

# **TEACHING TIPS**

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## **Teaching Tip 3: Checking Understanding**

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*How:*

1. Ask your students 'Is that clear?'
2. If it's clear, fine. If anyone says 'No, can you explain that?/ Can you explain again?', don't. Ask if one of the other students can explain it.
3. If nobody understands it, go through an example step by step together. They should get it then.
4. If they still don't get it, go through another example together.
5. If the poor things are still lost either
  - 1) Do the whole activity together as a class, if possible or
  - 2) Give up and go to the next activity.
  - 3) If it's a word they are having difficulty understanding, you could set it for homework and get the students to explain the meaning to you next lesson.
6. Another way to check understanding of instructions is to ask the students to imagine that you are a new student who has just come in - can they explain how to do the activity?
7. Another way to check understanding, not only of instructions, is by concept checking (see TT19).

*Why:*

1. You need to check that the students have understood because they are unlikely to tell you if they haven't - they will simply bumble through the exercise, doing it wrong, probably *aware* that they are doing it wrong, and losing confidence.
2. You need to ask 'Is that clear?' rather than 'Do you understand?' because the chances of a student saying 'No, I don't understand' are very slim - they will feel very stupid. Would you admit to not understanding something in front of others in a classroom situation? I wouldn't! The student who doesn't understand will be convinced s/he is the only one who doesn't get it and will not want to admit that in public. Questions like 'Is that clear?' shift the blame to the quality of the instructions instead. Neutral ground - much nicer.

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