

Getting ATTENTION in the Classroom

The first challenge in teaching a classroom full of (excitable, rowdy or bored and disinterested) children is to get their attention - whether at the beginning of the class, or partway through the lesson when you need to call them back from misbehaviour, or even from some set activity that they are involved in.

I have watched with delight as various Malaysian English teachers using their attention-getting tactics that reflect their own character and style. It is true that every teacher has to develop their own style. Also it's not a bad idea to add variety and keep changing what you do from week to week or month to month - you don't want the children to get bored, nor bore yourself.

So here are some ideas to try. If you find some new ideas that work especially well, it would be wonderful if you could use the 'Ideas Sharing Contact Form' below to share that with others.

There are a number of basic options *(that don't involve shouting!)*:

1. Use an Instrument

You could purchase or acquire something that makes a musical sound such as

- a tambourine
- a bell
- a horn
- a whistle (but never blow loud!)
- a recorder or flute

Or something less tuneful such as a little drum, or tambour, or wooden rhythm or tapping sticks.

Make sure you decide ahead of time, and make sure that the children understand, what you want them to do in response to the sound.

For example:

Teacher: 3 shakes of the tambourine

Children: Turn and face teacher and stop talking. OR "Ready! Ready! Ready! Teacher!"

2. Clap and Response Rhythm

This is easy to develop, practise, and change from time to time. It is also very good for the children developmentally. AND it can be a lot of fun!

Prepare by playing some clapping games with the class. Clap simple numbers and ask them to copy. Then clap simple rhythms for them to copy. And then get them to respond to your clapping rhythm with a different one.

(To help with practising their English, it can also be great if the clapping rhythm went with some words - because the word stress of English is a really important part of the spoken language. However, to start with, just work with a rhythm.)

So, for example:

Teacher: Clap! clap-clap! Clap! Clap! (slow, quick-quick, slow, slow)

Children: Clap! Clap! Clap!

Or whatever appeals to you.

Practise well first, before using it as an attention-getting strategy.

3. Spoken or Sung Rhymes

Of course this is an excellent way to practise English while getting attention. And it can be so much fun!

Here are some ideas - but remember to go ahead and create your own (and maybe share them below!)

- **Teacher:** 10, 9, 8, 7, 6 ...
- **Children:** 5, 4, 3, 2, 1!

This can be sung or spoken:-

- **Teacher:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- **Children:** Once I caught a fish alive!

(You could continue with:

- **Teacher:** 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
- **Children:** *Then I let it go again.*)

- **Teacher:** 1, 2, 3, eyes on me.
- **Children:** 1, 2, eyes on you.

- **Teacher:** 1, 2, 3, eyes on me
- **Children:** 4, 5, 6, our eyes are fixed

This is part of a song - sing it if they know it, or say it:-

- **Teacher:** Stop right there!
- **Children:** Thank you very much.

To the tune of 'Are you sleeping?' or 'Frere Jacques':-

- **Teacher:** Are you listening? Are you listening?
- **Children:** Yes we are. Yes we are.

To the 'playground tune' (It's raining, it's pouring')

- **Teacher:** Stop and listen carefully!
- **Children:** Yes, Teacher, here we are.

To the tune 'Twinkle, Twinkle ...')

- **Teacher:** Boys and girls, please look right here.
- **Children:** Teacher, we are ready now.