

ELL Quick Tip

Do you have an ELL student and wonder how to help him/her in the classroom?
Then the ELL Quick Tip is for you!

Tip #10

Check for comprehension

When giving and ELL student directions, do not ask, "Do you understand?"

If you ask an English language learner if s/he understands, you will often get a nod or a 'yes'. This does not necessarily mean that the student understands you, but that s/he is eager to please and thinks that this is what you want to hear.

What you SHOULD ask...

It is essential to check for comprehension for an ELL student to determine if s/he needs further clarification, but you need to be specific. You also want to encourage students to be specific about which parts they understand and where they have questions.

Here are some ways to check for an ELL student's comprehension:

- Tell your partner: What are we supposed to do first? Then what?
(Call on partners to tell what the other student said.)
- What are you supposed to do first? Then what?
- What do you do if you get stuck?
- What does this mean?
- How are you going to do this?
- Where do you write the answer?
- What are you supposed to write?

Explanation

When you ask a student if s/he understands or 'gets it', it is often difficult for the student to articulate where their comprehension broke down, or what specifically, he or she doesn't 'get'. When you have students explain to each other or to you what is expected, that gives you the opportunity to determine where their comprehension did break down and how to provide clarification. This also gives students practice using procedural language and explaining an academic task orally, which will ultimately help increase their academic language proficiency.