

Supporting emotional well-being when returning to the English language classroom

Returning to the classroom will be exciting for learners, but for some, it may cause anxiety. You may also feel anxious yourself.

Be realistic

Look after your own emotional well-being. Share your feelings with your colleagues who may be feeling the same way. Time pressure may be an issue for you and your learners so be realistic about what you can do and don't push yourself or your learners too hard. Remember that it's OK to feel anxious.

Communicate

Look out for signs of learners who are particularly anxious (e.g. they find it hard to concentrate, get angry quickly, seem worried, or seem tired from not sleeping properly). If possible, talk to them one-to-one; have an open conversation with them and listen to their concerns. Establishing a routine is important but remember to allow time for breaks and socialising with friends. Physical activity is good for mental health so get your learners moving around. For primary learners, in particular, you can do actions to songs, or ask them to respond physically to instructions. Creative activities also help, such as drawing or writing/telling stories.

Engage with parents

Ask parents about how their child has been studying at home and let them know how you plan to transition back to the classroom. Remember that this should be a two-way communication. Encourage parents to speak to their children about routines and the expectations of going back to school.

Differentiate

Some learners may not have had access to technology or been able to study much at home. They may feel anxious about gaps in their learning. Support them by differentiating your lessons. Give stronger students tasks to do on their own while you focus on those who need most help. There are resources on the **Cambridge English website** to help you.

Plan and share

A good way to help your learners to feel more prepared and less anxious is to share your plans. Preparing for an exam can give them a goal to work towards and clear aims. Tell them your plans for the year/term but also every week and at the start of each lesson. Outline the important skills they will practise and develop. Encourage your learners to develop good study skills by preparing for what is coming up. For example, for older learners, tell them the topic of the next lesson and ask them to research it on the internet for homework. For younger learners, ask them to bring in pictures or objects (e.g. different animals, photos of their family, their favourite toys, etc.).



Reflect

Reflect with your learners on what they did when studying at home. Did any techniques work more effectively? Why? Think about how you can include these techniques in future lessons. For example, can you let your learners choose from different ways to do a task? Can you use technology for feedback? Reflection can also be useful when addressing the emotional well-being of your students. Ask them to tell you about what they liked or did not like about learning from home, and ask them to share how they felt in a safe way such as written text or video.

