet** and hand it out when students have finished an exercise. This works very well for exercises such as matching activities and tasks for which you have made cards, as the sheet is also a future reference for the students. Pairs and groups can use the sheet to check against what they have done. Monitor and answer any questions which arise. Again, you might like to have an extra question ready for the fast pairs / groups.
- **Check individual student's work.** They can then check their neighbour's, who can check their neighbour's, etc. This works well when students are working alone. It gives you the chance to check the faster, and often more able, students' work and explain any incorrect answers. They then compare their correct answers with their neighbour's and try to explain why an answer is incorrect. It can be useful to encourage more able students to help less able ones. Monitor and help with explanations where necessary.
- **Have the answers available somewhere in the room.** One option is to attach the answers to the wall so that students go and check their own answers. This allows you to see who has finished. Alternatively, if you have time and enough space in your classroom for students to move around, you could put the answers at various places around the room. For example, for Unit 2, Part B, exercise 3b, you could have individual sentences (*She is working at the animal hospital today. She always wears a uniform*

to work. etc.) in view in different places around the classroom. When students have finished, they get up and move around the classroom to check their answers. This adds a bit of fun to an exercise and allows students to move around.

Pre- and Post-Listening / Reading

The listening and reading exercises in *Compass* are designed to improve learners' listening and reading comprehension and give them confidence in a real English-speaking communicative situation. The tips below refer to both receptive skills of listening and reading. You can offer your learners strategies for coping with listening and reading comprehension before they listen to or read a text, both in and out of the classroom, and we have given three strategies below. Also, by giving them the chance to do something with the information they have learned, you are showing them how much they really can understand. The teacher's notes offer post-listening / post-reading tasks for some activities.

Pre-listening / Pre-reading

- **Predicting:** Before your learners listen, give them some clues on the subject and get them to predict what they might hear. For example, in Unit 17, Part B, exercise 4a, the learners are asked to tick the phrases they expect to be in the text. This prepares them for the information which is coming.
- **Remembering:** Students are usually asked to listen to a text first to get the general idea of what it is about and then to listen for specific details. Before playing the text a second time, ask them whether anyone can remember any of the information. An example of this is Unit 11, Part B, exercise 2c. In the teacher's notes, we suggest asking the students whether anyone remembers any of the information from the first listening.
- **Pre-teaching vocabulary:** If you think your learners would benefit from having some of the vocabulary in the listening or reading text explained before they listen, you could use synonyms, definitions, drawings or mimes to explain them. Try to avoid simply giving a translation of the word / phrase. Also, it's important to make it clear to your learners that they don't have to know the meaning of *every* word in order to understand what the text is about.

Post-listening / Post-reading

- If you have time for **an extra activity** after a reading or listening exercise, it can be useful for students to use the information to do something themselves. The teacher's notes on Unit 17, Part A, exercise 3b, for example, suggest asking the students to write a text on the woman similar to others on the same page. This gives them practice using the vocabulary from the lesson. The teacher's notes for Unit 6, Review, exercise 2c, suggest asking the students to write a postcard from the guesthouse they have read about, which personalises the exercise.

Writing

There is a lot that learners can write, even at the A2 level. Encourage them to write in English as much as possible in their daily life, as this will help their understanding of grammar, spelling, and is useful for vocabulary development. Here are four ideas to encourage your students to use English as part of their daily lives.

- **Shopping lists:** Why not encourage your students to write their shopping lists, or part of them, in English? It's simple and quick to do, and they can write as much or as little in English as they want each time.
- **Recipes:** You could start a cake-making tradition. Each month, a different student brings a cake and writes the recipe in English, with your help. At the end of the semester, you could put all the recipes together so that each student has a memento of the English class.
- **Diary:** Encourage your students to keep a diary in English, just for themselves. They can write as much or as little as they want and don't need to show it to anyone. You could encourage your students to put this diary into their Dossier (see *Compass* Portfolio).
- **Emails:** Do your students write emails or texts to you or each other? Ask them to write the text in English. Some ideas are given for such emails in the Contact sections of the *Out and About* booklet.

Speaking

Communication is given high priority in the *Compass* course books and learners are given lots of opportunity to speak, either in pairs, in groups or in class. The *Flexizone C* activity provides you with two or three questions to start a discussion in class, based on the theme of the unit part. Below are three ideas on how to use this Flexizone activity and then some suggestions on dealing with students who either dominate or don't participate, as well how to deal with controversial opinions which may come up. There is also a photocopiable list of useful discussion phrases to give to your students. They could highlight three or four phrases which they would like to use in the discussions. Encourage students to speak as freely as possible and not to worry too much about making mistakes as the idea here is to improve their fluency and not necessarily focus on accuracy.

- **A discussion**, either where all students are free to give their opinion, or, if you want to make it more structured, where each student is allowed to make a certain number of contributions to the discussion (see below). This has the advantage of making sure that everyone has the chance to speak. Flexizone C in Unit 2, Part A would work well as a class discussion.
- **A debate**, where groups of students have different opinions on the subject. You could divide the students into groups according to their opinion on a subject or as they are sitting. Give each group time to prepare their opinions. Monitor and help with vocabulary. You could set up the first questions in Flexizone C in Units 3 and 10 (Part A) as debates.
- **A chat**, where weaker students can benefit from talking about the topics in small groups of three or four. Also if your classroom allows it, put groups of chairs together for chat groups as your learners will be able to talk in a more relaxed way if they are not sitting behind desks. More personal subjects, such as that in Flexizone C, Unit 11, Part A, are very good for such chats.
- **Dominant / quiet students:** If you have one or two students who dominate a discussion, try giving each student three or four paper clips / chocolates. When a student gives an opinion, they give you a paper clip / eat a chocolate. This is repeated until the paper clips / chocolates are all gone. This method can also encourage quieter students to speak, although it is important that they are never put under pressure. You can help build quieter students' confidence by asking them to answer questions which you know they can answer – perhaps because you have seen that they have the correct answer while monitoring. If someone gives a controversial or provocative opinion in a discussion, it's best to stop further discussion by saying *That's interesting, but I would like to go back / go on to the question of ...* .

- **List of useful phrases**

You can copy the following phrases for your students.

Useful phrases

Asking for an opinion

What about ...?

What do you think?

Do you agree with (Sigrid)?

Giving your opinion

I (don't) think ...

In my opinion

Agreeing

I think so, too.

I agree.

Disagreeing

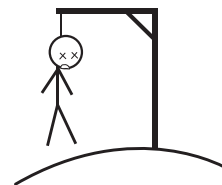
I don't think so.

I'm sorry, but I don't agree.

Vocabulary

It is always good to give your learners the opportunity to practise the vocabulary which they have learned in a lesson. This could be in the lesson itself or as revision at a later stage. Below, there are some suggestions for revising vocabulary quickly and without much preparation.

- **Back to the board:** This can be done if you have a spare 5 or 10 minutes at the end of the lesson. Place two chairs with their backs to the board and invite two volunteers to sit on them. Write a word or phrase on the board. The rest of the class describe the word or phrase, without saying the word / phrase itself until one of the volunteers guesses the correct word. Continue with two different volunteers.
- **Hangman:** This is a favourite which can be used at any level when you have a spare 5 minutes. Either write the words you would like to revise on small pieces of paper or ask the students to think of a word themselves. Draw the hangman figure on the board for reference. Demonstrate the activity by choosing a word and drawing a dash for each letter of the word on the board, e.g. if your word was *Compass*, you would draw _ _ _ _ _ . Ask the students to call out a letter, e.g. *a*. If your word has this letter, write it in (so for *Compass* you would have _ _ _ _ a _ _). If not, draw the first line to form the hangman figure and write the letter under the hangman so that students can see which letters have already been called out. Continue until either the word or the hangman figure is complete. Allow each student to come to the board with a word.
- **Mime / Pictionary:** Either write the words / phrases you would like to revise on pieces of paper or ask students to think of some themselves. In small groups, volunteers take a word / phrase and either mime or draw it for the other students until someone guesses correctly.
- **Gap sentences:** Write sentences on the board or on paper, but leave out the word you would like to revise. Students write the sentences and add the missing word.



Teaching grammar communicatively

The *Compass* course books all teach grammar in a communicative way. This means that a grammar point is always set in a relevant context, that the grammar is personalised where possible and practised in a fun way.

- **Creating a relevant context:** It is much easier to learn grammar items if they are taught in a relevant context, as students can relate them to a real-life situation. In Unit 4, Part A, for example, students read a text on Buffalo Bill, who lived in the 19th century. Students are therefore introduced to the past simple through the text on Buffalo Bill and then given lots of exercises in which to practise the tense themselves.
- **Personalising grammar:** Many of the freer activities to practise the grammar learnt in the unit give learners the chance to talk about themselves. An example of this is Unit 4, Part B, exercise 3, where students walk around the class and tell each other what they used to do as a child.
- **Working out the rule:** Students are often encouraged to work out a grammar rule for themselves, often from a text. In Unit 5, Part A, the students read a text on India which includes the past progressive. They are then asked whether the text describes a scene or lists events in a story. Once they have decided on when we use the past progressive, they are shown how to form it. Learners find it more useful to discover language rules for themselves.
- **Grammar can be fun:** Who said grammar had to be boring?! *Compass A2* gives you lots of ideas for making grammar practice fun. The *Flexizone* game in Unit 8, Part B is an excellent example of how students can use the language they have learnt in the unit (here the present perfect), in a fun way.