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Plenary One

“Teaching in America: A Guide for International Faculty” (Part 1)

Before the Video: With a partner or small group, discuss the questions below.
During the Video: Take notes on what you learn about each topic below.
After the Video: Share your answers with your partner or small group.

1. Which characteristics are true about American university students:
   Formal:
   Curious:
   Work hard:
   Respectful:
   Emotional:
   Talkative:
   Well-prepared:
   Scary:
   Active:
   Interested in learning:

2. Why is it important for American students to participate and interact during class?

3. How do American students show respect?

Important terms:
Teaching Fellow—during this video a Teaching Fellow is the same as a Teaching Assistant at USC.
“Shopping” for a class—Students will often visit several sections of a course at the beginning of the semester before they decide which section they will enroll in that semester.
Plenary One: “Teaching in America: A Guide for International Faculty” (Part 2)

Before the Video: Write what you know about each topic.
During the Video: Take notes on what you learn about each topic below.
After the Video: Share your answers with your partner or small group.

1. What do American students expect from their TAs?

Engage them in discussion:

Show interest in their opinions:

Behave like an American TA:

Use their name:

Eye contact:

Know the students’ motivation for taking the course:

Available outside of class:

Show enthusiasm about the topic:

2. What are some ways to break down the cultural barriers between the TA and the students?

3. What are some ways to prepare for a TA class?

4. What problems could you have as a TA?
Helpful Hints for International Teaching Assistants

1. **Adjust your expectations.** Do not assume that all your students will perform well. Rather, address the interested student of average ability and try to gain the attention of those who seem unconcerned.

2. **Remember where you are.** You will never get U.S. students to act the way students in your country act. American students treat all TAs informally, not just you. It is no sign of disrespect.

3. **Consider your students’ backgrounds.** Many American university students have had little or no experience with people from foreign countries. Their prejudices against foreigners are not personal.

4. **Learn how students learn.** Tell your students specifically what assignments they are supposed to complete and when they are due. Make all deadlines clear. Grade and return assignments and exams promptly.

5. **Be friendly.** Learn the students’ names. Engage in informal conversation. Read the student newspaper. But remember that you are expected to be a bit distant and serious.

6. **Communicate without words.** Do not dress too formally. Move around the room. Use your hands when talking. Stand about an arm’s length away when chatting one on one. Establish intermittent eye contact while talking.

7. **Learn departmental policies.** Talk to experienced teachers about how they respond to students’ complaints and excuses. Do not be intimidated by threats from students. Learn how cheating is defined and what a teacher should do when a particular student is a suspect.

8. **Don’t be afraid to ask for help.** Do not pretend you know the answer to a question when you don’t. Ask your students for help with American slang and difficult pronunciation. Try to arrange informal meetings with other TAs, both foreign and American who have had the job you are about to begin. Ask them to comment on your classroom performance.
Plenary Two

What to Expect as a TA: A Panel Discussion with USC Undergraduates and Experienced ITAs

This panel will give you an opportunity to hear about teaching and studying at USC "straight from the horse’s mouth." Two undergraduate students and two experienced international teaching assistants will tell you about their experiences and expectations of classroom life at the university. You will also learn about some ways that you can find out about the expectations your students may have for you as their teaching assistant and the individual level of understanding about the course material as it is being presented throughout the semester.

On the index card handed out to you, on one side write ITA, the other side undergrad. Write down 1 – 2 questions on each side. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITA:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you remember the students’ names?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you find it difficult to proceed with your studies while you’re performing your TA tasks? If so, what is your recommendation to overcome the problem?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UG:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you evaluate a TA’s performance?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have different expectations from an ITA than that of a native speaker TA?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plenary Three

"It's all American to me!"

Part One: Culture & Culture Shock

TASK 1: Read the following two quotes and answer the questions that follow. Work with a partner.

“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I would have our young men and women with literary tastes to learn as much of English and other world-languages as they like, and then expect them to give the benefits of their learning to India and to the world...But I would not have a single Indian to forget, neglect or be ashamed of his mother tongue, or to feel that he or she cannot think or express the best thoughts in his or her own vernacular. Mine is not a religion of the prison-house.”

“As the traveler who has once been from home is wiser than he [she] who has never left his own doorstep, so a knowledge of one other culture should sharpen our ability to scrutinize more steadily, to appreciate more lovingly, our own.”

1. In the first quote, discuss how Mahatma Gandhi suggests we deal with culture. What are some things we should and should not do?

2. According to the second quote, how can contact with other cultures change a person?

3. Based on your life experiences, how has contact with other cultures changed you as a person? Give examples.
TASK 2: After watching the first part of the documentary “The Aliens”, answer the following.

1. Which one of the following statements made by the students on the tape can you identify with the most?

- When I arrived in the United States to pursue a bachelor’s degree, I didn’t know that I had landed on another planet.
- The whole idea of coming to the United States was exhilarating for me.
- Unlike other people, I think I was well prepared to make the transition.
- I was totally flustered. I felt completely like a fish out of water.
- I just expected it all to be the same. But you realize that no, that’s not how it is.

TASK 3: Intercultural adjustment can be a difficult process. One of the phases of intercultural adjustment is culture shock. According to the following expert, culture shock results from the difference in the set of values between cultures. Watch the following clips from the documentary “Cold Water” and answer the questions.

Dr. Robert Khols, Executive Director at the Washington International Center, describes the reasons for culture shock:

“You see, the problem is that every country teaches its values as if they were the only set of values worth having and every other set of values would be inferior…And that’s why we call it culture shock, when you realize that living in this culture that your own values are being brought into question. And that sort of pulls the rug out from under you…and you get kind of rather frightened…It’s difficult to describe because all of this happens over an accumulated period of time…and you can’t blame it on any one thing…and point to, “This is what it is that’s bothering me…” Basically…you find that here is another set of people living by another set of values that are very often in contrast to my own and they are getting along okay. And if I’m going to operate in this culture, I’m going to have to operate from that set of values rather than my own, even though I need to retain my own set of values in order to be myself.”

The word value is defined by the Collins Cobuilt English Language Dictionary as follows:

“The values of a person or a group are the…principles and beliefs that they think are important in life and that they…live their lives by”.
1. Think of some examples from your personal experience that describe the clash of different value systems.

2. What should a person do in order to adjust to a new culture?

3. According to Olivia Espin, Counseling Psychology Professor, what are the 3 stages of culture shock?

**Part Two: Perceptions and Values**

Our values influence and shape how we view the world. Our perceptions of what is taking place around us are interpreted based on our values and beliefs. In this segment, you will be introduced to several common American values as they are perceived by a group of international students. As you are discussing these values, keep in mind that even within a culture, people differ in the way they view themselves, their own culture, and others.

**TASK 1:** After viewing the documentary “The Aliens”, discuss the following in your groups. Make a list of the different values you think are important in American society.

1. **Quote:** “As I am walking, American students frequently ask me how I am and yet, when I begin to reply, I find that they’ve just passed me by, not waiting for an answer. Why do they ask ‘How are you’ but not wait for a response?”

   **Discussion:** This question is a simple greeting that is mainly used as an acknowledgement. The fact that most Americans don’t expect a detailed answer doesn’t necessarily mean that they don’t care. What are some ways you greet people in your own country? How would a visitor from another culture react or be expected to react to this greeting?

2. **Quote:** “Why are American students less grown-up than international students? Why are first-year American college students assumed to be unsure about what they want to study and what careers they want to pursue?”

   **Discussion:** Liberal education is highly valued in the United States. Students are encouraged to discover while in school what they want to pursue further as a career. It is very common for a student to enter college as an undecided major and even change majors in the process. How do you view liberal education? Why do you think it is valued so highly in the United States? Compare this educational system to that in your country.

3. **Quote:** “I am expected to complete virtually all my assignments on a computer.”

   **Discussion:** Information technology has become the norm in almost every field of study in the United States. How does this compare to your country? Both as a student and a TA, how comfortable are you using technology in your classes? Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a “high-tech” education.
4. Quote: "My academic advisor and others are recommending that I drop a certain class, but such an action seems drastic and cowardly."

Discussion: Many times and for different reasons the best choice for a student is to drop a course. Success and personal achievement are highly valued in the American culture, and if stress or failure can be avoided by dropping a course, this decision is perceived as a wise choice and a good strategy. How do students in your country deal with class selection? How important is academic success and maintaining a good GPA in your country? Discuss grades and their importance in your country’s educational system.

5. Quote: “Americans seem so friendly and yet I find it very difficult to get close to my friends; they need privacy and private space. Are they really my friends?”
“My American friends don’t seem keen on discussing personal issues”.

Discussion: The sharing of personal feelings and issues is very common in many cultures, but most Americans view this as intrusion of personal privacy. Privacy and maintaining one’s own space are really important to Americans. This might be falsely interpreted as avoidance or disinterest in forming deeper friendships. Share your experience forming friendships and the sharing of private thoughts and feelings in your culture. What are the differences and similarities? What are your observations about Americans and how they make friends?

6. Quote: “Why are Americans so ignorant about the rest of the planet? They don’t consider other points of view”.

Discussion: The fact that the Unites States is such a large and powerful nation may be one of the main reasons for this. Its politics and popular culture affect and influence not only this country but often the world. This adds to the element of ethnocentrism that is perhaps a characteristic found in every culture around the world. How do you think history, economics, and politics have influenced Americans’ worldview? What is the role of the media in shaping this worldview? How has the media influenced the way your perceive Americans?

Part Three: In the Classroom

The values, beliefs, attitudes, and customs of every culture are also reflected in the way the students and teachers function in the classroom. As a TA, you need to be aware of what is appropriate student and teacher behavior. In this segment of the documentary “Cold Water”, international students share their experiences in the American classroom.
**TASK 1**: In the table below, make a list of different things about the American classroom that surprised the international students. The first two examples are provided. Which of these behaviors would be acceptable or unacceptable in your country?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom behavior in the US</th>
<th>Classroom behavior in my country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food in the classroom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrupting the professor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Part Four: Advice**

Adjusting to a new culture can be a daunting and very stressful experience. One essential step is making the effort to understand the new culture, its values, and the way it operates. In your groups, consider the activities you’ve worked on earlier and make a list of specific pieces of advice on how to make this cultural adjustment as smooth as possible.
Plenary Four

Teaching Styles & Diversity in the Classroom

Part One: Teaching Styles

TASK 1: Characteristics of a Good Teacher

Think back to all of the teachers you have had. Select one that you thought was an especially good teacher. What made this person such a good teacher in your opinion?

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

TASK 2: Taking Notes

Now you are going to watch a videotape of a teacher presenting the same identical lesson, but employing four different teaching styles. The videotape will be paused after each scene depicting the ‘model’ TA/teacher in the classroom.

Write down your observations of the ‘model’ teacher in the boxes below.

Scene #1:

Scene #2:

Scene #3:

Scene #4:
Part Two: Definition of Diversity

The classroom in the U.S. is amazingly diverse. Diversity is “otherness,” or those human qualities that are different from our own and outside the group to which we belong, yet are present in other individual groups. It is important to distinguish between the primary and secondary dimensions of diversity.

Primary dimensions are the following: age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, and sexual orientation.

Secondary dimensions of diversity are those that can be changed and include, but are not limited to: educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, military experience, parental status, religious beliefs, and work experiences.

TASK 3: Dealing With Diversity in the Classroom

With a partner, consider some possible challenges of teaching in a richly diverse classroom. Write them here:

Some Potential Difficulties for TAs in the Multicultural Classroom
1. Including culturally diverse students in classroom discussions.
2. Gaining respect and authority as a female TA.
3. Creating a classroom community that includes historically marginalized students.
4. Overcoming fear and gaining skills for effective classroom management.

Strategies for Working in an Environment of Diversity
For Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Students
- Don’t assume that all of your students are “straight” (heterosexual).
- Don’t always use straight lifestyle examples in class.
- Don’t allow gay or lesbian jokes in the classroom.

For Students with Strong Religious Beliefs
- Realize as a TA that the way you see your students is conditioned by your religious faith.
- Realize that not all of your students believe in abortion rights and evolution.
- Realize that our faith stance and our academic stance may not coexist harmoniously.

For Women
- Use non-gender specific language.
- Use last names only on lab reports to avoid gender bias in grading.
- Have a safe suggestion box for students to critique your gender-related teaching style.
For International Students
- Write key words and phrases on the blackboard to support the spoken lecture.
- Remember that “inside jokes” and explanatory stories only make sense to insiders.
- Offer alternative ways to gain class participation credit.

For Students of Color
- Call on all students to speak in class.
- Don’t ask a student to speak for his or her entire race.
- Don’t think a student of color is an expert on issues of race and racism.
- Don’t assume that a student of color is academically and economically disadvantaged.
- Don’t expect a student of color to be any better or worse than other students.

References:
- http://www.inform.umd.edu
- http://www.sws.cornell.edu/OIS/tadw/Mult

Notes
Module 1

The First Day of Class: Setting the Tone with Effective Verbal/Non-Verbal Communication

The First Class Meeting
During the first week of classes, many students will be “shopping around,” that is, while they have registered for their courses already, they will still be deciding which courses they will keep, which they will add, and which they will drop. The impression you make in your first class meeting will help them decide whether or not to add, drop, or remain in your section of a course. The students’ decisions to stay will be affected by 1) how you set the tone and 2) your ability to communicate, verbally and nonverbally.

Setting the Tone for the Class

While many of the students in your section may not have purchased the required textbook yet, you can still set a positive tone for the rest of the semester by showing your enthusiasm for the class material and getting to know the students. Do not waste the first class session by dismissing the students as soon as you have gone over the syllabus and the course requirements. There are many things you can do on that first day to excite your students about the course. Here are a few suggestions:

- **Tell your students about yourself.** Tell the students your name, what you would like to be called in class, something about your background (personal and academic), and how you are specially prepared to teach this course. Students will feel more comfortable participating in class if you set the standard for communication.

- **Get to know your students.** Ask their names and find out some background information about them.

- **Try to find out what the students might already know** about the subject by asking them about their prior educational experience.

- **Ask the students about their expectations for the class.** What do they think they will learn in the course? List their ideas on the board and then tell them which are accurate.

- **Point out to the students in advance** what they should pay attention to for the next class meeting, e.g. the first reading or homework assignment.
The First Day of Class

These actions will communicate to your students that you are interested in them and in teaching the course. Research has shown that if you have a positive attitude toward your students, they will be more forgiving of foreign accents and grammatical inaccuracies.

Effective Communication Requires Conscious Effort
All teachers – ITAs, TAs, and even tenured professors – find effective classroom communication challenging. You, as an ITA, may face unique challenges due to pronunciation, accent, and/or culturally-based differences. Even so, you will need to be effective verbal communicators speaking in a way that is easy for your students to comprehend. Nonverbally, you want to communicate genuine respect and friendliness toward the students.

- For verbal communication, it is easier to control the volume and rate of your speech than it is to control aspects of your pronunciation, such as particular sounds and intonation, so you should be aware of two general qualities of your voice:

  1. **Speak with enough volume.**
     A loud voice (not too loud, it will make students anxious) shows confidence and implies authority. Be aware that if you speak too softly, students may not hear important points and they may doubt your ability to manage the class or lab.

  2. **Speak slowly in the classroom.**
     While American undergraduates can obviously understand fast speech, they may not be used to your accent, so make an effort to slow down your rate of speech in class. In addition, it is important in any learning environment to emphasize and repeat key concepts, which naturally involves slowing down the rate of speech.

- Our nonverbal behavior conveys a lot about our attitude about the class and our students.

  1. Make eye contact with your students! This will keep them engaged in the subject and attentive to what you have to say. You will also be able to monitor their ability to understand you by observing their facial expressions.

  2. Face the students when you talk to them; don’t keep your back to your audience for long, even when writing on the blackboard.

  3. It’s okay to walk around the front of the room as you talk. Using gestures and facial expressions also helps to clarify language and emphasize key ideas. Be aware that crossing your arms puts an invisible barrier between you and your audience.

  4. Maintain a relaxed posture and a relaxed facial expression. If you are too serious or schoolmaster like, the students will feel distanced from you and positive interaction will not occur.
**TASK: Present a confident image of yourself and the class**

Introduce yourself and give a brief description of the class you’ll be a TA for. Set the tone using the suggestions above. Students will tell you whether they want to stay or not depending on the tone and communication:

**Consider:**

1. What can you do to help the students accept you as their teacher? How can you show them that you are approachable, friendly, and concerned about their learning?

2. Students may be concerned about their ability to understand you and whether you will be able to understand them. It may be wise to approach this subject right from the beginning. Therefore, you should keep in mind the advantage of acknowledging your English differences (accented speech) and/or problems (grammatical errors, lack of knowledge of slang expressions) rather than apologizing for them. What could you say on the first day to put the students at ease and set a positive tone for the semester? How will you work together with your students to overcome language difficulties?

3. How will you know if the students have understood you? Will you monitor their faces, ask frequently if they understand, encourage them to ask specific questions?

**Tone:**

**Volume & Rate:**

**Non-verbal cues:**
MODULE 2
Language of the University: Key Expressions

Preview Questions
How can I find out what part of the teaching material the student does not understand?
How should I respond to students’ incorrect answers in class?
How can I give clear directions and organize tasks effectively?

Asking Questions: Finding Out What Students Know
All teaching includes helping students to learn from themselves. In the classroom this often translates into being skilled at eliciting information from students. In many teaching situations, students can learn more from your questions than from your answers. Here are some sample questions that a TA might ask when:

- The student has just provided an incorrect answer to a homework problem.
  TA: “How did you start?”

- The student stops in the middle of solving a problem.
  TA: “So what do you do with the constant? Do you know?”

- The student has made the wrong move in a science experiment.
  TA: “Doesn’t this _______ belong somewhere else?”

These are not rhetorical questions. In each case the TA expects the students to explain their thinking process so that he or she can step in once they have identified where the student made a wrong move.

When you find the point of error, you might:
- Remind students of what was said in class
- Show how they took the same step in another similar situation
- Ask the class for feedback and intervention
- Point out a helpful passage in the textbook
Responding to Student Answers
Students can respond to a question in three ways: by answering it correctly, by getting part of the answer right, or by giving an incorrect answer. In every case the student expects some kind of feedback from the teacher. Here are some ways American teachers respond to student questions:

- If a student gives the correct answer, the teacher might say one of the following to give positive feedback and encourage all of the students: *okay, yes, that’s right, excellent, perfect, nice job.* To make the feedback more personal, the teacher can add the student’s name. For example, a teacher could respond by saying, “*Good work, Jan.*”

- If a student gives an answer that is partially correct, teachers also like to start out by saying, “*Okay,*” but then add, “*that's part of it, now can anyone else help us out from this point?*” This way the teacher has acknowledged the effort of the first student and opened up the problem to the rest of the class, thus inviting more interaction and participation.

- Lastly, if a student’s answer is incorrect, teachers in the United States try to begin their response with a positive or neutral word before getting back to the question. This is true even if the teacher suspects that the student was ill-prepared or was not paying attention. Teachers do not openly criticize students or their answer. For example, a teacher would not say, “You are wrong,” or “That is wrong.” If you say such things in the classroom you will appear too mechanical and unfeeling. A more expected approach would be if you said:

  “*Let’s go back. You were doing fine until you got right here. Then you missed a step in the calculation.*”
  “*Close. Can you try again?*”
  “*I understand what you’re saying, but that’s not what’s needed here. Think about the formula I gave you a few minutes ago.*”

The teacher might also need to restate or rephrase the question if most of the students cannot get the correct answer. When most of the class is having trouble understanding a point, the teacher might need to review the material again in a different way. If you think you may have been partly to blame for the confusion, you might consider using one of the following three statements. Taking partial responsibility will help maintain a relaxed atmosphere that encourages students to speak up and make mistakes without embarrassment.

- “*Maybe I didn’t express the question clearly. Let me try again.*”
- “*I guess I didn’t cover that material well enough.*”
- “*I think I might have confused you.*”
TASK 1: Applying the Strategies

For each case below, write out a teacher response that reflects the strategies discussed in this section.

Case #1: You have just finished teaching the class a key concept in your field. Because you want to make sure the students have understood it, you call on a student to repeat back to you the main points. The student has a confused look on his face and says, “I have no idea. I’m totally lost.” Many other students say, “Me too!” What do you say?

Case #2: You presented a mini-lesson to your class last week on how to solve a particular type of equation. The students have been practicing the equation on homework problems for over a week. In class you ask a student to provide the answer to problem #1 and she gives an incorrect answer. What do you do?

Case #3: Your duty as a TA is to run a discussion section in which you go over the homework problems assigned by the course professor who gives the students weekly lectures. You are not required to attend the lectures that the students must attend. While you are in the middle of solving a homework problem on the board, a student raises his hand and asks for the definition of a particular term that you have used in your equation. You are stunned for a moment because you had assumed that all of the students knew this information already, and that you were just reviewing it. Now you wonder what else they might not know yet. What do you do?

Case #4: At the end of a lab experiment you ask students why a particular reaction occurred. A student gives an answer that is only partially correct. How should you respond?
Organizing Tasks and Giving Clear Directions
Sometimes the most difficult part of a lesson is organizing tasks and giving clear instructions. Students will generally do what you ask them to as long as they know what it is you are asking them to do! Here are some helpful tips to follow when giving directions:

- Give a reason for your request.
- Try to make instructions as clear and succinct as possible. Avoid long, wordy directions.
- When putting students in pairs or groups, try to use their names instead of calling each student, “You.”
- Confirm students’ understanding.
- Use proper stress and intonation.

If students are already in the middle of a task and you need to give them further directions, be sure to get everyone’s attention first. What are expressions you could use to do this?

TASK 2: Applying the Strategies
How would you give clear directions for each of the tasks below?

1. Students have been working with the same lab partner for a few weeks. Give them instructions to find a new partner to do this week’s lab.

2. Students are in groups discussing questions on a handout you have given them. You notice you are running short on time and you want them to skip questions 7 and 8.

3. The review session for the midterm has been changed. Tell the students that the review session formerly scheduled on _____ (date) in _______ (room) from _____ to _____ (time) has been changed. Give them the new date, room, and time.

4. You are going to assign students passwords for their computers. You need them to line up in alphabetical order.
5. A student has broken a flask in a chemistry lab. How do you politely tell her that she has to pay for it?

6. For your next classroom activity, you need your students to get into groups of four. You have a multilingual class and you want to be sure members of the same group don’t speak the same language. What will you say?

7. You are going to have individual midterm conferences with each student. Prepare a sign-up sheet and send it around the room for students to sign up.

8. There is a mistake on a handout you have given the students. They are already working in discussion groups. Interrupt them and correct the mistake (the number 15 should be 50 in problem 8).

9. For an experiment, you need the students to line up by height. What do you say?

Classroom Terms and Their Definitions

**TASK 3: Matching Classroom Expressions**

These are common expressions that are used in the classroom. Match each term with its definition.

**Terms**

1. Partial credit  
2. To grade on a curve  
3. Multiple choice test  
4. Closed-book test  
5. Midterm exam  
6. Incomplete  
7. Take-home exam  
8. Extra-credit  
9. Make-up exam  
10. Pass/fail or Credit/Non-credit  
11. Add/drop  
12. Open-book test  
13. Supplementary textbook  
14. Review session  
15. Prerequisite
Definitions

A. ___ A grade given to a student for a class in which he/she has not completed all of the required work.

B. ___ A test that students complete at home.

C. ___ Additional points earned by a student who does work in addition to what is normally required.

D. ___ A test question that forces students to choose the best of several given answers.

E. ___ A textbook that is recommended for additional study but that is not required for the course.

F. ___ A test that is given after the scheduled time for students who missed the original test.

G. ___ A test given halfway through a course that covers material up to that time.

H. ___ A course that must be taken before another course.

I. ___ A policy in which grades are based on a normal distribution curve.

J. ___ A test answer that is not completely correct and receives less than maximum points.

K. ___ A time period in which a student may join or leave a class without it affecting his/her grade.

L. ___ A test in which students may not use any notes or books.

M. ___ An extra class held for those students who want help with the material to be covered on a test.

N. ___ An in-class test for which students can use their textbooks and notes.

O. ___ A grade for a class in which a student does not receive a letter grade.

**TASK 4: Fill in the Blanks**

Using the above expressions, complete the dialogue on the next page.
TA: Does anyone have questions about the syllabus?

Student: Yes. Is there a (1)__________________________ in this class?

TA: Yes, there is. Halfway through the semester you will have a test on the material we’ve covered in class.

Student: Will it be (2)__________________________ or closed-book?

TA: You will be able to use your notes and books for the test, but you will do it in class. It’s not a (3)_______________________________.

Student: What about the grading scale? Do you (4)_____________ __ __ ____________?

TA: No. I give grades based on a set scale: 90% is an A; 80% is a B, etc. I also give (5)______________________________, so you can do extra work to improve your grade if you do badly on the test.

Student: That’s cool. But what if we don’t do all of the work for the course?

TA: Then, you’ll probably receive an (6)_________________________ instead of a regular grade. But if you have taken the (7)______________________, Algebra I and Algebra II, you should be prepared for the class. I also recommend you read the (8)_________________________. They are not required reading, but they will also help you do well in class.

TA: Any more questions about the course before we start the class?

Student: If I decide that I don’t want the course, when is the last day I can (9)__________ ___________ without it affecting my grade?

TA: That’s a good question . . . I’m not quite sure. I’ll find out and get back to you. But remember, the class is (10)__________________, so you won’t be graded. If you do the work at a satisfactory level, you’ll pass the class.

References
MODULE 3

Language of the University: Asking, Requesting, and Suggesting

When speaking any language, a person makes the voice rise and fall in pitch. Except in cases of special emphasis or contrast, an English clause or sentence has the major pitch change on the last major content word. This is entirely appropriate, considering that it is also a pattern in English for the most important or new information to be placed at or near the end of a sentence. The final position is called the “focal,” or highlighted position. In this position, the major pitch change of the sentence draws attention to this highlighted position.

In statements or information questions (who, what, where, when, why), the pitch typically rises and then falls on the last major content word or phrase.

*I want you to take out your study sheets now.*

*Where is your study sheet?*

In yes/no questions, the pitch of the voice tends to be high and/or to rise on the last major content word.

*Do you know the answer to this question?*

In the “continuation” intonation pattern, the voice is high or rises on all the items other than the last one to show more information is coming. Falling intonation generally indicates finality, whereas rising or high intonation generally indicates non-finality.

*The reason could be the obvious one, or it could be a not-so-obvious one.*
TASK 1: Mark the intonation patterns listed below, then practice with a classmate.

1. This chapter is an important one.

2. Who knows the answer to this question?

3. Have you read the assignment yet?

4. Do you agree with the opinion expressed here?

5. Will you be able to finish your paper on time?

6. You will have to take a make-up exam or else retake the course.

7. Either he is lying, or he is misguided.

8. There are four things you need to do by the end of the course: turn in your lab reports, turn in your class notes, schedule a meeting with me, and then turn in your final papers.
More on Asking, Requesting, and Suggesting
When you need to have your students follow directions, do you a favor, or pay attention to a warning, your choice of words to communicate your intention is very important. Consider the differences in the following statements and questions:

A. Lower the flame!
B. I think you might consider lowering the flame on that burner.
C. It would be a really good idea, if you don’t mind, to lower the flame on that burner.
D. Would you please lower the flame on that burner?

A. Close the door; it’s noisy out there.
B. Would you please close the door; it’s noisy out there.
C. Could you get the door?

A. Pass your homework papers forward now.
B. Pass your homework papers forward please.
C. Would you all kindly pass your homework papers forward please.

Conclusion: Write in when you should use:
can
could
would
might
may

When to use imperative forms:

When to use polite, but informal directives:
TASK 2: Using the Most Appropriate Request Forms

Using the language forms and intonation patterns we have discussed, make suggestions, requests and give warnings.

1. Request that students read chapter 3 for the next class.
2. Suggest students to form study groups to prepare for the midterm.
3. Request that students put away all lab equipment before they leave.
4. Warn a pair of students that unless they dry their beaker completely before putting dry ice into it, the experiment won’t work.
5. Ask permission to erase what you have written on the blackboard.
6. Suggest that a student explain her point.
7. Suggest that a student repeat her question.
8. Warn a student that he has been boiling his solution for too long.
9. Request that the class look at the diagram on page 130.
10. Encourage a student to identify the specific part of the problem that he does not understand.
11. Request that the class make a list of unfamiliar terms from the reading.
12. Warn students that they are running out of time to finish the lab experiment.
13. Ask students to stop talking.
14. Request everyone’s attention while you explain a key point.
15. Warn the entire class that unless they wear their safety goggles, they cannot perform the chemistry experiment or stay in the classroom.
16. Request that students change lab partners each week.

References
MODULE 4

Language: Targeted Areas of Pronunciation: Vowels & Consonants

Each language has a unique inventory of vowel and consonant sounds that occur in combinations to make the syllables and words of the language. Attention to the exact features of the pronunciation of the individual sounds in American English and how these differ from your native language sounds will put you in a better position to understand and pronounce American English well.

Vowels

Understanding with the vowel chart makes it possible to learn new sounds physically, as opposed to relying on the ear, which may not be able to hear unfamiliar sounds. Your ability to hear the new sounds will improve as you learn to form them physically. The vowel chart (Figure A below) fits into the middle of the mouth as shown in the simple cross-section of the head (Figure B).

**Figure A**

**Figure B**

The role of the tongue: Note that the left side of the chart points toward the lips, and the right side points toward the throat. The upside down, backward "e" symbol (schwa) in the middle of the chart would be located in the middle of your mouth.

Each point on the chart is a position in the mouth where the tongue moves to make a different vowel sound.
Now try some vowel sounds: Look in a mirror and say the sound "eeeee" as in the word "see." Next say "aaaah" as in "father." Alternate saying these two sounds a few times: "eeeee, aaaah, eeeeh, aaaah." Do you see your tongue moving in the mirror? Notice that the front of your tongue moves up and forward to just behind the gum ridge for "eeeh," then down and back for "aaaah."

In the same way, each symbol and key word on the chart represent a position in the mouth to which the tongue moves to form a vowel. If you don't move it anywhere, and just leave your tongue relaxed in the middle of the mouth and let out some voiced air, you get the sound "uh," shown in the middle of the vowel chart with the "schwa" symbol, an upside down, backward "e." This is a very important sound for the American accent, as it's the most common vowel sound heard in American English. The following words should all be pronounced as "uh": allow, deny, possible, compose, upon.

The lips and jaw help, too. In addition to how your tongue moves, it's also important to notice how the lips and jaw shape vowel sounds. If you consider the vowels along the front of the vowel chart (moving down from "see" to "cat") you'll note that your jaw is slightly open for /i/ (eeeh) like in "see" and opens more as you move down the chart to the vowel sound in "cat."

Along the back of the chart there is lip-rounding: When you say the vowel in "blue" at the top of the back, your lips round very fully. As you move down the back of the chart, they round less and less until you don't round them at all for the "aaaah" sound in "father."

Explore the vowel chart: Try making a few of the sounds by reading the key words. Check yourself to see if your tongue and lips where they should be according to what you've now learned about the chart. Check yourself by looking in a mirror.
Consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stop Sounds</th>
<th>Continuant Sounds</th>
<th>Nasal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voiced</td>
<td>Voiced</td>
<td>Voiced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two lips</td>
<td>be</td>
<td>we</td>
<td>man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teeth &amp; Lip</td>
<td>poor</td>
<td>van</td>
<td>fill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teeth &amp; Tongue</td>
<td></td>
<td>Then</td>
<td>Thin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongue Tip</td>
<td>do</td>
<td>this</td>
<td>Thin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongue Front</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>the</td>
<td>strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongue Back</td>
<td>zip, lip,</td>
<td>so</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>run</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throat</td>
<td>get, go,</td>
<td>kiss</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>guard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TASK:** Practice vowels and consonants that your Instructor noted on the language feedback sheet from “First Day of Class” Presentation. Correct language errors too.

References
http://www.thedialectcoach.com/content.asp?ContentId=542
MODULE 5

Language: Word Stress Patterns

As a general rule, every English word spoken in isolation contains one major syllable, which is stressed. A stressed syllable is usually louder, and its vowel is longer and higher pitched than the vowel of an unstressed syllable. Often, the vowel of an unstressed syllable is shortened or weakened to the neutral schwa /ə/ vowel.

The words below are commonly occurring words in an academic context that non-native speakers may accent incorrectly. They are grouped according to the syllable that receives the strongest stress. These are all important words, which you should practice pronouncing until you are confident that a native speaker would not misunderstand you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress on 1st Syllable</th>
<th>Stress on 2nd Syllable</th>
<th>Stress on 3rd Syllable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inference</td>
<td>Assignment</td>
<td>Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercises</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessary</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrate</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Impossible</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Prediction</td>
<td>Hypothetical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>controversy</td>
<td>material</td>
<td>Controversial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TASK 1: Add terms in your field to this list.

TASK 2: Practice the stress of words your Instructor noted on the language feedback sheet from Presentation #1, and the 100 Terms List.

References
http://www.thedialectcoach.com/content.asp?ContentId=542
MODULE 6

Components of Defining a Term

When defining a term or concept in an American university, it is important to remember to make the information relevant (applicable) to the students’ lives. It will help them learn the material better if they know why the information is important and how it relates to other concepts they already know.

In this section, we will focus on making the term relevant to the students so that the meaning is clear and presented in a way that students can easily understand.

Before giving the definition

Before you define a term or concept, it is important to provide motivation and make connections to what the students already know. The questions below will help you. The examples given are adapted from “The New Science of Skin and Scuba Diving”:

1. Why do the students need to know this term?
   “Temperature and pressure are probably the most important factors with which sports divers are concerned…”

2. How much do they already know about this term and about the related subject?
   “Though the beginner may feel that some of the detail is excessive, it is certain that a reasonable understanding of these phenomena will help to increase the pleasures and reduce the hazards to be encountered in diving.”

3. What related ideas and concepts do the students already know that will help them understand this new term?
   “Just as pressure builds in the middle ear as we ascend or descend in a plane, it also builds as we ascend or descend into the water”
Defining the Term

It is important to remember to give a clear and concise definition of the term or concept.

4. What is the formal definition of this term?

“Matter is anything that occupies space and has weight”

5. Could this term be defined differently in other contexts?

“Since the word ‘diving’ is applied to just about any method of getting underwater, we shall have to narrow the definition a bit for the purposes of this [course].”

Making it Relevant

When defining the term, there are several ways to make it relevant and clear to your students. To do this, think about the following questions:

6. What practical examples will make the term clear to your students?

“For example, in ice, the water molecules are held in a crystalline structure because the forces of attraction between water molecules are greater than the energy required for free movement”

7. What personal examples or stories will help explain the term?

“The accident which gave rise to the term ‘squeeze’ was what happened when a diver’s air hose broke near the surface and vented the helmet to a lower pressure. He was thus ‘squeezed’ into the helmet as he descended”

8. What analogies can be made to concepts the students already understand? Is there a pattern, relationship, or function similar to the term you are defining?

“As you descend into the water, you may have to yawn or swallow so that the air will pass through the tubes in your ears easily. It may even be necessary to grab your nose and blow. But if you blow too hard, the ‘trap door’ (the area between the throat and ear) may just shut tighter.”
9. What terms compare or contrast with this term?

“If one lifts a 2-ounce fishline sinker he refers to it as ‘heavy,’ but a large block of balsa wood… is called ‘light,’ even though it weighs twice as much. The term density explains this discrepancy”

10. What is the origin of this word (prefix, root, suffix meanings)? What language is it from? Is it made from an acronym?

“Seaward refers to moving in the direction (ward) of the open sea.”

“Scuba comes from the acronym self-contained underwater breathing apparatus”

11. Will a drawing or diagram of the term help your students understand it more clearly?

“The relationship between these three scales is shown by the following conversion equations”

Task 1: Presentation Analysis

As you read the following example from a linguistics course, decide which of the questions were answered. Which questions were not answered? Is this definition clear or would it be better with more information?

Before we continue our discussion of second language acquisition, I would like to explain an important concept, affective domain. This term is basic to any discussion of personality. It has been useful in discussing the personality variables that we observe in second language learners. Affective domain refers to the feelings and emotions that everyone experiences, the emotional side of human behavior. It can be contrasted to the cognitive side, which refers to our rational and analytical abilities, our ability to learn, analyze and remember. An example of a personality factor which falls within the affective domain is the idea of self-esteem or self-confidence. Self-esteem relates to how you view yourself. In second language acquisition, we often assume that students who are very self-confident will be successful in language acquisition. Another example is motivation. Lack of motivation or lack of a desire to learn another language often results in slow progress.
Task 2: Practice Making it Relevant

Work alone or with others from a similar field to think of a term or concept that is important for a basic understanding of your field. Take a few minutes to answer as many of the questions below that you can about the term. When you have finished, explain your term to a partner or small group of students who are unfamiliar with your field.

1. Why do the students need to know this term?

2. How much do they already know about this term and about the related subject?

3. What related ideas and concepts do the students already know that will help them understand this new term?

4. What is the formal definition of this term?

5. Could this term be defined differently in other contexts?

6. What practical examples will make the term clear to your students?

7. What personal examples or stories will help explain the term?

8. What analogies can be made to concepts the students already understand? Is there a pattern, relationship, or function similar to the term you are defining?

9. What terms compare or contrast with this term?

10. What is the origin of this word (prefix, root, suffix meanings)? What language is it from? Is it made from an acronym?

Will a drawing or diagram of the term help your students understand it more clearly?
MODULE 7

Presenting Information: Useful Classroom Expressions

Preview Questions
How should I speak in the classroom?
What can I say to:
- Introduce a class or lab?
- Give examples and emphasize important points?
- Invite questions and support participation?
- Conclude a class session?

What language do I need for the lab or office hours to:
- Make students feel comfortable?
- Work through a problem?

“We’re usually all there when he walks in. He looks sort of embarrassed, stares down at the desk, and asks if we have any questions. There’s an awkward silence, like at a party where nobody can think of anything to say. Then he starts to work out a problem from the homework. He talks to the blackboard in a steady, even way. You can hear, but you can’t tell what’s important and what isn’t. I can’t follow one of the steps but I’m afraid to say anything. Every now and then he says, ‘O.K.?’, but it doesn’t mean anything and he doesn’t stop. After a while you don’t really understand much and wonder why you’re there. I copy the stuff into my notebook – I’ll probably be able to figure it out at home – but if it weren’t for the exam I know I would never look at it. He knows his stuff all right, but it’s like he’s up front and we’re back there and there’s a glass wall between us.” MIT undergraduate student (p. 67, TAS)

Classroom interaction is not likely to be effective if a TA does not present the course material in an effective, interactive manner. To become a more effective TA, you should think about how to speak in the classroom, using common words and phrases that assist effective communication, strategies to help students learn, and ways to continue developing your own English language skills.

Useful Classroom Expressions
Many different phrases are used to organize presentations and to identify for the student what type of information is being presented. Some are used to introduce a topic, give examples and emphasize main points, invite questions and support participation, and to conclude a teaching session.
Introduce a discussion section or lab by giving an overview of what you will cover:
“**What we are going to cover today is . . .**”
“**Today, we are going to talk about . . .**”
“**Last time we talked about . . ., today we will go on to . . .**”
“**Today’s topic is . . .**”
“**The purpose of our lab experiment today is . . .**”

Give examples and emphasize main points with clear language clues, so that students know what requires specific attention:
“**Let me give you an example . . .**”
“**For instance/For example . . .**”
“**Now, there are two things that are really important. First, . . .**”
“**What this means is that . . .**”
“**Now pay attention to this next part . . .**”

Invite questions and support participation by giving students the opportunity to express their ideas and comments, and encouraging their attempts to participate in the class even if their responses are not correct. Part of learning is making mistakes too.
“**What do you think? **”
“**Could you explain that a little more? **”
“**Can you think of an example? **”
“**Who can tell me what our next step is? **”
“**Exactly. **”
“**Almost. Consider . . . Now, what do you think? **”

Conclude a class or lecture topic with a brief summary of the main points.
“**To summarize . . .**”
“**What we have been talking about is . . .**”
“**The important points to remember are . . .**”
“**So far (up until now), we have been discussing . . ., in the next class we will . . .**”
“**Who can summarize what we have done so far? **”

Language for the Lab or Office Hours
The lab and the TA’s office are usually more personal settings for TAs and students to interact. Working one-on-one with students provides another opportunity for your students to see you as interested, helpful, and friendly.

Encourage their questions by being open and aware of potentially difficult subject matter.
“**How’s it going, (use first name)? / What’s up?**”
“**Any problems with the class so far?**”
“**How are you doing with (possibly difficult point/problem)?**”
“**Where should we start?**” (to begin working through a problem)
“What should we do next?”
“What do you remember about this step/part?”
“And so what’s our answer?”

Here are some steps that you can take to present information successfully.

1. Consider the purpose of your lesson. Is it to teach a new concept? Review key ideas from a lecture? Explain how to conduct an experiment?

2. Consider your students’ preparation. How much do they already know about this subject? How can I find out what they don’t know yet? How will this information affect my presentation?

3. Make connections for the students. While you might be very familiar with the material, it may be new to your students. Try to connect the new material to something the students already know or have already learned in class. Take a minute or two at the beginning of class to review what was covered last time. You should also make these connections any time you introduce new concepts.

4. Preview for the students what will be covered in a particular class period. You might want to write on the blackboard the things you wish to accomplish that day. This provides the students with a framework for the class session.

5. Use transitions, technically known as discourse cues or markers, to signal a move from one topic to the next, or to show how one idea is related to another. Here are some examples:
   - “This is the first step.”
   - “Now pay close attention to this part because this is the part you have to know.”
   - “What I’d like to do next is focus on . . . .”

6. Repeat key words or concepts. Students need to hear new concepts repeated in order to understand them. Paraphrase your ideas – repeat your message in different words.
   - “The first law of thermodynamics relates to conservation of energy, and states that energy can be neither built up nor destroyed. In any system, no energy can be created without an exactly equivalent lessening of the total energy in the system.” Paraphrase: “Energy won’t run uphill.”

7. Reinforce an important principle by showing the principle in practice, such as in a lab setting. Visual aids, the blackboard, and handouts can also be used to demonstrate a principle.
HOMEWORK

After lunch you will be presenting information in the form of a term in your field (Read Module 9, Term Practice #1: Introducing a Term). Consider the 7 points above and the expressions you’ve just learned to incorporate into your presentation.
MODULE 8

Handling Questions in the Classroom

Preview Questions:
Do students in the U.S. ask the teacher a lot of questions in class?
Is there a strategy that I should use to respond to student questions?
Am I expected to provide answers to all of the students’ questions?

What to Expect in the United States
In the United States university classroom, students are expected to ask questions. When students ask questions it shows the teacher that they are alert, thoughtful, and interested in the subject matter. Teachers anticipate and welcome student questions because they help the teacher assess student comprehension. Teachers do not perceive students’ questions as a threat to their authority. In contrast, when students do not ask questions, the teacher may assume that the students are bored, lost (do not understand the subject matter), or perhaps too intimidated to speak up in class. In an interactive classroom environment such as we have in the U.S., you should anticipate questions from the students and recognize that this kind of student-teacher interaction is considered a normal part of the learning process.

Steps for Responding to Questions
In brief, you can follow these five steps when faced with a question in class:

- Identify the question.
- Acknowledge the question, verbally or nonverbally, within three seconds.
- Repeat or rephrase the question.
- Answer the question as concisely as possible.
- Get confirmation from the student. Check with the student to make sure you did indeed answer the question that was asked.

1. Identifying the Question
Aside from being prepared to answer student questions, as an ITA you first face the challenge of identifying questions in the classroom. Undergraduates may not articulate their questions using typical question formats such as a WH- question, a choice question using OR, or a YES/NO question of some kind. Students’ statements or exclamations are often questions in disguise.
For example:

**Student (looking at the incorrect result of his science experiment):**
“Hey, my solution doesn’t look the way your example did!”

**The real underlying question that the student is asking might be:**
“Why did I get this result?” or
“What went wrong with my experiment?” or
“Can you help me to figure out what I did wrong?”

**TASK 1: Identifying Underlying Questions**
In each case below the undergraduate student is trying to elicit a response from the TA. Read the following and decide what question the student is really asking the TA. The *italicized* words should receive added stress.

**Example:**
Student: “Antibodies *neutralize* antigens. At least that’s what I *thought* you said the other day.”
Real question: Do antibodies neutralize antigens or not?

1. **Student:** “So if we know the equilibrium price we can determine the equilibrium quantity?”
   **Real question:**

2. **Student:** “I don’t get the part about U-substitution.”
   **Real question:**

3. **Student:** “Uh-oh. The answer I got was 5.”
   **Real question:**

4. **Student:** “But I thought you said it didn’t matter if we kept the minus sign in here because we’re not worried about the direction of the vectors in this lab. Now it seems like you’re worried about it.”
   **Real question:**

5. **Student:** “I thought you said last week that we have to use the Chain Rule to solve this kind of problem, and now you’re telling us we have to use this other rule. I’m totally confused.”
   **Real question:**
6. **Student:** “In your example where there are two people on a raft and one jumps off, and the weight pushes the raft in the opposite direction, I don’t get how to calculate the effect of the jump on the raft.”
**Real question:**

7. **Student:** “I didn’t catch what you said about how work and power are different.”
**Real question:**

2. **Acknowledging the Question**

Acknowledging student questions can be done either verbally, by saying something like, “That’s a good question!” or nonverbally, by looking at the student while nodding your head and keeping a thoughtful expression on your face, and/or making a “Hmm . . .” sound. In any case, you should give some indication that you have heard the question within **three** seconds. If you wait longer, the student will wonder if you have even understood that a question was asked. What you don’t want to do is freeze up or become tense because you hadn’t expected someone to ask a question.

It is also important that you do not discourage students by responding negatively to their questions. If a student asks a question, you should treat him/her with respect by taking the question seriously, even if the question shows that the student does not understand an elementary principle of the material you are covering. Never respond by saying something like, “That was a dumb question” or “You should know that from lecture.” This tone sounds punitive and students will feel demoralized by such a response. They will also not feel comfortable asking questions in the future.

**TASK 2: Acknowledging Questions**

What are some other ways that you can verbally or nonverbally acknowledge a question? Write some other responses here:

3. **Repeating or Rephrasing the Question**

**This is the most important step!** While it is important for all teachers to restate a student’s question, it is especially important for nonnative speakers. Repeating or restating a student’s question:
- Allows the student to know that you understood the question.
- Helps other students in the class to hear the question.
- Gives you a chance to rephrase the question so that it is clearer or more appropriate.
Keep in mind that undergraduates do not always ask questions in a coherent way and may not be as familiar with the terminology in your field. They may need your help to rephrase or reframe a question.

- Provides you with a little more time to consider a response to the question.

Restating or rephrasing questions often involves changing the grammar of the original question.

For example:

Student: “Can we turn in this assignment on Friday instead of on Wednesday?”

TA: “You want to know if you can hand in your assignment on Friday?” or “You want to know whether you can hand in your assignment on Friday?”

Student: “How come my mixture didn’t turn blue like it was supposed to?”

TA: “You want to know why you didn’t get the right result?” or “You want to know what went wrong?”

**TASK 3: Restating Questions**

Restate or rephrase the following questions. Use the phrases in parentheses to start your response. Pay attention to any grammatical changes you might need to make.

1. “What’s the lab assignment again?” (Okay. Can I have everyone’s attention? Someone has asked. . .)

2. “How come we have to use the Riemann sum to figure out an integral if we already have formulas for it?” (That’s a good question. He wants to know . . .)

3. “Are we going to have a review session before the midterm exam?” (Did everyone hear that? He wants to know . . .)

4. “I was wondering if you could tell us again what M stands for.” (So you’re having trouble understanding . . .)

5. “Can we apply this equation to any system or does it only hold true for closed systems?” (If I’m not mistaken, you’re asking . . .)

**4. Responding to Student Questions**

After you restate the question and clarify any misunderstandings, you should consider how to respond to it. In some cases, it’s best to provide an answer that is brief and accurate. Long responses can take time away from other students who have questions and
Handling Questions

from time needed to cover class material. Avoid getting into a long conversation with a single student as this could cause other students to become frustrated and bored. Suggest that the student with the question see you in your office hours if more time is needed to explain an answer.

Another point to keep in mind is that when students ask questions, it’s an ideal opportunity for you to find out what they have understood so far. Sometimes it will be appropriate to refrain from automatically supplying an answer. You could instead reply with a question of your own.

For example:

Student: “I still don’t understand the Doppler effect.”

TA: “Can you tell me which part you don’t understand?”

Student: “You said something about a change in frequency of waves and pitch, but I don’t understand what makes those changes.”

TA: “Okay. Did you understand what I said about the speed at which the source and the observer move toward each other? Do you remember the example I gave about the train?” (The TA continues to explain and asks for confirmation that the student has understood.)

Even when the student wants you to confirm his/her answer, don’t respond automatically with a “That’s correct.” Rather, encourage the student to think through his/her response by saying, “What do you think? And why?” This way, the student will be forced to explain his/her rationale and you will see where the student might need additional help.

For example:

Student: “So arithmetic progression is different from geometric progression, right?”

TA: “What do you think?” OR “Yes, can you tell me how?”

**TASK 4: Responding to a Question**

Decide whether the following questions require a short answer response or a question response.

Example:

“When do we have to turn in our term project?” *Short answer response*

“I’m not sure I understand what Dr. Collins means about “fear of failure” so can you go over it again?” *Question response*

1. What was the answer to number five on the quiz yesterday?
2. I don’t know what you mean when you say to integrate a function. I’m just really lost.
3. So, we have to use U-substitution to solve this next problem?
4. Did Niels Bohr propose the Theory of Relativity?
5. What would happen if we substituted R for C? Would we obtain the same results?

6. How does the core of the nuclear reactor get lowered into position for a nuclear reaction to take place?

5. Getting Confirmation from the Student
After you give your answer, check to see if the student is satisfied with your response. If you provided an answer that does not match the student’s intended question, you will have to go back to step two and try again to understand the question the student is asking. Here are some phrases you can use:

“Did I answer your question?”
“Is that what you were asking for?”
“Does that help?”
“Do you understand now?”
“Is that clear?”
“Okay?”

TASK 5: Role-play
With a partner, consider what went wrong in the interaction below and how the ITA could have responded more appropriately. With a partner, write a dialogue based on this scene, applying what you know about handling questions. Lastly, perform this role-play for the class.

It was the end of a math discussion section, and the ITA had just announced that she wanted her students to hand in their homework on the due date. (Many of the students had been handing in their homework late.) At that point, a U.S. student asked if he could hand in the homework that was due for class that day during her office hour, which was at a later time on the same day. At first she laughed. When he repeated his question, she paused for a long time. At that point, the bell that signaled the end of class rang, so everyone started picking up their belongings and standing up to leave, which created a lot of noise in the room. The student who had not yet received an answer to his question asked the question again in a different way: “Do you want it now or can I hang on to it until I see you in your office hour?” She answered, “Right,” an inappropriate response to a question using or. He asked one more time, and she finally gave him an answer, but there was so much noise that hardly anyone heard her. The student later reported that he thought the ITA had misunderstood his question because of her inappropriate responses. During an interview with the ITA after class, she said that she had in fact understood his question but was unprepared for it because she had not expected it. Both the student and the ITA said that all of the noise and movement made the situation worse.

(This scenario and exercise come from Smith, Meyers, and Burkhalter, 1992, p. 90).
Helpful Tips for Difficult Situations

What happens if you are unable to understand a student’s question because of language or pronunciation? You can handle the problem in 3 ways:

- Admit that you do not understand the question and ask the student to rephrase it.
- Repeat the student’s words as you understand them, or rephrase the question yourself. Then ask the student if you have understood it correctly (a confirmation check); say, “Did you ask me if ______?” or “Is this what you said: ____________?”
- Ask another student to restate the question without showing disrespect to the first student. For example, say, “Perhaps someone else can help us restate the question.”

What do you do if you can’t answer a question? Here are some suggestions:

- Repeat the question to the class and see if anyone in the class would like to attempt to answer it. If you recognize an answer that is correct, praise the student who responded! If you do not recognize the right answer, perhaps what others say will trigger the correct answer in your mind.
- If nothing useful occurs to you, be honest: Simply say, “That’s a good question, but unfortunately, I can’t think of the answer right now. I’ll find out the answer and let you know in our next class. And if any of you have time, see if you can find the answer too, and let us know.” By making it an interesting challenge, you have turned a potentially risky situation into a learning experience. When you handle this type of situation calmly and confidently, you do not lose your student’s respect; rather, you increase it!

References:
MODULE 9

Term Practice #1: Introducing a Term

Keep in mind the information learned in previous sessions about verbal/nonverbal communication and using transition words. Your presentation will be assessed by both the teacher and a peer to see how well you performed.

Step 1: Choose a term from your field and consider how you would present it to undergraduate students, assuming that they are not familiar with the term. Write down what you will say in your presentation. Make an effort to provide a framework for the new information: use transitions and appropriate expressions to connect the information, and, if necessary, repeat or paraphrase key ideas or concepts. Step 2: Plan a short presentation of no more than five minutes to cover the term. After your presentation, your classmates will ask you questions about the term.

Presenting the information:

1. Overview: Welcome the students to and tell them what you will cover during this period. Introduce your topic with an attention getter.

2. Visual Aids: Write down the term (and outline) on the blackboard. Go over the key points related to the topic.

3. Topics: What can you say about the content to stimulate interest in the students? What parts might you want to emphasize? Do you know any additional information? Or do you know how to find it out?

4. Closing: What could you say in your closing to make the students feel that your topic is interesting and helpful? What impression will you give them concerning your role as the instructor?

5. Questions: How will you know if the students have understood you? Will you monitor their faces, ask frequently if they understand, encourage them to ask specific questions? Also be ready to answer questions about your topic.
Presentation #1
Peer Feedback Form for Presenting a Term

Speaker: _____________________ Feedback provider: ___________________

1. Which term did the speaker present?

2. Put a check under the appropriate description of the speaker’s performance.

   Needs Improvement    Okay    Excellent

   LANGUAGE

   Volume
   Rate
   Pronunciation
   Grammar

   Specific Comments:

   CONTENT

   Organization
   Examples & Emphasis
   Interactive
   Stimulating

   Specific Comments:
NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Eye Contact
Facial Expressions
Comfortable Appearance
Gestures

Specific Comments:
MODULE 10

Feedback: Pronunciation, Language, and Discourse

Your score on the ITA exam is determined by your pronunciation, language, and discourse. If you receive a 5 or below in any of these areas, you will need further instruction in English. In this module, you will receive feedback from your peers and instructor to help you improve in these areas before you take the ITA exam. You will have another opportunity to present your term to the class after your pronunciation, language, and discourse have been critiqued.
MODULE 11

Term Practice 2: Defining a Term

TASK: Present a term in your field to your class.

SITUATION: Your students are undergraduate students with little or no background in the subject you are presenting. Try to make the topic interesting and relevant to them.

STYLE: Semiformal. You will stand at the front of the room facing the students. You should include questions for the students in your presentation. They will also have questions for you during/after the presentation.

VISUAL AID: You will use the board to illustrate examples of your term.

You may use notes for your presentation, but you may not read from a prepared script.

TIME: 4-5 minutes

PURPOSES:

1. To use English clearly, fluently, and at the appropriate volume.

2. To use key terms and expressions for presenting your term.

3. To practice describing and explaining a term.

4. To understand and respond to questions effectively.

5. To develop an interactive style of teaching.
Peer Feedback Form for Term Practice #2

Speaker _____________________________________

Topic _______________________________________

1. Did you find the speaker’s description and explanation of the term easy to understand? Why or why not?

2. Did the speaker follow each of the recommended steps in presenting a term:
   - Gave the title, name, or purpose of the term?
   - Explained terms and/or symbols?
   - Gave one or more examples?
   - Emphasized key points?

3. Write down any organizational cues you heard the speaker use:

4. What was best about the speaker’s presentation?

Did the speaker use: (Circle one)

- Appropriate volume? Yes      Okay      Needs more attention
- Appropriate speed? Yes       Okay      Needs more attention
- Appropriate eye-contact? Yes  Okay      Needs more attention
- Clear pronunciation? Yes     Okay      Needs more attention
APPENDIX I

The Language of Using Visual Aids

Preview Questions
How do I prepare visual aids?
How do I use visual aids in the classroom?
How do I present graphs and tables?
How do I emphasize trends and patterns in graphs and tables?

Using Graphs and Tables
Information is presented graphically in many academic disciplines. As an ITA you may find yourself discussing charts and graphs from textbooks, research articles, and lab reports. Many of these graphs and tables will contain important statistical information, and it is essential that you are able to present and discuss the data with your students.

Preparing Visual Aids
☐ Keep visual aids simple and clear.

☐ Each visual aid should focus on only one idea. It is better to show several simple visual aids than to put too much information on one.

☐ Be sure that your visual aids are aimed at the appropriate technical level of your listeners.

☐ Visual aids should be neatly prepared with as few words as possible. The lettering and numbers should be large and easy to read. Colors should be bright and in sharp contrast to the background.

Guidelines for Using Visual Aids
☐ Stand to the side when you present visual aids so that the students can see them. You can use a pointer so that your body does not block someone’s view.

☐ You do not need to explain every item of information on the visual aid. Instead, you should focus on any important points or trends.

☐ When you show your visual aid you should continue to face your students. You should be familiar enough with the visual aid that you do not have to keep looking at it.

☐ Limit the number of visual aids that you use.

☐ Do not stop talking while you are showing the visual aid. You should explain and interpret the visual aid as you are showing it to the listeners.
The Language of Using Visual Aids

- Show each visual aid only when you are discussing it. Show the visual aid when you want people to look at it and then remove it when you move on to another point.

- Before your class, make sure that the room has the necessary outlets in the right place. Check that all the equipment is working correctly.

**Graphs**
There are four key questions that you must answer when presenting a graph:

1. What is the subject of the graph?
2. What do the X and Y axes/bars/components of the pie chart represent?
3. What trend does the graph illustrate?
4. What predictions can you make from the graph?

**Useful Expressions**

1. This graph shows . . .
   This graph illustrates . . .
   The bars represent . . .
   The components/parts/segments represent . . .

2. The horizontal axis represents . . .
   The vertical axis represents . . .

3. The line on the graph illustrates the relationship between _______ and _______.
   The bars show that _______ increased steadily/went up dramatically.
   The graph illustrates that _______ dropped/went down slightly.
   The bars show that _______ decreased gradually while _______ declined sharply.
   The graph illustrates that _______ remained (relatively) stable.
   There was a significant/steep increase/rise in _______.
   There was a gradual/steady decline/drop in _______.
   The components in the pie show the percentage of _______ devoted to each _______.
   We can see that _______ makes up the largest percentage.

4. By examining this graph, we can predict that _______.
   If this trend holds, _______.
   If this pattern continues, _______.
   If these percentages remain unchanged, _______.

Example A (See Figure 1)
1. The subject of the graph: This graph shows the growth in the world’s population from 1750 to 2000, and estimates growth to 2150.
2. The axis: The horizontal axis represents years with fifty year intervals marked. The vertical axis represents the world’s population in units of a billion.
3. The graph’s trend: The world’s population has increased steadily since 1750 from less than two billion people to more than six billion people.
4. Predictions: If this trend continues, there will be approximately ten billion people in the world by 2150.

Human Population: Fundamentals of Growth
Population Growth and Distribution

World Population Growth, 1750–2150

![Graph showing world population growth from 1750 to 2150 with annotations and labels for years and population sizes.]

Graph Description
This graph shows the growth in the world’s population from 1750 to 2000, and estimates growth to 2150. The horizontal axis represents years with fifty year intervals marked. The vertical axis represents the world’s population in units of a billion. The world’s population has increased steadily since 1750 from less than two billion people to more than six billion people. If this trend continues, there will be approximately ten billion people in the world by 2150.

TASK 1: Presenting a Graph
Work with a partner and prepare a description of a graph by answering the four key questions:
1. What is the subject of the graph?
2. What do the X and Y axes/bars/components of the pie chart represent?
3. What trend does the graph illustrate?
4. What predictions can you make from the graph?

TABLES
There are four key questions that you must answer when presenting a table:
1. What is the subject of the table?
2. What do the columns represent?
3. What order is the data arranged in?
4. What conclusions can be drawn from the information in the table?

Useful Expressions
1. This table shows . . .
   This table illustrates . . .

2. The left-hand column indicates . . .
The right-hand column indicates . . .
The middle column represents . . .
The column on the far left represents . . .

3. The data are presented in chronological order.
The data are arranged alphabetically.
The data are arranged in numerical order, with the highest number at the top of the column and the lowest number at the bottom.

4. By studying the table we can see that . . .
The table shows that . . .
Example B (See Table 1 below)

1. Subject of the table: This table shows the breakdown of the U.S. population under 40, by age and gender.
2. The columns: The left-hand column indicates the age of the population. The middle column represents the number of males in each age range, and the right-hand column shows the number of females in each age range.
3. The order of the data: The data are presented in ascending order, with the youngest population range at the top of the column, and the oldest range at the bottom of the column.
4. Conclusions: By studying this table we can see that there are more males in the population in the five youngest age ranges. In contrast, there are more females in the population in the three oldest age ranges.

Table 1: United States Population (Under 40 Years) by Age & Sex (Population in Thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00-04</td>
<td>9,639</td>
<td>9,227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05-09</td>
<td>10,122</td>
<td>9,659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>10,196</td>
<td>9,712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>10,237</td>
<td>9,672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>9,502</td>
<td>9,098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>8,926</td>
<td>8,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>9,721</td>
<td>9,904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>11,105</td>
<td>11,209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Description
This table shows the breakdown of the U.S. population under 40, by age and gender in 2000. The data are presented in ascending order, with the youngest population range at the top of the column, and the oldest range at the bottom of the column. The left-hand column indicates the age of the population. The middle column represents the number of males in each age range, and the right-hand column shows the number of females in each age range. By studying this table we can see that there are more males in the population in the five youngest age ranges. In contrast, there are more females in the population in the three oldest age ranges.

TASK 2: Presenting a Table
Work with a partner and prepare a description of a table by answering the four key questions:
1. What is the subject of the table?
2. What do the columns represent?
3. What order is the data arranged in?
4. What conclusions can be drawn from the information in the table?
APPENDIX II

Leading a Class Discussion

Preview Questions
How do I prepare for a discussion?
What types of questions should I ask?
How do I encourage student participation?

Discussion leading is a common duty of teaching assistants, especially those in the social sciences and humanities. In order to have active discussions, keep in mind the following tips.

Pre-Discussion

- Since students usually have read more than what can be covered in one class period, select the most important aspects of the reading for discussion.
- Tell students in advance which sections of the reading they should expect to discuss.
- Prepare good questions. What types of questions should you prepare?
- Write the discussion topics and goals on the blackboard at the beginning of class.
- Type up a handout with your discussion questions.
- Use a variety of discussion techniques, such as ______________________.
- If you notice that students are not doing the reading, what should you do?

During the Discussion

- Greet the class and state the discussion topic. For example:
  “Good morning. Today we are going to talk about ________________.”
- You may want to start off with some general comprehension questions about the reading before moving on to questions which elicit opinions and analysis.
- If you are having a whole-class discussion, be sure all the students are involved, not just the talkative ones. List three ways you can do this:

  ______________________________________________________
  ______________________________________________________
  ______________________________________________________

- When a student is speaking, be sure to use such active listening techniques as:

  ______________________________________________________
  ______________________________________________________
  ______________________________________________________
• Be sure to clarify unclear questions/answers.
• Give positive feedback to insightful answers and interesting ideas. Expressions you can use include: good answer, excellent point,

• Be open to different ideas and opinions; in a discussion there is often no right/wrong answer.
• If a discussion becomes too heated, you will need to diffuse the situation by saying something like, “I can see we have some very strong opinions here. Perhaps we can agree to disagree.” What are some other sentences/expressions you could use?

• Be aware of the pace of the discussion and keep it moving.
• Periodically summarize the discussion.
• Wrap up the discussion by restating the main points that were discussed, issues that were resolved, conclusions reached, and/or topics for further discussion.

** Keep in mind that a discussion is not a lecture. Your role is to facilitate the discussion, to clarify difficult points, and to maintain an environment which encourages participation and an exchange of ideas.

** See Teaching Nuggets, Modules 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 for further information about discussion leading and group participation.
APPENDIX III

Support Systems for TAs

Preview Questions

Does the university offer any formal avenues of support to improve my teaching?
How can I find out about informal avenues of support for advice and reflection
about my work? Can I find out about informal avenues of support for advice and
reflection about my work?

Formal Avenues of Support

1. The Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET)
http://www.usc.edu/cet or (213) 740-9040 or usccet@usc.edu
CET’s group of Faculty Fellows provides USC teaching assistants many programs and
materials to improve teaching and learning at USC.

- Sign up at the CET website, http://www.usc.edu/cet, to the weekly CET email
updates. These emails list upcoming events offered by CET faculty.

- Attend the Principles of Teaching Series throughout the semester. Every other week
CET offers a "brown bag" discussion of some teaching topic ("brown bag" means you
can bring your own lunch). For instance, they have "The Art of the Lecture" and "the Art
of Discussion Leading".

- Read the CET Teaching Nuggets for new teaching ideas and strategies. This book is
distributed to all new TAs at USC and is available from the CET office. A PDF version is
available at their website.

- Visit the CET library. This is a selective library of practical works on teaching and
learning, all of which are available for browsing or borrowing. Also available is a variety
of instructional videotapes on such subjects as lecturing, discussion-leading, effective
advising, collaborative learning, and interacting with students.

- Classroom Observation (or Videotaping). Individual faculty as well as TAs who are
interested in developing their teaching skills can arrange to be videotaped in the
classroom and receive feedback from one of the CET’s Faculty Fellows. The Faculty
Fellows are a select group of professors noted for their outstanding ideas, approaches,
and techniques for teaching. They are also willing to observe a class (without
videotaping) and provide constructive comments. Meetings can be arranged by
contacting CET a few days in advance.
2. Departmental Faculty Advisors
Each department will assign a faculty advisor who will counsel and review your progress on a yearly basis.

- Every TA should have a faculty mentor in regard to their teaching. Although the faculty mentor may be your research advisor, this need not be the case. Each semester (and sometimes mid-semester) your students will formally evaluate your teaching. You and your faculty mentor should review your teaching evaluations at the end of each semester. This will help you to learn where your strengths are as well as where you need further development as a TA.

- Meet with your faculty advisor frequently to review material and discuss your students’ progress.

- When you are unable to teach (or perform your duties), you should contact the instructor or arrange to be replaced according to a pre-established procedure. Find out what that procedure is in your department!

3. The American Language Institute (ALI)
The ALI (http://www.usc.edu/dept/LAS/ALI/ita.html) offers several courses for nonnative English speakers to improve their communicative ability. Most of you will take an English exam before the beginning of the semester. Based on your exam results, you may be required to take an English course to help increase your language proficiency so that you can meet the academic standards of the university. Several elective courses are also offered by the ALI.

4. The Office of International Students (OIS)
OIS offers assistance and support to international students. OIS is dedicated to facilitating students’ adjustment into a new academic environment. OIS offers a pre-semester orientation program for new international students. Check the USC website for more details (http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/OIS/). Their office is located in the Student Union Building.

Informal Avenues of Support

5. Departmental Assistance
As a TA, you should check with colleagues in your department to find out what resources are available.

- The secretary in each department can be a valuable source of information. Make friends with this person!

- Subscribe to relevant email listservs. TAs can check with their departments to find out what professional and academic listservs are available in their field.
6. Experienced TAs
Seek advice from other TAs in your department. Ask around for help when you need it!

- In some departments the TAs meet regularly for informal lunches or talks. Ask the departmental secretary or more experienced TAs to find out what goes on in your department.

7. Students
You can also elicit feedback from students.
- Talk to students casually and try to get clues about what may help facilitate their understanding of course material. This confirms that there is an open line of communication between you (the TA) and students. It also shows students that their TA is interested in helping them succeed academically.

8. Teacher reflection
It is important that all TAs reflect on their interaction with students and try to discover ways of improving their teaching. You could do this with other TAs or with your faculty mentor.

Other Available Avenues of Support

9. The Graduate Student Bill of Rights
The Graduate Student Bill of Rights document is available at: http://www.usc.edu/org/gpss/information/billofrights.html. TAs should read through this document to become more familiar with their rights and responsibilities. For example, graduate students have the right to refuse doing tasks that are not closely related to their field. (However, they should realize that this refusal may have future political ramifications.)

10. The Graduate and Professional Student Senate (GPSS)
Through its programs, GPSS aims at providing community development, the advocating of rights, and the highest quality service to graduate students on both campuses (University Park and Health Science Campus) at USC. More information on the services and academic resources that GPSS provides is available at: http://www.usc.edu/org/gpss/information/mission.html.

11. Student Counseling Services - Division of Student Affairs
Student Counseling Services is committed to helping USC students creatively handle the stresses and challenges in their academic and personal goals. There are groups to help all students with problems they may face in their personal, academic or professional lives at USC. Be sure to take advantage of this service if you are feeling a lot of stress! A complete list of these groups is available at: http://www.usc.edu/students/enrollment/classes/term_983/26_development-index.html.
12. Office of Student Conduct - Division of Student Affairs

The office addresses problems involving academic integrity. They also publish a booklet appropriately named *Trojan Integrity: A Faculty Desk Reference*. The policies in this booklet and other academic integrity publications are excerpted from the university student conduct policies published in SCampus. The booklet has sections on preventing academic dishonesty, confronting acts of cheating, reporting violations and handling disruptive classroom behavior. In addition to the booklet, “Trojans for Integrity” will send a representative to your class with copies of the booklet to discuss issues concerning academic integrity. They can be reached via email at: tfi@usc.edu.

More information about student conduct is available from the office’s website at: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/

References

Handbook for graduate assistants

The Center for Excellence in Teaching
http://www.usc.edu/cet

Report of the Teaching Assistant Task Force
http://www.usc.edu/admin/provost/tataskforce/report.html
APPENDIX IV

Teaching, Language, and Culture Resources for TAs

Teaching

A. Presentation Skills
   1. Teaching Tips Index
      http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/teachtip.htm
   2. Planning and Teaching Your Classes
      http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/FreshmanTools.htm
   3. Emerging Technology
      http://www.foundationcoalition.org/home/keycomponents/emerging_technology.html

B. Resources – Respect on the Line
   http://www.itap.uconn.edu/ta/resources/respectquestions.htm

C. Managing Conflict

D. The One Minute How to Podcast
   http://oneminutehowto.com/

E. Math Grad Podcast
   http://www.mathgrad.com/

F. Business English Pod
   http://www.businessenglishpod.com/
Language

A. Pronunciation:

1. Field-Specific Pronunciation Guides:
   a) Professional Terms
      http://www.answers.com/topic/encyclopedialmanacapedia
   b) Merck Medical Dictionary
   c) Merck Manual of Medical Information-Second Home Edition
      http://www.mercksource.com/pp/us/cns/cns_merckmanualhome.jsp
   d) The National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI): Talking Glossary of Genetic Terms
      http://www.genome.gov/10002096
   e) On-Line Glossary of Technical Terms in Plant Pathology
      http://ppathw3.cals.cornell.edu/glossary/Glossary.htm
   f) Medline Plus
      http://medlineplus.gov
   g) Glossary of Energy and Chemical Change Terms
      http://antoine.frostburg.edu/chem/senese/101/thermo/glossary.shtml

2. American Accent Training
   http://www.americanaccent.com/pronunciation.html

4. Merriam-Webster's: Perfect Pronunciation
   http://www.learnersdictionary.com/pron.htm

5. Homophones--American English
   http://www.paulnoll.com/China/Teach/English-homophones-01.html

6. English Pronunciation/Listening
   http://international.ouc.bc.ca/ pronunciation/

7. Limericks
   http://volweb.utk.edu/school/bedford/harrisms/limerick.htm

8. ESL Café
   http://www.eslcafe.com/
9. Tongue Twisters
   http://www.geocities.com/Athens/8136/tonguetwisters.html

    http://www.uiowa.edu/~acadtech/phonetics/english/frameset.html

11. Audacity
    http://audacity.sourceforge.net/

B. Grammar:
1. The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation
   http://www.grammarbook.com

2. Daily Grammar
   http://dailygrammar.com

3. E. L. Easton
   http://eleaston.com/grammarqz.html#prepqz

4. English Page
   http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/verbtenseintro.html

5. English as 2nd Language
   http://esl.about.com/library/grammar/blconditionals.htm

6. English Daily
   http://www.englishdaily626.com/

7. ESL Resources, Handouts, and Exercises
   http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/esl/

8. Activities for ESL Students
   http://a4esl.org/

9. Common Errors in English Usage
   http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~brians/errors/errors.html

10. ESL Resource Center
    http://eslus.com/eslcenter.htm

11. Phrasal Verbs
    http://www.eslcafe.com/pv/pv-mng.html

12. Web Concordancer
13. Grammar Girl  
http://grammar.qdnow.com/

14. Tim John’s Homepage  
http://www.eisu.bham.ac.uk/johnstf/homepage.htm

15. Candle National E-Learning Center  
http://candle.cs.nthu.edu.tw/newcandle/Home_E.asp

C. Vocabulary/ Idioms
1. Field Specific Terms (Glossary & Dictionaries)
   a. IT Tech Definitions  
      http://whatis.techtarget.com/
   b. RSNA Radiology Dictionary  
      http://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/glossary/glossary1.cfm?pid=1&bhcp=1
   c. About.com: Architectural Glossary  
      http://architecture.about.com/library/bl-glossary.htm
   d. US Department of Labor: Electric Power Dictionary  
      http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/electric_power/glossary.html
   e. HyperStat Online: Statistical Terms Glossary  
      http://davidmlane.com/hyperstat/glossary.html
   f. Moxie International: Civil Engineering Glossary  
      http://www.moxie-intl.com/glossary.htm
   g. ISU: Geological Glossary  
      http://www.ge-at.iastate.edu/glossary.shtml
   h. Artlext: Art Glossary  
      http://tf.nist.gov/timefreq/general/glossary.htm
   i. NIST: Time and Frequency Glossary (Physics)  
      http://tf.nist.gov/timefreq/general/glossary.htm
   j. Graph Theory Glossary  
      http://www.utm.edu/cgi-bin/caldwell/tutor/departments/math/graph/glossary.html#degree

2. Commonly Used American Slang  
http://www.manythings.org/slang/
3. Most Popular Idioms
   http://www.goenglish.com/Idioms.asp

4. Mad Libs

5. Idiom Site
   http://www.idiomsite.com/

6. American Slang for ESL Students
   http://www.schandlbooks.com/AmericanSlang.html

7. Urban Dictionary
   http://www.urbandictionary.com

8. American Idioms
   http://www.eslcafe.com/idioms/.html

9. American Slang
   http://www.eslcafe.com/slang/.html

10. Hint of the Day
    http://www.eslcafe.com/webhints/hints.cgi

11. Lexxica- More than just words
    http://www.lexxica.com/

**Culture**

A. USC Program Board
   http://www-scf.usc.edu/~prgbrd/index.php

B. Places to Visit
   a. Hollywood Bowl
      http://www.hollywoodbowl.com/

   b. Museums in LA
      i. LA County Museum of Art
         http://www.lacma.org

      ii. The Getty Center
          http://www.getty.edu

      iii. Museum of Contemporary Art
           http://www.moca.org/index.php
iv. National History Museum  
http://www.nhm.org

v. California Science Center  
http://www.californiasciencecenter.org

vi. Museum of Tolerance  
http://www.museumoftolerance.com/site/pp.asp?c=arLPK7PILqF&b=249627

vii. The Huntington Library  
http://www.huntington.org

c. LA Events
   i. LA Culinary Events  
http://www.gayot.com/restaurants/losangeles_events.html

   ii. LA.Com  
http://www.la.com/

   iii. Los Angeles Times – Calendar  
http://www.calendarlive.com/

   iv. Experience LA  
http://www.experiencela.com/

C. Topics for Discussion
   a. American Holidays  
http://www.usinfo.pl/aboutusa/holidays/

   b. Federation for Immigration Reform  
http://www.fairus.org/site/PageServer

   c. Center for Immigration Studies  
http://www.cis.org/

   d. American Holidays 2  
http://www.theholidayspot.com

   e. This American Life  
http://www.thislife.org

   f. NPR Story of the Day  
http://www.npr.org/rss/podcast.php?id=1090

   g. Mr. Manners  
http://manners.qdnow.com/
Writing

A. Wikipedia- Cursive Writing  
   http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cursive

B. Cursive Lettering Chart  
   http://www.handwritingforkids.com/handwrite/cursive.htm

C. Cursive Handwriting Worksheet Maker  

D. V Letter – Script Translator  
   http://www.vletter.com/design_visitor.htm

E. Handwriting Insight  
   http://www.handwritinginsights.com/lesson.html