**Classroom management techniques**

Organising the classroom - Classroom layout

The chairs and desks in an English Language classroom can be laid out in a number of ways, from the conventional schoolroom set up to a horseshoe or café style arrangement with islands of tables. It is a good idea to experiment with different classroom layouts, so that you understand which lend themselves best to different activities. Groups of learners may also have a preference for a particular classroom layout, so it can be beneficial to involve them in the process and set up the classroom together at the beginning of the lesson.
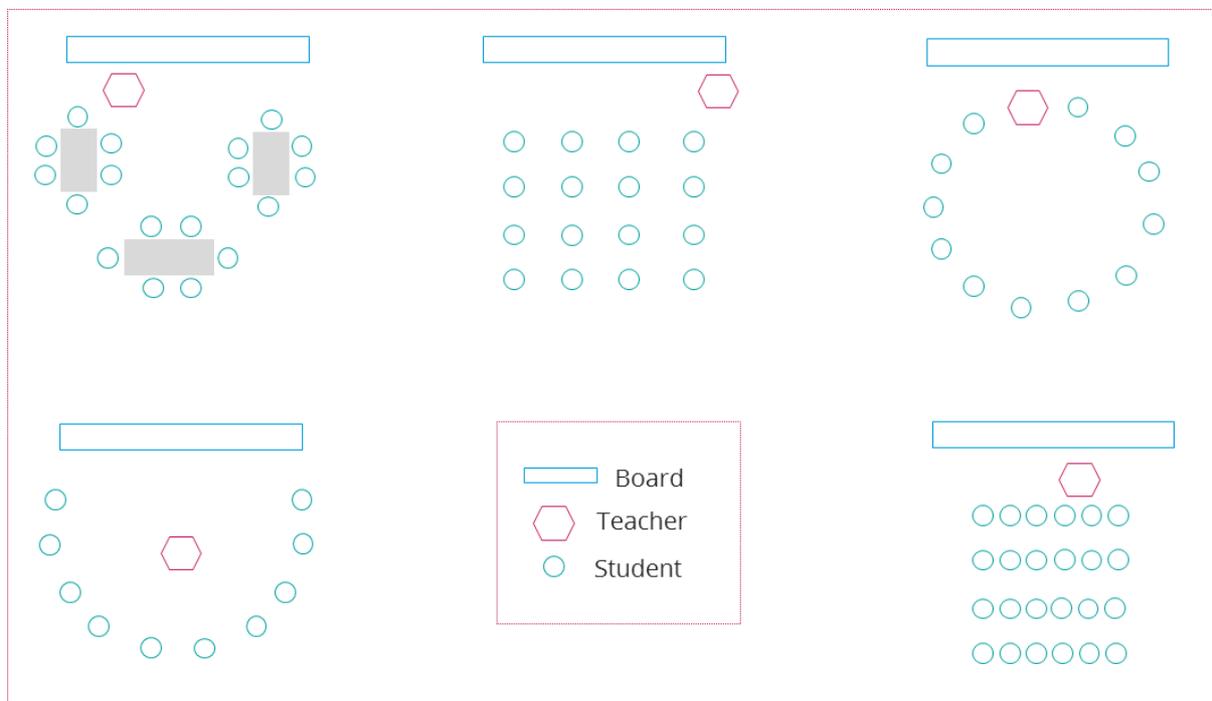
Setting up activities and giving instructions

Setting up class activities can often be harder than it sounds, as the teacher needs to give clear, concise instructions, using language which is at the right level for the learners. It can be difficult to strike the right balance between using language at learners' level and using natural language which isn't oversimplified. When teachers grade their language, they try to use vocabulary and grammar structures which they know the learners are already familiar with, so that they can process the instructions more easily.

Monitoring

Once the instructions have been given and checked and the learners have started the activity, the teacher has a different role to perform. Although it may be tempting to sit down at the front of the class and take a break while the learners get on with it, the teacher needs to remain actively involved in what is happening in the lesson, by moving around the room to check learners' progress and to provide support where necessary. This particular classroom technique is called monitoring and has many different functions, including the following:

- Checking learners have understood the instructions
- Checking learners are working well together and are all involved
- Offering help to learners who are struggling
- Noticing recurring difficulties which need to be addressed at the end of the activity
- Assessing the learners' general language ability – some teachers make notes of both good and bad language use which they can share with the class

Monitoring is often more effective if it done discretely so that the learners aren't overly aware of the teacher's presence. Observing from a slight distance, rather than standing over the learners when they are working, will help them to feel less nervous about making mistakes and will give you a truer picture of their performance. Monitoring is a powerful tool, as it enables teachers to assess individual progress without formally testing the learners.
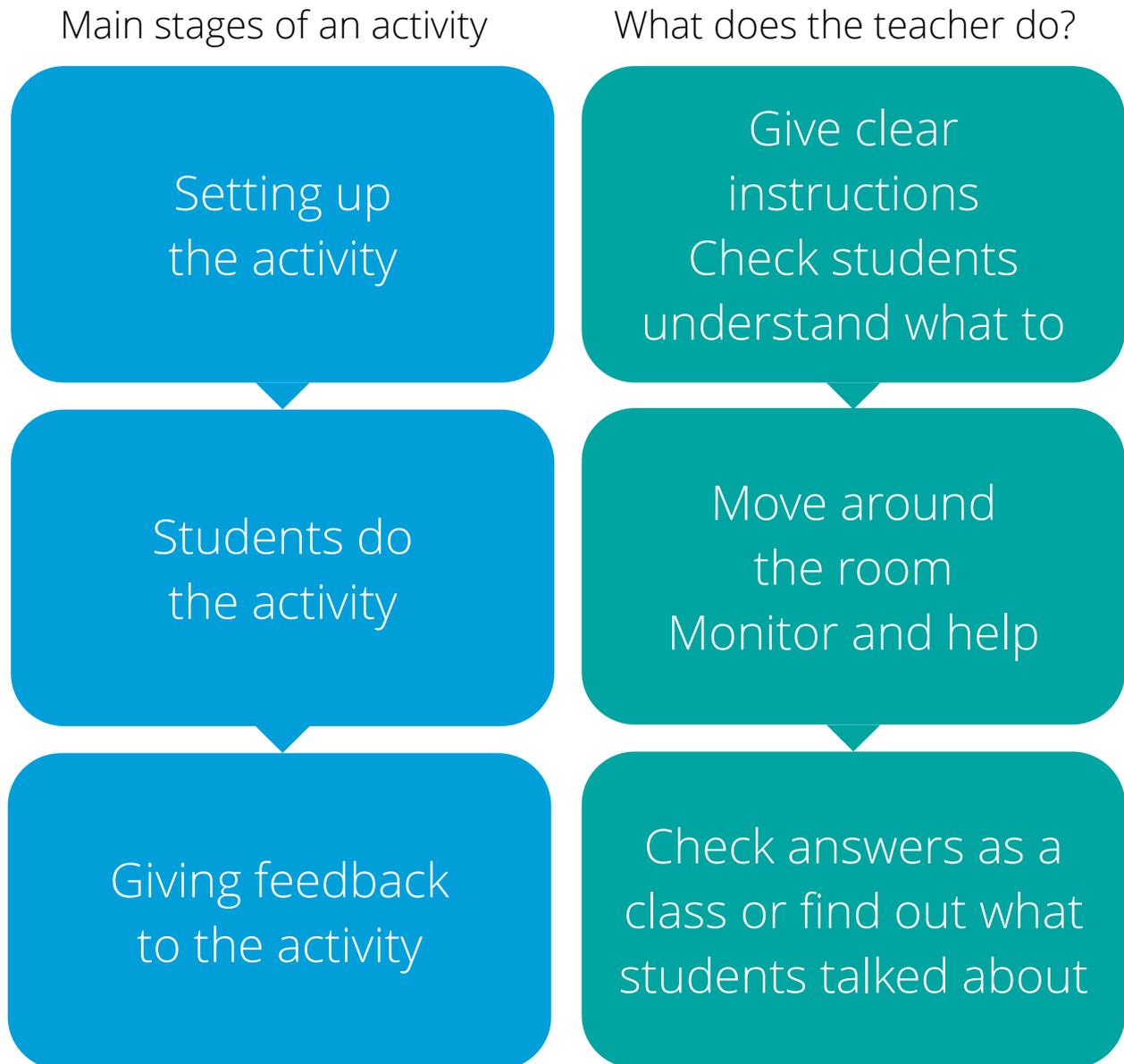
Giving feedback

Once the activity is completed, the teacher needs to regroup the learners and give them feedback on their performance. This includes highlighting areas of weakness, as well as giving praise for what they have achieved. For many activities, it is important to go over the answers together in order to help learners understand why their answers were either correct or incorrect. It is often beneficial if the feedback is visual so that learners can see the answers written down somewhere, for example, recorded on the whiteboard. However, if they have just completed a speaking activity, the feedback

stage is more of an opportunity to share what they have talked about and practise their English further. The teacher can also encourage cross-classroom communication by prompting students to ask each other questions. The feedback stage is always influenced by the teacher's observations during the monitoring process, so that the learners' emerging needs can be addressed.

Teacher roles at different stages

Here's a diagram which summarises the role of the teacher at different stages of the activity cycle.

Main stages of an activity

What does the teacher do?

Setting up
the activity

Give clear instructions
Check students understand what to

Students do
the activity

Move around
the room
Monitor and help

Giving feedback
to the activity

Check answers as a class or find out what students talked about

Boardwork

Another class management skill which takes time to develop is boardwork, as writing clearly on the board in an organised manner requires practice. It is a good idea for teachers to plan their boardwork in advance, when they are planning their lessons, by using a framework like the one below:

Vocabulary column	Title/Topic	Date
Vocabulary that comes up – keep it fairly wide so you can record more than one word E.g. to be interested in something	Main aim of lesson • Example sentences • Diagrams / pictures	*Prompts for speaking activities* E.g. What was the highlight of your weekend? *Feedback – answers to tasks* 1) e 4) a 2) c 5) d 3) b 6) f

On most teacher training courses, new teachers are given the opportunity to use both the conventional whiteboard and an Interactive whiteboard, which is linked to a classroom computer. The latter enables teachers to display documents and files which they have previously designed and saved onto a device. The interactive whiteboard is particularly useful for showing images and videos.