

Do's and Don't's of Teaching Grammar

- **DO** use grammar as a tool for improving students' writing and understanding of the language—using grammar (in Standard English or variations of it) as a building block rather than a way to tear apart their writing helps them use it to achieve their purpose in a more effective manner.
- **DON'T** highlight every error in their writing and deduct a point for every mistake—if you treat grammar as something to be reprimanded, they'll just view it as a punishment from the beginning.
- **DO** have students be more creative in the classroom— composing a class handout using their own examples, doing small group interactive exercises that apply the grammar to their own writing, etc., are great ways to keep students interested and involved.
- **DON'T** make them observe examples from a book simply written on a board—it makes grammar boring and detached, instead of encouraging them to use it in their writing.
- **DO** introduce them to different dialects and writing styles, and encourage their own creativity—even though it's important to learn Standard English, some of the greatest writers in history have broken the rules.
- **DON'T** insist that Standard English is the only acceptable grammar to learn—instead, introduce them to different ways the language and grammar can change according to situations (i.e. code-switching).
- **DO** vary the structure of your class periods and grammar lessons—this will help avoid redundant patterns that make it seem like busywork.
- **DO** show them examples of grammar (both Standard English and variations) in context—this will help them appreciate it in published literature.
- **DON'T** make them take multiple-choice or fill-in-the-blank tests—this forces them to memorize the grammar as information to forget once they've taken the test.
- **DO** use a sense of humor sometimes—for example, a collection of pictures of signs with grammatical errors that changes the meaning will help them learn better than a dull handout of common errors.
- **DO** have them apply the grammar directly to their writing—giving them the chance to consciously use grammar in the context of their own writing helps them understand it better.
- **DON'T** spend time repeating the same elements they have covered every year—this makes grammar a constant review rather than learning new concepts to build upon old knowledge.
- **DO** create a list of new concepts or brainstorm problematic areas *as a class*—this lets them have some control in their schedule, which makes them more involved in the class.
- **DON'T** force-feed students repetitive exercises that they do just to get out of the way—this makes them think of grammar as meaningless busywork.