

Teaching for Diversity

By Tamar Goldmann, Instructor of ESL and Freshman Composition

WELCOME! Orange Coast College is a wonderful place to work, with dedicated colleagues and eager students. I hope you'll enjoy teaching here as much as I have for the past fifteen years. Please feel free to call me if I can be of any help to you.

As I started to write suggestions for working with ESL students, I realized that almost everything that will help nonnative speakers of English will also be a great help to our homegrown students. For example, it is important to ESL students that all assignments be presented and explained in writing—on the board or, even better, in print. Missing a word or two can lead to an improperly done assignment by even the most diligent student. However, American students can also be distracted or confused. What is helpful to the student struggling with English is helpful to all.

Enough students need to be educated in study skills and appropriate college behavior that it 's worth figuring out how to incorporate this education into all classrooms I've come to the realization that instruction in study skills must be part of my job. I assume that student weaknesses are the result of lack of knowledge, not willfulness or laziness; this principle applies to both study skills and classroom etiquette. The following are suggestions to help students learn skills that I once assumed they already had. Items with an asterisk (*) apply especially to ESL students.

INCLUDE INSTRUCTION IN STUDY SKILLS

The study skills and motivation of ESL students vary from superb to absent, the same as for homegrown students. We have enough students with very weak study skills that I have come to the realization that helping students acquire these skills is part of my job.

1. Emphasize expected study time: Two hours per unit per week. Most students are shocked to learn that the expected study time for a college class is two hours outside class per unit per week. It would be helpful to include this information in your course outline and to emphasize its importance verbally as well

2. Demonstrate how to use course outline and study guides. Surprise! Lots of students will not be familiar with your course rules and assignments, and many won't even know your name. Towards the end of every semester, I try to help students who are wandering around looking for their instructors with only the vaguest ability to describe them.

Try giving a **course outline quiz**:

I have been giving open-book quizzes on my course outlines during the first week of school in my lower ESL classes; I recently learned that my husband, who teaches large-group science classes includes course outline questions on his first quiz and also on his final (regarding when & where students will find their grades, etc.) I've included a sample.

Refer to the course outline or study guide when providing answers already in print. I answer all questions politely, even repeated ones. In order to help students become more independent, I reluctantly began to refer them to the

place where they could find the answer; I do this in my office as well as in class. The question, for example, “How many different sources does my research paper need?” will be answered “Where can you find that information?” (Again, this practice is needed the most by United States-educated students.)

3. Demonstrate keeping records of assignments and grades. I assign grades by percentage of total points, and I number all graded work consecutively. I distribute a point record page at the beginning of the semester and demonstrate how to use it. This helps students both keep a record of their grades and notice when they have missed an assignment. (I don’t have an online version, but I’ll be happy to give you a copy of the record page that I use. Call me.)

4. Encourage study groups (See attached sample form)

Although I’m opposed to assigning group projects with group grades, I have come to appreciate the value of informal study groups. I recently asked my Freshman Comp students to discuss the pros and cons of study groups with me. They presented thoughtful papers balancing pros and cons. The cons are ones you might expect, such as the laziness of some of the group members, trouble getting together, waste of time and the unfairness of getting a group grade.

On the other hand, most seemed to feel that the significant advantages outweighed the disadvantages. They listed the following: being able to ask classmates questions that they were afraid to ask in class, getting to know other students, and simply having fun.

** International Students are especially grateful for the opportunity to be paired with Americans.

Disadvantages can be avoided by making groups voluntary and not requiring a product as an end result. Of course, some students are accustomed to these informal study groups and will set them up on their own. **Others, though, either too shy or too busy will not. I have found it worthwhile to facilitate group formation. Attached is the form I hand out a few weeks into the semester, after students have begun to meet each other I have been impressed with the results.**

5. Facilitate use of buddy system in case of absence.

Right on your course outline, provide space for students to write the names and phone numbers of classmates whom they can call in case they are absent. You might allow a week or so to complete this until students become comfortable with each other.

6. Demonstrate use of flashcards, outlining, notation, and any other supplementary skills you find useful.

Don’t assume knowledge of even the study skills you consider basic. If you think the use of flashcards, for example, is beneficial in your subject, model their use and give time in class to practice or assign a trial. For information requiring rote memorization, I first demonstrate the use of the cards, then allow students who did poorly on the test a chance to make up some points by bringing in a complete set of flashcards.

MAKE ALL EXPECTATIONS CLEAR

Just as nonnative students need to learn American expectations, many students coming from high school expect to continue with high-school workload, work quality, and

department. However, most students are eager and well-meaning and will rise to the standards expected

***7. Provide all assignments in writing as well as explaining them orally.** It is important to ESL students that all assignments be presented and explained in writing—on the board or, even better, in print. Missing a word or two can lead to an improperly done assignment by even the most diligent student. However, American students can also be momentarily distracted or confused. What is helpful to the student struggling with English is helpful to all.

8. Set standards for written work

Few classes at OCC have prerequisites, and some prerequisites listed might not be enforced. This means that students in your class may not even be able to read the newspaper yet expect to do well in your class. This sad fact applies both to nonnative speakers and remedial high school students.

Students have the right to remain in your class, but you have the right to set reasonable standards for written work. If writing is clearly inferior, let the student know on the very first paper. Help is available. (See “Supplementary Help.”)

However, it is unrealistic and unfair to expect perfection in grammar from nonnative students. The grammar of even highly educated nonnative speakers will not be perfect. Problems with prepositions and articles, in particular, persist, but a scattering of other problems can be expected. On the other hand, work should be easy for you to understand and should express college-level ideas with the same clarity you expect from all students.

**If you're unsure about how to handle non-native writing, I will be happy to discuss papers with you, and most ESL faculty would also be happy to do so. You can also refer students to the Literature and Language Resource Center for assistance.*

9. Make behavior and attendance standards clear (See informational handout).

This advice applies almost entirely to U.S.-educated students. As a group, students who completed high school in other countries are quiet and respectful. It has been my experience year after year that the few students who are disruptive in ESL classes are ones who have spent a few years in American schools. They are the ones most likely to chat with their neighbors, call out, and groan when homework is assigned. I can only conclude that they carefully observed their high school classmates and decided that this is how to behave in American classrooms. Now they need to learn the rules all over again!

Students are also confused when instructors ignore behavior that might seem outrageous to them. Some then think this behavior is accepted here. I have prepared a handout, “American College Manners,” which includes not only behaviors to avoid, but also some innocent cultural differences.

It will be easy for me to provide this handout to my classes as information. Giving it to a predominantly American class without appearing condescending would be more difficult. Feel free to adapt it and use any small part of it that would be useful.

10. Describe appropriate test behavior. These rules don't differ much from one country to the next, but going over and enforcing the rules for your class reduces temptation.

***11. Explain acceptable and unacceptable levels of collaboration on homework.** Students may legitimately misinterpret invitations to study together. I make it clear that discussing answers is fine, but writing the same thing is not. When I find evidence of excessive collaboration I deal with it promptly. Usually it's simple copying with the transgressor confessing, but occasionally students think they're operating within legitimate bounds.

***12. Provide clear guidelines for the difference between plagiarism and the acceptable use of sources.** This distinction again appears to be a legitimate difference of definition. Students who have taken Freshman Comp have been drilled on proper use of sources, but your students may not yet have taken this class. Most composition textbooks have clear examples of proper use of source, demonstrating outright plagiarism, patchwork plagiarism, and legitimate paraphrase.

Practice in advance of a research paper can eliminate problems. (I request copies of sources in order to prevent both unintentional and deliberate plagiarism. Call me for details.)

***13. Be explicit about expected classroom participation.** The biggest complaint most instructors have about their non-native speakers, especially Asian students, is that they don't participate in class. This silence is due to deeply ingrained rules about acceptable behavior and is hard to overcome. If you intend to make classroom participation part of your grade, please make your expectations explicit and go out of your way to involve your quiet Asian students. I use the following language on my course outlines in my advanced ESL classes. Feel free to use or adapt it:

ORAL PARTICIPATION:

Students in American classrooms are *expected* to answer factual questions, to give their opinions in class, to *volunteer* (raise their hands to offer to answer instead of waiting to be called on), and to ask questions for clarification.

This oral participation is considered as much a part of being a good student in the U.S. as coming on time, turning in homework on time, and being quiet and respectful during lectures.

I am aware that this oral participation will seem uncomfortable to some students, but practicing will make speaking in class easier. *Please volunteer in class at least once a week. Answer as well as you can every time that you are called on.* Use this time in ESL class to practice the American-style good-student behavior that your other teachers will expect as well.

(On the other hand, students from more vocal cultures need to remember to raise your hands when you want to say something and to understand that everyone else needs a turn to speak, too.)

Try using a set of name cards to equalize participation. I have also learned from colleagues the technique of using a set of name cards to call on students in order to keep a few from dominating the discussion. Be aware, though, that even when directly called on, some students will find it hard to overcome their deeply ingrained reticence.

ENCOURAGE SUPPLEMENTARY HELP AND ADVISEMENT WHEN APPROPRIATE

* 14. ALLOW THE TAPING OF YOUR LECTURES. Diligent students will spend hours listening until they understand. Even better than just allowing taping would be to suggest it and to write in your course outline that it is allowed.

*** 15. REFER STUDENTS TO TUTORIAL SERVICES OR TO ESL TESTING**

Students enrolled in your class have the right to remain, but they may not have the reading or writing skills to perform successfully. Students who seem within reach of class standards can benefit from the Tutorial Center for help with subject matter and to the Literature and Languages Resource Center (Lit & Lang Rm 222) for help with papers. Staff at the Resource Center *will not edit papers*. We guide the students to improve their own work. The Chart, an OCC publication describes additional student support services in detail.

Some students in your class may have very limited English skills and be clearly below class levels. If you can encourage them to take the ESL Placement Test and to see the ESL Advisors, Greg Conner (432-5717), Tamar Goldmann (432-5595) or Kathleen Keesler (432-5579), you will be doing them a service.

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Tamar Goldmann **AMERICAN COLLEGE MANNERS**

It's sometimes difficult to figure out what is appropriate in another culture. The manners expected in American colleges are different from what is accepted in other countries and even from what is expected in American high schools. Because the relationship between teacher and student is much less formal here, many students have a hard time walking the fine line between the openness expected in an American college classroom and unacceptable behavior.

STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN CLASS

Raising your hand to participate in class and asking questions are considered not only polite, but desirable behavior. Teachers often complain that students who remain silent (as is appropriate in their own countries) are unresponsive and uninterested. In fact, some teachers give a "classroom participation" grade, and students who do not volunteer in class might get a low grade..

If you are from a country where speaking in class and asking questions are considered rude, do your best to raise your hand to answer questions, and be sure to ask for clarification when you don't understand something. If you can't bring yourself to ask for help during class, approach the instructor immediately after class or go to the instructor's office during posted office hours. Doing this is **not** bothering the professor. Office hours are scheduled for the purpose of helping students, and we are glad to help.

RUDE BEHAVIOR IN COLLEGE CLASSROOMS.: While you are expected to raise your hand and contribute in class, there are unspoken rules of behavior which you should follow.

Watching the behavior of your most noticeable classmates can give you the wrong impression; while teachers may not reprimand students for the following behaviors, they still consider these actions unmannerly.

1. Chewing gum--especially offensive if done with the mouth open
2. Eating or drinking—in fact, food and drink are forbidden in most campus buildings.
3. Sitting with feet up
4. Reading the newspaper
5. Doing homework for another class
6. Talking to a classmate
7. Allowing your cell phone to ring
8. Even worse, answering the cell phone
9. Coming late
10. Walking in and out during class
11. Leaving early
12. Packing up before the end of class--rustling papers, snapping notebooks, zipping or unzipping backpacks
13. Pushing ahead of the instructor to get into the classroom first.

BORDERLINE BEHAVIOR: While many American students wear hats in class, it is still considered much more polite for men to remove their hats in a building.

DIFFERENT WAYS OF SHOWING RESPECT

In the U.S., the proper way of addressing a teacher respectfully is to use the person's title and last name, for example, "Mrs. Goldmann." It is considered *disrespectful* to address your instructor with the title, "Teacher." While many instructors have learned that this is the properly respectful title in other countries, it is still considered rude here. Title and last name are *not* less formal than the title "teacher"; it is just a different way of showing respect. Using the first name, on the other hand, is an invitation to a less formal relationship. Please address your instructors the way that they prefer—don't call them "Teacher."

Americans do not observe the lovely custom of giving something to a superior with two hands; it is recognized as a respectful gesture, so feel free to continue to observe this custom, but it is not the least bit disrespectful to hand something in with one hand.

APPRECIATED ALTHOUGH NOT DEMANDED

Opening doors for another person
Erasing the board

.....

Name _____

STUDYING TOGETHER HELPS STUDENTS DO BETTER IN SCHOOL.

PLAN A TIME EVERY WEEK OR MORE OFTEN WHEN YOU CAN WORK TOGETHER.

Please check the appropriate sentence:

_____ I will study together with _____.

We will study together at these times: (Show me below.)

_____ I would like to study with another student. Please help me find someone whose schedule matches mine.

A. I would like a group with _____ other student(s).

B. I could meet at these times: (Show me below.)

_____ I will consider working with another student, but don't schedule me yet. These are the times that I might be available: (Show me below.)

_____ I don't want to study with another student now. I usually study by myself at these times: (Show me below.)

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRIDAY	SAT.
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
NOON							
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00							
After 6 WRITE TIME.							

DIRECTIONS:

1. In the times when you have a class, write the name of the class.
--If the class meets at an irregular time, draw a line across the box. See example.
2. At a time when you could study with another student at school, write the letter "S" in the box.
3. Write "H" in the boxes at the times you usually do homework for this class by yourself.