

What Makes a Good Grammar Lesson?

Task 1: Our Rules for Grammar Teaching

Think about your experiences in this course and in your own language classes as both a teacher and student and articulate 4-6 rules, tips, or guidelines that you could share with new teachers to help them design and implement effective grammar lessons. For each rule, include a brief description that answers the questions, how and why.

Rule	Description: <i>How do you apply this rule? Why is it important?</i>
A Little at a Time	How: Present the simple form first before more complicated variations and exceptions. Why: Avoid confusing students with too much information at once.
Start by presenting the grammatical structure	How: Begin the grammar lesson with the grammar structure that will be taught. Why: Because in PPP, P means presentation, and that gives students more understanding of what they are going to practice and produce.
Real-World Scenarios Contexts	How: By having different activities related to possible grammar context use in future situations. Why: Students can easily use their knowledge in reliable contexts by having experience in several real-life scenarios.
Incorporate Interactive Activities	How: Design activities that encourage our students' participation/ Why: Students can engage their learning with several interactive activities focusing on grammar.
Offer constructive feedback	How: Correct errors in a specific, supportive, respectful, and timely manner. Why: Students expect to be corrected, but they deserve respect and coherent feedback.
Not everything needs to be "taught"	How: Don't be afraid of giving students a reading, listening, or video that has grammar structures they haven't seen. Not everything needs to be turned into a grammar lesson. Help them understand the text and make the task appropriate to their level but don't feel you need to explain every unfamiliar grammar (or vocab) item in a text if it is not part of your class goals. Why: Students need to be exposed to language in use and some of that language will be unfamiliar to them. That's normal. You want them to become "detectives" who are able to figure out the meanings of texts even if they don't understand every single thing.

GO TO TASK 2 ON THE NEXT PAGE!

Task 2: Thornbury's Rules of Grammar Teaching

Read Thornbury's rules of grammar teaching from his (1999) book *How to Teach Grammar*. Match the rule with its description by copy/pasting the rules into the green spaces on the left.

Rule of Economy	Rule of Relevance	Rule of Use
Rule of Appropriacy	Rule of Context	Rule of Nurture

Rule	Description
Rule of Context	Teach grammar in context. If you have to take an item out of context in order to draw attention to it, ensure that it is re-contextualized as soon as possible. Similarly, teach grammatical forms in association with their meanings. The choice of one grammatical form over another is always determined by the meaning the speaker or writer wishes to convey.
Rule of Use	Teach grammar in order to facilitate the learners' comprehension and production of real language, rather than as an end in itself. Always provide opportunities for learners to put the grammar to some communicative use.
Rule of Economy	To fulfill the rule of use, be economical. This means economizing on presentation time in order to provide maximum practice time. With grammar, a little can go a long way.
Rule of Relevance	Teach only the grammar that students have problems with. This means, start off by finding out what they already know. And don't assume that the grammar of English is a wholly different system from the learner's mother tongue. Exploit the common ground.
Rule of Nurture	Teaching doesn't necessarily cause learning - not in any direct way. Rather than occurring as flashes of insight, language learning is more often than not a process of gradual approximation. Instead of teaching grammar, therefore, try to provide the right conditions for grammar learning.
Rule of Appropriacy	Interpret all the above rules according to the level, needs, interests, expectations, and learning styles of the students. This may mean giving a lot of prominence to grammar, or it may mean never actually teaching grammar at all - in any up-front way. But either way, it is your responsibility as a teacher to know your grammar inside out.

[CLICK HERE](#) to check your answers then move on to Task 3.

Task 3: Discussion

Discuss the following questions with your partners. You do NOT need to write.

- What do you think of the rules? Which one seems most important to you? Why?
- Which of the rules or descriptions are similar to your list of rules?
- Which of Thornbury's 6 rules do you think you do well in the classes you teach? Why?
- Which of Thornbury's 6 rules do you think you need to improve in your own classes? Why?
- Do you disagree with any aspect of Thornbury's rules or descriptions? If so, why?

Task 4: Analyzing a Grammar Lesson

In this task you will read a brief description of a “bad” grammar lesson. Then you will discuss what made it ineffective and make suggestions for improvement. Start by reading the description of the lesson, then discuss the questions below.

Context: Intermediate level group of teenagers

Step	Description	Our Thoughts
1	T: “Good morning everyone. May I have your attention. Today we are going to start with a grammar lesson. The topic is about the <i>past perfect</i>.” Teacher writes the phrase “past perfect” on the board. Teacher explains the rules of formation and use of past perfect including the following: • Subject + had/n’t + past participle • Used to refer to a time previous to an established past reference ◦ When she arrived, the movie had started. • Used to transform direct speech of past simple and present perfect when reporting what other people said ◦ I have seen the movie. ◦ She said she had seen the movie. • Used in the conditional clause in 3rd conditionals to refer to a hypothetical past time ◦ If I had arrived on time, I would not have missed the first part of the movie. T: “Does everyone understand? Ok, good.”	• Where’s the warm up? If you are going to review vocab, maybe do it now. • More time needed to present the grammar since it’s complicated. • Present the form in a conversation so they can see how it’s used. (ex. News story that incorporates indirect speech). Use real scenarios and more opportunities to make use of it. • Are all these uses of past perfect relevant to today’s class? • You need to break it down and help them remember the regular / irregular past participle forms.
2	T: “Ok, now we are going to do some practice.” Teacher hands out a worksheet that requires students to convert the past simple and present perfect into the past perfect. For example: • I went to the beach. / I had gone to the beach. • She has seen the movie. / She had seen the movie. Students work on this individually and then take turns reading their answers aloud. The teacher corrects any errors.	• ...
3	T: “Ok, now for the last 10 minutes of class we are going to play a game.” The teacher leads students through a game of Hangman (<i>ahorcado</i>) to review some vocabulary words from earlier in the unit.	• Production part: speaking or writing... in groups have a topic they have to discuss

Discussion:

- What do you think about this grammar lesson?
- Look again at Thornbury's 6 rules and your own rules for grammar teaching. What could the teacher do differently to implement these rules and improve the quality of their grammar lesson? Write your comments in the column on the right side of the lesson description.