



Tutor Survival Kit

Sample Pages

by Evelyn Renner

A collection of interactives that provide fun and adventure during the journey involved in acquiring the skills to speak, read and write English.

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Literacy programs have asked that an ESL Kit and Basic Literacy Kit be published to satisfy funding sources and program requirements. A beginning ESL student is usually learning speaking skills and is referred to in the kit as a *hear → speak* student. A literacy student is basically learning speaking, reading and writing skills and is referred to in the kit as a *speak → read → write* student. To insure you have a variety of activities to meet your student's needs as he progresses, the activities in this kit cover *hear → speak → read → write*. By selecting appropriate activities, this kit can be used with either an ESL or literacy student.

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Welcome to the fourth edition of what I think is the greatest collection of *interactive* games, gadgets and great ideas that can help tutors share the mysteries and madness of English—the world’s craziest language.

Language is difficult to acquire under the best of circumstances. English, however, is probably one of the most difficult languages of all to acquire! What we say is very different from what we write, and our idioms are enough to send the most determined students screaming from the room.

We *run out of gas* even though we’re driving; we *catch cold* even though it’s invisible. Our verbs are moody and make little sense, and our sense of humor is wonderful, but easily misunderstood.

Language is difficult to acquire because it’s alive. It changes with the people and the mood of the country, and is influenced by all those who use it. If a country’s population is relatively stable, with little international influence, the language stays somewhat the same.

Language is difficult to acquire because it’s alive.

But, if a country’s population is always changing, with profound international influences, the language seems to change daily. That sounds like my wonderful part of the country, and it probably sounds like yours.

You may be able to teach someone about history, but you can’t teach someone about our language. You can only provide them with a language-rich, context-based environment and let the people exposed to our language assimilate what they feel is needed.

We acquire an accent when we move to another part of a country, or lose an accent when we leave a part of the country, through assimilation and exposure to a language-rich, context-based environment. Our English as a Second Language students need this same environment to master meaningful English. The journey may not be easy for them but they experience the adventure with enthusiasm. The adventure can be great fun for us, too.



The materials in this survival kit are based on these concepts:

- ◆ A language-rich, context-based environment encourages students to interact with real English.
- ◆ English from a book that's discussing phonics or grammar doesn't assist a student with literacy skills.
- ◆ English from fluent, relaxed, caring English-speaking tutors sharing their skills and knowledge is the most valuable English we can give a student.
- ◆ Through conversation and collaborative activities, a tutor can enrich the student's efforts to master English, enhance the student's quality of life in the United States, and have a great time in the process.
- ◆ Don't do anything a student can do. People learn by doing, not observing!

Don't do anything a student can do.

People learn by doing, not observing!

I hope you enjoy the adventure!

Evvy Renner



Language Acquisition Principles

We can accelerate our student's mastery of English by understanding and utilizing some very simple principles:

- 1] Learning a language is based on *process* not product. Activities and interaction with an English-speaking person provides students with the *process-based* learning that will include not only speaking or reading English, but also understanding it as well. Speaking, reading and writing any language doesn't mean there is *understanding*, just imitating. If we don't bring understanding with us on this journey with our students, we have accomplished nothing.
- 2] Everything we do that our students can do denies our students *process*, and process-based learning has more meaning. So, only do what your students can't.
- 3] Honor your students, their culture and heritage as much as you honor your own. They may change their values or ideas over time, but as a tutor, we will show them what they want and need from our culture, and let them, as adults, determine what they will keep and integrate into their lives.
- 4] Learning grammar rules is not particularly productive to learn a language. Once the language has been spoken, and if the student has questions about the rules, grammar is a valuable tool to show them what parts of our language are consistent. To demonstrate this, simply pick up a grammar book, and read a section about adding an *s* to a word. You will probably say, "So, that's why I do it that way!"

When most of us need to find out how something should be written, or said, we evaluate its correctness by whether it "sounds right" or "looks right" and not by "That's Rule #122 in an English Grammar Book."

If we don't bring understanding with us on this journey with our students, we have accomplished nothing.



That's because once there is an understanding of a language and what *sounds or looks right*, the rules stick better and make more sense. So, in a like manner, as your students attain fluency, and ask technical questions about why English is the way it is, we can encourage them to go to school because they now have the skills to take classes on grammar, spelling, and anything else they want, and discover answers themselves.

- 5] We gear our lessons to provide meaningful, collaborative interaction based on what the student already knows, and what the student wants to know. The *journey* between what they know, and what they want to know is the context-based, interactive lesson we can design using the materials in this Survival Kit.
- 6] EMPOWER your students to share a full partnership with you in this entire adventure. Plan together, laugh together, and learn together.
- 7] Mistakes are opportunities; Questions are opportunities; Opportunities are lessons!
- 8] Focus on content, the *message*, not on grammar or pronunciation. Be message-based as a tutor, not grammar-based.
- 9] We don't speak English naturally in short bursts of one or two words, like "table," "chair." We speak in sentences. Usually. So, don't speak unnaturally to your students by using short bursts of nouns. Instead, say "This is my table." "There is the chair." Because that's more natural. Right?

*Plan together,
laugh together,
and learn together.*

If you have any questions, check with your literacy program.



The Stages of Language Acquisition

Throughout the Survival Kit, the activities are identified with the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4. These numbers represent the *fluency level* needed for the activity. Although this seems like a clean, neat way to identify which activities work best with which students, please keep in mind that nothing in life is that clean and neat.

You'll find just about every activity in this Survival Kit can be modified to use with just about every student. That makes the idea of labeling each activity with a fluency level very difficult because by editing the narrative for all the activities, we could probably show all four levels for all the activities! But, we didn't do that. We worked very hard to use our best instincts and experience to provide a guide to assist with the selection of activities for students based on fluency levels. Use your instincts and experience to modify any activity to accommodate your students and your situation.

Here's a description of what you can expect from a student at each of these four levels.

Low-Level Students: Hear → Speak Students

Generally, these students have minimal English skills and are generally learning English as their second or third language.

Level 1 students communicate primarily through gestures and possibly a few nouns. They must hear the language over and over before they begin to internalize it and attempt to pronounce English. They will *listen, point, move, match, act out* and even *draw* what they see and hear based on your message, but the activities are geared to elicit non-verbal responses. Focus on practical nouns, but never isolate words. Instead, use short sentences. It's much more natural.

Level 2 students can speak one or two word noun/verb combinations. The words may be difficult to understand, but remember we are *message-based*. They will say a few words, small sentences and phrases, and understand and say important nouns and verbs.

Just about every activity in this Survival Kit can be modified to use with almost every student.



Remember, pronunciation comes with exposure. Model correct English grammar and pronunciation, but don't correct their pronunciation! First of all, it won't do any good until they have mastered our English sound system. Second, error correction doesn't really work; modeling does. Third, pronunciation changes or improves over time, just as *your* speech pattern or pronunciation might change if you moved to a different part of the United States.

High-level Students:

Speak → Read → Write Students

Generally, these students are native born or foreign-born with good speaking skills.

Level 3 students communicate!. They speak and are beginning to read. They can describe, explain, summarize, compare, communicate, and ask questions. Their English may not be perfect, but they get their message across. They will be more inclined to tell you what they need to know, and to ask you to help them with materials or situations they encounter.

Level 4 students can speak, read and write English well enough to be independent members of the community. They are fluent and focus more on fine-tuning reading, writing, reducing their accent (which is *not* a literacy issue) and English grammar. It's time to send them to adult education!

Please note:

A beginning ESL student is usually learning speaking skills and is referred to in the kit as a *hear → speak* student. A literacy student is basically learning speaking, reading and writing skills and is referred to in the kit as a *speak → read → write* student. To insure you have a variety of activities to meet your student's needs as he progresses, the activities in this kit cover *hear → speak → read → write*. By selecting appropriate activities, this kit can be used with either an ESL or literacy student.

The activities in this kit cover hear → speak → read → write.



How to Use the Survival Kit

There are basically three components to developing an activity for a lesson plan; (1) designing an activity, (2) based on their current fluency level, that (3) to develop skills they can use immediately at home, at work or in the community.

This Survival Kit addresses two of these components; the activity to use and the students' fluency level. The third component—something they can relate to at home, at work, or in the community—is the *context* that you and your student must determine together.

For example, if you and your student want to work learning the tools he uses at work, and you know the student's fluency level, simply browse through the survival kit and select a few activities that might work within the context of tools.

As you review the activity descriptions, keeping the context of tools in mind, you can easily tell if that activity will work for tools—or how to modify the activity for it to work. Sometimes these activities are described for small groups, and sometimes one-to-one situations. In almost every instance, the activity can easily be modified for either situation. Just use your common sense and a little creativity!

The activities you design using this Survival Kit focus on the new information you are introducing to your student during the lesson. The lesson itself involves at the very minimum several other activities, including; a review from previous lessons; assessment of any special needs the student may have that need to be addressed during the session's activities; new information developed from understanding the three components discussed in the Survival Kit—context, fluency level, and activities; a dialogue between you and the student about the new information; and what else the student may need in order to plan the next lesson.

The activities you design using this Survival Kit focus on the new information you are introducing to your student during the lesson.



Over the years this survival kit has been used by many tutors that have given us some great suggestions for the survival kit. The latest edition, thanks to our wonderful readers, is a new, user-friendly version with a wonderful new look.

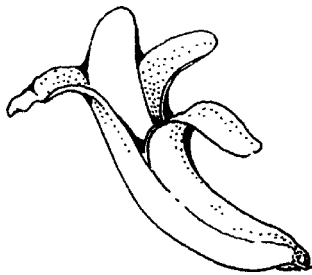
Enjoy!



1, 2

Add an Object

Using a collection of pictures, or the actual objects from a context the student has chosen, (such as tools from work, kitchen utensils, food groups, or animals) place the pictures or objects on a table and begin by discussing each object with a simple sentence such as “This is a dish. This is a cup. This is a knife.” Repeat this several times, always using the same order and handling each object. Ask them to repeat it if they are comfortable doing so. Then, add a word to each sentence, and discuss what the new word means. For



example, “This is a *round* dish.” Then point to something else that is round—like a watch or clock and gesture what the word “round” means. Repeat the discussion about the word “round” until they show they understand the new word. Then, move to the next object, and do the same with the cup. Say something

like “This is a coffee cup.” Discuss the word “coffee” using name brands. (Most students know words in English for product names, or show an ad in a newspaper for coffee.) Then work on the knife, saying something like “This is a *sharp* knife.” (or a long knife, or a short knife) and discuss the added word.

Repeat this activity several times. Ask them to repeat it when they are comfortable. Then add another word to each sentence, such as “This is a round *yellow* dish.” and “This is a *brown* coffee cup.” etc.

Ask them again to repeat the sentences when and if they are comfortable. Each new word will also have to be discussed. Now combine sentences, such as “This is a round yellow dish and a brown coffee cup.” Eventually add words like *near*, *next to*, *above* and quantities, such as *two black pens*, etc. This exercise can be conducted over several sessions and adds many new words to a student’s vocabulary.

Use this interactive to introduce important nouns.

**3****Add a Word**

Ask the students to make word cards for the nouns he's learned. Next, ask him to pick a card and add a word to the card. For example, if the noun on the card was *car*, he might add the word *small* and says *small car*.

If more than one student is participating, have the next student in the class add another word, such as *blue*, and repeats the entire set of words, *small blue car*. If you are working with just one student, you add another word. Don't be surprised if sometime the student says, *blue small car*. If that occurs, simply say the correct order of the words and proceed.

Continue adding words as long as the sentence makes sense and there is a high degree of success. When the sentence is completed, write it down and discuss the words used in the sentence. Then, continue with the next noun card. After the sentences have been completed and written, introduce the parts of speech, such as adjectives, verbs, etc. Or, use adjective and verb cards. The students have to add the adjective or verb card to one of the sentences already developed, or develop a new sentence with the word. As the sentences are developed, the cards used for each sentence should be placed on the table so the students can recall the sentences and sequence of the words in each sentence being developed.

2, 3, 4**Analyzing**

Students learn a great deal from analyzing things. It doesn't have to be a very technical conversation, either. For example, a student can analyze the difference in tastes between a piece of candy and a lemon; or using pictures, the differences between a sports car and a van; or on a more complex level, analyzing why they feel a democracy is better than the form of government in their country.

Use this interactive to introduce nouns and their related adjectives.

Use this interactive to introduce analyzing information.



The analysis will depend on their level and fluency. Lower level students can compare tastes, how things feel (smooth or rough), or pictures of things. Higher-level students can compare concepts or philosophies.

Encourage students to use *graphic organizers*, (charts or graphs) to visually represent their analysis. Even low-level students can get a great deal from such visual activities. For example, discuss differences in culture, food, clothing, or education using a chart or graph, and then analyze the similarities and differences. (See *Graphic Organizers*.)

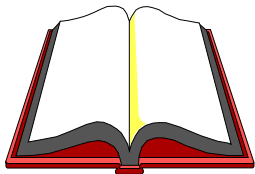
2, 3

Around the House

Ask the student to bring some kind of reading material that is regularly found around his or her house. Discuss the information and scan the materials together. As soon as possible, begin reading the material together.

3,4

Author! Author!



Work together to write a story that the student can read to a child or grandchild. Or, together develop a play and write down the dialogue she can read aloud to her children. Or, the student and tutor could write their own dialogues for a story and read them together.

Use this interactive to introduce writing skills.

2, 3, 4

Bananas Anyone?

If a student has a difficult time spelling, saying or remembering a specific word, have him write the word on something unusual, such as a banana, avocado or orange, using a felt pen or ink pen. The shapes, sizes, colors smells and laughter may help him remember the experience and the word!

Use this interactive to remember how to spell or say an important word.

**2, 3**
BINGO!

Students can make a grid on a piece of construction paper large enough to hold small pictures cut from catalogs and magazines. As the student pastes pictures on the grid, the tutor discusses and pointing to the items describing what the items are and their use. Once the student is familiar with the words, she can cover the picture with a blank card when you say the word representing that item. Or, encourage the student to say the name of the item and then cover the item with the blank card. Continue until all the pictures are covered. This is also great with numbers and different domains.

3, 4
Blank Comics

Work regularly with a comic strip the student enjoys. Cut up frames of the comic for sequencing practice. Block out the dialogue using sticky notes or blank address labels. Work together on a new dialogue for the strip by discussing possible new story lines for the pictures. Encourage your student to use his imagination. He can make up new stories no matter how fantastic, or revise the story line to make it more amusing, to make a political or social statement, to address a social issue, to be sarcastic, daring, or less violent. Plan together what each picture's dialogue should be. Write them on a piece of paper to check grammar and spelling. When he's satisfied with the dialogue, ask him to write the new dialogue in each comic strip frame.

Use this interactive to encourage a student's imagination.



3, 4

Board Games

Next time you're cleaning closets, check for old board games. Think about using them in the tutoring activities. A board game has great possibilities for some unusual learning and fun!

Work with the student to design a board game using that might include one or more of these activities:

- Instead of dice determining how many places the token can be moved, the student uses selected words from flash cards in sentences and moves the token the same number of spaces as the number of letters in the word.
- If the student uses the word in such a way that the content is understood, the student rolls one or two dice to determine how many spaces to move.
- If the student is not able to use the words selected in sentences, the tutor provides a sentence. If the student can then use the word in a sentence, he can take his turn. If not, the turn is forfeited.
- Using sticky notes, rename the areas of the board where the tokens move to include words, sounds, or topics. Then, after the student has rolled the dice, he can move the token if the word can be used in a sentence, or if the sound can be pronounced. If he is unable to provide an understandable message, he forfeits the turn. During the time he is waiting for the next turn, he can look in his notes for the information needed to respond. Be sure to discuss the game and set the rules before you begin.

Use this interactive to develop planning skills and word decoding skills.