

Grammatically Speaking

by [Michelle Jackson](#)

How to Teach The Future Tense

The beginning of a new semester is a precious time when a classroom community can be established and later built upon. A classroom community creates a sense of belongingness and connectedness for students. Within such a community, students know their learning will be supported by their peers, which can positively impact their motivation (Richards & Farrell, 2011). In a language classroom, where interaction is essential to acquisition, the community provides students a safe place to try new verbal forms or add vocabulary from their reading to their writing. The community prizes effort and views mistakes as integral to learning.

The chief challenge with community is that it does not naturally occur. It must be purposefully designed and built by the instructor, who encourages active participation and engagement from all students. One way to build community at the start of a semester is to have students develop a set of seven norms for classroom behavior. These expectations will govern how the community interacts as well as what obligations members agree to fulfill.

Additionally, as the norms are written in the future tense, this method allows students to practice grammar and develop their understanding in the context of real-world communication. I have used this technique with introductory college-level ESL students, who appreciated the inclusion of their voice in course norms.

Materials Required

- Paper and writing utensils for all students
- Chalkboard, whiteboard, or doc cam and writing utensils

Timing: 30 minutes

Step 1

Summarize the future tense for students. The future consists of the word *will* followed by the base form of the verb. For example, I will grade exams this afternoon. My cousin will find a job after graduation. We will write four essays this semester. Tell students they will use the future tense to craft a set of class norms that everyone will follow. (3 minutes)

Step 2

In groups of three, have students brainstorm answers to the following questions (5 minutes):

1. What student behaviors support my learning?
2. What teacher behaviors support my learning?

Step 3

Groups will use their responses to the questions to craft five statements in the future tense. For example, if students believe that peers' in-class participation is essential to their learning, one of their five statements might read: *Students will come to class prepared to participate.* –or– *Students will bring all necessary materials to class.* (5 minutes)

Step 4

Each team will share their five statements. While teams share, summarize the statements on the board and sort them into categories. You should also draw the students' attention to the correct use of the future tense. (10 minutes)

Step 5

Once all teams have shared their statements, say that, together, you will narrow all the teams' statements down to seven norms that the class will follow throughout the semester or the year. The statements that were most often mentioned by the teams should make the short list of norms. (7 minutes)

Step 6

After the class has agreed upon the final set of seven norms, post them either in the classroom or online in the learning management system (preferably both). These norms should be referenced often, reminding students that these behaviors were created by and for the classroom community to ensure everyone's success.

Happy teaching,
Michelle

Reference

Richards J. C., & Farrell, T. (Eds.). (2011). *Practice teaching: A reflective approach*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

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