

## 4 challenges in teaching young learners online and tips for overcoming them

### Challenge 1: Giving instructions is difficult

Giving instructions in an online lesson can be difficult:

- 1) You may not be able to see your students' reactions as clearly as in a face-to-face classroom to see if they can understand what you're saying.
- 2) Problems with connectivity might mean students miss parts of the instruction too. Without a friend sitting next to them to check what you've said, students could get lost quite quickly.

#### Solutions:

Think about how you give your instructions. Can you write the instructions on your presentation so students can read what they have to do as well as listen to you? Remember to ask questions to check that your students have understood what they have to do and always do an example of an activity before starting it.

Another idea is to use activities that your students are already familiar with and have done before. This can help to cut down on the time it takes to explain what to do. If you use sample tasks from **Pre A1 Starters, A1 Movers and A2 Flyers**, this also helps them feel more prepared for the exam.

Lastly, you could give instructions or check they've understood your instructions in your students' L1, particularly if they are quite young or a low level. This can help to save time and also be comforting for students. For more ideas on giving instructions and teaching young learners online, watch **this webinar** which is full of tips and activities.

### Challenge 2: Activities take longer to prepare and longer to teach

Activities tend to take longer when teaching online as you have to allow time for any technical problems, and for checking all your students can see and hear you.

#### Solutions:

Don't try to fit too much into each lesson. Have one clear aim and keep your lesson simple! Think about short activities that vary in pace to help you reach that aim. Plan in a few extra minutes for each activity and plan a flexi-stage that could be left out if you find you're running out of time.

Use time-efficient feedback methods. Plan how you will give feedback and check answers during the lesson. Rather than nominating individual students to give their answers which can be time consuming and also make students anxious, show the answers on the screen for students to check themselves. Not only will this save time but it will encourage students to reflect on their own work by checking their own answers. You could also ask students to hold their work up to the camera so you can see their work at a glance.

To give you some support and help you cut down on your planning time, we've created lesson plans to cover every task in the Pre A1 Starters, A1 Movers and A2 Flyers exams. These complete lesson plans are designed to cover a 45 minute – 1 hour lesson but can be easily adapted to suit your needs. Download them from the **Teacher Resource Finder**.

**Challenge 3: Students get distracted easily**

Unlike in the classroom, you have no control over the environment students are joining the lesson from. They could be in the same room as other people in their family doing other things. Wherever they are, there are so many reasons they might get distracted during their online lessons.

**Solutions:**

Involve students in the lessons as much as possible! Talk to all of the students and use their names when talking to them. Give them a physical task and change the pace of the lesson to get their attention back. You could ask them to show you something that's in the room where they are - ask them to tell you about it. Tell them to hold up something of a certain colour or to 'clap if...'. This is a good way to involve students without them having to talk, to check their understanding of something or to share their answers to a task. As well as helping to keep students' attention, it's also a break away from focussing on something which is on screen.

Another way to involve students and keep them engaged is to have them make their own flashcards to hold up. Have a look at our **A2 Flyers Reading and Writing Part 4** lesson plan (optional extension, p4) for an example of how to do this. Students create flashcards with different prepositions and have to choose the right ones to hold up at the right time. Students really have to listen and focus on what they are doing.

Finally, grab their attention with a song! Students can sing along to a song and even dance or do a movement when they hear a particular word. Not only will this raise energy levels but it can help practise vocabulary. You can find songs to choose from in the **Sing and Learn** section of the Cambridge English website.

**Challenge 4: I talk too much/students don't talk enough**

Pair work and group work can seem more challenging to set up in an online lesson meaning the teacher can end up talking a lot more than in a face to face lesson. However pair work and group work *is* still possible, you just need to think more carefully about how it can work logistically. If you can incorporate more group and pair work, you can increase how much students are speaking.

**Solutions:**

If you can safely monitor breakout rooms, these are a good way of giving students time away from the whole class to do speaking activities with one another. Alternatively, students can still be put in open pairs to talk to each other while the rest of the students are listening. For students to feel confident enough to do this give them some thinking and planning time first. You could try using a spot the difference activity which is a task students have to do in A1 Movers Speaking Part 1 and A2 Flyers Speaking Part 1. This can be done as a whole class and in pairs. As an open class activity, you could show the two pictures on your screen, giving students some time to find the differences. You could split the class into 2 groups and ask a student from group 1 to give a difference. Then go to group 2 and do the same. Ask different students each time.

Another way of ensuring students are talking more and you less, is to demonstrate an activity but then encourage students to lead the activity. You can find an activity in the **A1 Movers Speaking Part 4** lesson plan which shows students how to make a chatterbox so they can ask their partner questions. Students practise different vocabulary, asking and answering questions and they don't need to rely on the teacher to be involved!