The First Class

1. Before your first class, make sure you have all the necessary information (address/platform, No. of students, level, GE/BE/ESP/Exam Preparation). Find out as much as you can **about the class and the students.** If you plan to use shared Google Slides, check beforehand whether your new students are able to access them. A good way to do this is by asking in your welcome email**.** Also, if you are taking over from another teacher, don't forget to check the CIF file in Schoolpartner for additional details about the class and the students.
2. Try to make a good **first impression**. Wear smart clothes and look professional! A confident smile as you go into your first class will help to create a good atmosphere in the room. Careful! Teachers often feel nervous in their first class, which can lead to increased Teacher Talking Time (TTT). Be mindful of how much you speak, and make sure to give students plenty of time and opportunities to express themselves.
3. **Keep your lesson plan for day one very simple** and choose activities you feel confident leading. Remember that Unit 1 in any coursebook is designed to help you to get to know your students. Also, always prepare a plan B in case the students' level turns out to be higher or lower than expected (typically, it's lower).
4. **Introduce yourself and get to know your students via an ice-breaker** (see tips below). You can ask your students to make name tags on cards to fold in half to put on the desks in front of them. The advantage of tags is that if you have a big group (or you're not familiar with Czech names), you can ask them to put them out in the first few classes until you know everyone's names.
5. Do a thorough **needs analysis** and don't forget to take notes! It is **essential** you find out the students' expectations so you can tailor your future classes to their needs and **incorporate their specific goals and preferences**, which at the end of the day gives you positive feedback and provides you with a great reputation that can lead to more opportunities in the future. **Make notes** on your students' language – mistakes, errors but also good language use. It will not only help you confirm/estimate their level but you will also know what to focus on at a later date (grammar, vocabulary, etc.). You can use the form available.
6. Last but not least, **take a deep breath before you go in, and try to enjoy it. Good luck!**

Here are a few tips on several ice breaker activities:

- **Add an adjective** (B1.2 and higher)

After the initial introduction, tell students you want to try to learn their names. Introduce yourself by saying, "*My name's Patrick and I'm polite*". (Replace "Patrick" with your name and "polite" with an adjective which has the same first letter.) Emphasize the fact that your adjective starts with the same letter as your name by stressing the pronunciation of both the

sounds. Invite the students to introduce themselves in the same way. This activity can really help you to get to know the names quickly.

- **Personal Star** (A1.1 and higher)

Draw a star on the board and inside it put 5 or 6 answers to questions about you (e.g. *BLUE, MICHAEL, SEPTEMBER 22ND, 1947, MELBOURNE, DENMARK,* and *171*.)

Tell students that the star contains information about you. Ask them to form questions, the answers of which may be the pieces of information inside the star, *"What are the questions?"* Explain the activity: *"My favorite color is blue. What question do you ask to find out this information?"* Elicit from them, *"What's your favorite color?"* and cross out the word 'blue' from the star. They should be able to ask you questions to eliminate the rest of the clues. They may be tempted to ask *"Who's Michael?"* for example. Encourage them to ask the question properly before giving them each piece of information. If your students struggle with this, you may decide to focus on question forms at a later date.

When they have asked you all the questions, put the students in pairs. Ask them to draw their own personal star and put 5 pieces of information about themselves inside. In pairs they can ask each other questions to find out about their partner.

TIP: If your students already know each other well, encourage them to put things that their partner won't know about them. When they have all finished, ask them as a group to tell the others what they have found out about their partner.

- **True or False?** (A1.1 and higher)

Write 3 statements about yourself on the board, 2 true ones and 1 false one. Grade the statements depending on the level of the class.

For beginners you can put: *I practice yoga four times a week. I have two hamsters. My favorite actress is Alicia Vikander.* (All in present simple.) For a more advanced level you may use sentences with a mixture of tenses and challenging vocabulary.

Ask students to guess which one is false. They could have a class vote to see if they can guess. They will then probably ask you to elaborate on the information received. Then, ask the students to do the same and write 3 sentences about themselves. In small groups or as a whole group students read out their sentences and the others guess the false one.

TIP: You can set it up as a fun game. A good way to do this is the class versus the teacher**,** if the student can successfully deceive the teacher, the class will get the point. If the teacher can successfully detect the lie, the teacher will get the point. Don't forget that winners like rewards ☺, you can bring some candies.

- **Pictures** (A1.1 and higher)

Especially if you are from another country, students will be very interested in hearing about where you are from and specific cultural aspects of your country. Using pictures or flashcards will help students grasp the meaning of your introduction without understanding

every single word or sentence. The best approach is to use the simplest possible language during this section of the lesson.

TIP: If students seem to understand the material very well, you can prompt them to form or just complete sentences based on the materials you are showing them to give them an opportunity to demonstrate things they already know.

- **My Name is X, and I Like X** (A1.1 and higher)

The game can be carried out in several ways. The first and simplest is perfect for true beginners. Start by introducing yourself using this format: "*My name is x, and I like x*." Then ask every student to go around and use the same format. The student has learned two sentence structures (one with "to be" and one with a transitive verb).

If you have more advanced students, you can include memory recall in this game. Ask students to introduce themselves in this way, and then ask students to introduce their neighbor to the group: "*His/her name is x and he/she likes x*." This way, students learn not only a first-person sentence but a third-person sentence as well.

The most advanced way to play this game is to include questions. Go around the room and have students ask a classmate: "*What's your name? What do you like?*" The student who asked the question has to introduce their fellow student using the answers they provide, and then the student who answered asks the questions to someone else. With this version of the game, students learn how to ask two different kinds of questions.

TIP: With this game — as with many classroom games — the more random you can make the order in which students are called upon, the better. When students realize that the order is random, they're much more likely to pay attention to other students' answers instead of counting how many more turns until they have to participate.