

## ASPECTS OF TEACHING ENGLISH ONE-TO-ONE

The idea of one-to-one teaching often provokes quite extreme reactions in teachers. They either love it or hate it. Those in the former category will point to the advantages of working with the linguistic needs of a single learner and the highly focused programme that can produce, while those in the latter group will often highlight in a negative way the affective factors that can come into play in the one-to-one classroom. Naturally, there are many techniques that teachers routinely employ with groups that are inappropriate with one-to-one classes. Apart from the obvious ones (pair and group work, for example), the specific classroom dynamic of one-to-one may make it counter-productive to do "traditional" situational grammar presentations based around the whiteboard. Likewise, the teacher standing while the student sits may not be the best solution. On the other hand, the one-to-one classroom can offer great possibilities for working in a collaborative style. One-to-one teaching also provides huge benefits in terms of pace and timing. In a class of fifteen or so students, it is difficult to please all of the people all of the time and, no matter what you do, when some students are fully engaged, others may switch off. In the one-to-one classroom, there should be constant feedback on the activities chosen, whether they are relevant and useful and when it is time to move on. Breaks can be taken when it seems appropriate to do so. Both teacher and student can move around the room as and when the need arises. It might also be appropriate for some time to be spent reading silently, using the dictionary, researching a contentious or problematic grammar point, drafting an e-mail or preparing a presentation. There is no need for the class to become a constant one-way question and answer session with the questions all coming from the teacher. Once trust has been built between teacher and student, a one-to-one class can be as varied and stimulating as any group class. It can also be incredibly informative for the teacher who, if he or she is interested enough, can learn a wealth of information about a wide range of professional activities. Perhaps the greatest advantage of teaching one-to-one classes, however, is the individual focus that this kind of teaching provides. The teacher can work on the specific difficulties of the individual, dealing with persistent grammar problems in a remedial way, filling in gaps in the student's knowledge of grammar, focusing on pronunciation problems and giving intensive practice in apparent areas of weakness such as listening. In addition, where a group class would almost certainly not accept class time being devoted to a very specific topic area that was relevant to just one member of the class, in the one-to-one class this is not only desirable but an essential part of the course - the background and professional needs of the student will go a long way towards determining the content of the course.

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