

# **Innovative Techniques to Correct 5 Common Mistakes ELL Students Make Using Prepositions, Past & Present Tenses**

By Gelene Strecker-Sayer, NBCT

**This information was created by & intellectual property of Gelene Strecker-Sayer. Originally created in 2004. Copyright 2011**

## **Objectives:**

- gain a heightened awareness of the oral & written mistakes ELL students make.
- discuss reasons why/how students from different backgrounds make the same mistakes.
- be able to implement games and activities to help students correctly use present tense and past tenses.
- be able to employ activities to assist ELL students' correct usage of prepositions on, to, at, in relating to days of the week, months, year and physical placement.
- share their strategies, activities, ideas and understandings of other common mistake and misuses they experience.
- network with other ELL teachers after the workshop via email groups.

## **Content of Presentation:**

To present quick activities that help clear up common mistakes in English morphology, grammar and syntax. These mistakes are made by students from various countries and language backgrounds. The activities are fun, effective and incorporate strategies that work with a variety of learners. Such strategies include visual (including use of color), auditory; kinesthetic; and modeling. In addition, the activities are easily and the DON'T take up much time. Teachers can incorporate them into their existing lessons or focus on these specifically

# Innovative Techniques to Correct 5 Common Mistakes ELL Students Make Using Prepositions, Past & Present Tenses

By Gelene Strecker-Sayer, NBCT

\* Welcome & Introduction

\* Email List & Notes

\* Background on Activities:

- Common patterns of misuse- speaking, reading, writing & listening
- Made by students from various cultural & language backgrounds

*Spanish-Urdu-Arabic-Hindi-Italian-German-Russian-Chinese-Korean-Persian*

- At intermediate & upper proficiency levels, ages 6-up
- Low tech & easily inserted into any curriculum or lesson plan
- Not detrimental for communication, but necessary for fluency
- Trying to disrupt old use & build new pathways to relearn info  
"Practice Doesn't Make Perfect, PERFECT practice makes perfect"  
- Ruby Payne
- Scaffolding- can take away support pieces as ability is gained.
- Ideas are based on educational & brain compatibility research:
  - Brains are dynamic, search for patterns & novelty
  - Keep students active, engage, lower affective filter & assist in student's metacognition
  - Incorporate strategies that work well for all learners:  
auditory, visual, kinesthetic, use of color, modeling, repetition & pattern.
- **EASY TO DO, FUN & EFFECTIVE!!!**

# Innovative Techniques to Correct 5 Common Mistakes ELL Students Make Using Prepositions, Past & Present Tenses

By Gelene Strecker-Sayer, NBCT

## PREPOSITION ACTIVITIES

Prepositions- one of the last things to be mastered

### A. 'At Saturday' Floor Activity

1. Put papers with days of week on the floor or write on tile with dry erase marker.
2. Students walk/jump/leap from day to day, saying "ON....."
3. Expand to sentences of what students did "On Saturday, I played with my friends", etc.
4. Can include holidays: 'On Eid', 'On Dawali', 'On New Year's', etc.
5. Put days together: 'On break', 'On vacation', 'On the weekend'
6. Extend into writing; make a journal or book.
7. Read each other's journals or books.

\*\* Gives physical sense of "ON" AND "Smaller pieces/chunks of time"

### B. Months & Seasons IN a Bag Activity

1. Get boxes/paper bags/milk crates- something for students to safely put over head or stand in ---NO PLASTIC PLEASE!! 😊
2. Decorate each side winter, spring, summer, fall & corresponding months.
3. Put paper bag/box on head OR stand in it, saying 'IN.....'
4. Expand to sentences to include topics like; weather, clothing, things people do, what it is like in other countries, etc.
5. Extend into writing; make journal, book, essay, etc.
6. Read each others' journals or book.

\*\* Gives physical sense of "IN" and "Larger spans of time" b/c larger object

# Innovative Techniques to Correct 5 Common Mistakes ELL Students Make Using Prepositions, Past & Present Tenses

By Gelene Strecker-Sayer, NBCT

## PREPOSITION ACTIVITIES

### C. "My pencil is ON my classroom" Walking Activity

Personal Placement Prepositions- 'to', 'in', 'at', 'on'

1. Take students on walk to different places in a school whispering, "I am walking TO the library/gym/lunchroom."
2. Then have the each STOP at the door and say to you "I am AT the library/gym/lunchroom."
3. Then let them pass thru the door into the room and say, "I am IN the library/gym/lunchroom."
4. Follow up with a final trip to the playground repeating each step: "I am walking TO", "I am AT" & "I am ON the playground!"
5. Let students play for 10mins while you & students say where they are: "I am ON the slide/swing/bars", "In the playhouse "At the latter," etc.
6. Again can follow up with writing activities, books, flashcards....

\*\* Again pointing to the physical sense of each & reinforcing difference between 'IN' and 'ON'.

BAG of REMINDERS: Days of the Week in a Bag!!

# Innovative Techniques to Correct 5 Common Mistakes ELL Students Make Using Prepositions, Past & Present Tenses

By Gelene Strecker-Sayer, NBCT

## PRESENT TENSE VERB CONJUGATION

Grammatical Read-Thru: Teacher activity  
Listen, Mark, Review & Discuss

So how to help??

**STOPS** & **GO**- A Visual Activity for Understanding!!

- \* Using universal traffic signal visual- most countries use it
- \* Basic Concept: TO SIGNAL STUDENTS!!
  - o Singular- **StopS** and add S / S/
  - o Plural- Keep on **GOing**'

NOTE:

- o Students must understand concept of singular/plural
- o Students must also understand sentence order S-V

Activities/Ways to Incorporate

1. Traffic Signal Box- put nouns into appropriate slot.
2. Shouting out "stop/go".
3. Using hand signals OR student made Stop-Go signs.
4. Underlining/highlighting in red/green.
5. Driving mini-Match Box® cars, stopping at the 'intersection' of 'Subject' & 'Verb'.
6. Draw traffic signal at the beginning of sentences & have students color in light accordingly.

\*\* BAG of REMINDERS: Laminated Traffic Signal/Desk Reminder!

# Innovative Techniques to Correct 5 Common Mistakes ELL Students Make Using Prepositions, Past & Present Tenses

By Gelene Strecker-Sayer, NBCT

## PAST TENSE ACTIVITY

*think-thought, buy-bought, fight-FIGHTED!!!*

### Color-Coded Past Tense Flash Cards & Activities

Best used with 2<sup>nd</sup> grade & up, can introduce with 1<sup>st</sup> grader/6 yrs???

1. Have flash cards of verbs that are organized by change in conjugation and color-code accordingly
  - ie. All regular verbs that add /ed/ are in **black**  
*play-played, jump-jumped, brush-brushed*
  - ie. Irregular verbs that change by adding /t/ are **green**  
*keep-kept, sleep-slept, dream-dreamt*
  - ie. Irregular verbs that change spelling completely are **red**  
*go-went, is-are/was-were, eat-ate*

**think**

**thought**

2. Options:
  - a. Organize them into groups and look for patterns.
  - b. Students can play with flash cards practicing first with present tense, then work in **reverse**.
  - c. Can be made into regular one sided cards for students to different games; Matching, Go Fish, Old Maid, etc.
  - d. Change ALL to black, remove color cue when writing.
  - e. Teacher can assess kids to see which ones they know.
  - f. These can be made by students, used by anyone & taken home to share with family.

**\*\*Interesting NOTE:** Students who speak Asian languages seem to be better at IRRegular than regular conjugations...

# Innovative Techniques to Correct 5 Common Mistakes ELL Students Make Using Prepositions, Past & Present Tenses

By Gelene Strecker-Sayer, NBCT

## PASS OUT BAGS!!!!

Deck of 24 cards included!!

think

thought

### **YELLOW** - verb stays the same

Group of examples: put/put, cut/cut, hurt/hurt

### **GRAY** - verb changes, but not in reliable pattern

Group examples: pay/paid, read/read, took/take, fall/fell, have/had, do/did, see/saw, sing/sang, get/got, make/made, run/ran

### **RED** - verb changes to a completely different word

Group examples: eat/ate, is-are/was-were, go/went

### **PURPLE** - middle vowel/s change to /o/

Group examples: wake/woke, choose/chose, wear/wore, ride/rode, write/wrote, break/broke, drive/drove,

### **BLUE** - initial consonant/s remain, rest of word changes

to /ought/

Group examples: think/thought, fight/fought, bring/brought

### **GREEN** - final consonant is replaced by /t/, /ee/ change to /e/

Group examples: build/built, sleep/slept, keep/kept, dream/dreamt, sweep/swept, feel/felt, spend/spent

### **ORANGE** - /o/ changes to /e/ and /d/ is added to end of verb

Group examples: hold/held,

### **BROWN** - middle vowel/s changes to /a/

Group examples: give/gave, come/came,

### **PINK** - retain initial blend and add /ew/

Group examples: fly/flew, grow/grew, draw/drew, blow/blew, know/knew,

### **BLACK** - regular past tense -/ed/

# Innovative Techniques to Correct 5 Common Mistakes ELL Students Make Using Prepositions, Past & Present Tenses

By Gelene Strecker-Sayer, NBCT

Questions/Comments??

Closing Remarks.....

- ❖ When you see students stopping to 'think' OR if they are starting to make changes in their misuse, ASK them what they are thinking....
- ❖ Keeping your ears open is key!!
- ❖ Know as much as you can about the universals & major differences between languages!!
- ❖ Email Address Sheet..... Keep in Touch!

# Thank You!!



# Innovative Techniques to Correct 5 Common Mistakes ELL Students Make Using Prepositions, Past & Present Tenses

By Gelene Strecker-Sayer, NBCT  
Grammatical Read-Thru

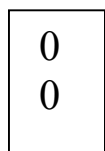
My friend Jack has a dog. The dog is named Spot. Jack and Spot take a walk everyday. Sometimes Jack keeps Spot at home. Then Spot cries and rips up Jack's house. That makes him mad. He decided to take Spot to dog training school. Now they will live happily together.

## Highlight:

Su likes to play with her friends.

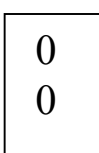
Mom and dad go to the store on Fridays.

## Traffic Signal Boxes:



He eat/eats his lunch at school.

## Driving in a sentence:

Her cats  jump\_ on the table.

I HAVE REORGANIZED THESE COLOR  
CODING AS OF 2011. IF YOU WOULD  
LIKE TO SEE MY WORK/EXAMPLES  
EMAIL [Gelene@eslanswers.com](mailto:Gelene@eslanswers.com) 😊

put

cut

hurt

have

do

sing

make

eat

is/are

go

wake

ride

hurt

cut

put

sang

did

had

was/were

ate

made

rode

woke

went

built

drove

wrote

spent

slept

kept

bought

fought

thought

knew

grew

flew

write

drive

build

keep

sleep

spend

think

fight

buy

fly

grow

know

