Activity Guide
Team English

V0.2

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Team English is a system developed originally by Associate Professor Maggie MacDonald from Wright State University, along with her colleague Zena Thiravithul. Maggie's son was working at a school in Thailand, and complained that it was not possible to run student-centred communication activities with classes of 40-60 students. Maggie developed Team English as a system to:

1. Motivate students through ongoing competition

2. Get students to work cooperatively, with strong students motivated to mentor weaker team-mates

3. Get students to maintain their own discipline so that student-centred activities are possible with large classes.

Team English is not an activity itself, but a system that makes other activities work better.

For Team English to work well, it is very important to take some time to set up your teams. This is very different to quickly forming teams for one game during a lesson. The teams will stay together for a whole semester or longer, so it is much more important to make well-formed teams from the beginning, who can work well together, and develop team loyalty and pride.

Before Class	Set up the Teams	
Take photos of each student. This will help you to remember their behaviour, class participation, relationships with other students and so on, as well as their English ability.	Make a table with three columns: 1. Name 2. Photo 3. Grade (leave blank for now)	Give each student a grade of A, B, C or D. Consider English ability first, then other factors such as behaviour, confidence, participation etc. You can also refine your grading by adding + and – to grades; e.g. A-, C+ etc.

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Before Class	Set up the Teams	

Now, look at the students with the best grades and choose four team captains, and vice captains. Try to make teams even, so, if possible, put the strongest captain with the weakest vice captain etc. However, also consider good working relationships in your decisions.

Make four new tables (one for each team) with the columns:

1. Number
2. Name
3. Photo

Copy and paste names and photos of the four captains into the Number 1 position in each team, and the four vice-captions into the Number 2 position.

Fill out the teams with the middle order students. Copy and paste names and photos into the tables, and give a number to each team member. Occasionally, stop and check for:

1. balance of ability between teams
2. balance of sexes in each team
3. good relationships between team members

Adjust the teams if necessary.

When you get to the weakest students (Ds and D-s), start by assigning the weakest first. Think about which leadership groups have the skills and maturity to mentor the weakest students.

Check the teams one more time for balance, relationships and so on. It might be a good idea to take a break before this final check so that you can look at the teams with fresh eyes.

Print out the team lists. It is a good idea to print out 2 copies. You can give one copy to the Team Captains, and keep one for yourself.

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| Before Class | Prepare Team Uniforms |

There are many ways to make team uniforms. This is one that is quite cheap and easy to do yourself. The file 'A00019 Team English.doc' includes uniform numbers ready to print.

① To calculate how many uniforms you will need for each team, take the largest class that you teach and divide by four. You might want to add one extra in case more students come during the term.

② Print out the required pages from the file 'A00019 Team English.doc'.
Cut them along the two dotted lines (one in the middle, the other near the bottom of the page).
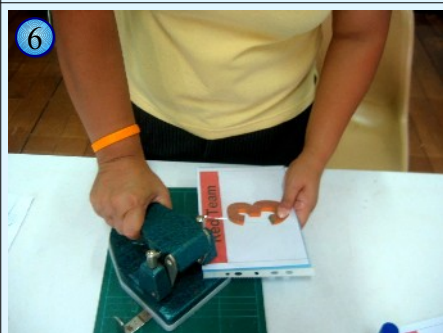
③ Cut out pieces of future board to back the numbers. The usual dimension is 21.5 cm X 14.5 cm.
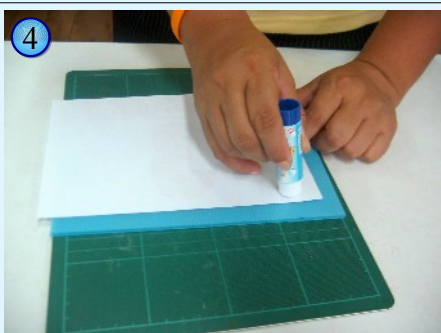
④ Stick the numbers on the future board. Be careful – too much glue tends to soak the paper and make the ink run.

⑤ It's a good idea to cover the numbers with clear contact, a piece of plastic sleeve, or a large medicine bag.

⑥ Punch holes in the top corners of the future board.

⑦ Cut pieces of ribbon to the appropriate size for your students.

⑧ Thread the ribbon through the holes and tie large knots at each end so that they cannot slip out.

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Before Class	Prepare Your Classroom

① **Red Team** **Blue Team** **Green Team** **Yellow Team**

Find the four Team Headers in the file "A00019 Team English.doc" and print them out on cardboard.

Also print out the Score-sheets from the same file.

② Cut out the Headers and cover them with clear contact to protect them.

③ If you teach all your English lessons in one classroom, you can stick them on the whiteboard/blackboard with double-sided tape.

④ If you move around and teach in several classrooms, you can buy something called 'Blutack', which looks like chewing gum, but is actually a kind of re-usable glue.

⑤ If you teach in one classroom, stick the score-sheets prominently on a wall.

⑥ If you teach in several classrooms, keep the sheets together in a folder.

⑦ If possible, clear the classroom of desks and chairs, or arrange the desks so that each team can sit in a circle.

⑧ If you cannot move the desks, think about how you will arrange your teams so that they can sit and work together.

DO NOT SIT YOUR TEAMS IN ROWS!!!

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In Class	Introduce Team English

Set the scene: explain the purpose of Team English to your students:

1. Competition helps to motivate all students.
2. Strong students will help the weak students to improve.
3. Strong students also benefit by getting leadership experience.
4. Everyone has fun, and improves their English much more than without teams.

Present the Team Captains and Vice Captains to the class. Bring them to the front of the class, put the #1 uniforms on the Captains and the #2 uniforms on the Vice-captains.

Give the rest of the uniforms and the team lists to the team leaders.

The first activity is for the leaders to find their team-mates, distribute uniforms correctly to each student, and get their teams sitting quietly in a circle.

Check that each student is wearing the correct number, according to the team lists.

Write the scores up on your scoreboard.

Score:

- 4 points for the first team
- 3 points for the second
- 2 points for the third
- 1 point for the last.

Explain to students that, although the teams will compete against each other in many activities throughout the term, all teams will get prizes when they reach certain milestones; e.g. 100 points, 200 points, 300 points etc.

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In Class | **Seating Arrangements**

One of the great advantages of numbering students according to their level is that it allows you to group them in various ways for different purposes. Here are two different seating arrangements by way of example.

①

Here is a good seating arrangement for collaborate learning. We sit #1 and #2 opposite each other in the circle, then #3 and #4 at 90° to them, #5, #6, #7 and #8 next to #3 and #4, and so on, making sure that the weakest students sit next to #1 and #2.

②
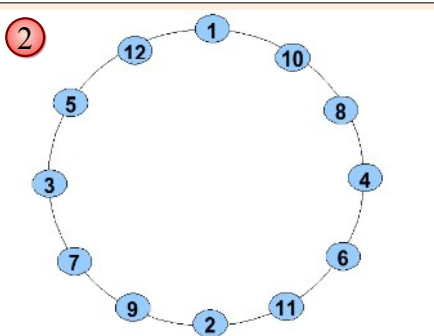
The diagram above shows an example for a team of 12.

As well as sitting weak students next to their mentors, another important part of this arrangement is separating the strong students.

③ Strong students are usually good friends, and weak students can easily lose interest if the strong ones are bunched together, working so quickly that they can't follow, leave alone contribute.

④ Even though the team works collaboratively, we assign one person to be responsible for each round of an activity. That person must make the final decision on the answer, and bring it to the teacher.
This also helps to involve the weaker students.

⑤

This second example is a good arrangement for Team Coaching, where we give flashcards to Team Captains and Vice-captains, and let them coach their team-mates.

First, we divide each team into odd and even numbers.

⑥

The Captain and Vice-captain sit in front of their subgroups with the flashcards.

The weakest students sit right in front of their coach, and other weak students sit next to them.

The mid-range students (e.g. #3 and #4) sit at the back. Their role is to 'police' the weak students, making sure they pay attention, as well as helping and monitoring.

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In Class	Feedback and Scoring

1 Add points to the scoreboard during the lesson as you run activities.

2 You can also use points as a 'weapon' to control students. If they misbehave, threaten to deduct points, and **do it** if their behaviour does not change.

3 At the end of each lesson, make the teams responsible for storing their uniforms and other materials neatly.

You can also make this an activity – give 4, 3, 2 and 1 points in order, to the quickest teams to put away their uniforms and be sitting quietly ready for the feedback session.

4 Begin the feedback session by giving each team up to 5 points for behaviour and effort during the class.

5 Look at the scoreboard and make a rough estimate of the points for each team.

Then, beginning with the team you estimate has the **lowest** score, count the points with the students.

Congratulate **each** team as you write the totals.

Congratulate the winning team(s) for the lesson.

6 Add the scores for the current lesson to the running totals.

If one or more teams has reached a milestone (e.g. 100/200/300 points) congratulate them and tell them they will receive prizes in the next lesson.

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In Class

Feedback and Scoring

Update the team score-sheets with the new running totals.

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