

Herbert Puchta's

101

Tips for Teaching Teenagers

Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers
Pocket editions

Series Editor: Scott Thornbury

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Herbert Puchta's 101 Tips for Teaching Teenagers

Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers

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Herbert Puchta



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Thanks

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Typeset

QBS Learning.

Why I wrote this book

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I have given seminars on teaching teenagers in a great many countries. At the start of these sessions, I normally ask teachers to engage in three rounds of reflection on their own work with teens. First, I ask them what they find rewarding about teaching teenagers. Typical answers colleagues have come up with include: the opportunities a teen classroom provides for them to respectfully influence young people's development; the fact that teens have general knowledge that teachers often don't (the latest trends in popular culture, for example); teenagers' familiarity with modern technology; their spontaneity and the fun it can be teaching them; and the opportunity to talk about 'real' issues with them and challenge them by discussing solutions to real-world problems.

Following on from that, I ask the participants to list the challenges they regularly come across in their teen classrooms, to compare their answers in pairs and to categorise them. The outcomes of this second round are often amazing. My rough guess is that 90 percent of all the categories of challenges that teachers mention is not about language learning *per se*, or what is usually regarded as language teaching methodology. Rather, it is about the specific challenges presented by the facts that teenagers are going through a phase in their lives characterised by not just a desire to be different from parents and teachers, but also by their search for identity, and the worries, fears and insecurities that come with that. How should teachers cope with these challenges?

In a final round, I ask colleagues to list their specific questions about language teaching methodology in the teenage classroom. I usually get quite a few questions on how to teach the four skills, but also on how to help the learners apply efficient learning strategies and what we can do to help them become responsible adults who have learned to make optimum value-based decisions for themselves in life.

These fascinating and wide-ranging discussions with colleagues over the years have shaped the outline of this book. It is about the methodology of teaching teens – and here we are focusing on the teaching of the four skills. But also it is first and foremost about issues that go beyond language and that have a significant influence on learners' willingness

to learn, and the qualities and outcomes of their learning process. In particular, we are looking at motivation, classroom and behaviour management and how we can help foster our learners' maturity. Each of these nine chapters starts with an introduction to the relevant topic and the significance of dealing with it in the teenage classroom.

A look at the literature available on teaching English to teenagers shows that first of all it is scarce, in fact almost non-existent. Secondly, I know of no book that focuses specifically on the issues that quite a few colleagues would seem to need support with. There are, however, some excellent books on what Laurence Steinberg calls the 'New Science of Adolescence'. They deal with educational and psychological issues in the teenage classroom and provide insights based on recent neurobiological research into what goes on in teens' inner world and how that impacts their behaviour and their thinking and feeling.

My own work on teaching teenagers has been significantly influenced over the years by the writing of educational philosopher Kieran Egan. Egan makes the point that a person's intellectual growth happens naturally, through the acquisition of certain intellectual qualities (he calls them 'developments') deeply rooted in our cultural history. In order for an individual's intellect to grow appropriately, the development of certain 'cognitive tools' is essential. The most challenging of these processes is what he calls 'romantic understanding' – a beautiful name, but often a very difficult phase in a young person's life. This is the time when they are overwhelmed with emotions and don't know how to deal with them – with all kinds of consequences for their behaviour and their inner world. In order to move on to 'philosophical development', what is required is the maturation of higher brain functions. It is important to note, however, that these developments are not age-determined; in other words, some young people move into their philosophical thinking frame as late as their twenties or thirties (if at all!).

Fortunately, recent research into teenage development confirms that the teenage years offer great opportunities for us as teachers to influence our learners positively. The tips in this book have been written based on the belief that the problems we so frequently come across in the teenage classroom are challenges that we can overcome and that the changes going on in the teenagers' inner world are opportunities for us

to help influence them and guide them towards becoming mature and responsible adults.

I have been involved in teaching teenagers since I started teaching some 40 years ago, first as a teacher in Austria, then as a materials writer, teacher trainer and classroom researcher. Most of the suggestions in this book I have developed and used in various classrooms myself. Others I have learned over the years from colleagues and made ‘my own’ by adapting them so they fit my own personal style best. I hope you will do the same with the activities in this book that you find useful and want to use in your own classes. I believe they will work best if you too make them your own. This will then help you deal with the more difficult teen developments in a way that feels familiar to you, which will in turn enable you to influence your learners’ behaviour – and consequently the classroom dynamics – in the best possible ways.

For readers who would like to immerse themselves more deeply in the fascinating topic of teaching teenagers, I would like to recommend the following books. Not all of them deal with teaching teens directly, but they have had a great influence on my own development and they have informed my thinking and writing over the years.

Arnold, J. and Murphy, T. (Eds.) (2013) *Meaningful Action: Earl Stevick’s influence on language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Egan, K. (1997) *The Educated Mind: How Cognitive Tools Shape our Understanding*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Egan, K. (2005) *An Imaginative Approach to Teaching*. New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons.

Faber, A. and Mazlish, E. (2006) *How to Talk So Teens Will Listen and Listen So Teens Will Talk*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Meddings, L. and Thornbury, S. (2009) *Teaching Unplugged: Dogme in English Language Teaching*. Peaslake UK: Delta.

Puchta, H. and Schratz, M. (1999) *Teaching Teenagers: Model activity sequences for Humanistic Language Learning*. Pilgrims Longman Resource Books. Longman.

Steinberg, L. (2014) *Age of Opportunity: Lessons from the New Science of Adolescence*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.

Stevick, E. (1996) *Memory, Meaning and Method: A View of Language Teaching*, Second edition. Newbury House Teacher Development series: Heinle & Heinle.

Sample only
Streeck, J., Goodwin, C. and LeBaron, C. (Eds.) (2011) *Embodied Interaction. Language and Body in the Material World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. © Cambridge University Press and Assessment 2021

Thornbury, S. (2005) *How to Teach Speaking*. Harlow: Pearson Longman.

Zull, J. E. (2002) *The Art of Changing the Brain: Enriching the Practice of Teaching by Exploring the Biology of Learning*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

A: Motivation

Teaching teens can be a huge challenge if they can't see how English will be of advantage to them in their future, nor indeed how the learning process itself can engage them and arouse their curiosity. The tips in this section are a balance of serious interactions and elements of surprise, fun and gamification. They will help you not only reach out to your learners through your own enthusiasm, but also create a warm and welcoming classroom atmosphere while you challenge and support them on their individual learning paths.

-
- 1 An energy booster to start the lesson**
 - 2 Show your enthusiasm**
 - 3 Help learners see why learning English is important**
 - 4 Make deals**
 - 5 Turn the classroom into a special place**
 - 6 Gamify learning**
 - 7 Teach outdoors occasionally**
 - 8 Take your learners' learning seriously**
 - 9 Empower learners by asking them to teach you**
 - 10 Break routines**
 - 11 Use rewards artfully**
 - 12 Support learners who show self-doubt and negative beliefs**
-

At the beginning of a class, teens can be sluggish. This activity usually raises their energy levels straight away.

I have frequently used this game as soon as the lesson starts, especially while I'm waiting for a latecomer; they can easily join in without disturbing the class.

- Ask the learners to stand up. Say you will ask them a question, and that those who know the answer can sit down. Although they can cheat by sitting down without knowing the answer, if you suspect that, you will ask them for the answer. If you're right, the game is over for them and they must take their chair to the front of the class and sit on it until a new game starts. If you're wrong, they are still in the game, of course.
- Ask the first question, usually about content from the previous lesson.
- In the first few rounds use some pretty challenging questions, so that not too many learners will get the opportunity to sit down straight away. Also, I don't usually ask a check question then. That raises the suspense and the level of fun for the learners.
- When learners sit down, look at them suspiciously. I do this in an exaggerated way and this usually creates quite a bit of laughter.
- Once everyone is seated, tell them to stand up again. Say that this time if they think they know the answer, they should tell their neighbour.
- Note which of the learners do this, then ask one of them for the answer. If that learner has got the answer right, they can sit down, as can any other learners who have got it right.
- As a follow-up, ask one of the learners still standing in the last round to take over from you and ask questions.
- In a very popular variation of the activity, ask questions about trivia instead of content.
- Yet another variation: one of the learners could ask the questions from the beginning of the activity. (This needs to be set up beforehand.)

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B: Classroom management

Classroom management is about techniques, skills and strategies you can use in order to help your learners work in a focused, efficient and academically organised way. Without that, the classroom would be a place so chaotic as to make it very difficult, impossible even, for learners to pay attention and learn effectively. The tips in this section address ways of managing the class (both the room and its occupants) in order to optimise learning.

-
- 13 Activate your learners right from the start**
 - 14 Start the lesson with attention**
 - 15 Establish classroom routines**
 - 16 How to use the walls of your classroom**
 - 17 Enlarge your action zone**
 - 18 Arrange learners in groups for a reason**
 - 19 Use visual anchors**
 - 20 Make lessons flow**
 - 21 Establish an online learning buddy system**
 - 22 Make sure learners do what YOU want them to do**
 - 23 Don't let your voice become high-pitched or loud**
-

You may once have been told that you shouldn't start the lesson without every learner paying attention. That can be tricky!

Have you ever entered the classroom and noticed your learners are anything but ready for the lesson? Some may not have taken their books out, and others may not even have taken their coat off. If you were to face individual learners and say something along the lines of, 'I'm not going to start the lesson unless you take your coat off!' the situation might develop into a wild west kind of showdown. This is because teens want to be in control and complying with what you have just told them to do would mean losing face in front of their classmates.

I have found that it works best to ignore the lack of readiness and instead engage learners in a simple activity straight away. Here are some ideas:

- Work with a partner and write down 10 words that you learned in the last lesson.
- Think of a text you read or listened to in the last lesson. Write three sentences stating what you learned from the text, and three questions you have about the content of the text. Write a short text (for your teacher/for a classmate) beginning: 'Did you hear/see/read about ...?'
- Write three sentences with the first word in each of them starting with the letter *A* (choose any letter, but not *J*, *Q*, *X* or *Z*; they are too rare in English).
- Think of six sentences, each containing a word you recently learned. Write up the sentences, but leave that one word out of each sentence. Give them to a partner to complete.

It is now time for you to walk round, observe what learners are doing and signal to individuals that you are happy with their performance. If a learner has still got their coat on, give them a nod and quietly ask them to take it off.

C: Classroom culture

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I use the term ‘classroom culture’ as discussed by Breen (1986) in addressing the complexity of the interactive and social aspects of the classroom; he portrays this complexity as a coral reef with its surface hiding a multiplicity of life forms and challenges. ‘Most often the flow of classroom life is actually under the surface. What is observable is the rim of a socio-cognitive coral reef! Classroom life seems to require that many learners spend surprising amounts of time doing little, whilst a teacher spends equally surprising amounts of time trying to do too much.’ Hopefully, the tips in this section will help you discover some of the hidden challenges, and explore ways of meeting them successfully (without having to do too much!).

-
- 24 Create a classroom culture your learners want to belong to
 - 25 Show learners you care for their physical well-being
 - 26 Establish the ground rules together
 - 27 Inject some light-hearted fun into the lessons
 - 28 Help learners cope with stress
 - 29 Deal with errors wisely
 - 30 Help your learners learn from their mistakes
 - 31 Ask for feedback
 - 32 Take learners’ emotions seriously
 - 33 Make learners feel they are in control
-

.....

Breen, M. P. (1986) The social context of language learning – a neglected situation. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 7: 135–58.

Create a classroom culture your learners want to belong to

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24

The way you interact with your learners has a significant impact on how welcome they feel.

As a young teacher, I was told by a 14-year-old who I had taught for several years that she had thought at first that I wasn't very nice because when I entered the classroom for my very first lesson with her class, I 'looked grumpy'. I was surprised because I'm not normally seen as bad-tempered. With hindsight, she had probably caught me at a moment when I was deep in thought, unaware of the difference a smile would have made to my learners.

- You never get a second chance to create a first impression. In a class for the first time, smile and make eye contact with all learners.
- Make sure you know learners' names, and use them. Use mnemonic techniques to memorise them, e.g. create an association or rhyme between a person's name and an object the name reminds you of, then a picture that fuses the two. If a learner is called Sue, think of, e.g. *Sue in a zoo*, and remember a picture of her climbing a giraffe's (super-long) neck.
- Keep a 'Getting to know your learners' file. In it, note personal things about them. Use them in small talk.
- Reserve part of a classroom wall or free web-space to display texts your learners have written.
- Some teachers make a point of greeting learners at the classroom door; shaking their hands and telling them it's good to see them.
- Or, if you can, be in the classroom when the learners arrive and greet each one as they enter. Also, related to this, don't make a big deal about latecomers; just let them quietly enter and integrate as quickly as possible into the classroom dynamic.
- Show learners you like teaching them. Even if that isn't a hundred percent true, pretend to do so; a bit of positive pretence can really change the classroom atmosphere for the better, and – magically – can often change your own perception of a difficult class, too!

D: Listening

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Understanding a new language can be a huge challenge, especially for those whose sense of self-esteem is fragile. This is why we need to help our learners get into a focused yet relaxed state of mind, and one in which they feel ready to understand the gist of a text, whether fact or fiction, without an inner voice telling them they can't do it. Listening with a partner, interactive listening activities and listening games are just some of the scenarios we can provide to develop a range of strategies that help with listening tasks.

-
- 34 Teach learners to listen out for keywords
 - 35 Use storyboards with narrative texts
 - 36 Use various ways of dictating texts
 - 37 The super statement challenge
 - 38 Motivate learners to listen attentively to each other
 - 39 Try Rogerian listening to improve communication in class
 - 40 Use collective listening to raise learners' level of attention
 - 41 Encourage learners to record their voice
 - 42 Ways of supporting intensive listening
-

Having to understand the main ideas in demanding texts can be stressful for teens, and that can block their comprehension.

I have used the following strategies to help learners become focused yet relaxed while listening:

- Give learners a handout with a word cloud of, say, 10 to 12 keywords from the listening text, including two or three words that are not. Give them a few minutes to create sentences using the words.
- Tell learners you're going to play an audio text or a video. Ask them to listen/watch and circle the words they hear. Ask learners to work in pairs and create a short summary of the audio/video, drawing on the keywords and their memory.
- Then, ask the pairs to list some questions they have about the content. Ask them to call them out. Write the questions on the board and play the audio/video again.
- Ask learners for any specific comprehension problems. If there are any words, phrases or sentences they don't understand, play the relevant parts of the audio several times so they get a chance to understand without stress. Praise them for their effort in listening several times.

I have successfully used another variation of the keywords technique when revising stories. Start by asking learners to call out words from the story that you have told them or they have listened to in the previous lesson, and write each one of them on the board. Make sure you have plenty of words, at least one per learner. Then allocate a word to each learner. If there are more words, give each learner a second or even a third word. Ask them to listen to the story one more time, and whenever they hear one of their words they should get up, go to the board and point to it, then immediately sit back down, focusing on the listening again.

This is a popular activity as, although it does demand concentration, it allows learners to get out of their seats occasionally as well.

With 17 tips, this section is the longest in the book – justifiably so, I believe, in response to the point made by many colleagues that it is often so very difficult to get teens to talk in the target language. There are sound psychological reasons explaining why the most talkative teen can all of a sudden turn into a monosyllabic stony-faced automaton. Changing that for the better requires the use of a range of strategies aimed to show our learners both that we take them seriously – their emotions, fears (of making mistakes), their opinions, their interests and their own language – and that we can lead them, with the help of the right support and inspiring activities, into a safe and engaged use of the new language.

- 43 Use substitution tables
 - 44 Engage your learners in small talk
 - 45 Use anecdotes
 - 46 Ask the right questions
 - 47 Deal with silence successfully
 - 48 Do use drills
 - 49 Engage learners in effective roleplay
 - 50 Have five-minute activities ready
 - 51 Encourage learners to speak personally
 - 52 Motivate your learners to stick to English in class
 - 53 Design engaging problem-solving tasks
 - 54 Show me your stickers and I'll tell you ...
 - 55 Use concentric circles to foster fluency
 - 56 Use consensograms as a basis for discussions
 - 57 Engage learners in gallery walk conversations
 - 58 Encourage discussions about values
 - 59 The role of the learners' own language (L1)
-

Substitution tables can be really helpful, especially for beginners.

Substitution tables support learners in creating linguistically correct sentences and also help them express themselves meaningfully. However, substitution tables need to go beyond mechanical drills. Paul Nation (2013) says, ‘Teachers need to make sure they not only provide opportunities for exact repetition, but that they also provide opportunities for repetition involving generative use. Retrieval involving generative use is one of the most powerful language learning conditions.’

Here is a substitution table for young teens beginning to learn English.

I	use don't use	my	tablet games console smartphone laptop e-reader	to	play games. listen to music. shop. do homework. talk to my friends.
---	------------------	----	---	----	---

- Write the table on the board to familiarise learners with a key sentence pattern.
- Read out the top sentence in the table, pointing at it word for word. Get learners to repeat the sentence pattern in chorus and individually, then repeat with new sentences.
- Tell learners that you are going to point at an individual word/phrase in a column that offers more than one option. Point at a learner and ask them to say a sentence, but to replace your word with another word from the column.
- Give learners half a minute to think up sentences that are correct linguistically *and* express what they want to say. Give an example about yourself.
- React primarily to what learners say by showing an interest in it when you respond. If they make any mistakes, correct them discreetly (see also 29 about discreet error correction).

Nation, P. (2013) *What Should Every EFL Teacher Know?* Compass Publishing, Kindle Edition.

F: Reading

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Reading requires effort and passion, and to some teenagers it may not seem like something they want to work at. After all, there is a world of electronic temptations out there that require far less effort and feel as though they are going to be a lot more entertaining. Yet many teens are concerned about their future, and how successful they will be in tomorrow's world. So this section provides a range of ideas: some that support less motivated readers; some that give a fascinating insight into what happens in the brain when we read and some that provide clear guidelines to help develop the reading skills needed for passing exams.

-
- 60 Create awareness of what's happening while reading**
 - 61 Vary the lead-in activities you use**
 - 62 Use motivating tasks in connection with extensive reading**
 - 63 Help learners become fluent readers**
 - 64 Use interactive reading ideas**
 - 65 Occasionally, ask learners to read while listening**
 - 66 Regularly revisit texts learners have read**
 - 67 Explore a story using all the senses**
 - 68 Scaffold learners' intensive reading (1)**
 - 69 Scaffold learners' intensive reading (2)**
 - 70 Scaffold learners' inferencing skills with the help of poetry**
 - 71 Engage learners in creating concept maps**
 - 72 Read texts out loud**
-

Create awareness of what's happening while reading

Helping learners become aware of what's happening inside their heads when they read can improve their reading, and increase their enjoyment of it.

When we read a novel, for example, we constantly want to find out what happens next. A little experiment helps learners explore what's going on in their minds when they read:

- Select a very short story, preferably ending in a single sentence containing a twist or a surprise. Tell learners that you are going to present a text to them in a very unusual way: sentence by sentence, with a pause of about 10 seconds after each sentence.
- Ask learners to remain silent during each pause in order to write down what they expect will come next.
- Carry on until you get to the pause just before the last sentence (which you're not going to tell them – yet).
- Tell learners to discuss these questions in pairs or small groups: *At each pause, what did you expect to happen next? And what are your expectations for the ending of the story?*
- Discuss the relevance of learners' experiences to their reading in general. Suggest that a pattern of *pausing – thinking what you've read – becoming aware of your expectations* could be a useful strategy for them to enrich their own reading.

See [Appendix 1](#) for a story whose first paragraph I have used successfully with young adult A2 learners. It's the introduction to a text about Jonnie Peacock, the gold winner of the 100m race at the 2010 Paralympics in London, and is a slight adaptation of a text from Doff et al. (see reference below).

Doff, A., Thaine, C., Puchta, H., Stranks, J. and Lewis-Jones, P. (2015) *Empower. Elementary Student's Book*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

G: Writing

Sample only

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Learners who can express themselves effectively in writing in a new language often have a clear sense of ownership of it. But in many teenage classrooms, this is an idea that has yet to be explored, especially when writing is seen merely as a way of taking notes for exam preparation, or as a way of practising a new language in the form of grammar activities and drills. So this section focuses on some swift and practical ways of getting learners to write short functional texts, then suggests various ways of involving learners in fun and poetic writing tasks, and rounds off with ideas on how to use ‘mentor sentences’: literary models of excellence aimed at enriching the learners’ own writing styles.

-
- 73** Involve learners in writing short texts
 - 74** Help learners get into a writing flow
 - 75** Text transformations
 - 76** Engage learners in silent dialogue writing
 - 77** Use grammar poetry to make language more memorable
 - 78** Mini-sagas
 - 79** Write questions for an interview
 - 80** Wacky lists
 - 81** Use mentor sentences to inspire your learners’ writing
 - 82** Ask learners to write an eyewitness account
-

Writing can be frustrating for beginners and for those who are struggling. So teaching them how to write short, meaningful texts can give learners a terrific sense of achievement.

Teenagers should be taught right from the start to write short texts with a communicative purpose:

- **Short emails:** Emails are easy to write. They can be short and informal. Write emails to ask your learners simple questions that they answer as homework. Teach them to send you emails, too.
- **Writing memos:** Show learners what the format of a memo looks like (*To: / From: / Date: / Subject:*). Show learners how to write memos to each other, e.g. when doing a group project.
- **Writing a personal note:** Write short messages to your learners to congratulate them on an achievement, to thank them for something, etc. Encourage them to write notes to each other, too.

Higher-level learners need to practise writing shorter texts, too – in their work life they will be expected to write concisely and clearly.

- Teach learners how to write **customer feedback messages** after buying something online or eating at a restaurant. A text they can publish immediately!
 - Show learners examples of customer feedback messages – for example, on restaurants' homepages or websites for travellers.
 - Analyse their generic structure: greeting / reason for writing / description of problem(s) or reason(s) for praise/criticism.
 - Identify words/expressions used for positive/negative evaluation.
- Hand out a copy of an unnecessarily long email. Tell learners to shorten it so readers will quickly understand it.
- Set up a closed social media group for the class. Encourage learners to chat in English with each other, and with you, too.

Chong, C. S. (2018) 'Where are the short messages in ELT?' *English Teaching Professional*. Available at: <https://www.etprofessional.com/where-are-the-short-messages-in-elt>

H: Behaviour management

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The non-verbal communications expert Michael Grinder once said, ‘If you can teach teenagers, you can teach anyone!’ That’s true of what we see in many teenage classrooms, and every teacher of teens knows how challenging they can be at times. Provocative and disruptive behaviour, aggressive language, inability or unwillingness to pay attention, lack of persistence when it comes to homework, problems with phones during class – the list goes on. In this section, we look at all these and other issues, and suggest practical things we can do to help and deal with the difficulties, being understanding and supportive, yet firm and fair.

-
- 83 Help learners find out how to pay attention best**
 - 84 Problems with homework? Don’t give up!**
 - 85 Use specific language strategies to stop disruptive behaviour**
 - 86 Don’t let conflicts escalate – make your learners think**
 - 87 Learners are shouting out the answer? Vary the expected response**
 - 88 Avoid conflicts around mobile phones**
 - 89 Help learners solve conflicts in constructive ways**
 - 90 Have strategies ready to deal with attention-seekers**
 - 91 Keep calm with difficult learners**
 - 92 When learners are verbally aggressive – go meta**
-

Learners sitting still with their backs straight may give the impression they're paying attention, but there is no guarantee that this is actually the case.

In an experiment a few years ago (see reference below), a dull two-and-a-half-minute voice message was played to a group of 40 people. Half the group was invited to do a kind of doodling activity while listening, and the other half was told to sit still. Neither group knew there would be a memory test afterwards. When asked about details from the recording, the doodlers remembered 29% more details than those in the other group.

This shows that our beliefs about what paying attention involves may not always be right. It appears that when we're bored and about to switch off, doodling can in fact keep us alert and attentive.

Share this information with your learners and ask them whether they believe doodling while listening may influence their own retention. Then get them to try it, and see whether what they'd thought was right.

Drinking water, eating a snack and chewing gum could have an equally positive effect, by the way. I am aware, however, that might be a bit too far – although your learners might find that cool!

When my sons were teens and wanted to listen to music while doing homework, I was strictly against it. It has been shown, however, that the type of task, one's personality and the type of music may influence the outcomes in different ways. So why not ask your learners to experiment with listening to music while doing their homework?

Pillay, S. (2016) 'The "thinking" benefits of doodling.' Harvard Health Blog. Available at: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/the-thinking-benefits-of-doodling-2016121510844>

I: Fostering maturity

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Despite the fact that teens tend to mature physically at a younger age than they used to, their mental maturity lags way behind. Research shows that the development of the so-called frontal lobe of the neocortex – that is, the structure in the brain required for higher-order thinking, decision making, critical thinking and the willingness to take responsibility for oneself and others – tends to be delayed into their twenties or later. Further, many teens depend heavily on digital social media that can so often create a deceptive sense of accomplishment in them. The tips in this section include ones that will help teens to set realistic goals for themselves and learn to be persistent, defeat procrastination, develop a growth mindset and use efficient study strategies; in short, to work towards becoming responsible adults.

-
- 93 Help learners to set goals and reach them
 - 94 Help learners become responsible adults
 - 95 Help learners beat procrastination
 - 96 Inspire learners to become high achievers
 - 97 Deriving pride from effort – and learning from mistakes
 - 98 Coach body language clusters
 - 99 Help learners develop growth mindsets
 - 100 Teach efficient study strategies
 - 101 Help your learners be happy learners
-

When we ask learners to set goals, they will often do so quite enthusiastically. However, most learners tend to forget about them when they come up against obstacles.

In order to help learners retain their vision of those goals, try these ideas:

- Write or project a text with keywords learners might need in order to talk about their goals, in, e.g. vocabulary, pronunciation, reading, listening, speaking, writing, preparing for exams, studying for tests, getting good grades, etc.
- Give learners an example of a goal and concrete action steps. For example, Goal: *I will increase my knowledge of vocabulary.* Action steps: *Every day we have English, I'll take five minutes to go over new language I have learnt that day, and another 10 to revise language previously learnt. I'll do that for two weeks, starting dd/mm.* Ask learners to work in groups and define more goals and action steps. Help them phrase these well, and write them on the board. Ask all learners to note them down.
- Tell learners to write down examples of what a learner might get out of achieving a goal, e.g. *My parents will allow me to spend more time with my friends.*
- Ask learners to think up reasons they might not stick to their goal, e.g. *I might forget about [my goal],* and a strategy to overcome that obstacle, e.g. *I'll put a note in my calendar to remind me of [my goal].*
- Offer individual feedback to your learners who write up, at home, (1) a goal, (2) the best outcome they could get from achieving it, and (3) concrete action steps to reach that goal, together with (4) what might stop them and (5) a strategy they could use to overcome that obstacle.
- Encourage those learners who have a clear strategy to use it and talk to you regularly about how well it works.

Steinberg, L. (2014) *Age of Opportunity. Lessons from the New Science of Adolescence.* Boston and New York: Mariner Books.

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