

US TEACHING LARGE CLASSES COURSE

Learn how to manage large EFL classes of over 40 students with this course covering classroom management, activities and discipline.

Units in this course:

- Unit 1: Introduction to Teaching Large Classes
- Unit 2: Classroom organization
- Unit 3: Activities and Discipline

Unit 1: Introduction to Teaching Large Classes

Welcome to the course

■ Video

This video is available online. The transcript appears below.

Hi there, and welcome to this specialist course on teaching large classes. Here we'll show you all about how to plan and deliver English lessons to a big group of students, but first let's answer one simple question: what constitutes a large class?

In the US school system, we're used to class sizes of 30 students or so – which is common in many countries. That's quite a lot of students, but wouldn't yet be considered to be a large class.

In many language schools around the world, they set a limit of 25 students for their English classes, so this would definitely not count as a large class.

But in some countries and some schools all over the world there are classes of 40 students, 60 students, 80 students, 100 students or maybe even more! Imagine that, 100 students! That will sound incredibly daunting right now I'm sure, but don't worry. This course will show you how to teach English to large groups of students, whether there are 40 people or 100 in the class.

You might end up surprised at how similar large classes and small classes are, with both types of lesson using similar activities and techniques. The difference is about how you deliver your information, organize your lesson and how to ensure that everyone is using the language and improving their skills.

All the things that make up a great lesson: student talking time, rapport between student and teacher, and feedback on progress are all just as possible in a large class – and we'll show you how to make this happen. Let's get to it then and show you how to teach, and manage, a large class of English students.

Teaching through lectures

■ Video

This video is available online. The transcript appears below.

When you were first thinking about teaching a large English class, what you imagined was more than likely a lecture, am I right? If you've ever been taught as part of a large class yourself it would have probably been in a lecture hall, perhaps at college or university.

What are these lectures normally like? You have a teacher or professor standing at the front of the class, perhaps on a stage, and students sitting in rows stretching to the back of the auditorium. There's probably a display on the stage, with a projector or white board, so that the teacher can talk through the lecture while students sit and take notes. This traditional style of lecture works well at presenting information to a large group of students so they can take that info away and work on it themselves.

These lectures are normally complemented by smaller group tutorials, where students can ask questions and participate in a much more engaging way. This is a common format that works for many different subjects, but is it really effective in a language lesson?

Let's look at the traditional format bit by bit. The lectures might be effective at presenting information, but students aren't engaging with the content themselves. So, in a language lesson this would mean students couldn't ask questions, practice pronunciation or do exercises on the language points. There would also be little to no feedback from the teacher. This means students probably won't be able to go off and use the language outside of the classroom, so this lecture format really won't work for language lessons.

Lectures followed by tutorials are a little better, allowing students a chance to practice the language and get feedback on how they did. However, if the tutorial isn't straight after the lecture, students might not fully remember or understand what they learned.

In many schools around the world however, the only way of teaching large classes will be through lectures, so while they're far from ideal when it comes to teaching languages, we need to make them work as best we can. So, how can we turn this format around and make it an effective language teaching tool? We need to roughly follow the PPP lesson structure and remember to follow the following five points:

1. Present the language to the students in a way they can understand

Make sure to cover the meaning, the pronunciation and then the form to do this. This will cover things like word order or grammatical structure.

2. Help students understand how to use the language

Make sure students have examples of how the target language is used so they can use it themselves in a meaningful way.

3. Get students using the language themselves

Allow them to practice using the target language, as this is the main way for them to pick up new vocabulary or structures that are unfamiliar to them

4. Listen to the students and correct errors

Make sure you pay attention to as many students as possible and correct any errors they make so that you help them improve their fluency. If lots of people make the same error, perhaps go over it again in front of the whole class.

5. Consolidate language use

Now use the target language in different practice and production activities so that your students get extra practice using the language.

These tips can make a significant difference in helping you turn a rather ineffective lecture into a TEFL lesson, and hopefully leave a lasting impression on your students' English skills.

Difficulties with teaching large classes

We've now looked at the lesson format as one of the most basic problems with teaching a large class, but there are other things to be aware of.

Activity:

To start with, have a think yourself of what difficulties you can imagine facing while teaching English to a large group of students. Use the timer below to give yourself a minute; we challenge you to come up with five different things.

Name 5 challenges you might face with teaching a large class.

Start timer

Large class difficulties: Quiz

true-or-false

A large class is anything over 20 students.

Select the correct answer from these options

true

false

true-or-false

You need more than one teacher to teach a large class.

Select the correct answer from these options

true

false

true-or-false

In some countries English is taught through lectures.

Select the correct answer from these options

true

false

true-or-false

Teaching English through a traditional lecture format is very effective.

Select the correct answer from these options

true

false

true-or-false

The checklist for things that have to happen in an effective lesson has 4 points.

Select the correct answer from these options

true

false

true-or-false

Large classes can be difficult to monitor.

Select the correct answer from these options

true

false

true-or-false

You should do closed pair work before open pairs.

Select the correct answer from these options

true

false

true-or-false

Large classes have a higher drop-out rate than small classes.

Select the correct answer from these options

true

false

true-or-false

You need totally different techniques and activities for a large class than you would use with a smaller class.

Select the correct answer from these options

true

false

true-or-false

You will only find large classes in Asia.

Select the correct answer from these options

true

false

Unit 2: Classroom organization

Organizing the classroom

■ Video

This video is available online. The transcript appears below.

You now know what to expect from a large class and how large classes might cause you some difficulties. However, we're now going to talk about the resources you have to help contain and manage a class of that size, and teach them in an effective way.

There are many possibilities in terms of the space you'll be given to teach your class, but ideally all students will be seated. In many parts of the world this might not always be possible, so the key is to be flexible and ensure everyone is engaged and comfortable. The most common example of a large class is the lecture hall example we've discussed, with an auditorium full of tables and chairs either in rows or grouped together.

Let's take this as a scenario to imagine a large class learning environment. There'll be some seating, probably in rows stretching to the back, or tables to arrange in clusters. You'll possibly have a whiteboard or blackboard at the front of the room. You could also have a desk there to keep your notes. This is a more standard layout, but there are extras that could liven your lessons up a little too. These include things like a microphone and speaker system, an interactive whiteboard you can use throughout the lesson, or perhaps a TV or projector to show video.

If you have all those features available to you, it certainly helps when planning fun and interesting lessons, but remember that schools where class sizes have to be large might also be under-resourced in more than just teachers. The room could be small and cramped, or may lack enough seating or desks. You might not even have a blackboard to present your lessons. What do you do then? Can you even teach in this scenario? Of course, the answer is that you can. The difference here is that the main resource in the room is you, as a teacher and an English language specialist. Make sure you present topics from either the front or the middle of the room so everyone can see and hear you, and remember that you'll need to project your voice if you're without a microphone. When students are given the time to talk, remember you need to listen to them – so walk around the class and make sure to give as many students some feedback time as you can.

Make sure you know in advance of a lesson what's available for you and prepare yourself accordingly. Even with a large class and few resources, you can still be an effective English teacher, so plan well and you'll be fine. Let's move on now and discover which seating arrangements work well for a large class.

The seating arrangement

Just like in a smaller class, the seating arrangement plays a big part in how your students engage with each other and use their new-found English abilities in unique ways with different people. Having a variety here is crucial in large classes to develop rapport, but how does this work if you have over 60 students in a class?

Let's look at the basics of what a seating arrangement choice should enable a teacher to do:

The teacher needs to be able to:

- See all of the students
- Move around, monitor and hear all the students
- Give clear instructions to all the students
- Get the attention of the students during the lesson
- Lead-in to activities the class should do
- Co-ordinate a variety of activities from mingling to group or pair work
- Present board work so all students can see it

Students also have needs from their point of view of the seating arrangement, so let's look at those:

The students need to be able to:

- See and hear the teacher clearly
- Take notes as necessary
- See the board clearly when it is used in the lesson
- Speak to and work with a variety of fellow students during the lesson
- Sit close to fellow students when doing pair and group work
- Be monitored by the teacher and receive quality feedback

Depending on your class size, lesson type and the resources you have at hand, you'll need to choose a seating arrangement that works best for you. This could be rows, cluster tables or something else – with each being ideal in different scenarios.

Here are some tips to make sure you make the most of your seating arrangement.

- If you have a raised platform, like a stage, use it from the start and throughout the lesson to get students' attention. If this isn't available, use the head or front of the room. This creates a natural focal point and helps keep students on task.
- If there is a microphone, make sure to use it! If not, position yourself so all students can hear you and project your voice to those sitting furthest from you. Feel free to move around during the lesson to make sure separate groups have understood you.
- Try to make sure all students can face you when you speak, even if it means they need to turn their chairs. If they have their backs to you they'll naturally fail to hear you properly and will miss out on non-verbal communication such as body language and facial expression, which are essential to picking up new language.
- Ensure you can physically move around to speak to every student if you need to, as this is important in monitoring effectively.
- Get the students to help you arrange the classroom. Don't waste valuable lesson or preparation time by trying to do it all yourself; teach students the seating arrangements you want for different lessons and ask them to help. You could ask different groups to be responsible for different lessons or ask them to organize themselves individually, depending on what you think is best.
- Think carefully about changing seating arrangements mid-class. Doing this for every activity will waste time, so put activities with a similar classroom arrangement together and ensure you're as efficient as possible.

Using your students as a resource

■ Video

This video is available online. The transcript appears below.

We've now covered the physical resources that you'll have in your classroom, and how to arrange them for an effective lesson. We've also shown you that the teacher can be a resource too. The final resource we'll look at is another human resource, and that's the students themselves.

With large classes, it's impossible to do everything on your own, so why not let the students help you? We already know that they can help with arranging seating, but what else can they do to get involved? They could collect handouts, help monitor other students, give feedback to their peers, write down questions for fellow students and much more.

Let's go back to imagining a large class scenario, this time with a 60-student class. To keep things more manageable we can split them into groups, so perhaps 10 groups of 6. Now, you can see that a cluster table seating arrangement would work well here – with all students in a group sitting and facing each other. You could even do this with a row layout, with some students turning around and facing those in another row. Don't make the mistake of putting a whole row together in a group, or students might barely be able to see each other let alone speak together!

Once we have our groups, we can start using this to our advantage with classroom management. Each group can be assigned a leader, who'll be like your own assistant, and they'll help you co-ordinate your activities. The best candidates for group leaders are those who are keen to help and those that are among your strongest students. These qualities will make them more likely to follow your instructions and be able to help fellow students, which will make your lesson more effective as a result.

Make sure to rotate group leaders now and again so that other people have a chance at helping out and feeling involved. This can be a great motivator for students, and helps keep order and engagement in the class.

We now have our 10 groups and 10 group leaders, and already things seem more manageable. So how do we decide who goes in which group in the first place? It's very important that each group represents a range of abilities, so that weaker students and stronger students are spread throughout the groups. This allows the stronger students to help the weaker ones, and this is even more important in larger classes where the teacher has less time to help individual students. This also gives students a feeling of responsibility for each other, which is fantastic for their learning development as well as their language skills.

We now have 10 mixed groups, each with a group leader and they'll all report to you. We can use our group leaders to help delegate tasks and keep a handle on each student in the class. Now this class is more organized and more ready to learn, and hopefully you'll feel more confident in teaching them too.

Let's look a little more at how our group leaders can help bridge the gap between a large class and a teacher.

What do group leaders do?

We're now going to look at the role group leaders can play in your classroom.

Activity:

To start off, make a note of five different things you think group leaders could do to help you in class. We'll give you a minute.

Name 5 tasks for group leaders in your class.

Start timer

Classroom organization: Quiz

multiple-choice

There _____ to arrange the seating in your classroom.

Select the correct answer from these options

is one way

is an optimum way

are different ways

multiple-choice

_____ are useful for group activities where everyone is speaking to each other.

Select the correct answer from these options

Cluster tables

A horseshoe layout

Fixed rows

multiple-choice

You _____ have access to a projector and internet access in the classroom.

Select the correct answer from these options

should always

might

will never

multiple-choice

Set the classroom up _____.

Select the correct answer from these options

with the students' help

on your own

before the lesson and keep it that way

multiple-choice

You should _____.

Select the correct answer from these options

keep the classroom layout the same for the whole lesson.

change the classroom layout when it suits particular activities.

change the classroom layout for every activity to keep the lesson varied.

multiple-choice

The teacher _____.

Select the correct answer from these options

should always stand at the front of the classroom.

should choose a spot in the room and stay there for the whole lesson.

should move around the classroom throughout the lesson.

multiple-choice

_____ should be group leaders.

Select the correct answer from these options

The stronger students The weaker students

A mix of stronger and weaker students

multiple-choice

Make sure the weaker students _____.

Select the correct answer from these options

are spread across the groups

are in the same group

sit at the front

multiple-choice

What are the responsibilities of group leaders?

Select the correct answer from these options

Monitor their group and write down questions and comments for feedback to the teacher.

Make sure their group is only using English and doing the set tasks.

Help with distributing handouts and checking their group have understood the tasks.

All of the above.

multiple-choice

You can give groups _____ for good work or participation.

Select the correct answer from these options

translations

rewards

extra work to do

Unit 3: Activities and Discipline

Developing group rapport in a large class

With a large class, it's very easy for your students to feel a little lost in the crowd, and this can lead to them being demotivated and unengaged with your lesson. This means that you'll need to take a different approach to engaging them and ensuring they are participating and learning.

A key element of this is to create a group rapport, or a sense of classroom spirit, that will motivate your students to work together and learn together. But how do you go about helping students build this rapport in such a large class? There are things you can do both inside and outside the class that we're going to show you:

Inside class

We've looked at organizing your classes in groups, and you can use this to your advantage in building rapport. Keeping students in roughly the same groups for a while can help them get to know each other very well (although you can also change them around if you find they are getting over-familiar with each other). You can even foster a greater sense of connection by giving the groups names, or asking students to come up with one themselves, in order to give them a collective identity within the class.

Names for groups work best with a theme, for instance: sea creatures (sharks, turtles, dolphins etc.), colours (blue, green, red etc.), or maybe fantasy characters (pirates, fairies, elves etc.).

To increase this rapport, get groups to work together on some tasks, or change groups slightly, as this can help students learn more about each other.

If you want to encourage morale in a class, you can give your groups prizes or rewards. This can be done through reward charts or certificates, and can be for good performance, good attendance or any other positive feature you want to encourage. Rewarding students as a group reinforces strong connections between students and helps them feel like their efforts are acknowledged.

Another useful way of giving your class some identity is to devote a part of your classroom wall to your students and give them the responsibility for personalizing it. You can use a mixture of different materials here, which will each serve their own purpose.

Examples of work

If students write a great essay or make a fantastic poster, this should go up on the wall to motivate students and make them feel acknowledged and proud of their work. This can also be useful to help students compare work throughout the year with what they've already done.

Topics or vocabulary

You can ask different groups to make posters or signs relating to important topics or vocabulary items you have completed in class and then put these up on the wall. These will serve as reminders of what you've covered, and give strong visual cues that help students keep those items in mind throughout their time in class.

Photographs of activities

Take photos of some of the more fun activities you do in your class and put them up on the wall too. This can provide nice memories for students of the enjoyable times they've had in your class and can serve as talking points for other activities throughout the year.

Having wall space might be a luxury in some schools, so this is not always possible, but it can be really effective in making students feel a part of the class. You might also find that you share the classroom with other classes, and if this is the case your amount of wall space might be more limited. However, this can be of benefit, as your class spirit can be shared across the school and create a positive atmosphere and an interest in your teaching.

Outside class

Learning English certainly doesn't exist solely within the classroom, and it's a good idea to encourage students to continue practicing, as well as developing rapport, outside the class.

English speaking clubs

If there isn't one already, why not get the school to set up an English speaking club? Students who want to practice can meet up once a week in their own time to speak English with each other. Remember that they should be focusing on English here, so that should be the only language spoken.

If possible, get the students to run the club themselves, although you should be willing to attend and participate now and again to help out. The students can run conversation classes and do language games and activities to improve their skills. Your aim is to be there as a resource for them and to help with any questions, rather than to be a 'teacher' as such.

Topics to discuss at speaking clubs can be anything, for example: fashion, films, sport, travel, business, holidays, relationships etc.

Film club

You could also set up a film club for students to attend, again letting students take the lead in running it. This gives students a responsible way of viewing English films and picking up language this way. Your role can be minimal, perhaps helping students choose films and making sure that what they watch is suitable and appropriate for them.

Book club

This can be great for students that are interested in literature. Give the students a book to read each month, or perhaps choose shorter "readers", some of which are specifically designed for EFL, for lower-level students. Then after reading the book, you can bring everyone together to see what they thought. You can pick up cheap books online too or by contacting a publisher.

Student magazine

A fun and interactive outside activity would be creating an English-language student magazine. Many students will be interested in helping write articles, organize pictures and edit the magazine, so this could be very popular. The magazine itself doesn't need to be top quality, but let students decide on the design details. You can perhaps ask each group in your class to produce an article to do with something they're interested in, like sports or music.

Excursions

Taking students on trips is always a good way of keeping them interested in your class, and trips to the cinema or to see plays performed in English are great ideas. You can even take them to something that's culturally relevant to their country for this, as you can teach them new vocabulary and encourage English use in these situations that are familiar to them. This is also great for you as a teacher, providing talking points you can use when back in the classroom and also allowing you to explore a part of your new country (if you're teaching abroad). Getting students to suggest where to go can be useful here, and will encourage them to use English to communicate with you.

All of these activities will help develop a sense of community within your class and allow for unique ways of using English in real situations. They will also motivate students and help them enjoy their studies more, by creating more interest in what you're teaching them.

Getting the whole class involved

■ Video

This video is available online. The transcript appears below.

With large classes, just like smaller ones, you'll be using tasks and activities to help students practice new English skills. When you're teaching a small class, it's very easy for you to make sure all of the students are involved in the lesson, but how do we do this when classes are much bigger?

The easiest way is to let students organize and manage the activities themselves. Perhaps you could get each group to work on organising a separate activity for the class to take part in: one group organizes a film activity, while another organizes a sports activity and so on. You should make yourself available to your students so you can give advice and suggestions to them on what they're doing and perhaps give pointers on things they can practice at home. Your goal is still to help your students, but let them do the actual work themselves.

It's not enough to just tell them to do it, though, as in a large class this is tricky to monitor. You need to appoint specific jobs for each of your group leaders so that they can do the bulk of the organising for the task they're doing. This helps focus your students on their primary role of learning and practising English in an engaging way.

Every two or three weeks, once the activities are done, you can get groups to take responsibility for something new. So those working on film activities could work on the student magazine, or those working on sport activities could help decorate the classroom. Remember to assign activities fairly and ensure that you cater to their strengths and weaknesses, as this will allow them to improve their language most effectively.

Group leaders are essential in these sorts of situations, and they need to be sure of what they have to do so they can control their group and ensure all students are involved. Have regular meetings with your group leaders to make sure that they not only understand their role, but are also encouraging the use of English within the group. The more complex the activities you assign, the easier it is for students to stray back to their native language to communicate. That's why you will need to keep things simple and rely on your group leaders to make sure your students' English skills are being used and improved.

There's no reason why you can't be a participant in some of these activities, either. In fact, this will help you monitor the students and their progress, and allow you a chance to correct any language errors or pronunciation problems that crop up. You can speak with groups as a whole or to individuals within a group, depending on what you think works best.

To monitor effectively, carry a notepad with you and note any recurring problems you find with students' speech, grammar or pronunciation. You can then use these points to teach to the whole class later in the lesson.

These are all helpful ways of organising activities in your large classes. It does take some thinking and effort on your part to organize them and ensure they run smoothly, but with good delegation to your group leaders this will make your life easier and ensure students maximize their learning. This will also develop a deep respect between you and your students and engage them more closely with the learning process. If you can pull off a multi-activity lesson in a large class successfully, then it can be one of the most rewarding things you'll experience in teaching.

Discipline: Introduction

■ Video

This video is available online. The transcript appears below.

Discipline. It means enforcing rules, obedience and self-control, doesn't it?

Actually, the original word for discipline comes from the Latin "disciplina", which suggests it is a positive thing resulting in mental or moral improvement.

People need discipline to help them understand how to act and behave, and your large English classes are no different.

Discipline

We are now going to look at discipline and how to control your large classes by encouraging students to behave well. So, what types of behavior would you want to discipline in your class?

Activity:

Look at the table below and click on the behaviors you think are unacceptable in the classroom and would correct, or discipline.

Speaking in their native language

Correct – Students should only speak in English in the classroom

Asking lots of questions

Incorrect – Students should be encouraged to ask questions, though make sure this is done in a guided way – perhaps through the group leader

Eating and drinking in class

Correct – This is very distracting and eating and drinking should be restricted to break times unless there are special circumstances, e.g. illness

Arriving late to class

Correct – This is very disruptive to the class and the late student will need help to catch up, affecting the pace and progress of the lesson

Asking the teacher to repeat something

Incorrect – The students need to understand what they are told, so asking for clarification if unsure is a good thing

Asking to be the group leader

Incorrect – You have the final say over who the group leaders are but a student showing eagerness to be group leader is a good thing! Maybe they can take a turn in the future.

Using a phone in class

Correct – Even if a student is just texting they are probably not doing so in English and they are not participating properly or listening to the lesson.

Not doing homework

Correct – You want students to do the homework you set but do be realistic about time constraints and how much other work students have to do. If you set too much homework or it is too difficult students are unlikely to be able to do it

Not paying attention

Correct – Though you should think about why they are not paying attention. Does your lesson have too much TTT and students don't have anything to do? Is the lesson too complicated? Were your instructions clear? If you have a lot of students not paying attention this might be the problem rather than the students themselves.

Moving around the classroom unnecessarily

Correct – You want movement in the lesson, but this needs to be controlled by you and the group leaders

Missing lots of lessons

Correct – Students who don't attend regularly will quickly fall behind their peers and find it difficult to catch up

Teasing other students

Correct – Group rapport is very important but teasing other students, particularly about making mistakes, will not create an environment in the classroom which is conducive to learning

This isn't a complete list of issues you'll face, but it should give you some ideas of what types of behavior you might want to address in class. How do you go about that then?

Rather than waiting for bad behavior to emerge in your large classes, why not let students know what you expect of them right from the beginning of your first lesson? Talk to them about what kind of behavior is not acceptable and won't be tolerated. This does two things:

1. It will discourage your students from doing anything they know you won't accept.
2. You will be able to refer to this initial discussion and remind them that they were warned.

You could even do this in groups, getting them together to discuss and elicit ideas about what is good behavior and what is bad behavior. Then they could make posters for the wall to serve as a reminder of their conversations. This allows students to take responsibility and encourages them to get involved with organizing the class whilst using their English skills.

A Discipline Plan

■ Video

This video is available online. The transcript appears below.

Actor 1: If you are well-organized, have well thought-out activities, and know how you're going to run your lesson with the help of your group leaders, you shouldn't have too many issues with discipline. Most behavior issues happen when students are either bored or struggling to participate because the material is above their level. So, if you prepare your lesson plan well and know exactly how to keep things engaging and appropriate for your students, you can avoid many of these problems:

Actor 2: Another useful tactic is to start each school term with a discipline plan. This is a means of giving you and your students an understanding of which behaviors are acceptable, and which are not, in your classroom. For example: you'll want your students to turn their phones off before starting the class, so include that in your discipline plan. Maybe you'll not want them to eat or drink either, so include that too. Here are some key features that you'll need as a teacher of a large English class, and will need to consider when discipline issues come up:

Be fair

Actor 1: First, be fair with your students. They'll notice straight away if you seem to have favorites or are treating some students differently to others. By treating all students equally you'll gain respect and all students will feel that you're on their side. Make sure that even if one of your best students misbehaves you treat them the same as anyone else.

Emphasise respect towards others

Actor 2: You need to make sure that your lesson helps emphasize respect towards others so your students work together well. If students are chatting with each other when they're not supposed to, that's disrespectful towards both you and other students who are trying to listen. Encourage students to give their opinions and take them seriously, and let them know you expect them to do the same.

Don't let students interrupt

Actor 1: Next, don't let students interrupt the flow of your lesson. If a student does something that distracts from the lesson or is messing around, this all takes class time away from the other students. Deal with this quickly and with as little fuss as possible. It's important for students to understand they're there to learn, and can't chat with their friends while they're meant to be listening to you. Interruptions are okay if they're in the form of a question, but ideally this would be done through a group leader and if you're clear in your instructions and lesson there'll be fewer questions in the first place.

Avoid confrontation

Actor 2: When you do need to step in and sort out a discipline issue, avoid confrontation. You need to be clear about what's acceptable and what isn't, but do so in a calm way and don't take time away from the lesson. The best way to do this is with a quick chat during a break or after class. Don't make an example of your student or make them lose face, as that will show disrespect to them and they'll have less respect for you. Focus on how their actions affect other people and their learning and they'll hopefully change their behavior. And above all, NEVER lose your temper. Be calm and controlled and you'll have a better chance at maintaining the respect of your class and solving the issue at hand.

Use humor

Actor 1: On a similar note, when trying to sort out an issue with a student keep things light and use humor if necessary. This can be good to defuse situations and naturally work on the rapport you have with your students. Don't slip into sarcasm though, as this might not be understood and could do more harm than good.

Encourage participation

Actor 2: We know discipline issues can come up if students don't feel involved in a lesson, so make sure your students can get involved throughout. It shouldn't be a free-for-all, but students should have a way of communicating with you and the rest of the class. This could be done through a group leader, or each group could take a turn. You could ask them to raise their hands and wait on you to call on them. Giving everyone a turn will help students learn, but also help them enjoy the lesson.

Use a study agreement

Actor 1: You can use a study agreement to create a two-way understanding between you and your students, which ensures both sides know what's expected. For example: students should expect a well-thought out lesson and some homework to help them boost their skills, but you should expect a class that's well-behaved, works hard and arrives to class on time. Including your class rules here is a straightforward way of creating a bond between your students and their learning. This pre-empts a lot of future behavior problems, as not only do you show respect by involving them in the process, but all students will know in advance what's tolerated and what's not.

Make sure your material fits the lesson

Actor 2: Having good material, and plenty of it, is vital for keeping students engaged. If students aren't interested in what you're teaching them, or worse still you have nothing to teach them, then behavior issues might crop up. Be well prepared and have plenty of spare activities to hand to make sure your lessons are filled up finally.

Be consistent

Actor 1: And last but not least, be consistent. If you can keep control of your teaching methods, you stand a good chance of controlling your class too. Don't let your own moods dictate how a class goes, make sure that students know what to expect and they'll perform to your expectations more often.

Actor 2: So there you have it, a plan for classroom discipline that will help you control even the largest of classes. Be fair, be consistent and keep control of your part of the lesson and your students will be engaged and they'll become stronger English speakers because of you.

Rapport and discipline: Quiz

Creating a Personal Development File

Students in large classes will need to take a lot of responsibility for their own learning. Your role as a teacher is to guide and teach them, but because you'll have so many students they'll need to study and practice on their own at times, as well as keeping track of their own progress.

A good way of encouraging this is by asking students to bring a folder into class every lesson and use it to keep their work over the course of a semester. Using the contents of this folder as part of their overall course assessment is a good idea – perhaps making it worth as much as 50%, with the rest being made by the grade of a final exam. This motivates students to work hard throughout the semester rather than put all their effort into revising for the final exam. This folder can be called a personal development file (or PDF).

By introducing personal development files as part of your lessons, you can make sure that students won't only turn up to classes, but will actively participate and concentrate in them. If their classwork has to be recorded and shown at the end of semester in a single file, students are encouraged to get involved in their classes.

If you use personal development files, make sure students understand the importance of bringing them to every lesson and what they're expected to do with them. There's lots of ways of getting them to record their work, and you can decide what works best depending on your lessons. You could also ask them to use their personal development files to record their extracurricular activities they do with their group outside of class, to encourage their use of English in other settings.

Here is a typical list of instructions you could give your students about their personal development file, but feel free to change it or add ideas to suit your classes:

- Bring your personal development file to every lesson
- Write notes on every lesson you attend as well as record all your homework instructions and assignments
- Keep all your written work in your personal development file
- Keep all class handouts in your personal development file
- Make a list of new vocabulary, writing down any new words introduced, along with their meaning, in the personal development file.
- Keep a diary in English for at least three days a week in your personal development file.
- Write a summary of any films you watch, including characters and plot points, in your personal development file
- During the term, choose six English songs you like and write the lyrics of them in your personal development file. Also explain what they're about and why you like them.
- During the term, choose two English books you like and write a summary of what they're about and the characters involved.
- Keep any practice tests in your personal development file, so you can use them and your other work as part of your exam revision.

Learning vocabulary

■ Video

This video is available online. The transcript appears below.

As with all types of English classes, your large class students will need to learn new vocabulary. This is where they'll use their receptive skills, of reading and listening, to pick up new words. This is often easier for them when reading, as this gives them context and form to figure out meaning and use elsewhere. You should encourage students to do this, and to use a dictionary to look up the words they can't figure out. This skill can prove even more useful for them outside of class too, where they'll encounter a lot of new vocabulary without a teacher to help demonstrate it for them. They can then write this word and its meaning in their personal development files, or PDFs, to save for later.

So how should you teach vocabulary in class? First of all, decide which words you want to spend time teaching thoroughly and which ones can be taught with a simple explanation. The more useful a word is, the more you should spend talking about it. More uncommon words that don't occur too often should only be explained briefly, as it's likely to take up more class time than it needs.

Remember to follow the same practice you would for teaching vocabulary in a smaller class, eliciting the meaning from students first. This could be done in groups by asking them to come up with the correct meaning and then volunteering someone to share the meaning with the class.

You should also give students the chance to ask what a word means when they don't understand. It's important to do this, so even if it means deviating from your lesson plan it's worth spending the time on.

If you follow these tips you can plan and deliver an effective vocabulary lesson, and in the next lesson we'll show you a fantastic example for doing this with a large class.

Learning vocabulary through films

Films are packed full of new vocabulary for English learners, and that makes them a prime resource for your classes. You should encourage students to watch films in English with the English subtitles on, so they can get experience –listening to the language and reading the words at the same time. From this, they can get more information about meaning, pronunciation and use of a word.

Students should be told to pause films to write down the word or a sentence in their personal development files and write down or look up the meanings.

You can demonstrate how to do this in your class by showing a clip of a film in class and asking them to pick up new vocabulary this way. The clip only needs to be a couple of minutes long, and you can highlight any unfamiliar vocabulary by pausing at that moment.

You can also use your other vocabulary techniques such as eliciting to involve your students. They will then learn the skills needed to do this at home, where they can watch other films and pick up even more vocabulary.

It's also a good idea to set a group activity for students to engage with the vocabulary a little more in class, giving them questions about particular words such as:

- What do you think the meaning is?
- Can you give a synonym for the word?
- Is the vocabulary formal or informal?
- Can it be used as an adjective, adverb, verb or noun?
- Give a couple of example sentences.

After a few minutes, you can get the groups' feedback as a whole class and encourage everyone to make notes on the new vocabulary in their PDFs.

Our resources section has some more fantastic ideas on teaching vocabulary to large classes, using the skills of reading and listening.

Final Teaching Large Classes tips

■ Video

This video is available online. The transcript appears below.

Actor 1: You've learned a lot about teaching large classes so far, and hopefully you almost feel set to get started. We wanted to give you some final pieces of advice to help you on your way after you finish the final quiz and assignment.

Actor 2: The main thing we want to touch on is creating the right learning environment in your class. We've already discussed how important it is that students are able to participate and feel comfortable doing so, and this is important to get students engaged in classes. You'll also want to use what we've learned about regarding organizing your class, both physically in terms of seating arrangements and in having groups and group leaders to manage the class with you. Finally, we've also shown you how to deal with discipline and how you can use study agreements and personal development files to keep this in line. These are all significant factors in keeping students engaged and focused on learning, but what else can we do?

Actor 1: Well, one thing that's important even in a large class is simply learning your students' names. Even if you have 100 students, it's important to know who's who and show students you've made the effort to remember them. This means you can accurately assess their abilities and that they'll have more respect for you. This might be easier if you remember names group by group, or use a seating plan to remember them. Try to use their name whenever you talk to them and get the group leaders to help you out.

Actor 2: Something else we've covered that's really important to keep in mind is to give students the opportunity to ask questions. They need to feel just as able to be heard in your large class as they would in smaller one, as they'll have the same needs to understand something as they would in a small class. It takes courage to ask a question in front of a big class, so make sure you treat the student with respect and thank them for their input. Spend some time on answering the question too, as it's likely there's more than one other student in your class who wants to know the same thing.

Actor 1: Keeping students at the focus of the lesson is more difficult in larger classes, but you should still be aiming for as much student talking time as possible. This gives them the practice of English and lets them feel involved in their class rather than just an observer. Give lots of opportunities for pair work or group work so they can consolidate what they have learned, and do your best to spend some time with groups to help correct some errors and give feedback.

Actor 2: All these groups might be tough to keep a handle on at times, but if you use discipline correctly you'll manage just fine. Start off as a stricter teacher and then soften as you go, as this will show you have control over the class but are still creating a relaxed atmosphere in which to learn. If students respect your authority in the class they'll be less likely to misbehave and will want to learn more, so make sure that you're clear with them but keep things light and friendly.

Actor 1: humor can be a great way of doing just that, but remember to rein it in a little. humor might not come across the right way sometimes with students and too much humor can mean students don't take you seriously. Once a class is settled and relaxed, humor is a natural way of communicating with students and as long as you use it correctly then it should help create a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere. Try using examples that are relevant to your students' culture and background for best results here.

Actor 2: A key piece of advice is to keep the aims of your lessons crystal clear. With smaller classes, you can add in a bit of mystery, but for large classes you need to be focused on your lesson aims so all your students know what lies ahead and how they're progressing through the lesson. You'll still want to use techniques like

eliciting, but be a bit more direct with it. Short summaries after important points can help students understand and remember points, and help them see how they're progressing. This can also help students of all levels, which is a bonus in what could be a very mixed class.

Actor 1: Finally, no matter how good the students' English is, they'll not understand everything. That's why it's important to make use of verbal or visual signalling to highlight key points of your lesson. You can emphasize or stress words to do this, or lower your voice to give a sense of urgency. You can also mark things by using expressions like: "this is important", and then pausing to make sure everyone is listening. You can use a visual gesture by cupping your ear to make it clear that students must listen in. Students will automatically respond to these sorts of things as well as your body language, so be sure to use them well.

Actor 2: We hope you've enjoyed this quick advice session and are now even more prepared to become the teacher you want to be. You're almost done this course, just finish the end of course quiz and the final assignment and then you can put what you've learnt into practice.

End of Course: Quiz

true-or-false

You should complete a personal development file for each of your students.

Select the correct answer from these options

true

false

true-or-false

A personal development file should be used once a term.

Select the correct answer from these options

true

false

true-or-false

Personal development files can be used to assess the students.

Select the correct answer from these options

true

false

true-or-false

Students can learn extra vocabulary outside of class.

Select the correct answer from these options

true

false

true-or-false

Films are a good way of learning new vocabulary.

Select the correct answer from these options

true

false

true-or-false

You can use short summaries through the lesson to make sure students are clear about what you have covered.

Select the correct answer from these options

true

false

true-or-false

Students should understand every word you say in class.

Select the correct answer from these options

true

false

true-or-false

Visual signaling is when we use our voice, for example: speaking louder, emphasizing words or using particular phrases to draw attention to a point.

Select the correct answer from these options

true

false

true-or-false

You should always be strict with your students.

Select the correct answer from these options

true

false

true-or-false

Students should work out the meaning of new vocabulary for themselves.

Select the correct answer from these options

true

false

Course review assignment

Congratulations

■ Video

This video is available online. The transcript appears below.

Congratulations, you've reached the end of the teaching large classes course! You've now discovered what makes teaching large classes different from ordinary lessons, but what stays the same. You've looked at how you can organize your classes through groups and activities to meet those challenges. You also know how to manage a class that might have dozens of students and how to teach them things like vocabulary and grammar.

We hope you've enjoyed the course and now feel able to step in front of a large class and give an amazing lesson.

If you are interested in learning more, why not check out our advanced Teaching Young Learners course. That goes into more depth on what younger learners require from the educational process and how best to teach them concepts they might not have covered in their native language yet. This is all great experience if you go on to teach a large class of young students, as you might do if your teaching destination of choice is in Asia.

Congratulations again, and whatever your next step on your TEFL journey is, we wish you the best of luck!