

10 New Year's Resolutions Every English Language Teacher Should Make

By [Mira Malupa-Kim](#)

One of our first activities when we come back from our holiday vacation is to ask our students what their New Year's resolutions are. I wonder if we have thought about our own resolutions, or if we even believe in making them; if we do make them, are we willing to share these with our students? You might find it interesting that what we think our students should do is not exactly very far from what we, teachers, should do.

As a teacher educator, I encourage my students to “do” rather than “say.” It is very easy for a teacher to say, “I make learning fun.” Then you walk into their classroom only to find that it is the most teacher-centered lesson known to man! I would like to take this opportunity to share my year-round “To-Do List,” which will be presented in the imperative form of verbs (in alphabetical order, as all of them are equally important!). These are my top 10 plans-of-action, not only for myself, but for my teacher-trainees as well.

1. Collaborate

We tell our students how we can learn from one another, and it is an important skill to be able to work in teams or groups. However, as teachers, we often work alone or prefer to work alone. While we encourage our students to work in groups, we, too, could work in groups: plan lessons, write a coauthored article, work on a project, or copresent at a conference. Be the one to tell your students how true the saying “two heads are better than one” is.

2. Create

As we can easily reach out to Mr. Google, perhaps we could show our students that we are able to customize activities and exercises for them. We always tell our students, “say ‘x’ in your own words,” but do we do this ourselves? Be creative. This creativity turns into a much higher yield of productivity. Some personalization in your daily instruction goes a long way.

3. Explore

Are you a technophobe? Or have you been using the same technology for the past 3 years? Perhaps it is time for you to explore CALL or, better yet, explore different ways of teaching in general: explore more interactive ways to teach grammar, providing students opportunities to learn independently, or even seek out topics that you can learn from your students—their cultures, their language(s), or their knowledge about something.

4. Listen

We spend most of our time in class, at home and at work listening, but are we really listening? Listening alone is helpful in gauging our students' learning needs. Nation and Macalister (2010) talked about conducting ongoing needs analysis to be able to determine learners' needs, lacks, and wants. There is no easy way to do this but to listen to our students. On the other hand, listening to what our colleagues have to say as well as listening to our superiors might just be the

“recharging” we needed. Try listening to learn about and from others instead of listening to react to others.

5. Network

In one way or the other, we have told our students to “Make American friends,” “Practice your English outside class,” or something along those lines. We are basically telling our students something we should also do ourselves: network!

- Get in touch with colleagues! Join a listserv: Try the TESOL listservs (such as those for the [Higher Education Interest Section](#), the [Intensive English Programs Interest Section](#), and the [Teacher Education Interest Section](#)), the ACTFL [Teacher Development listserv](#) or [Global listserv](#), or the CATESOL [global listserv](#).
- Attend a local conference: TESOL International Association has more than [100 affiliates](#), many which host their own conferences.
- Once you find an affiliate, get to know other TESOLers, starting with your immediate community of practice (Wenger-Trayner, 2014). Before you do that though, have you reached out to your colleagues that are just sitting right next to you at the faculty lounge?

6. Serve

Your involvement in various communities of practice will eventually lead to service. We always complain that we are too busy to do anything else outside teaching. Maybe we do not have to go that far; we could serve in our local TESOL affiliate(s), our local library, or other organizations that may need our expertise. Giving back to the profession is one of those things we put on hold since we have been too busy “perfecting our craft” over the years. Make this your year to be (more) involved.

7. Share

Teachers often feel isolated, and this can cause burn-out. Why allow yourself to be bored at a faculty meeting? Share your thoughts, ideas...and struggles. Share your teaching strategies, techniques, and cultural tidbits that may help your colleagues in understanding and teaching their students more effectively. Share a little bit of information about yourself with your students, and have them do the same.

8. Mentor

This might be the time for you to take somebody under your wing: a new coworker, a struggling student, or a novice teacher. Mentoring might be one of the activities that could be explored this year. There is so much that we can learn from our peers; observe each other’s classes and exchange thoughts and ideas about teaching and classroom management.

9. Reflect

How did your lesson go today? How did the class go this week? Reflective teaching practices should be part of every ESL or EFL teachers' daily activities. At the end of the day, evaluating what worked and what did not work is your first step toward professional development (Tice, 2011). This most inexpensive way of professional development is likely the most effective one, as long as we are honest and true to our self-evaluation and assessment.

10. Study

To be effective teachers, we need to study alongside our learners. How prepared are we when we come to class? How prepared are we to answer their anticipated or unexpected questions? Have our answers improved throughout the years? Put on a student hat for a day—or for longer! Once in a while, it doesn't hurt to be in our students' shoes. Be on the other side of the fence and learn something new. As teachers, we often forget how it is to be a student and we lose our perspective on the matter.

It is my hope that my "To-Do List" for my teacher-trainees also becomes your own checklist in some fashion for the entire year and beyond.

Make this your year. Happy 2015, everyone!

References

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Tice, J. (2011, June 15). *Reflective teaching: Exploring our own classroom practice*. Retrieved from <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/reflective-teaching-exploring-our-own-classroom-practice>

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