Strategies for Getting the Little Tykes Off Your Back **48**

I originally got my TEFL certificate in Guadalajara, Mexico at the International Teacher Training Organization. This was in 2014. The program at the time was pretty standard for most EFL programs. You went through at least 120 hours of teaching training. What was different about this program was that it offered actual experience in the classroom where you could teach to students with real needs to learn English. ITTO had an agreement with the neighboring private academy, IMAC, whereby teacher-trainers were assigned different classes to teach during the course of the day. Students at IMAC were very diverse and from a wide range of backgrounds. Many students of IMAC needed English for their jobs or for their university, where it was required to pass an English proficiency examination. Others were just intrigued by it and the culture, having aspirations to move to Canada or the United Kingdom or the United States.

Getting practice at ITTO was invaluable because it allowed me to test ideas out and to work out the quirks in some of the pedagogical strategies that we, the teacher trainers, were learning about. We had been assigned a textbook and the textbook was definitely comprehensive in that it had numerous templates on teaching, and pedagogical approaches designed for maximum learning. Things like classroom management, warm-ups/cool-downs, and phonetics were covered in this folio and I remember thinking at the time how overwhelming all of this was, and yet how so crucial it was that we could be assimilating all of this content and then working it out in a classroom for students. Yet, when I started teaching at a real school, I soon discovered that the textbook had only taken teacher-trainers so far in preparing us for what reality was like on the ground as an English as a Foreign Language teacher, and that the needs of a real school were quite different from the needs of the model student that ITTO and the rest of the teaching curriculum had been preparing us for. In short, I soon discovered that the needs of an English teacher required something a little more than just dispelling information and having students repeat ad infinitum until they got it, or understood. At many of the schools, EFL teachers had to play something of a dynamic role in the classroom and in the community at large.

One interesting thing that my training had not prepared me for was the life outside of the classroom that also had to be a chore. As an English teacher, for example, not only are you supposed to be teaching English to students but you are also apparently supposed to act as a model citizen for the host country and for your own country. For me, this wasn’t quite a scary proposition, although I certainly wasn’t the upstanding citizen that people had known me to be. I had a tattoo and I laughed at dirty jokes. I thought it was funny when my students cursed and I had no problem talking about alternative lifestyles to people, were they to ask about it. In korean schools, before you are hired, the hiring staff check to make sure you have no visible tattoos or any psychological issues, like depression. There are a few of these hurdles that one has to pass to be considered for an English teaching post in Korea that signal to you as a potential hire that you’re no just teaching English but also serving some kind of ambassador role and public figure.

Fast forward to my teaching post in Korea, I quickly learned that the role of English teacher, at least at my school in Korea, was something of a hybrid mixture of entertainer and educator, sometimes distributed evenly 50%-50% but sometimes largely skewed toward entertainer. What many English teachers on Facebook boards have called “Edutainer.” This is exactly what has been my experience from the get-go.

Sure, you’re probably thinking this is a rather harsh conclusion to make. But allow me to explain myself a little more thoroughly here. As a “guest English teacher,” in Korea, my success was almost entirely contingent on whether my students enjoyed the class or not. This in turn, was usually determined by whether they attended or not. Therefore, if students did not attend my class, they probably did not enjoy it enough and therefore I was performing poorly. Sometimes, these absences were entirely excused, such as as when students had to perform in a debate or attend some annual conference that was hosted by the school. Sometimes students were absent for school trips and other times, they missed because they had to attend an important class on job preparation and life after high school. And then of course, there were the numerous trips to the nurses office and the hospital. Between all of these various excuses, I might have only seen my students for about 7 classroom sessions where I was charged with the duty of making them enjoy the book, pedagogy be damned.

When your entire job is designed to please the student, you’re not going to resort to the strategies that other more conventional teachers use in their daily lives. When you’re sole duty is to get students interested in a subject, you’re going to become a regular Patch Adams: you’ll smile all the time, wave to students, crack jokes with them, and ask them personal questions about their lives. You’ll meet them in the hallway and after class and gauge them in conversation. But perhaps most importantly, you’re going to be on all the time and use your high energy and smiling to ensure that students read nothing but the best from your personality and don’t register anything that remotely resembles exhaustion. You’re going to do this to be on the good graces of nearly everyone in the school environment so that the students are happy and the teachers think you’re particularly effective. Never have I been at a job where my success and effectiveness was entirely determined on the basis of my consistent smiling and pleasing of the students. To be fair, this was my first post overseas, but if there is anything I have learned, it is how exhausting it can be on the teacher, how taxing it can be to be “On” all the time. I can liken this experience to being a Renaissance Fair performer. Although I never worked for the Ren Faire, I did audition for the Renaissance Fair once upon a time and remembering the auditors speaking vaguely about the need to be able to perform and not be “off character.” For those of you who aren’t aware of theater terminology, the phrase “off character,” and other such phrases refer to the idea that when you’re watching a show, there are certain areas designated for the life of the show and certain areas that are the realm of reality. So for example, the area just beyond the stage, to the sides of it, and behind, is called “back stage.” When you are backstage, you can be yourself again. You can talk to your fellow cast members or prepare for your next scene by rehearsing your lines, or you can do some stretches. If you’re not in a show and you’re just hanging out a theater (e.g. because you’re in high school), you can use the backstage for other things as well (I will leave you to use your imagination!). The area just beyond the stage, in the wings, is either the orchestra pit or just the area beyond the stage where the audience resides to enjoy the show. It is beyond what many actors refer to as the “fourth wall,” it’s the dividing line between the performers and the audience. So clearly, in the tradition of the theater, there is a fine line between what is pretend and what is real. This is very similar to Erving Goffman’s ideas about there being actual physical areas in life where people take on different identities. According to Goffman, people create backstages and frontstages of their lives. The frontstage can be thought of something like a performance whereby people put on a front for people and do impression management. They smile, they look happy, and they say things that will hopefully endear themselves to other people and create satisfactory relationships. The backstage, on the other hand, is where all of the prep work is involved--it’s the reserve of all of your worries, anxieties, complaints, and frustrations. This is where all of the fighting happens and the real core of the person comes out in all of its raw form. Sometimes the distinction between front and back is quite stark that it’s like you’re living a double-life, completely separate or that you have some kind of a split personality. Other times, your front and back are more extensive. I bring this up because for the most part, EFL/ESL literature has really done an inadequate job at conveying this rather interesting facet of the teaching profession. After interviewing many EFL/ESL teachers, many do seem to agree that there is an element of having to be “on” all the time for the school community. For Korae especially, oftentimes what you do outside of the class--but in the school environment--is just as important as what you do within the class, perhaps even more important since the students are more likely to approach you in the hallways and be “real” with you. The truth is that your job doesn’t end after the class is over. Your job continues until the end of the day is over and you can retreat to your house and chill out and do whatever you’d like, and even this is sort of false because oftentimes, you’ll see other students outside of school, in cafes and restaurants and stores and you’ll have to find a way to interact with them in a casual way but nevertheless putting on a front. It’s not that you’re being fake, but that your job as a cultura-diversity-ambassador and entertainer (a sort of pseudo-representative) mandates that you put on this front.

It’s not that I did not enjoy the company of my students. On the contrary, I quite enjoyed their company, sometimes more so than my own colleagues because they were just always more “real” with me and honest than most other staff members that I had to spend my other, non-classroom hours with. However, you reach a certain point in your teaching career where the mandate of constantly being “on,” and in entertainer mode begins to grate on you so much that teaching--at least EFL teaching in the way it has been designed in schools across the world--that it starts to feel like slave-work or indentured servitude. And I say this with a lot of love and fondness for my students. I had many great moments with my students. The reality, however, is that you are being paid to be a performer for more hours than the human body can tolerate. And this is the main point that I wish to drive home in this book. There is no human being on this Earth that can take so much hgh energy performing for hours on end. The body will tear down and you will burn out rather quickly.

I’m sure there will be some detractors reading these words and arguing a few valid points. For example, some might say that teaching is designed for people who do not have that frontend/backend dichotomy. In other words, that who they are on the outside is exactly who they are on the inside. To this argument, I woudl say that I am not actually directly addressing the “fronts,” per se but the necessity at your job to be attentive all the time to the people around you and the people that you need to serve. Like it or not, the need to be attentive all the time and to be that teacher that everyone turns to, either for praise or complaints, is not great for one’s health. It’s taxing to be attentive all the time, to be smiling widely and fraternizing in the jovial way that EFL teachers are known to do. People need a break They need to be able to keep a quiet face sometimes, to allow their bodies to rest. This is more the concern that I have, and less about maintaining a consistent identity.

Other people are likely to argue that your job is to be attentive and if you don’t like it, you can leave. Well, yes, that is the job of the profession, and frankly, I’m concerned with it. Some schools around the world,for example, have high turnover rates. These schools can be likened to teaching factories where teachers are required to keep draconian hours and then work schedules that are inconsistent and often go against the circadian rhythm. These schools also require that type of attentiveness that I have been describing, attentiveness to the students and to your colleagues. “So scale back your energy,” you might be thinking to youself, “use some strategies that you learned from your teacher training program.” Well, actually, many EFL programs actually don’t address this issue that I speak of. On teaching message boards and similar platforms, I often hear about first-year teachers not having anticipated the level of entertainment and silliness that they woudl have to put on for their students. Soon enough, they get tired of putting on a show, so to speak, rather than doing what they were trained to do in school, and either quit after the first year, or, in the worst case scenario, will do a midnight run and just disappear from the neighborhood without a trace, likely “going home,” to wherever that is. Alas, there are no statistics on the number of would-be teachers doing midnight runs or giving up after a year, but if anyone has any information on this, I would love to have it.

So in short: teaching requires you to be on and attentive, in entertainer mode and it requires a hightened level of energy that most would-be teachers aren’t prepared for. It isn’t always apparent the level of energy that you’re required to expend because oftentimes that job won’t feel that way, especially during those desk warming sessions as many an English teacher will tell you. However, there is no doubt that teaching does require that attentive front.

So who is this book for? This book is for any teacher who recognizes this reality of teaching and who is feeling tired and frustrated by it. It’s for the teacher who wants to get some of their time and energy back. Many books have been produced to help the EFL teacher cope with the demands of teaching to many students. Many of these books I have used to cull material together, especially those that I have used in my own experience to get the students doing maximum work with little effort on your part. If you go to the back of the book, you’re going to see an appendix of some of the resources I have used to help me save my energy and teach to students. This book will take you through a series of exercises and activities that have been designed to get the students more engaged in th activity than in you. Many of these games are great for middle school and high school students. Some might even be good for elementary students too. This is not your normal pedagogy book. I am not going to review theories of teaching or over-explain why a particular game or strategy counts as effective taeching. There are many books out there right now that can do this for you, and more than probably they have done this in a more comprehensive and englightening way than what I could do for you. This book is more practical. My goal for this book was for you, the reader, to have an outlet for teaching, a resource that you could draw from when the going got tough. I’ve included several in-class strategies as well as several out-of-class strategies. Many of these suggestions will seem obvious when you’re reading them. Others I hope will provide you with some clarity of thought and what it is that you need to do. And still others I do hope you’ll be learning about for the first time. I have written this book because I deeply care about the profession and want it to improve.

This is not to say that I have all of the answers here in this book. In all likelihood, if you’re teaching multiple classes and dealing with hundreds of people per week, your energy is likely going to be taxed in some way. However, I have learned that there are several ways for you to get around the abuse of your time and energy that frequently takes place in the EFL classroom and in communities that hire English native speakers. And you can use these strategies on a near daily basis to pace yourself, preserve your strength, and ultimately learn how to expend energy where it counts in your life: starting businesses, meeting new people that elevate you and make you excited about what you’re doing and where you are going. This has been a long road and a difficult one, but I have learned that if you don’t care for yourself first, then you won’t be able to help make your life grow and evolve where you want it to go. And you’ll just remain stagnant and ultimately do yourself a disservice. This is the price you pay for allowing your mental energy to be wasted. It’s like Isaiah Hankel said in the *Habitual Hustler:* “I find mental energy is more important than time and money. If youv’e ever bought something to save time, you know money is not yoru most valuable possession. If you’ve ever sat down to watch television, then you know it’s not time. It’s mental energy. If you don’t protect your mental energy as the #1 importance, other people will drain it from you.”

In this day and age, where it is becoming increasingly easier and easier to design your own lifestyle and start businesses with almost little initial investment--in other words, to invest in yourself--you owe it to yourself to arm yourself with the strategies that will allow you to perform at your very best. Maybe owning a business is not for you, but at the very least, you should be taking care of your mind and body on a daily basis so that you can maximally serve the people you have been hired to serve. So how do you do this? It starts with your decision today to not allow students, faculty, or anyone in your immediate surroundigns that you have to work with on a daily basis to drain your energy. it starts with you making the decision that you will not try so hard at your job that by the end of the day, you’re completely spent.

In his book, *Awaken the Giant*, Tony Robbins argues for the effectiveness of Neuro-Associative Conditioning, saying basically that people can change in an instant if they decide to do so. How can you do this, he asks? You can decide that the pain of working too hard is so unbearable that you’re not willing to endure it anymore. You can decide that expending your energy for other people until you havqe nothing left to give is just not worth it. And decide to reallocate your associations. Tony Robbins basically says that people make decisions based on one of two things: pain and pleasure. If you allocate more pain toward the energy debt that you accrue toward the end of the day, then you can decide to change and improve your circumstances on the job. It’s really that easy. The strategies that I have used over the course of my own career will certainly help you deal with this, but they won’t be nearly as impactful if you don’t put your foot down today and say “I am not going to take this anymore.” Believe me, I was there.

I started my career overly-eager, shall we say. Eager to please other employers, eager to please the students, eager to please everyone. In my efforts to please the employers, I would always check and double check that what I was doing was just fine and that I was employing proper pedagogical strategies. In terms of the students, I would always change course of the lesson if they were bored or not interested. And if there was just no way for me to change the lesson, I would give them candy for paying attention. But just think about how damaging that is to people in the long run, especially yourself. If you were charged with the responsibility of educating students, then you are actually not living up to your repsonsibilities because you are giving in to the whims of the students.You are allowing them to waste their own time and yours. You are becoming nothing but an entertainer. If this is what you were really hired to do, than fine. Yo ucan still use these strategies to help you lessen the need to over-perform. Many schools, of course, have different settings in which you will be teaching. Some private academies will have you teach all age levels at different hours of the day, sometimes during what many would consider the night shift. Other schools will have you work during the day and teach only select classes. The demands of each level of student is also considerably difficult. If you’re teaching little children, then you’ll most likely be expending a lot of energy trying to enact fun and games and songs into your classes. If it’s for high school, then you can be more conversational and reason with students. Alas, my only experience is with high school and middle school so I probably won’t be able to provide much assistance for those of you who are teaching very young children. So who is this book for? This book is for anyone who is teaching English as a Foreign Language to middle school and high school students. The strategies that are provided in this book will help you manage yoru classroom behavior more effectively and also help you to reduce the amount of energy you expend in the classroom when you’re teaching. Although these strategies won’t provide you with a 100% alleviation of the taxing needs of your respective school, it will nevertheless provide you with ways that you can begin to reduce the ware and tear of the academy so that you have enough energy leftover to initiate the actions that will be necessary for you to move forward in your life and either improve your work environment or take the steps needed to transition out of your career and into something that is more manageable or of more interest to you. In his book *End of Jobs*, Taylor Pearson declared the age of working for other people was over; that, despite what other people would have you believe, the years of spending your time in a cubicle, or in the case of English teaching, at a desk with other teachers, is over. He further states that those who will profit the most from this age are those who are going to pursue their own interests and start their own businesses out of those interests. Doing this isn’t often always easy because it requires a lot of stamina and deliberate focus. It requires that yo have enough energy left over to execute on your job escape plan. In order to do this, you need to take concerted steps to lessen the ware and tear, the energy sapping experiences of your school, both in the class and outside of the class. This book will hopefully provide you with some answers for doing that.

It was a cold day in late January and I found myself nearly sweating as I scrambled to try and think about what I was going to do for my winter camp in the middle school where I taught English. “You know, do something fun,” my co-teacher said. I had had little feedback and was nearly exhausted from trying to please everyone. When you are in Korea teaching English, you’ll frequently get the advice to “Play games.” Play any kind of games. Some of the games that are usually cited: Jeopardy, Hot Seat, Hit or Miss, Apples to Apples, and HangMan. These games certainly have their value and will be described more thoroughly later on in the book. However, I think people overestimate the helpfulness of these games because it is actually a lot of work to prep the students into playing them, especially during those periods when teh students have just gone through an exam or are in preparation for one. You’ll frequently get mixed reactions to the games when you try to initiate them in your class. Some students will love the idea, while others will only love it if there is candy involved (more to come on this idea as well). Still, others will be more “serious” students and absolutely hate the idea that you are wasting their time. Sometimes games go over well, but they can also bomb really badly. When you’re trying to implement a game, you usually have to fill the game in with some information or facts that the students are going over. It could be vocabulary or concepts and definitions or something like this to test students’ recall and recollection of the material. Doing this can be super time-consuming and energy draining in itself. I remember creating massive amounts of jeopardy games, for example, and spending what felt like countless of hours fill out these jeopardy boards with questions from the student textbooks that were at different levels of difficulty. Sometimes I would even forget the answer and would have to look back and check myself. When I really wanted to save time and use someone else’s work, it would be fraught with error. There would be grammar errors or misinformation or really bad pictures, sometimes even terrible pictures that had nudity or some form of profanity that was inappropriate for my age group (oh my goodness, it was disastrous).

So in short, powerpoint-games aren’t always the best solution to a teacher’s energy debt, although they can be! I cannot tell you how many times Scrabble has saved me and helped me preserve my mental energy (not to mention sanity) when I was feeling the most drained. As I’ve said, there are many strategies in this book that will help you preserve your energy. Most of this book was designed for EFL teachers who are teaching English since this is where the most gross violations of mental taxation come into play. English teachers the world over are treated like indentured servants or even economic slaves as they are forced to toil day in and day out with massive amounts of classes for little pay. Some teachers would argue with me and say that they have the best jobs in the world. And I don’t doubt this for a second. I do believe there are many teachers in the industry who have excellent jobs. But I also believe there are probably many more teachers who feel differently and feel that they are being taken for granted or taken advantage of or both. And I’m sure there are many English teachers who feel downright exploited for their services. You don’t have to look far to find the horror stories that abound over the internet of people who were not reimbursed for certain expenses that were promised them, certain procedures that were downright authoritarian, and requirements that almost impossible to meet. Many schools expect teachers to be perfect and read the minds of authorities in the school and do exactly what they want perfectly without getting any objective feedback. There are many schools that have been run chaotically and the English teacher is often the one to bear the brunt of this management and financial mess. And then to add further sand to the wound, the English teacher gets lambasted for being bitter and angry when the entire system is apparently rigged against them, not in their favor. Being an English teacher is by no means easy. Being any kind of an educator is difficult. But there are ways around this. I hesitate to use the word “hack” here because it has been so overused in other media outlets. Instead, I prefer to use strategies because while these won’t solve your problems completely, they will mitigate some of the frustrations of being any kind of teacher.That is my hope for this book and for you, as the reader.

So let me explain exactly what I intend to cover in this book. I will make this section brief so that we can get right to the strategies that have worked for me. **The book covers strategies for in the class, strategies for the school community, strategies for outside of school, and even strategies for your home and for life in general.** I also include among these strategies career planning tips because when you find yourself depleting so much mental energy on a daily basis and you’re brought to the point of desperation whereby you have to pick up a book like this, then you know that something needs to change and change fast. I hope that this book will give you some ideas on what you can do to take steps to change your life for the better.

As I stated there are many strategies covered here. The first part of the book covers strategies for the classroom. Probably the most important question you’re going to have is how to reduce the level of energy that you’re expending in class. When you’re a new teacher, your initial inclination probably to please your students. After all, who doesn’t want to make the students happy while learning? Isn’t that the best way to get information to stick? To make it memorable? Interestingly enough, studies have revealed that this is not necessarily the case. In fact, several studies have come to the surface that reveal that having an ebullient happy teacher is in fact detrimental to the learning process (**FIND A CITATION)** and that making the students laugh, in and of itself, is no guarantee that the students are going to like you in the long run or even be able to retain any of the valuable information that you’re trying to convey to them, either for a test or otherwise. (CITE). We all want to be liked, it’s true. But when it comes to teaching, being liked by the students may not be all that it’s cracked up to be. Sure, if your entire job relies on you being able to attract the students to your class, then you definitely have to be liked and perhaps act like a performer rather than a teacher. I will cite strategies that you can use if you’re in circumstances like this. For those of you who are in the enviable position of not needing to be liked by the students,then there will also be strategies for you as well.

Many beginning teachers, in the midst of trying to get a foothold, will naturally cling to the “please them, make them happy,” solution. They’ll do a song and dance, do massive amounts of lesson planning and work, and attempt to really consider each and every student that they have, especially the most troubling students who don’t even want to be in the class. I can honestly say that after having tried this experience, if you go down this fateful path you will get burnt out faster than you can say “olly olly oxen free.” You cannot allow the students or the administration to impose this kind of work on you, even if they threaten to fire you. That’s right. I will repeat that because it bears repeating. Even if you are on your last dollar and you don’t think you’re going to be able to work anywhere else, if the administration insists on this type of super-work on you, if they impose, then you need to not only walk but run. There are many companies who have these kinds of draconian impositions on their teachers, running down a slave shop, and many teachers who quickly become the walking-dead. You cannot allow yourself to become one of these teachers, even if you’re insisting that you need to do it. Your body and health are far more important than pleasing other people.And frankly, you won’t be able to do your best work unless you’re doing less of it. In fact, I would even argue that the less work that you do, the more productive you become because you’ll have the energy and the willpower to be able to exact results. When you’re down for the count and you cannot possibly give anymore because you’ve already expended so much energy trying to give your all for your students, this is when you’ll give the least amount of work and be the least productive. You must avoid this at all costs because this can quickly lead to depression and other more serious circumstances that you need to avoid. Your survival depends on it.

And so I open this book with strategies you can use for the classroom. Because it is one of the first energy sappers you will likely encounter in your journey as a teacher. You’ll realize your putting in more work and you’ll soon look for ways to find the smart ways of doing things that will reduce the work ten fold. Look no further. I have provided some of these strategies for you here.

The second part of this book covers strategies that you can use for the school community. One responsibility of an English teacher is to interact with the community. Most professions that are done offline require interaction with the working culture. The teaching profession is no different. In my experience as an English teacher, overseas in Korea, I had to be an integral part of the community and serve as a sort of cultural ambassador for my country. Sometimes this entailed dispelling popular myths about the culture, for example, that not everyone was in love with Justin Beiber or Miley Cyrus. Sometimes this required that I hold conversations with students outside of class about how they were doing, perhaps asking them about their plans for the weekend. And sometimes I had to play soothing psychologist to all of the students whose embattled hormones raged during test-time. In a way, I was part psychologist, part teacher, part counselor, and part entertainer and court jester and trickster. Sometimes I got to play talent show announcer and sometimes I was able to play coach. I had to play all of these roles at any given time. I have to admit that sometimes these roles were fun. A good part of the time, they were tiring. These are the sorts of aspects of teaching in a brick and mortar school that get little publicity. But even more interesting,the story of how these sorts of activities extract life energy from teachers daily is seldom told. This is because for the longest time, people have taken for granted the fact that teachers do this sort of thing. For some reason, it is expected that teachers are going to give their all for each student. I know this because I was a student once upon a time and never one second did i ever consider what the teacher had to go through to plan lessons. And of course, I railed and complained from high school and college whenever I saw a teacher seemingly taking the easy street. I used to call them frauds and privately hate them because they weren’t doing anything. I have since changed my thinking on this. Maybe it doesn’t look like it from a distance but teachers are quickly becoming some of the hardest workers in any profession. The more and more we progress into the 21st century and either give jobs to robots or outsource most work to the internet, brick and mortar teachers are quickly becoming the hardest workers because of the multiple roles they play and the unrealistic expectations that people exact on them. I’ve already listed some of the roles that I had to play when I was teaching in Korea. However, I have also heard of some other roles that people have played as teachers, some of these more precarious than my own: Mind-reader, fortune teller, pillar of perfection. Some teachers have had to glean perfect lessons based on what their superiors were thinking. Still, other teachers somehow found themselves having to anticipate the week’s events and make lesson plans. The roles abound for the teacher mostly because there isn’t really a common consensus as to what a teacher should be. According to **Name,** a teacher **could have been anything from a priest and shaman to a counselor. Even a member of the family!** Teachers serve different roles to different people in different communities throughout the world. And because of the vast diversity of roles that a teacher can fill, oftentimes they are caught in the crossfire of competing interests that make up the school community. So what is a teacher to do in all of this? The answer may surprise you.

Equally as important are the strategies you incorporate outside of the school. In the third section of this book, I cover strategies for conserving your energy within the non-school community. One interesting phenomenon is the fact that many teachers are supposed to be considered upstanding pillars of their communities. They are supposed to have absolutely no flaws and they are supposed to be these well-rounded know-it-alls, incapable of mistakes. For those of us teachers who split our personas between our teaching personas and our everyday life personas, this can be a very formidable operation to endure. Many teachers sometimes move out of their communities just so that they can avoid being seen by students and protect their real-world persona so that they can live comfortable lives.

Living in the community where you teach is not easy. You run into parents, students, and colleagues. If you’re like me and lived in a foreign country, you occasionally also get approached by strangers. Sometimes it’s the reverse and you just get stared at. Whatever the case may be, these daily interactions can also cost a lot of mental energy. When a student approaches you to say “hello,” and “How are you?” you have to think about the culturally appropriate thing to say and then further anticipate what what you’re going to say in return that will be polite and reaffirm the image that the student has of you. It can be a very exhausting impression management game where you are constantly trying to endear yourself to other people. It’s not that these activities aren’t enjoyable but one can easily underestimate just how much of a second- and third- shift teachers actually have without getting paid. Depending on what community you’re teaching in, the wages may not justify all of the energy that you’re putting into it. Actually, I argue that it is never justified, even if teaching is something that you do for the sheer pleasure of it. Because taking care of yourself--your mind and your body--must always come first. Charity must begin at home. And so the third part of this book focuses on managing the stressors that come with interacting with people just outside of the school community.

Finally, the fourth part of this book focuses on strategies for your home life and personal life. This is another area that is seldom broached in the teaching profession but is all too critical if teachers are to perform to their maximum potential. There’s this saying that “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.” Well, a teacher is very similar to this. No one ever examines the personal life of a teacher, perhaps because no one cares or no one wants to think of their teacher in this sort of way. But teachers are humans and have the same needs as others do. Yes, they have sex lives, and they make mistakes in relationships. Sometimes they drink excess wine and sometimes they smoke cigarettes. Teachers aren’t perfect. And because people don’t ever need to consider the totality of a teacher’s life (now why would they?), it can be very difficult for the teacher to manage these assumptions from others and may often make the teacher feel like some kind of a celebrity trying to maintain a certain public image. The difference between the public and the private lives of teachers is an interesting one. In the media historically, the types of stories that appear about teachers and their private lives is a less than flattering one. News of teachers molesting children or pornography surfacing that features the teacher are all too common in the media, to the extent that a backlash of sorts gets created where the teacher is supposed to be as saintly as the Virgin Mary. The question becomes how to live your life--mistakes and all--and not lose energy over it, particularly the parts that involve masking parts of who you are in front of other people. Discussions about what you can do to become a more integrated person in your personal and professional life will be discussed. Finally, some closing remarks will be made that will tie up all of the loose ends. Please note the appendix of resources in the back for you to take advantage of right now. These resources were collected from my research as well as my own personal experience with what works and what doesn’t and they are there for you to use! Use them well!

Chapter One: In-Class Strategies

I include this chapter as the very first because there is no bigger culprit of zapping energy from the teazcher than than classroom itself. By far, this is the place where most of the enery is going to get exacted. For most beginning instructors, this is probably the most precarious situation of them all since in all likelihood, the beginning teacher will be eager to do a good job and try to please the students. They will do a song and dance, play the banjo, act like a clown, and reward students with lots and lots of candy and smiles just to be on their good graces. Mark my words that there is nothing more deadly to a teacher’s career and endurance/sustenance than becoming one of those teachers who is constantly battling to please the students and colleagues. This strategy is by no means an endurable one because most obviously, the strategy will create burnout and lead one to distress. In a community where the teacher is front and center, especially in a foreign country, the possibilities for over-exerting yourself in daily conversation is high, whether it be talking to your students or colleagues or parents. Frequently, these interactions exact a toll on the teacher because they just require so much forethought and planning and pretending to be relaxed. Social interaction doesn’t always have to be strenuous of course, but when it comes to putting on airs--which all humans do--there’s bound to be an element of energy utilization to ensure that it happens, that you’re on the good graces of the people around you. It’s natural. Like any profession, it behooves you maintain your ease and sense of calm in class. It is vital for you to protect your body and your mind and be as calm as you possibly can be. Becaues the moment you start putting on a show for students, they will expect the same from you over and over again utnil eventually you’ll wake up one day and find yourself dreading the experience of behaving like a side show performer. It is not your responsibility to entertain the students but to convey information. Even if the students are having a bad day and need motivation, this should never phase you. You should maintain your ground and sense of authority and work with the sometimes unpredictable and unregulated emotions of your students, all the while realizing that it is not your fault that the students are having a bad day. This is especially true for the EFL/ESL classroom, especially in Korea, where usually the teacher is not repsonsible for any grades that make a difference in the lives of their students. Because of your expendable nature anyway, you should just relax and go with the flow. It’s not going to make a difference in the long run anyway if your song-and-dance routine pleases anyone. Because at the end of the day, if a school doesn’t have the funds to keep you on board, you’re gone, and you’re just that much more tired after doing all of that work that you should have never done in the first place. So please take the time now to promise yourself that from this moment on, you are going to take care of yourself and expend only enough energy necessary to communicate with your students. Because teaching, like most professions, will never reward you for your love. If you get inner rewards for being over the top and performing, that’s another story, but if you find yourself overacting for the sake of the students, then you should realize that it is a fruitless battle and that nothing positive will come of it. That said, I have included many activities here that were designed with a number of purposes in mind. Firstly, many of these activities are designed to get the attention off of you, the teacher. I include any activity that I have performed with success that has permitted me some downtime in the class, whereby I can just lazily walk around or even better, sit at my desk and daydream for a while during the activity. I also included activities that were designed to require little help from the instructor. In other words, if the activity required help from the teacher and clarification, it wasn’t included. Therefore, many of these activities are going to serve you well for when you need to review material. A little pro tip that you should be aware of when you’re teaching English overseas is that a lot of the time, students are already familiar with a lot of English related material. Want to teach cooking terminology? The students have probably been exposed to it. Want to teach students how to find the store? They have probably gone over it with their teachers in previous classes. Therefore, you don’t need to reinvent the wheel if the students have already gone over the material in their classes. Many of the activities can stand on their own as a result and serve as a review, even if you have never gone over the material in prior classes. Just a quick test of the subject to ensure that the students comprehend is sometimes all that you need to determine if the activity is appropriate for your class. As a beginning teacher, you’re likely not going to know what words students are unfamiliar with and you’ll likely get little help from your colleagues working in the school since most of them will be busy working on their own jobs. Therefore, many of your classes can be used to explore what students know and what they don’t know. You can provide, for example, worksheets that are designed for a range of proficiency levels and see what students find the easiest. This might involve a bit of photocopying on your part, but it is an effort well-spent when you’re just trying to figure out what your students want or need. If you don’t have a photocopier, than you can write the activities on the board and have the students copy the work into their notebooks or on a small piece of paper. Students should always be prepared for class anyway and if they are not, it is not your problem. Tell them to be prepared. And on this note, a little side commentary is in order. Alway always alway on the first day of class, set the standards for moving forward: the rules by which students follow in order to maintain a healthy pattern of productive behavior. In the book *Teaching English in Korean Public Schools*, the author SP Lee recommends that you find your own rules to suit your needs and he recommends some rules of his own that have worked for him, one of them being “no talking when the teacher is talking.” For middle school students especially, this rule can be an absolute life-saver when you’re trying to handle multiple students at once. If students aren’t aware of this need, you must make them aware of it and repeatedly until they learn how to behave properly. A classroom where students are cross-talking constantly can be just as bad as a teacher who is overly active in class and trying to entertain the kids constantly.

Worksheets have been an absolute life-saver for me. Worksheets are by far the best way of getting the students quiet and busy while I can just stare out the window and meditate on what I should do with my life. Sometimes I’ll go around and check what the students are doing and offer assistance but of course, sometimes I will use this downtime to conserve my energy. I love worksheets. There are many different types of worksheets that you can give to your students to get them quiet and focused. You can make word searches for the students, based on vocabulary that you are going over. You can also make a crossword puzzle for the students. You can do fill-in-the-blank worksheets, with or without word banks. You can even make clue worksheets and have students read clues and attempt to solve the puzzle. Many of this will require some prep time, but there are still many websites that will generate these generic worksheets for you with just the minimum of input. The following is a list of helpful worksheet-generators that are active as of 2015:

**Scramble Words** - <http://textmechanic.com/Word-Scrambler.html>

<http://textmechanic.com/Word-Scrambler.html>

**Scramble Sentences** - <http://www.toolsforenglish.com/tools/scramble-sentence/>

<http://www.toolsforenglish.com/tools/scramble-sentence/>

**Make a Crossword Puzzle** - <http://www.puzzle-maker.com/CW/>

<http://www.puzzle-maker.com/CW/>

**Make a Wordsearch** - <http://www.puzzle-maker.com/WS/>

<http://www.puzzle-maker.com/WS/>

**Make a gapfill activity** -<http://sunnyscchoi.tripod.com/papergapfillgenerator.htm#Step> Seven

**Make Your Own Comic** - <http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/Comix/>

<http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/Comix/>

**Make a Match-Up Worksheet** -<http://www.superteacherworksheets.com/generator-matching.html>

The following links should help you, although sometimes they are a bit drab and require some sprucing up, especially for middle schoolers whose attention tends to wander around the room when they feel like they are being tied down to a boring worksheet. For this, I sometimes tell the students that they can work with a partner, if I feel that they won’t chat in class. However, if the students are chit-chatting away, that I will usually opt for the second option of designing the worksheet. You can find some great designs if you do a Google search on the Images search engine of Google and type in words like “worksheet borders,” and “border designs.” You can also, if you’re feeling really ambitious, look for images that are related to the topic that you are going over. When I was a first year English teacher, I did this a lot and saved many of my worksheets to Google Drive. But even doing this proved to be a lot of work, more work than i was willing to put in for the time and the amount of money that I was making. And I’m someone with little patience (I have to work on this). During those times when I wanted to divert my focus to more important matters, like reading a book or developing my web skills, I just hired someone on Fiverr.com to make me worksheets. I never hired anyone from Europe or the United States because these freelancers were just too expensive. Very often, I would hire someone from the Philippines or Pakistan or India to make worksheets for me. Sometimes, there were freelancers who I actually paid to find me talented artists who would work for literally 2 dollars an hour. These artists would produce the worksheets for me within a matter of days and I would just pay them a quarter of my hourly paycheck to save me the time that i needed to do other more important tasks, as mentioned reading, writing, and web development skills.

We have reached an era where it is literally no trouble at all to find someone who will work for pennies on the dollar to make you whatever you want, and Fiverr has become that go-to service for it. It might change in the future, and when it does, I’ll no doubt have to update this book and let everyone know about it, but for now Fiverr takes prominence in the market. You can find any freelancer in any part of the world to do work for you--you can find freelancers to make PPTs, freelancers to design worksheets, or make the exercises for you. You can find freelancers to do modeling work for you and freelancers to make instructional videos. Whatever you’re looking for, you’ll likely find it on Fiverr with just a little bit of search and the right keywords. Typically what I have done is scan in the worksheets and send them to the freelancer. The introductory message is usually quite casual. I’ll say something like “Hey, I’m interested in your services. I have this list of vocabulary (see attached). Would you be able to make a crossword puzzle out of this. It’s for middle schoolers. I have attached a scanned copy of the worksheet as well, to give you a better sense of the level I’m working with here. Let me know, thanks.” If the freelancer is in a developing country, they will usually return my messages within a matter of hours, sometimes in a few minutes. If the freelancer is in the United States, the wait time tends to be a bit longer. Ditto for European freelancers.

Sometimes they will ask for clarity about the assignment, but if they don’t, then they’ll usually send me a custom offer and I’ll either agree with it or I won’t. For example, one time a freelancer sent me a custom offer for 50 USD to make a PPT that was going to be about 15 slides. I flat out refused to pay the freelancer this amount and pressed the cancel button expediently. The freelancer returned and said that he wanted to work with me and that he was willing to adjust the price on my behalf. I told him that I was going to pay 15 USD and that was it. The freelancer agreed to the price and then sent me the custom offer. If the freelancer hasn’t had many customers, then they’ll likely be willing to negotiate with you so that they can receive their first favorable rating and get their business off the ground. You can use this to your advantage. Since freelancers are being born every day on Fiverr.com, you can keep hiring new freelancers to do excellent work for a small fee and maintain your expenses this way. I did this constantly throughout my tenure as a teacher and it worked wonders. So worksheets are actually an excellent way of getting the students busy on something different, something non-teaching related. If you can make the activities on the worksheets tricky enough, you can use a worksheet for the entire class period and do a last minute check up at the very end of class to see if students understood the material. If they clearly didn’t understand the material, you can then review the material again for the following week. It is great when students don’t understand the material because that means you can reuse the same material again in subsequent weeks without moving on to a new lesson or unit. This also saves you a lot of energy.

Any of the links I have provided you should set you on the right track to getting your worksheet-needs met, but if they don’t, you can also visit UpWork.com or freelancer.com and look for potential VAs this way as well, possibly someone for long term work. You could even hire some VAs from taskbullet and see how well they do for long term projects. Outside of worksheets, I also play movies. Not all the time because it often looks unprofessional to people if you show movies (although I know at least two professors in my university who literally all they did was show movies in the class). Although I don’t aspire to become a “movie-teacher,” i nevertheless recognize what life-savers movies can be when you want to do as little work as possible. Movies, apart from keeping the little kids silent for a period of time, perhaps over the duration of several classes, also provide stimulus that you can work off of to generate assignments and test whether the students have understand what transpired in the film, and then test to see how well they can articulate the movie back to you. This doesn’t always work with Middle school students because their proficiency is naturally rather low, but for high school students, this can be an absolute charmer. What kind of movies should you give to the students? This depends on what school you’re teaching in and the level of maturity of your students. I try to strike a balance between what would interest the students and thus engage them in conversation and what I could reasonably show in a high school setting that would have some educational merit. Of course, what does and does not have educational merit is somewhat subjective but you can actively court feedback from your fellow English teacher colleagues on websites like Waygook.org and Facebook groups that focus on the country that you’re teaching in. For me personally, action and fantasy usually work well for my classes but they might not work for you. Wherever you are, you’ll want to consider showing something that the students find at least a little bit interesting because then they will be more inclined to talk about what they have just seen, rathern than to snooze through the video and ignore everything that happened.

Usually after a video, I give another worksheet and have students answer questions about what happened. Sometimes I go more in depth and have the students make an art project based on what they have seen--it can be anything from a video to a collage. I don’t really care, as long as the students are processing information and then articulating it to me and thus demonstrating that they have been active and present during the screening of the film. Like I said, movie activities have been a real godsend when it comes to conserving energy and not breaking my back over lessons and lesson planning. They allow the kids to sit back and vegetate while I can also sit back and either watch the movie with them or do some of my own work. Sometimes it’s hard to concentrate on my own work when the movie is blasting in the background. My concentration is frequently broken when this happens and it’s hard for me to get back into the groove that i need to perform what it is that I would like to focus on during that class.

Some people would argue that this is theft. That what I am doing is wasting the school’s money by providing these activities to the students with artificial educational value. People might say that I am not a go-getter or someone who takes responsibility. Some would argue that I have no soul because I don’t apparently care about the development of my students. And these people would be wrong. This has absolutely nothing to do with “getting over” on the system and robbing schools blind of the money that they spend on me. Rather, it’s about self-preservation and being able to manage your workload, your personal life, and your self-development without burning out, without tiring yourself out. It’s also about having enough energy so that you can give effectively to students when they really do want your help. This is about deciding to take care of yourself first and then decide what matters to you most next. Many people come to the teaching profession with different goals and needs in mind. Sometimes they come to the teacher profession because they want to travel; sometimes they come to the teaching profession because they can’t find jobs in their home country; some peope come to teaching because they want to take a gap-year before going back to school and deciding on what they are going to do; and some people do it for the sheer love of teaching. Whatever the case may be, these are strategies that you can absolutely incorporate into your lessons, not because you’re a bad person but because you need to be able to take care of yourself so that you can take care of others. Also, there appears to be this untold assumption that good teachers are always active despite the fact that many a great teacher has been made by taking a rather passive posture, a la the Socratic method, and allowing students to divine their own conclusions about life and the material that they are responsible for learning. Many of the lessons prescribed in this chapter are passive for you the teacher. It doesn’t make you a bad teacher just because you’re inactive. There are still some other activities that you can incorporate into your classroom to be less active. Aside from worksheets, music, movies, and hiring from freelancing websites, games are also a great way of providing student-centered activities that will allow you to take a back seat. Some of the more popular games that I have allowed students to play on their own is Scrabble, Jenga, Wild Card (Uno), Battleship, and Go-Fish. Many of these games allow students to practice grammar patterns and vocabulary that they have recently learned. For card games especially, students can have a great chance of working out their words like at a gym while you take a backseat and just watch their progress. Some games like Uno wouldn’t appear to lend themselves to English practice, but if you incorporate a special rule that the students have to follow while they are playing--for example, give five English sentences that you learned if someone makes you Draw 4--then you could easily turn this and many other card games into a wonderful fruitful and productive class while storing your energy. I have done this many times with no just Uno but with Go-Fish and War. In the game, War, every time a student puts down a card, they have to provide me with one fact about themselves. When students play these games, I usually pair them up or group them together so that they can enjoy interacting with each other. This allows for the students to stay engaged in the class by staying engaged with each other and allows me to sort of withdraw and watch the progress. Sometimes you have to watch out for students devolving conversations back into their native language but if they are playing appropriately, then this game can be really effective and involve very little of you. In terms of Board games, Scrabble has been by far the most impactful and effective game that I have played with my students. In this game, students are provided with seven tiles that each contains a letter--sometimes no letter at all--and the students are then required to form English words with the random assortment of letters that they get for themselves by grabbing the tiles from the bag. Students then form words on the board and get points according to how many points the letters are worth. In subsequent rounds, students then attach their own words to whatever words have already been placed on the board and the game proceeds in this fashion with each student taking turns providing words on teh board and accruing points over the subsequent rounds. I frequently give this game after an exam period when the students are really not in the mood to be doing any more extraneous work. Sometimes the board game can be a bit slow if students don’t know enough words with the letters that they given, but very often the students are engaged with the game and looking for ways to get the most points. Sometimes I’ll model the activity by playing the game with the students and showing them what’s possible with the amount of points that they could get (for instance, getting a triple word score or a double word score depending on where you put the letters). But very often, I’ll take a back seat and allow the board game to do the lesson for the day. Outside of the board games, there are several powerpoints that have been floating around the internet that if you used in your class, they would practically totally relieve you of repsonsibility for the entire lesson. Teachers all over Korea have made fabulous powerpoints that serve as real life surrogates for the professional game shows. Some of them I have used for my classes: Wheel of Fortune, Jeopardy, Who Wants to be a Millionaire, and Family Feud are all real-live game shows that have been converted into PPT format that can be used for your young students and stimulate a real life game show scenario. Some PPTs require actual adjustments but others can be used right out of the box so to speak and are quite successful. For my own part, I have also made Snakes and Ladders and Foiled into PPTs which you can search for on Waygook. These games are absolutely invaluable for giving you the vacation-without-a-vacation that you need, from teaching. The kids love it and they practice what they have learned.

Sometimes, the PPTs are hard to adjust because they were made in such an advanced way that unpacking all of the different features would take literally days. For this, I hire a VA to do the unpacking for me and make the adjustments according to bullets that I have in a menu. I show the PPT-VA my sentences that i want to use, the words that need to be replaced and then I have them do the replacing for about 15-20 USD. Some people would find this expensive but the time that I save in doing this and the extended value that I get from using this PPT over and over again is actually worth far more to me in the long run. These artifacts endure for months and years and can be reused over and over again so I find it’s nothing for me to cough up a one time expense of 15 USD for an advanced PPT project like this. These games are great when you have to do some form of interaction but you don’t want to do a whole lot of it. Jeopardy especially has been super successful in the class and only requires you to click on certain squares where the students do the choosing. You literally just have to do a click and point and you’ve done your interaction for the day. “But wait,” some people might say, “isn’t your job interacting with the students?” My answer to this is “yes,” and this interaction doesn’t necessarily have to take place in the classroom. Also, the students are practicing their English through these games. I’ve come to realize that if the students really want to practice their interaction, they’ll engage you in conversation. Some students will be shy, and for these students, I approach them and engage them in conversation. Actually, it’s with the shy students that I feel most at ease since I don’t have to expend so much energy helping them understand my “greetings.” On this note, another way to conserve your energy and willpower is to keep conversation to a minimum and only give as much as the students are willing to take. This was a lesson that has taken me a very long time to learn. I used to think that the more conversation I could muster and diarrhea out of my mouth, the better English classes would be. Well, nothing is further from the truth. As with many things in life, the more you speak the worse it becomes until eventually the students just stop trying to understand you completely and zone out.

The reality is that the students don’t understand a lot of English. Oh, they might try and put on a front that makes them look really confident, but at the end of the day, they can’t capture the complex nuances that one can only get from years of fluency. There’s a reason why instructors TEFL programs stress the importance of reducing teacher-talk-time (TTT). Because TTT just plain doesn’t work and at the very worst, it makes you defuse more energy faster than you can say “olly olly oxen free.” Speaking is just a big time filler that just makes you exhausted. Why say anything when all you have to do is smile to capture all of the words that you had been meaning to say. Smiling. although it involves few words, will probably take you further in the English environment than speaking if only because smiling is a universal language whereas English is not (although maybe in a few decades it will be). So do yourself a favor and reduce your talking. Period. Try to give yourself the goal of talking a maximum of 50 sentences per day or at least shoot for the goal of feeling that you have spoken significantly less than you usually do. Trust me that this will do more for you in the long run than you realize. So when you play PPTs, don’t speak that much. Conserve your energy. When you have to speak, use the Socratic method and pitch the ball back to the other players, where the players are the students. It’s like a game of tennis, you see, and every time you speak the ball is technically in your court. Try to keep the ball in the students’ court as much as human possible. When they cannot generate words, wait until they can find some sort of words to express themselves. Even an “I don’t get it,” is preferable to nothing, particularly if the students are non verbal as opposed to pre-verbal.

There are days when the students won’t feel like talking. Why get angry at this? They are clearly doing you a huge favor. Rather than fight their stubbornness, just embrace it and reduce the talking. As an English teacher, you have very little influence over the direction of their academic career. In Korea especially, you’re likely to have no power to direct any sort of behavior outside of giving the students candy incentives to comply with your wishes. Therefore, it is in your best interest to be on their good side and make sure they are pleased at all times even if what they are doing is harming themselves. You probably know this by now but if you don’t, allow me to remind you that all of your actions led you to where you are today. We all went through it. That period of our lives when we had to comply with some authority’s wishes despite our real wish to just lazily sit on the couch and play video games. For many of us, this desire continued into college when we would negotiate with professors and ask them to curb grades or give us extra credit even though we hadn’t studied. Sometimes would seek out the easy professors on RateMyProfessor.com to ensure the minimalist of efforts in our educational career, all the while not even realizing that we were harming ourselves. If we are where we are today, it’s because of the choices we made that have put us where we are. Sure, it would be nice for the students to realize that what they were doing was unwise but they are already overstressed and tired and don’t have time to consider this. There will be a few students who do think about this but the vast majority of students will not care that they are not getting the most out of your classes. In life, everyone has to be ready to learn and discover some rather painful realizations about themselves. Sometimes this happens soon, and sometimes it takes many months of years. What I’m trying to articulate here is that it is not your responsibility to impose learning on students who aren’t willing to learn the material, especially when your class is voluntary and has no influence on their lives. As a taecher, one of the most important lessons you will ever learn through experience is that you have to meet the students wherever they are in their development and then stop pushing after that. It’s a sort of delicate process when you’re initially assessing what it is that the students know and don’t know, but beyond this, once you figure it out, you can’t go overboard or else you’ll lose the students and ditto for if you go underboard with them. I have had many lulls in my class, usually because the students were either too challenged, not challenged enough, or didn’t want to learn any of the material. When all was said and done, the classes went well depending on how the students felt and what they were willing to give me for that day. I just worked with the energy. It’s important for you to do the same, all the while making sure that your body language is open and your words are kind. We often forget that students have lives outside of our own classrooms. Show the students that you appreciate this fact about them--that is, their whole totality-- and that you’re willing to meet them wherever they are in their development. In a weird ironical way, this will do more for making your class productive than being Mrs. Stringer all the time and enforcing your standards on people that you know nothing about. And what’s more, this will also help you conserve bucketloads more of your energy. In fact, I would even argue that the more placid you become, the better because it means that you know your place in the school and how to handle yourself when students throw you all sorts of curve balls wherever they may fly. And believe me when I say that they will definitely throw you some curve balls. I’ve walked into entire classes of students chanting over and over again “candy, candy, candy” despite the fact that I had never even met these students and they knew nothing about me. Did I give them candy? You bet your darn butt I gave them candy. I gave them a lot of candy. Candy has this rather unusual influence that is hard to describe, especially when you’re teaching in Korea. It’s like this magical elixir that turns students into these obedient little lemmings that serve your every beck and call. It’s the difference between a Ford and Roll’s Royce. How does this relate to conserving your energy? Well, it turns out a lot actually. A decades’ worth of classical conditioning experiments, starting with Pavlov, bears this out. In case you’re not familiar with Pavlov, he was a psychology researcher who studied the salivary glands of dogs. In one famous experiment, he would ring a bell in front of a dog and note no major changes. Following the ringing of the bell, he would provide the dog with some food. Every time he rang the bell, he would then follow the action with the provisioning of food for the dog until eventually the dog learned to expect food from Pavlov after ever ring of the bell. How did Pavlov know this? He observed the salivation of the animal after every bell ring, a part of the dog that had not been there before in the initial phases of the study. It was through this research that Pavlov learned about how to teach animals. And can you guess what happened next? Well, fast forward several decades later, you can just imagine how this research could have been applied to humans. These days, it’s almost a taken for granted that humans respond much in the same way as the dogs in the original Pavlovian experiment. I’m not psychology research, but I can certainly tell you that the provisioning of candy is definitely something that coerces students into compliance. I’m not saying that I give candy liberally to the point where students forget my name and only refer to me as “Candy,” but I am saying that I will often use candy to make my classes easier to handle.

When it comes to conserving energy in your classes, give candy. Give candy right before exams when students aren’t willing to do anymore work. Give candy post exam when students are tired of working. Give candy right before a holiday when students definitely don’t want to work, and make sure to also give candy right before summer break. Holidays, big tests, and extended vacations are all opportunities for you to feed your students and trick them into compliance. How does giving candy make the class easier? It makes the class easier because you can make a command to the students, and with the little promise of candy, get them to do exactly what you want without asking twice. I’ve been an English teacher over two years now and I have seen with my very eyes how entire groups of students have turned their entire lives around with the promise of candy. I have also seen students who had very little English proficiency turn into budding literati when I told them about the promise of candy at the end of the game. Students will do all sorts of things for candy--including obediently follow a worksheet, obediently play a game that you force upon them, and even do some verbal activities that help them practice the sounds and meaning of the words that they are responsible for knowing. Candy is the great equalizer for almost all of your activities in the sense that all students are willing to fight for it on some level, unless you’re dealing with students who have several cognitive disabilities (which alas, is beyond the scope of this book). It’s hard to argue, haggle, and dispute with unmotivated students. Incidents like these are usually the main culprits behind exhausting many teachers’ will power and mental energy. It’s like the classroom becomes this forum for less-than-inquisitive whining and complaining. So do you remove this frustration? Candy. Lots of it. “You do this and you get candy,” is what you should say. I guarantee that once you do this, all arguing stops and it all becomes a game as to how they can secure that candy into their mouths. Make sure the candy is good, of course. Unfortunately, I can’t make any recommendations as to what type of candy you should get. It will be contingent on your individual class’ tastebuds. You may want to ask the students what kind of candy they like so that you can provide them with the amenities when the time is most convenient for you. Many teachers swear by the steadfast rule that they will not give candy if the students haven’t earned it. I totally understand this position, and I don’t blame the teachers for saying this. You obviously don’t want to be digging yourself a grave by making the students feel like they are somehow entitled to the candy. On the other hand, you need to first be responsible for ensuring your health--it goes back to you and the whole “Charity begins at home,” thing. If you’re not taking care of yourself, then you’re definitely not going to take care of others. And sometimes, you need every waking moment to keep yourself together during those long hours that seem like they will last forever, hours of teaching that just drag on because they feel like you’re more of a prison warden than anything else. Candy has saved me many times and I’m definitely a proponent of it, at least for EFL/ESL teachers. Maybe not for science teachers, but definitely for language teachers. There are some other strategies that are also worth considering. Sometimes I have gotten a lot of cross talking in my classes where students will like they can just yell or scream over my voice. This usually gives me a headache, particularly when the students are hurling all sorts of senseless invectives that have nothing to do with the class. Apart of this has to do with the fact that I didn’t set enough clear boundaries from the start. However, another part has to do with the fact that I didn’t order the Conair Mike Machine soon enough. These little machines strap around your body and have a detachable head piece that you can wear and speak into at the same time. They have little voice boxes that you can adjust and have served wonders for my classes where students feel like they are liberty to speak whatever they want at any time in the lesson. When I’ve had a co-teacher teach with me in the classroom, I have volunteered to allow them to use it since they are more likely in a better position to stop the students dead in their tracks (they speak the target language, after all, while I do not). I cannot emphasize enough just how critical it is for your voice to carry over all of the students and be heard from anywhere by anyone (unless they are deaf, which alas, is also beyond the scope of this book). Nowadays, I never leave home without a mike that helps me direct the classes and guide the lessons. When students act up, I talk sternly in the mike while cranking up the volume. It’s total, cold, raw power that I display before the students’ very eyes and they automatically just quiet down.

In middle school, using a mike is especially handy when the students have less filters and just say whatever comes to their minds in screeching pitches. For this, I maintain my placidity and just talk into the microphone and call the student out by name. And that reminds me…

Memorize the names of your students as fast as you can. If there are too many and you can’t, there are other compensatory strategies you can use which I will discuss in a little bit. But allow me to stress that if you memorize your students’ names, you’ll be able to call them out on the spot in front of the entire class and publicly disapprove of their behavior. If there’s something that students really don’t like, it’s being called out on the spot in front of their peers where they are judged. You can maintain your energy and calm quite considerably if you learn to call out the names of the students who are particularly pernicious in your class and causing all sorts of behavior problems. Behavior problems will arise in your class, without doubt, and they will surely tax you of all that you’re worth. To mitigate the effects of troublesome students, learn their names and use your mike to call out the name and tell the perpetrating student to stop. It’s amazing how even the most ebullient and active troublemakers will be stopped in their tracks just at the sound of their names being called from halfway across the room, by the teacher. Doing this regularly will surely help to alleviate you of the stress of trying to flag down the troublesome student and getting them to stop. Now, for students whose names you can never remember, you have a few options. Please be aware that this is a highly contentious issue and many teachers are divided on what they should do when they don’t remember names. One option is to have the students make name tags that they can wear regularly. Although this takes up a lot of time, it nevertheless can be beneficial for you as the teacher to be able to call students out. I have tried this activity a few times and sometimes this works, although the perils of doing this are legion: students don’t have markers, they write in little small letters that you can’t read, the color of their pens are too bright to see, they write their names in their mother languages as opposed to the English spelling, their handwriting is illegible, and there is too much doodling on the paper that it clouds out the student’s name. Explaining the rules for this sort of activity can take up a HUGE chunk of time and when you’re dealing with students who are learning English, they most likely will not understand you without the help of a teacher’s aid or a co-teacher, if you’re fortunate enough to have one of these. When you don’t have one, or if you have a particularly inactive one, then another option is to make up names for your students. Many people debate whether this is just transferred colonization of one kind or another. Personally, I don’t care what it is. If it gets the job done and leaves me less exhausted, that’s what I’m going to do--symbolism be damned. I am going to be repeating this over and over for you as you continue reading this book because it does bear repeating. Your self-preservation must take precedence! Absolutely, it must! And if it means you have to make up names for your students, then so be it. Call one student Spiderman and another student “Ralph.” Do whatever it takes for you to gain control of your classes and your students for preserving the maximum amount of energy possible. These compensatory strategies are better than nothing at all.

Another option is to just memorize some names and then have the students whose names you’ve memorized instruct the bad students to quiet down or behave. You can even play favorites on purpose and have the good students really become the vocalpiece for the class, the moral compass, and the surrogate teacher assistant if things aren’t working out. In fact, sometimes, the more you are nice to the star-student, the more commanding this student can be when it comes time to quiet down the rest of the class. I’ve recruited many of these little academic athletes to whip the class into shape and have made sure these students realize how grateful and thankful I am for their help (extra attention, social time, more one-to-one conversation, etc.). You can usually reward students wtih overt displays of casual conversation that make the other studetns feel jealous, like they are being deprived of their moments for casual fun conversation. Of course, you shouldn’t always play favorites because it could easily backfire. Alas, you’ll have to use your judgment to determine whether this strategy will work in your favor or not. Some books just can’t fully prepare you for every scenario, but it’s worth a try. If you fail, you can always backtrack and try something else. That’s the beauty of teaching young kids. As long as you keep your moods relatively middleground, they’ll have no recollection of strategies that you’ve tried in the name of improving your class.

So we’ve discussed using a microphone to keep the level of noise at bay. We’ve spoken about using students names to call them out and quiet them down when they are either misbehaving or out of control. We have spoken about giving worksheets to students to perform quiet work and movies to get them to vegetate for hours and then to process what they’ve seen through yet… more worksheets. We’ve also discussed fun PPT games that you can play that involve very little talking or interaction from you. Card games and board games were also mentioned. We’ve even discussed minimizing teacher talk time and just allowing the students to do most of the talking whenever possible. All of these strategies are assumed to work without a co-teacher or teacher’s aid in the room. However, when you do have a teacher’s aid in the room, you can make your job exponentially easier. I don’t want to say that you’re exactly freeloadnig on the hardwork for your co-teacher, but I will say that you should be using your co-teacher as much as is humanly possible if she or he is in the room with you. Whenever possible. I’ve had some co-teachers who have just sat in the back and text messaged. At first, I left these teachers get away with it at the beginning of the year. Eventually, I grew to incorporate them so much that I became virtually helpless without their assistance. Trust me, it should be like this. “But Todd, you’ll get fired.” No I won’t. Because you have to ask yourself. If the level of dispassionate disconnectedness is already tolerated in the school environment, then what you’re doing by relying on the inacive co-teachers is actually harmless compared to what they are probably doing in their own classes (assuming their level of dispassion pervades their entire life in untold ways). This is why when I am faced with an offensively inactive co-teacher, I make sure to direct the students’ attention toward the co-teacher and tell the that I need their translation help. Or give them worksheets to distribute while smiling and thanking them for their assistance. If the co-teacher is super persnickety and really doesn’t care about you--perhaps even trying to actively harm you--then give yourself a year and look for other jobs. Life is too short to be putting up with a problematic co-teacher who makes you life a living hell. If however, you do have a co-teacher who actually listens to you and who is willing to be engaged in the class and with the students, you can use their ability to translate to your advantage and have them do a lot of the explanations for you. Sure, you did get trained, technically, to purvey information to students in English, to teach English with English as it were. But if the school is going to provide you with an aid, assistant, or co-teacher, then use it! Make sure that the teachers are being as active as you are, if not more active. Here are some ideas for how you can utilize your co-teacher to your advantage: (1) You could have your co-teacher provide translations for your PPTs; (2) You could have you co-teacher provide you with worksheets that the students are using and use that to create activities for them like Bingo or Jeopardy (all the while keeping in mind that you can hire out a really inexpensive VA to make these games for you!); (3) You can have your co-teacher do a lot of the translation work for you in class, as was already mentioned; (4) you can have your co-teacher prepare accompanying materials to match the ones that you are going to provide; (5) you can pass the speaking-baton to the co-teacher and have them do a little lecture on the classroom material for the day; (5) You can ask your co-teacher about upcoming events in the school to be cognizant enough so that you know when you have to have a lesson prepared for the students; (6) you can ask your co-teacher about local events in town or local services to be apart of. Your co-teacher is most certainly not your virtual assistant or receptionist and they are by no means obligated to do you any favors at all. However, make sure to match the level of work that they provide for you so that you’re not over stressing about what you need to do.Therefore, if they are particularly inactive in your class or they take a back role, then you can use to your advantage by just selecting whatever lesson you think will be most helpful for students at the time of your lesson, without having to concern yourself with your co-teacher. If for whatever reason the co-teacher is bossy without actually doing anything, then gently remind them that you are in a relationship with them and that they need to do their part to ensure that the relationship executes the desired responsibilities of both teachers.

An entire book could be written about co-teachers (something I may do in a subsequent project). If you’re looking for more information about this format of teaching, I highly recommend you check out the book *Teaching English in Korean Public Schools* by SP Lee who does a more than adequate treatment of this subject, discussing ways to work with your co-teacher and ensure a healthy working relationship. Lately, I’ve discovered a new way for checking out and preserving your energy. Group projects. I’ve already mentioned that worksheets can be helpful in keeping the students busy but you could extend this to include some multi-class projects that involve a lot of group work and heady thinking. Many EFL books have provided great ideas for projects to give to your classes, and the Cambridge series is one of the best. There are many different types of projects you can do with your students over extended classes. For example, you can have them make a video, replete with script, actors, and a director. These types of classes are typically very fun for the students and keep you at bay while they perform the necessary responsiblities of the assignment. Another fun group activity is to do a publicity campaign whereby students organize themselves into groups and form a cause that they can support with propaganda. Making fliers is usually a great project to do over many days. Still, another activity that you can give to your students is game-making. Why purchase your own games when you can just have the students make their own authentic games that help them study material they are required to care about? I don’t know about you but I can’t think of a better way to keep the students occupied while I just stare out into space. When I have assigned this activity, students have typically taken 1-2 class periods to finish and then to play the game. I have the students make their own rules, make their own pictures on the game board, decide which information they want the game board to test students on, and decide on their own game board pieces. In short, I have the students basically do everything and I keep to high standards so that the students push themselves and I have maximal time to be able to sit back and watch the students take initiative on their own projects. My former students have made some rather elaborate games for me and they are frequently so fun to play that I have the students in each group take turns playing different games that have been developed over the course of the lesson.

Generally speaking, there’s a lot you can do with big poster paper. I’ve already mentioned that you can play games. Other things you can do is make movie posters, Humphrey Boghart style. You can have the students make their own modern art pieces, in the style of Picasso or Monet or Salvador Dali. You could have students diagram their own inventions and reward prizes for the most inventive piece. Or you could have the students make a diagram of the body or a diagram of their house or a diagram of your plans for life. In one Cambridge book I remember reading, *Personalizing Language Learning,* there was an activity where you would give students different traffic signs, from stop to go and to be careful and to even the most underused “Deer ahead,” sign. You would show the students all of these pictures and then you would have them draw a map that literally represents their entire life from birth to present with the different road signs to represent different milestones in their development. You could have the students do this, and extend the time that it takes to complete this task by providing markers and colored pencils and regular pens and pencils. You could enforce perfection and make sure that the students really fill in that detail to extend the time it takes to give this project. Finally, as frosting on the cake, you could have the students individually present their pieces to the class or have them present other students’ pieces to the class, or both. You could vote on the best life so far, and reward the student with the best life some candy. If you want to extend this activity even further, you could have students take turns and instruct their partners or groups of students how to draw their own particular life story on a map and then see if the students heard the instructions correctly.

You could put all of the life stories in a storybook album and then compare them across different classes and have the students vote for their favorite ones amongst the entire population of students in their grade or across the entire student body who did the activity. You could use the same signs that you taught the students for other activities as well. You can have students draw maps of places they like to visit or places they would like to go or imaginary islands. Afterwards, you could have the students talk about their activities while you sit back and listen. As you will find, there are many activities amongst the English teaching canon that could be extended almost indefinitely and when it comes to an activity using posters, there is an infinite supply of follow-up and add-on activities to accompany said poster activities. Other potential projects that you could with your students include making YouTube videos. In this era of overnight sensations being made, you could spark your students’ interest in the potential of them getting famous all over the world and then instruct them to make videos with the express goal to become famous overnight. The subject could be anything (within reason) and they would have *x-*number of classes to put the entire piece together, along with script. You could then assign a movie day where you and the rest of the class all watch the videos and then vote on the best one. You could even have an academy award day where you reward some students for best performance, or most dramatic. There are seemingly an unlimited supply of activities having to do with voting.

I have made many PowerPoints based on the games featured in the Cambridge Series, particularly the book entitled *Discussions that Work.* In this book, Penny Ur provides an entire section dedicated to just games where students can vote and I have found that voting games to be quite successful in my classes, particularly for me, when I need the students to focus on themselves and deliberate and haggle amongst each other while I relax. Many of my PowerPoints are featured online if you just search for my name “Toddsqui.” You can apply voting to most activities or structure them into most of your lessons. One game that I learned from the *Discussions that Work* book is the *Who Gets Eaten by the Minotaur* game. In this game, students are provided with the scenario that there are five women, all of whom have back-stories, each of which in turn has its own tad bit of scandal involved. All of the women are being sentenced and you, the judge, have to determine which of the four is the least deserving of a light sentence and thus get eaten by the minotaur. I made a powerpoint activity based on this game and submitted it to the Waygook website. Most of my fellow teachers in Korea found this scenario to be violent and offered some alternatives: Granting asylum to certain refugees, Who goes to prison. I like these alternatives as well. Regardless of which theme you go with, these activities can be real stress relievers if you perform them the right way. Mostly all you have to do is read the material, point and click on the powerpoint slides as you explain the scenario. Then, you can leave the students to do the discussion and then get back to you with their final vote. After the students have to determined the fate of the subjects, you can then ask them why they did what they did. There’s nothing more passive for a teacher than this activity because it places the responsibilty of talking and thinking directly on the student and allows you to take a break. There are other games like this as well. Another one is the *Choose Your Candidate* game, which is again taken from the Penny Ur book. In this game, students get to choose Mr. America or Woman of the Year or President of the Country or Ambassador of the Country or winner of an all-expenses paid trip to Hawaii based on information that they receive from contestants. In this game, you can divide students up into groups and choose their representative. The representative is going to be the candidate that is eligible to become Mr. America or whatever the reward is. Each group takes about 10-15 minutes to come up with a speech for the contestant, and to think of answers to possible questions that the other student body might ask. A panel of judges may also be selected to determine the winner of this game. After the 10-15 minute period is up, student representatives may be called to the front of the class and provide their speech, followed by a Q&A session with the rest of the students. After each representative has gone and given their best speech, judges can then determine the winner and the representative who wins the game can be given a prize, like candy or a big hug. This voting activity like the Minotaur activity is great for getting the students to take sole controle of the class and work amongst each other. It’s amazing how fast time flies when you’re doing an activity like this! Students will get right to work and really have fiery debates--sometimes even in English--over who deserves the reward or prize (in the case of the minotaur, it’s punishment).

There are so many voting-based activities that you can incorporate into your classes and weave throughout the semester. They’re not just confined to individual activities. You can virtually have students vote on everything, from worksheets to PPTs. If the students feel like what they are doing is a direct result of their own choosing, they’ll be more likely to do those activities and you’ll be able to take an increasingly passive stance in your class as they get to work on the activities that they chose. This is why I always try to bake voting into my classes because I know that voting will encourage students to be more in control of the direction of their education. I think one of the things that people don’t realize about teaching is that it’s a two-way relationship. Teachers very often don’t fail because they are bad teachers; rather, they fail because they didn’t establish a healthy working relationship with their students. At the end of the day, teachers will only be able to meet students wherever they are in their growth and development and eagerness to learn. You can only do so much to force students into doing the work that you want. Sometimes they won’t even want to do any of the work that you supply. In this case, you just have to meet them where they are and work with that (or not work with that). These days, I don’t work with students who refuse to do any work for me. It’s a futile effort. If the students are actively resisting the work for the class, I just allow them to do it and I move on with whatever it is that I have to do in my own life to make it better. I don’t push the students to do what I want them to do if I have seen them actively despising the English language. I let them hate it and be who they are going to be while I move on to more positive things in my life. Yes, there have been many classes where I just sat at my desk and did my own reading while the students rebelliously slept the whole time. It took me a long time to reach that point because I always wanted to help other people. But when I told my supervisors about their behavior and they just shrugged, I decided that it was a battle not worth fighting and i just decided to do my own work during that class. Will these sleeping students that I had come around at some point? I don’t know, but life is too short for me to be worrying about them. Like I said, you have to take care of yourself. Do what Tony Robbins suggests and seek pleasure and avoid pain wherever possible.

Giving your students choices whenever possible, even in a country where students are expected to follow the teacher, is not a bad idea. Actually, my experience in Korea, despite it being known for a country that respects elders, has been somewhat the reverse of what people normally say about it. Most of my students have never had a problem arguing with me and telling me that i’m wrong. They have ranted and raved and objected to many of the activiites that i have given them. They have openly requested to self-study during my class and some days they have even asked me if they could go use the bathroom, to which I have conceded, only to see them toward the tail-end of the class to which they explained that they had a really bad case of the runs. Some students have even had the audacity to request that they leave class to go play video games in the computer room. My Korean students have hardly ever shied away from telling me what to do. Maybe it’s because of my status within the school, my own teaching style, the changing times in Korea, or a mixture of these characteristics and others that I am not aware of, but whatever the case may be, it seems that the idea that korean students are somehow obedient to every word that a teacher says seems more myth than reality. Even during those times when I have put my foot down and told the students how I felt about their behavior, these times have been the absolute worst for me because it means that I have lost the trust in the students and they have come to resent me for making them do things that they don’t want. It ususually takes me more than a few weeks to win them back to my side and show them that I do care about how they feel, but that a compromise is needed in order for the both of us to move forward with our respective roles. When this happens, I usually end up expending more energy than I need to in order to win them back. Therefore, I am usually not willing to fight my students on classroom policy, wherever possible. It’s more trouble than it’s worth. If you’re fortunate enough to be in a country and community where students really do obey whatever the teacher says, then this conversation is moot and you consider doing virtually anything you want. Obviously, you should consider doing what’s in the best interests of the students while conserving your energy, but the task in doing this should be expontentially easier for you to achieve. If you are like me and have my experience, then you’ll obviously need to resort to strategies that will influence students into compliance. Like almost anything in life, you’re never going to be able to convince anyone to follow you unless you sway people by explaining things in terms of their worldview, their perspective. You have to meet your studetns where they are and reason with them from their angle or else the battle is completely lost. “Because I said so,” just never flew with me and my students, so I had to give them choices. Once students perceived themselves as having some choice in the matter of their education, then I could reason with them, first by saying that they had chosen their lesson and then reasoning with them further with yet more compromise: “Okay, so you wanted to do this activity and now you’re not interested in doing this. Let’s finish it anyway and then I will give you another selection.” When students were particularly rebellious, I truly had to reason at their level and be direct and like them. “Look, there are plenty of things that I do not want to do,” I told one student in my class one time. “I didn’t wnat to go to school either but I went. I did not want to do many of the activities. I would have much rather played video games, just like you, and not have gone to school.” I continued. “But in life, you can’t always do what you want to do. Sometimes, you have to do what other people want you to do. Don’t forget this,” I nearly warned. “You have to be able to please other people first and foremost before you can please yourself.” Please bear in mind that this was an English conversation class. I never thought in a million years that I would be having this conversation with a student who was at medium range of English proficiency. But here I was, acting like a little student and trying to show him what remaining young-kid-style humanity I had remaining in my body. I had to show this student that I still remembered being a student too and that I had similar emotions that he had, even it was a lie and I had always been a fantatsic student who graduated top 10 of my class and graduated summa cum laude from undergraduate school and magna cum laude from graduate school. What did this kid know anyway. I had to just continue to play along. By the time I had finished this spiel, the student was wholly convinced that i was right and we continued with this activity. It was stressful and energy-draining to have to go through this type of conversaiton and in hindsight, I could have saved myself a lot of effort by just giving the student the type and style of teaching that he wanted. And this is the lesson that I really want to drive home in this chapter for you. If your country and school community are anything like mine, then you’re going to want to maximize on your students’ ability to choose. Go to your class with a series of choices for the kids and have them vote on the activity that they want to do. Give them ultimatums and compromise. As long as the students perceive themselves as choosing their fate, they’ll be less likely to openly rebel and you’ll be in a better position to go through lessons without exacting any more mental strain to do so. That said, there are a few more activities that you can give to your students that will make them more active in your class. We already brought up voting activities. Other great activities that get your students busy is Clue activities. There are plenty of PowerPoint presentations floating around the internet today that are like the game Clue whereby students have to solve the whodunit question. These activities are very popular with students in Korea and they will likely be popular in other countries throughout Asia as well. These games are great because students can spend almost the entire class period working them out, expending all of the mental energy that they have to do them and then checking with you at the very end of the class for the answer. Another great activity to give to your students is the “Murder” game whereby you select one student as the detective and one student as the murderer. In this game, the student-as-detective leaves the room while you select a murderer who will wink at students to kill them. The detective will return to the class and ask students different questions of each student, trying to detect any sort of lying in their countenance. These questions can be super broad and irrelevant to the game, such as “what is your favorite color?” or they can be related to the game at hand, such as “where were you on the night of February 1st?” The questions will largely depend on the level of proficiency that you have. In any case, after or during questions, the killer can kill people and then the student can attempt to search and take three guesses at who the killer is. The beauty with this game, as with many of the other games that i have mentioned, is that this game is largely between the students and not the teacher After you’ve explained the rules--or gotten your co-teacher to do it if you have one--then the game can literally move forward on its own without your assistance. And if the students really get into this game, they can continue until the bell rings. This game can be done during the semester or in the winter camps that I have already mentioned and they are great time killers (no pun intended). Another great activity that you can give to your students, and which also happens to be mentioned in Penny Ur’s *Discussions that Work,* is “Arranging” games where you have students categorize words or concepts in a sequence, almost like a puzzle game.

When considering choices you can give to your students, there’s nothing more fun than arranging games. I have a series of powerpoint presentations that I made where all students have to do is arrange, arrange, arrange! One of the games, which is taken from the Ur book, is arranging the guests. In this scenario, students are at a dinner party and they are given profiles of several of the guests. Students are told what their personalities are like and what they do for a living. In this game, there’s usually a cross-section of characters, from a judge to a school teacher to a little brat who complains to her mommy all of the time. The students job is to arrange these guests at a dinner a party to ensure that everyone gets along and there is not a lot of in-fighting. This usually gets the students very busy, particularly if they’re above-average level of proficiency. Students will very frequently work through potential combinations like the activity is some kind of a rubics cube and then devise sentences that explain why they chose the way they did. This game is absolutely perfect for giving students an outlet to express themselves and to do most of the work for you. Another game that practically lends itself to self-teaching is arranged-marriage game. Again, this is taken from the Penny Ur book. In this game, students act as a marriage committee in a futuristic society where everyone needs to be married off and any couple that is getting a divorce needs to be re-coupled right away. Students are given a list of couples and the different problems that each couple if experiencing. The students then have to re-arrange the couples so that everyone is happy again. I’ve had much success with this game for the same reasons as the other game mentioned above. First of all, students love talking about relationships and couples so this game easily lends itself to all sorts of chit-chatter. Secondly, students love entertaining different arrangement of couples and figuring out the best match. I have very frequently delivered this game to classses as small as two and classes as large as 10 and it works the same. Sometimes it’s helpful to tell students to write down the information that you give to them via powerpoint or distribute worksheets that will remind the students of the different couples. This allows them to cross check their facts wiht their own memories to determine the best fit. I usually give the students about 15 minutes to deliberate before they render a decision and then I have them tell me why they chose the way they did. Sometimes the students will finish a lot sooner than I expected and then I will tell them to explain their reasoning. Usually, if their finishing of the activity is premature, they won’t be able to produce sentneces that explain their logic, and so back to the drawing board they will go until they can produce something for me. If they can produce sentences that explain why they chose what they did, I will have each student of a group contribute their thoughts. If I don’t understand what they are saying, I will tell the students as such and tell them that they have to go back to the drawing board and figure out logical sentences to give to me. After all, this is why I have been hired, isn’t it? To provide students with this kind of feedback (the invaluable feedback of knowing if a native English speaker can understand you or not). Sometimes students will give me clipped responses that just barely skim the surface and tell me the answer to their reasoning. In some cases, I will let this slide if the timing of the class is around exam time or their are some other unforeseen special circumstances (for example, I haven’t seen the students in two weeks due to a festival or some kind of a class trip). However, if I have seen the students rather consistently for weeks on end, I seldom tolerate clipped replies, such as “He is a firefighter,” to explain why they coupled, Bill, the Fireman, with Grace, the Nurse. I usually make the students come up with something more comprehensive and well thought out. Again, your needs may differ depending on what school you’re teaching in or what country you’re generally located in. For students in South Korea, in a high school setting, this is totally a normal expectation.

Another possible option, again taken from the Penny Ur book, is to have the students arrange animals in a zoo which functions similarly to the other games that I have already mentioned. With this particular game, it is important to give students a diaghram of the zoo so they can figure out where everything is and then determine visually from this point where everything should go (the flamingos with the iguanas, etc. etc.). These arrangement activities are absolutley perfect stress relievers for the teacher because they place sole responsibility on the student for making the class interesting and fun. If the students decide that they don’t want to partake in the activity, then it is entirely their fault for feeling that way. Personally, I have never had this problem. Most of my students have enjoyed these activities and engaged in them similarly to other lessons I’ve given in the past. There are still other arrangement activities that you can provide, most of which come right out of the Cambridge canon and can be applied to numerous classes where you don’t want to exert too much energy. For instance, you can have the students group words based on severity (e.g. tiny, small, big, large, collosal) or group them based on importance. You can have students use a randomly generated list of words and then have them determine their own categories. You can have the students generate sentences based on these random words that you’ve generated and make it into a game whereby the student who can’t think of a sentence is out of the game. Working with vocabulary is an absolutely wonderful way to get the energy off of you, particulalry if you’re working with vocabulary that the students have to learn. As a general rule, it will serve to your benefit if you can go over words that the students have already been reviewing because this provide some added incentive for students to be engaged with the class (since reviewing the vocabulary that they have to know for a test is never a bad idea).

Category games are extraordinary and I have used them extensively in my class. I’ve learned a lot about them from many books, but most of my activities derive from the Cambridge series. *Discussions that Work*, *Vocabulary Activities for Language Learners, Personalizing Language Learning,* and *Teaching One-to-One* all contain really great activities that you can use in your classes to keep the little tykes busy. Many of the activities I have mentiond here already. I will still mention a few more so that you can feel fully prepared. One activity that has worked really well for me is having the students draw out venn diagrams. I’ll have them write at the top of the venn diagram “Likes” and “dislikes” and then have them go interview other students and collect information. You don’t necessary have to perform this activity in a venn diagram. You can use a grid instead. Either way, getting the students up and out of their chairs and working with other students usually keeps the students busy for awhile. Once they finish interviewing at least two people, I will have them sit down and we’ll do a global feedback session whereby I have each student go around and tell me what they learned about their friends in this activity. Sometimes I’ll correct what they have to say if there is anything glaring, but usually I jut give the students an opportunity to exercise their mouth muscles and feel moe confident with the language they are trying to learn. This usually works really well for me. Another category game that I give to my students is writing random words on the board and then having students create their own categories based on the words that they see. To add further relevance, I will use words from the textbook that they are giving. Which reminds me, if you ever really want to conserve energy, use the textbooks that the students are using! Not only can you find great material from them, but students will usually feel more inclined to pay attention and follow your lead if you’re using material that they deem relevant to their lives. The textbook usually covers this base really well. Once the words have been written on the board,I will then have the students make their own categories. Sometimes I will model this but very often--particularly if you’re working with high school--you don’t need to model this at all and the students will work on this. Once they have created categories, I then charge the students with the responsibility of justifying why they chose the categories that they did. This usually compels them to speak further about their choices and I just sit placidly and listen to what they have to say. This can be a great warmup activity for students. Another great categorizing activity is to have the students create stories from the words that they are either using for their other classes or ones that you randomly picked from a textbook or some other source and then having the students generate a story a comic strip based on the words and then creating the stipulation that the students absolutely muse use all of the words in some way or context. It will help if you anticipate the difficulty that some of the students might have with using a select few words but this shouldn’t take you more than a few seconds to determine. For all intends and purposes, category games are what I call “set-it-and-forget-it” games, meaning that you basically give the instructions once and then get the students to work diligently on the activities for the remainder of the class while you take it easy. For activities like this, it might be helpful if you made use of classroom dictionaries, but it’s not always necessary. Personally, I love using dictionaries in my class for most of my activities. First of all, it prolongs the activities considerably while giving the students the extra discipline that they usually need to stay focused and learn new vocabulary. Dictionaries also giving students access to a range of words that might not otherwise be used in the classroom, which adds a little spice t the teaching. And finally, dictionaries allow the students to stay focused as they get more and more involved in the classroom activities with the more words they are able to use at their disposal. Sometimes, I will give students a worksheet and have them take some time to look up the words on the worksheet, again for the same reasons that i have listed above. It makes the activity longer while also giving the students that ol’ discipline again. If you don’t have dictionaries in your class, I highly recommend you ask someone to get them for you because they’ll give you that much more access to free time in your own class.

You can find a load of games like this in the Cambridge series, but if you don’t have the time to peruse the way I have, you can get easily accessible activities from various websites throughout the net, some of which I have listed in the appendix to save some space in this writing. As of publication, there are so many activities availalbe to you that you practically don’t even have to do any teaching anymore. You can just use the worksheets and literature that other kind people have created and published for you on open-source forums. I have had many weeks where i just didn’t have the desire in me to lesson plan based on the students needs. When this happened, I used websites to generate a list of activities to give to the students. Some aspiring English teachers will cry “blasphemy,” upon reading this. They’ll call me a fraud and a cheat and tell me that I am doing this teaching all for the wrong reasons. But I must insist that I am not writing this book for a singleminded English teacher with no other aspirations outside of teaching. I am writing this book for the renaissance people of the world who enjoy teaching but also recognize that there are other facets of their life that need to be met and that teaching just isn’t going to be the Eden for them to reach their larger goals in life. Like it or not, teaching English overseas isn’t the most sustainable of careers and wiht the way the market is going, the income is only going to stay the same or perhaps even get worse as the need for English teachers who teach English in English dries up in the markets. When this happens, it will be helpful for those English teachers--out of survival--to develop strategies to get their time back, to retrieve the willpower that they will surely need at the end of the day and to harness it toward their side hustle projects or other business ventures. It’s almost like a race that you’re losing, or being on some kind of a sinking ship. When I was in South Korea, it would always surprise just how much money English teachers would spend on some of the most inane products. Not that I am anyone to pass judgment, but I want to be clear that I am not trying to cater to English teachers who use their time outside of teaching to take lavish trips to Indonesia. I’m speaking primarily to the side hustlers of the English teaching world, of which there are many (I’m sure). But I digress. We’ve reached a point in time where you can almost always avoid reinventing the wheel when planning lessons. Even in the seminal work on lesson planning, in the Cambridge series, entitled *Lesson Planning,* the authors do make it clear that there is really no one right way of lesson planning. Some people will just write a list of words on a sheet and call that a “strategy,” while others will go more elaborate and create extensive bullet points that branch out into other bullet points ad infinitum. You can probably guess what my personal philosophy is with this lesson planning: take the path of least resistance. Lesson planning takes time and in my experience, even with rehearsal, will never be perfect. Things will bomb for many reasons, some of which are entirely out of your control. For example, the students feeling bad about a test that they took could lead them to hate your activity and then cause it to bomb. The truth is: you won’t always know why a lesson bombs, so the truth is that it’s in your best interest to just generate a list of activities and review with students (particularly during those weeks when you just don’t want to be bothered). Some might even argue that today what I am recommending is still too much work. And maybe they’re right. In the past, for example, I have hired VAs to handle a lot of my worklaod, from finding worksheets to making them themselves. I will explore this idea of outsourcing a little bit later, describing the whys and the whats and the wherefore.

There are many grammar-based games that you can give to students. Again, much of which is already supplied in the Cambridge series. Penny Ur has written extensively about grammar practice activities which I highly recommend you check out because they have literally saved me lots of time (after reading them of course). In my training program for teaching English, we learned the mantra of teaching form-meaning-use of any particular grammar structure. In South Korea, the students were already familiar with many words and grammar strctures and were just at the point where all they really needed was to be gently reminded of how they were formed (not necessarily what they meant). Therefore, I would structure many of my classes as review classes, even without having pre-taught any of the material. The students almost always knew how to form the grammar structures anyway!

Some grammar games however lend themselves to getting the students off your back while others are more work than they are worth planning them. Point blank, any grammar activity that involves you explaining the form and the meaning of the words does not belong in this book and I have excluded them. They are excluded because then this book becomes a teaching book with different activities that you can use for your classes. This is not the type of book that I am providing to you here. I am only looking to provide you with activities that will get the students off your back, that will allow you some rest time. Thus, any activity, grammar or otherwise, where you have to explain anything is completely against what I am trying to do here in the work of this book.

When looking for particular grammar activities that get the students’ attention off of you, ask your colleagues about what grammar structures they should know already. Run some sentences by them and ask them if the students will understand. If you get a confirmation that they do know the structures, then that is the greenlight for you to move forward and start considering the various activities that will get the students off your back. Use only grammar that the students are already familiar with and structure your lessons as a “Review with the Native English teacher” class. The students, and even the colleagues, will appreciate this especially since it may be argued quite forcefully that your job isn’t to teach new material but rather to help the students exercise material that they should have learned with the real translators. Once you’ve found a grammar structure to review, there are different types of activities that you can give to get the students busy: fill-in-the-blank, cloze activities, and word bank activities are probably the best types of worksheets that you can give to yoru students to get them to practie the form and meaning and use without you. It will literally take you 15 minutes to write a paragraph with blanks and then give it to the students. You don’t even need to decorate worksheets because most students will doodle on the worksheets no matter what you do and the pictures that you might wish to add to them don’t really add to the experience. It’s just extra work for you that you don’t need. Simply write a paragraph and take out some words. You can use a word bank if you wish or you can make it even harder for the students by not giving them any hints aside from telling them that the material is a review. For younger groups, you can make word searches with the missing words in the grammar structure or crossword puzzles with the structure in them. The more you provide material that is familiar to the students, be it because of a tes tthat they recently had to take or some activity that they recently did with another teacher, the more relevant the students will feel the grammar exercise is. You could literally use the book that the students are using and just make your own activities based on the book. And if doing this work takes up too much time, you could just farm out the work to someone in the Philippines who will do it for five dollars an hour. Using these sorts of activities with grammar is usually the best way to get the tykes off your back. Still, another type of activity that you can use is to have the students generate their own stories using the grammar structure, or have them read a passage and point out the structure for you. Some countries don’t encourage creativity so having students make their own anything is usually quite difficult if you don’t pre-teach what it is that they are supposed to do. If this is the case for you, I would strongly urge you to consider just giving a worksheet and having students derive the correct answer. Memory games are also spectacular for getting the students off your back, particularly in countries where raw human-derived memorization is considered the path to success. Getting the students to stretch their memories is an easy task to give to the students. Some students won’t be motivated unless you give them candy to do this. I would recommend giving them candy when this happens. It will take you less time in the long run and create less mental taxation too. There are several memorization games you can give to your students to keep them busy without you. One of them is a very popular game which I have lifted from the book *Recipes for Tired Teachers.* In this activity, you give each individual student a sentence strip with a sentnece on it. Each student needs to have at least one sentence strip and all of the sentence strips will tell a story of some kind. First, instruct the students to memorize the sentence. This usually takes about 5 minutes. You can go around and test different students to see if the sentence has crystalized in their minds. My students always loved when I did this. After the students have demonstrated their ability to memorize the words on their respective strip, you can then insturct the students to give you back the sentences. After that, you can tell the students that all of these sentence strips--the ones you’ll be holding--make a story and that it is the student’s responsibility to put the sentences in order so that they make a cogent and coherent story. Whenever I do this activity, it usually takes a whole chunk of time for the students to figure out what words mean and what each member of the group is saying. It forces the student to come to terms with their accents and how their communication might be perceived as either effective or ineffective. If you want to make this activity even longer, you can mandate that the students only speak in English and not their mother tongue. To make the activity much longer, you can mandate that students are not allowed to write the words down on paper. And of course, the larger the class you have, the easier it will be for you to break students up into groups and create a competition for which group can produce the story whole again in the least amount of time. I have had much success, so much success in fact that I have a whole stockpile of sentence stories ready to go in the event that I just don’t feel like teaching that day and will usually dispatch to the students to continually practice their memorization skills.

Still another game is the random word list game which is so beautifully simple and elegant in its execution. In this game, you choose random words to put on the board. They can be based on words that the students have already been going over or they can be of your own choosing, ideally based on words that the students will be familiar with (you can double check with your colleagues just to make sure that the students are familiar with these words). Put the words all over the board and then have the students look at the words around the board (Break them into groups if you have a large enough class). Give them about fifteen seconds to do so, and then immediately erase the words from the board. Afterwards, have the students try to recall the words from the board, either by writing them down on paper or saying them. You can make a game out of this activity by having each group take turns providing one word that they remember until they can’t continue anymore. You can continue playing this game in multiple rounds to see how far the students can go. This activity doesn’t usually take that long. If you want to extend it, you could distribute a worksheet with a story on it and have the students speed read the words before collecting the papers again. Then, you could have the students in groups attempt to recreate the story in their own words and possibly embellish on the words to make the story more fun. There are also websites which you can use for story prompts. Storytimed.com is a great website where people can go to upload their own stories and have others contribute. One option for an activity is to read the stories to the students (which usually takes only about five minutes) and then have the students recall the story and then continue it. You can even have the students tell you the story from what they can recollect and then have them continue it. Although this would technically make the activity more hands-on (for you), it still places most of the responsibility on the student to produce as opposed to the teacher. You could literally flash anything in front of the students and then take it away from them to see how much they can remember. You can flash picture stimuli, from magazines or newspapers or websites. You can flash words or drawings, and you can even have the students stare at a student and then close their eyes while that student changes his appearance and then have the students look again and see which part of the student was changed. One of the most popular flash-type games is called “Kim’s Game,” whereby you take a bag of different goodies, from pencil cases to erasers and gum and thumb tack and whatever other random objects you can muster. You show the students this random assortment of objects for a few seconds and then cover them up afterwards. The students are then charged with the responsibility of writing down as much of the medly as they can remember. This usually takes about half the class if it’s a 45 minute period. Sometimes even more and you don’t have to do much of anything at all!

One of the most popular games for memory if you’re working younger children is the “Going on a Picnic” game whereby students going around in a circle and provide one word that starts with a certain letter in the alphabet. The task is to remember all of the words that each student says in alphabetical order and those who forget are out. When I have done this game, sometimes students will help each other and thus make it a non-competitive game. If you have to monitor the game to make sure there are no cheaters, than technically you’re not getting the students off of your back and so the game is ill-advised. I would only give this game to students who can compete properly. Of course, with every game it’s important to provide the rules, but if the students can help themselves, then initiating a quieter game is probably better. And speaking of quieter games, playing memory with the students is a great quiet game that will get the students activating their short term memories. Sure, there’s a little prep involved with making the cards but once you have them made, you can reuse them over and over again. If I don’t have the time to make the cards myself, I’ll usually run the idea by one of my colleagues and recruit their help in making the cards. Of course, if they don’t have the time to help and I don’t have the time to do them, I just don’t initiate the game and I move to another one. One really great game that I have played with students is the memorize-this-text game. Although this partiuclar activity isn’t a favorite among students, it’s a favorite for me because it’s fast, requires little or no prep, and it can take the whole period. It’s a bit active because you have to interact with the students in the game, but it doesn’t require extraneous talking or shouting. It’s ideal for smaller groups. Basically, all you have to do is take a sample text, be it a poem or some famous stanza, and write it on the board for the students to read. Ideally, it should be about 12-15 lines of text. Show the students and have them read the text. Once finished, erase 3-5 words from the board and then have one student read the text again, this time replacing each missing word with the correct word. Once the student is finished, erase another 3-5 words and continue like so until the entire piece is completely gone and the students have to recite the entire piece from memory. As I have already mentioned, this isn’t exactly a set-it-and-forget-it piece because you’re still engaging with the students, but I do consider this a helpful game for conserving yoru energy and willpower because like so many of the other games I have already mentioned, this one requires very little talking. In fact, I have done this game many times without speaking so much as an entire sentence because this game is just so easy to explain. All you have to do is literally erase the words and have the students repeat the poem, and the students will automatically know what it is that they have to do. No prep activities are the absolute best for conserving your energy in the off hours when you would otherwise be lesson planning. One of my favorite poems to give for this particular activity is the Cross Poem by Langston Hughes which is just 12 lines long. I originally found this poem in the *Grammar Games* book by Mario Rinvolucri, a prolific author who has long been contributing super helpful EFL books for teachers the world over. This activity typically takes the whole class period. Some teachers might question the educational relevance of this activity, but you can easily justify it if the sample writing in question includes some kind of target word or phrase that the students have had to be responsible for on a test or a lesson in their other classes. Another game I like to play with large groups, particularly of young students, is a variation on the memorize-random-words game I described earlier in the chapter. I break students up into groups of 3-4 if the class is large enough and I have each student write ten random words on a sheet of paper. The words cannot be related to each other (e.g. such as a series of numbers or different body parts). They have to be ten random words. Sometimes I’ll give the students dictionaries for this activity. Having the students generate their own list of random words will usually take about 5 minutes +/- 2 depending on their level of proficiency. Once the students are finished with writing their own words down on paper, I then instruct the students to memorize the words on their paper. I give them about five minutes and very often will go around the room and test different students to see if they have memorized the words or not. Once I feel like a sufficient number of students have memorized the words, then I instruct a member of whichever group is going first to select a member from another group. The student selects one of the students. I then ask to borrow the list of words from the student who has been selected and I give that list to the other student who did the selecting. I then tell the selected student to recite from memory all of the words that he wrote down on his paper. If the student recites the words perfectly, then that student achieves points for his team and if he doesn’t, then the group that selected him gets the points. Subtraction may or may not occur for whichever team is on the losing end. I really love this activity because it can be a really powerful motivator for students who would otherwise find their language classes super boring. Although this activity is very similar from the poem activity that I described just one paragraph ago in that you have to remain a participant in the exchange, it nevertheless requires very little talking from you and all you have to do is go around the room and volunteer students to do the selecting. Eventually, if you get a good rhythm going for the activity, the lesson will take care of itself and the student will just start taking care of the activity on their own and doing without you telling them to. This is exactly what you want to have happen in your class, for this activity and virtually all of the others that are described for you in these pages.

I have had nothing but success with this game. Sometimes I’ll give candy as prizes and sometimes we’ll just play for fun, and the game almost always goes over well. One variation of this activity is to have the selected student close her or his eyes and then attempt to recite objects that she or he remembers seeing in the room, or from the picture. I’ve seldom done this activity because it can be a bit awkward making the students close their eyes, but if you have a group of students who eagerly follow your instruction, then you can probably make this variation work for you. For smaller groups of students, sometimes I give each student a magazine clipping that features a very detailed picture. If I don’t have magazines, I just make a print out or use the textbook that the students are responsible for. I have each student study their picture and then write questions about that picture. Once they are finished, each student takes turns showing their picture to the group of students for about 15 seconds. They then remove the picture from sight and proceed to ask the rest of the students questions about that picture. Students who answer correctly get one point and the student with the most points gets a reward. I have done this activity for students at a special technical high school which worked out great. This activity easily lasted the whole class and the only instruction I had to give was at the beginning when the students weren’t familiar with the game and needed to learn the rules. After giving these instructions, of course, it was smoothing sailing. One activity for even smaller groups is the “What are you wearing?” activity whereby you get two students to face each other and study their appearance for about fifteen seconds. Then, you have them turn around and stand back to back while they take turns adjusting their appearances. Give the students about fifteen minutes to do this and then have them face each other again. In the final step, have the students attempt to point out the change in appearance. Some caveats are worth noting about this game: (1) If the students are wearing uniforms, it can be difficult to make the activity tricky; (2) There is a tendency for students to be super-tricky, to the point that it is virtually impossible to figure out the change (for example, when a student slightly adjusts his or her suit button or makes a little tweak to their tie.) Instead of waiting for this to happen, make sure to explain during the rule-giving portion of this activity that subtleties are not allowed and then provide an example for why this is the case. This activity doesn’t usually last very long at all--15 minutes at the most if you have a very small class, since the activity tends to get boring very quickly. I would recommend doing this as a warm-up and prelude to other activities for the class. At least for Korea, some of the most successful memory games involve trivia or some variation thereof. Any simulation of a game show where students are contestants who are responsible for learning random inane facts about the world will usually go over well, but only if you’re using facts and information that the students will definitely know about. this can be tricky since news is super cultural bound, but you can mitigate this possible issue by first asking your colleagues about where they get their news from, or even better, taking a PPT from one of the EFL websites and just checking with another teacher if the questions are fair to ask of the students.

Many of the games that I have already mentioned pages ago will work well in trivia format. Sometimes with trivia based activities, I’ll either introduce the passages of information that students have to be familiar with in order to play the game or sometimes I’ll just review past information and get straight to the game. Of course, students prefer being able to play the game straight away rather than consume information before playing the game. Of course, I prefer the students familiarizing themselves first with the information and then playing the game afterwards and normally I’ll do this by either giving the students a worksheet to read over or I will show them a powerpoint slide with the infromation on it and time their reading. There will be some stragglers invariably in this activity, but I accept this and normally mitigate the risk of students feeling bad about themselves by giving special attention to those students who are behind, all while rewarding those students who are good at reading with extra smiles and congratulatory remarks. Once the students are finished reading, then we proceed with the trivia based game and there are a range of them of course. The games with the least amount of work on your part is invariably going to be Jeopardy which basically only requires that you flip whatever cards the students choose to answer. If you do decide to play Jeopardy, make sure that you are giving special attention to the level of difficulty. You will really only be able to truly assess this once you get to know the students a little bit better. Once you have figured them out, then you can determine a level of difficulty that is within their range and provide some really challenging questions on the Jeopardy game. The trick is to hit that sweet spot with the questions where the students feel the challengingness of the question without being completely disconcerted by the level of difficulty. In some Jeopardy games, I have often provided what I thought were really challenging questions only to discover that they were quite easy for the students. What ended happening was that the students would go directly to the super-challenging questions and then answer them correctly right away and thus totally defeat the excitingness of the game. In other instances, I’ve played Jeopardy games where the questions was so hard that the students not only gave up on the game, but they also started to feel bad about themselves and very nearly required counseling afterwards in order to feel better about their improvements in the language. This is very sensitive work, mind you, and you have to be extra aware of whether you’re hurting students or causing them to feel at the other end of the spectrum, which is over-confident and feeling like they don’t need your services anymore. Either case is totally bad for you, so hitting the medium sweet spot is going to be part of the challenging work of making these activities work for you.

Another trivia-based activity that I have played is Wheel of Fortune which is basically a glorified hangman game with a special wheel that students can turn for points (or lose them, depending on their fortune). Still another activity is a bomb game whereby students choose letters on a slide. These letters contain a question about the material and if they get the question right, then they are eligible to select one of three options of prizes, one of which contains a bomb that could evaporate all of the team’s points. I learned how to play this game from a Korean co-teacher that I had who apparently had had years’ worth of experience in working with English teachers, for she had some rather ingenious ways to cut corners in the lessons that even I thought were rather thrifty. This particular activity has always been exciting for the middle school students, with or without candy, and has involved very little of me in the lessons.

There are also digitized versions of Connect Four floating around the internet which you can use, with the stipulation that students answer trivia questions correctly first before being able to select the spot that they want their chip to go in. Ditto with most board games that are out on the market. There are digitized versions of Clue, Monopoly, Checkers, Chess, Snakes and Ladders, Foiled, and Candy Land. All of these games can be trivia-ized and made into a trivia game. You can use your own cards for these types of games or you can embed the questions directly into the PPT and have the students work at it. The board games almost always take the whole period to do and I will frequently forego introducing any material for these such games because I realize how long it takes to just explain the rules of these games. When it comes to playing trivia-based board games, I would only advise doing them if you have a highly active co-teacher who is willing to translate on your behalf, or, short of having a communicative co-teacher like this, I would recommend getting your instructions translated into the mother tongue language so that you don’t get stuck trying to do a song and dance about the rules of the game and you can just get straight to the game.

Perhaps you’re thinking that setting these games up is a lot of work. And you would be right in thinking this if you assume that you’re doing this all on your own. But who says you have to? I have used Fiverr.com and UpWork to hire many of the best PPT-makers on the planet, for just a small modicum of money to make some rather dazzling PPT presentations that have lasted me literally months. Some PPTs only cost me $10 USD, at the time of this writing, and the most expensive (for 200 slides, let’s say) cost me $100 USD. Most people would consider this expensive, but I would rather spend money to save myself time in the long run then to be stuck making all sorts of games for students that I won’t see ever again. And given that English teaching is a particularly unpredictable profession (i.e. you need to be the type of person to keep your whits about you and leave at a moment’s notice if ever you’re not wanted anymore), I do not invest all of my time in lesson planning. And as I have already mentioned a few pages ago, there’s no one right way to lesson plan. At least according to the authorities over at Cambridge (see *Lesson Planning* in the Cambridge series). Thus, it’s a small investment in my opinion to be spending money on these PPTs that will save you time and energy to do other things.

Aside from the trivia powerpoints, again, you can always refer back to the card games and other physical brick and mortar games to get you through. Card games can almost always be turned into trivia games if you play your cards right (pun unintended), although in my experience making the card games into trivia games requires a lot of unnecessary enforcement of the rules since students will likely try to cut corners by speaking in their mother tongue or completely skipping the trivia part. Use your judgment. If you think the students can handle the level of independence that card games call for, then by all means try card games out. You could, for example, make separate trivia cards to with the Uno Cards and have students draw from them after every round, or pick one up after one student has to draw four. Korean students also taught me a variation of Uno called “One Card,” which also proved equally as fun and which I have since incorporated into other classes (Google “One Card game”). All of these games are great for testing memory, be it long term or short term. I encourage you to experiment to see which types of trivia games will be the most successful to your students while at the same time giving you the most vacation time in your head.

Another favorite activity that I like to do for fun is music-making. My background is in musical theater, after all, and I spent a good part of my education either singing other people’s songs or when I wasn’t doing that, making up my own songs just for fun. There are many students who love music, although not necessarily to make it themselves. You’ll have to gauge whether you have the type of personalities in your class who can hold up such an activity and make it successful. The premise for this activity is rather simple. Show the students some rhyming words that they should be familiar with at their level of proficiency. Have them offer their own examples of rhyming words. Then, play a song that has some rhyming words in it and then instruct the students that you want them to make their own song. It can be a rap song, or a country song, or some other type of song, but they have to make it at least two minutes and it has to be creative. You can have the students vie for a creativity reward or candy and see which group of students come up with the most creative rendition. I enjoy this activity a lot because I literally get paid to enjoy fresh entertainment that I will not be able to see in the movies or on YouTube. I don’t have to do anything for this activity except enjoy the company of the students.

If you’re feeling really ambitious, you can film the performances and upload them to social media (with permission from the parents and the school community, of course) and see how many views you get from around the word, plus comments. Many teachers have already started doing this, to surprisingly wonderful results. You’d be surprised just how much the students can come up with on their own and in the best moments, can be really inspiring for you, the teacher, to watch as students, uninhibited, do an amazing Maroon 5 rendition or something from their local band.

But in returning to the subject that is this book, hopefully you have come away with some actiivites that can really serve you in conserving your energy. And if you get only one lesson from this book, please let it be the the following: **reviewing material** is the easiest way to get the little tykes off your back. It’s true. Hear me out on this.

You can review material that you have gone over ad infinitum if you think the students haven’t understood it the first time, or you can even go over material that they might have learned from other teachers. It amazes me how many teachers walk into a an EFL classroom and expect the students to be tabula rasa and have very low levels of proficiency. I mean, unless you’re teaching Elementary students, I think it’s a fair assumption that students as high as middle school will come in with a whole inventory of words that they have learned from prior years of learning. You can use Getting to Know You activities to gauge just how much your students know and then use the information that they know to review that material. You can ask your co-teachers as well and maybe peruse the textbooks that the students are going over to see what kinds of English they are supposed to know for class. Of course, the textbook isn’t always a great barometer for how much your students are going to know (there are afterall many false-starters and some students might have some learning disabilities to take into consideration) but you can use the textbook as a rough sketch of what it is that the students might be working on and then use that material in easy and unique ways. Of course, it is always always always a great idea to gamify your lessons whenever you can. This will always go over well with young people who are in cultures where competition is thoroughly encouraged. Other countries may not be as susceptible to this, but if not, that works to your benefit because then you can jut provide worksheets and other more academic tasks for the students to do and then your class just becomes an exercise in work-management. Now I would be remiss if I didn’t tell you that sometimes you’re going to get a lot of busy work in lesson planning, but you don’t have to leave that work to yourself to do. You can ask other English teachers for material that they’ve used and which have been a success in their own class. If you don’t have anyone around to do that, you can ask on popular Facebook message boards, and in the worst case scenario, you can log onto Fiverr.com and literally pay someone 10 USD to make worksheets for you. There are plenty of freelancers online as of 2015 who are looking to help teachers with their work generating and if your salary as an English teacher is in the 2000 USD range—as of 2015—then you are definitely capable of outsourcing a lot of your lesson planning to other people to save yourself some time. If you’re in the middle east teaching English, there should be very little work that you *aren’t* outsourcing since you’ll be making well over 2000 USD as take-home pay. Obviousy, as the teaching profession develops and requires a vastly different skillset from previous years, you’re going to want to hunker down on doing as much information-gathering as you can on your prospective school to figure out what exactly the students have been reviewing and most importantly, whether there are any hacks or cutting corners available to you that you might not have considered. Always remember that opportunities multiply as they are ceased so you are encouraged to be like a sponge and absorb as much as you can from those who have taken your path in previous years—as there will undoubtedly be some. As of 2015, there is really nothing that cannot be found if you don’t look hard enough and rest assured, there will always be hacks. I don’t have statistics on the origins of hacks in the teaching profession, but I’m willing to bet that hacks have been around since time imemoriam. While we are on the subject of outsourcing, getting yourself a general VA to look up information is never a bad idea as a strategy for getting the little tykes off your back. You can have your VA do so much for you then the people in your own office can barely do for themselves. For instance, you can hire a VA on upwork to do some of the research that I’ve already described in the previous paragraphs. You can have them look up reviews of the schools that you are going to be entering for your next job. You can have them look up other VAs who will make worksheets or powerpoints. You can hire a VA to find other former employees of the school that you presently teach at. You can use a VA to look up valuable resources for teaching material or to look for teaching material that is similar to the one that you’re going over. It’s almost reminiscent of the A.J Jacobs book where the author outsources his entire life, but it’s such a truism these days. You can literally outsource your entire life and almost no one would ever notice as you sit back at your desk and chill out over a cup of coffee. If you aren’t making enough money to hire a VA as an English teacher, then you might want to address why this is and consider maybe another school. I remember teaching in Mexico and earning pesos that were barely enough for me to buy a hot chocolate every morning. I left this situation because it just wasn’t sustainable. If the working situation isn’t sustainable enough for you to outsource, then it’s probably not sustainable enough to live on and unless you’re living on some kind of a trust fund, I wouldn’t consider you taking this route unless you’re planning on multiple careers in different professions and can take a few jobs working remotely. This isn’t a bad idea, but just know that you’ll necessarily have to do that if you’re working in a country that cannot afford to pay you the lavish salaries of the East.

I remember sitting with a fellow English teacher for coffee. I was in South Korea at the time and this particular English teacher whipped out his laptop and proceeded to show me a collection of lessons that he had prepared for his students. One after the other, he showed me one lavish PPT production after another. One PPT was on types of crimes and different procedures that takes place when a person is apprehended. In this particular PPT he had a list of different activities that accompanied a worksheet. Students had to match crimes with the punishments, they had to do a word search, they had to point out the crimes in embedded videos that this particular teacher had forked from the internet. Students had to arrange the lists of crimes and then label the different categories. In short, this particular PPT was astonishingly detailed and far better than anything I ever could come up with. At that moment, I hired this English teacher on the spot to handle all of my PPT woes. I had no regrets about this because I knew that he would save me time. Because I was good friends with this particular English teacher, he volunteered to give me his PPTs for free so that I could use them. And use them indeed. The entire PPTs lasted at least a month and allowed me to sit back and relax as the students diligently went through the lessons to understand procedural law, using the English language as a guidepost. It was wonderful!

The point I am trying to make here is that if you’re going to make lavish PPTs and other worksheet materials, the least you can do to ease some of the strain of getting paid a set amount from your job is to offer to do this type of service for other clients, vis-à-vis the numerous freelancing sites that are on the market today. You could offer to make PPTs on Fiverr.com for five dollars, for example, and include numerous add-on services to go with your initial five dollar offering. You could offer to make tailor-made English videos and sell them through fiverr or Etsy-type sites, or perhaps even make your own service and start marketing it through popular English websites or popular English-teaching blogs. One trap that English teachers often get themselves into is the thought that “it is my work, so I should keep it to myself and not share it with those other greedy teachers who get something for nothing.” At least this has been the mentality of many hard-working English teachers. I personally think this mentality is wrong because while it’s true that you’re giving teachers a way out of the hard work that you’ve clearly given up for yourself, there are nevertheless untold dividends to be offered if you do put your work on display for others and get that exposure that could lead to other opportunities down the road. This is not to say that I want to appeal to your greedy side and promise you that there will be other opportunities for being overly generous with your work, but I will say that you are doing far more for the benefit of the community if you do offer your services and promote the idea of sharing so that other teachers can follow your lead and do the same for you somewhere down the road. I suppose it all comes down to karma and spreading the good karma in this rather small industry. Many teachers don’t believe in it, but I do. I definitely think there is a karma that spreads and that if you’re generous, people will be generous to you in return. I’ve seen it happen.

We’ve covered a lot of ground in terms of getting the little tykes off your back. But there is still one more area to be covered. And that’s the area of actual, real-life lessons. Sure, there are many activities that you can do to get the students busy and offer your back. We’ve already discussed games as being really useful tools for keeping the little tykes busy: board games and PPT games being prime among them. We’ve also discussed using various types of activities that involve playing with words, creating categories, and doing some improvisation work with your students. There is only one last thing that we need to cover and that’s that fateful day when you actually have to give a lesson. Yes, it’s true, at some point you’re going to have to give an actual lesson, with a whole body that includes a beginning, middle, and an end. You’ll have to introduce vocabulary maybe or some grammar structure, maybe do some gesticulations to articulate the type of English that you’re trying to capture (the scenarios, contexts, and so forth) and then provide activities for the students that get them to practice, be it conversations that they perform in front of you or worksheets where they just ingrain the patterns of English in their mind through writing. Thankfully, there are still some ways for you to cut corners when you do actually have to give a lesson and I will certainly outline some of these strategies for you here before ending this chapter. Firstly, we live in an era where everything has already been done for you. So if you think you have to develop a lesson plan from scratch, think again. Linguahouse.com for example has many wonderful lesson plans and worksheets and videos that you can use for your classes. You don’t need to do anything except use these lessons or assess whether you think the ideas for the lessons will be interesting. You just fork the lessons and then use them at will, allowing the material to be conveyed through you while the students eagerly respond to the different stimuli that are part of the lesson. Busyteacher.org, as of this writing, is another invaluable resource, as is ESLPrintables.com and teacherswhopayteachers. All of these websites provide you with lesson plans and worksheets and PPTs and all sorts of little trinkets that you can use for your classes. I’ve used all of them and it has been years since I even developed a lesson plan from scratch since virtually everything I need is online. The other thing to keep in mind is that social media groups have also burgeoned all over the net. By 2020, 5 billion people will be using the internet. The scary thing to think about is that there may be a group of English teachers somewhere in the world who are making and generating content for each other on a regular basis, and you wouldn’t ever know about them. You could live your whole life without ever knowing about this group of diligent little English teachers because the internet, and by extension the world, is just so vast and truly beyond the comprehension of anyone in particular. It’s like when you try to count stars and you give up after counting to ten. The internet is just so vast, and social media groups are ever expanding the way the universe is, that you are likely to find something that will be more than useful to you in terms of delivering content to your students. You don’t need to reinvent the wheel when the material is ready for the taking. You just have to reach out and look for it. Or hire a VA to do it for you. Just remember, you have to introduce the material, maybe with some demonstration of how it is used, along with media stimuli. Provide students with a way to practice that language, and then apply some of the activities above to get the little tykes off your back. And then maybe review at the end, if there’s time. It’s really that simple. Now if you happen to have stumbled upon a really unique topic and you are just strapped for finding some PPT or video or worksheet on that topic—super rare but entirely possible—then I would advise that you make a rough sketch of what it is that you’d like to have happen and then either outsource it to some staff in the Philippines to spruce up your topic or if you have the time, when all else fails and you’re strapped for cash, do it yourself. But if you’re going to do it yourself, start small, don’t be ambitious, and test out a minimal version of your potential topic on the students first to see if they are taken with the topic. If they are, then you can build up further and if the students don’t like the topic, then you’ve learned something valuable about your lesson idea. Don’t spend over an hour on a lesson that you haven’t tested yet. Test first and then fill out the lesson plan later.

Unfortunately, discussing how to plan a lesson is beyond the scope of this book, but *Lesson Planning* is a great book that describes what you can do to prepare for your classes and serve the most successful delivery of material possible. When I was teaching in South Korea, I would have open classes whereby I would have to prepare an entire lesson to be reviewed by fellow native English teaching colleagues and native Korean staff alike. During this particular class, people would review my work and then offer me some feedback as to how I could improve on the lesson and my teaching overall. It was a great time to get outside support and assistance because teaching English can often be a solitary endeavor if you’re not surrounded by other teachers who are doing similar things as you are. Before every open class, my teachers used to make me write out the script to the class. I remember at the time thinking that it was a waste of time and energy, really taxing on my resources. But I did it anyway out of obedience and what started as a begrudging task turned into a learning opportunity, an opportunity for me to realize just how much energy I could save in advance if I just planned accordingly. I’m not saying that you should write a script for every class that you teach, but I am suggesting that some lesson planning may go a long way in helping you conserve more of your energy for the long haul. Whether you make the material yourself or outsource, having a well-prepared lesson can often be the difference between a stressful class and one that is executed with ease and grace. However, at the end of the day, you’re going to have to figure out what works best for you. Some teachers will create a laundry list of things to do for their students while other teachers were be more elaborate and created bulleted lists that are nested within other lists which in turn are nested with other lists as well. Whatever you decide to do, give yourself at least enough time to consider your classes before you enter them. Consider what would be best and ask around for assistance where you can. So to conclude this chapter, there are many ways for you to conserve your energy and willpower while teaching. You can provide students with games that you fetched from popular EFL websites or you can play board games and card games and just monitor the activities every so often. Finding material should never be a problem for you since there are just so many groups and support networks for this sort of thing. You can take advantage of sites like Waygook.org (being ever mindful for some trolls and not taking their criticisms to heart) or you can go on to popular Facebook groups and other social media outlets. Knowing fellow native English teachers in real life can obviously be super helpful as they will likely have a similar reference point for teaching and will guide you toward activities and assignments that have worked for them. Knowing other English teachers can pose a perfect opportunity for exchange which in turn will cut the work by almost half if you’re paired with the right English teachers. If you find that a particular English teacher just doesn’t deliver and is more of a moocher than a giver, than do not hesitate to find other English teachers who take their job more seriously. Trust me when I say that they are out there in the world. Find them, befriend them, and help each other out to mitigate the experience of being tired all the time. To combat it. Several activities which have long been a hallmark and staple of the English teaching profession is the worksheet. More specifically, the crossword puzzle, word search, and fill-in-the blanks have been used by English teachers for decades to get other students to practice the four domains of language fluency: reading, speaking, listening, and writing. As of 2015, there are several websites that will generate these sorts of worksheets for you for free. You just have to plug in the words and phrases that you’d like to use the and the website generator will do all of the rest. The worksheets that were listed in this chapter are also in the back of the book! If for whatever reason you find yourself strapped for time, you can always recruit Vas on Fiverr and UpWork to do the work for you. Just show them the words and then the type of worksheet that you want and then get the worksheet made. I usually don’t go this route, personally, unless I know that whatever material this particular VA is going to generate will lead to literally weeks upon weeks of excess free time for me to do other things. Believe it or not, this has happened repeatedly, as I hire and farm out many of my job responsibilities to other VAs. I’ve had several PPT designers make me PPTs that have been able to use over and over again in my own classes to the point where I often forgot what I was being paid for!

You should not be afraid to farm out your various responsibilities or somehow feel ashamed about it. As you should know by now, learning to delegate is a very important responsibility that English teachers are rarely told that they need to do. And yet, at any level of teaching, there are always going to be ways to cut corners and get the work done in half the time with little stress or energy. In order to appreciate the full experience of what English teaching is all about, ironically, you often have to give up some important tasks to be able to have time to yourself and observe what’s going on around you. Some websites where you can hire extra help for a really affordable price: Fiverr.com, Freelancer.com, and UpWork (formerly Elance and oDesk). My primary experience in hiring is with fiverr and upwork and I can tell you that I’ve had mostly positive experiences. In working with anyone, it’s important to make sure you have all of your expectations up front. Some people recommend that you interview all of your potential hires. Personally, I think this is a good idea if you’re working with UpWork because it saves time in the long run in that it keeps you from having to clarify issues and repeating yourself. On the other hand, if I’m looking for a one-off job, I will usually resort to Fiverr.com and bypass all formalities for an interview (Fiverr.com just isn’t designed in the same way that UpWork is). For repeat employees, interviews are necessary. When you interview, make sure that the freelancer can be seen on camera. Assess whether they have command of the English language and whether these are people who seem personable and confident. If this is someone you think you’d want to work with, then put them in the “follow up” pile.

People make a big deal about hiring staff, but it really doesn’t have to be a big deal, especially when you’re just hiring people to put together a decent powerpoint presentation or some worksheet. In most cases, you can just go directly to hiring someone and see what they produce. If you like it, you hire the person again and if you don’t like it, then you move on. Sure there is some level of risk involved in doing this sort of thing but I would rather incur the risk of hiring a potentially awesome PPT-designer then to incur the risk of waiting around and hoping for divine inspiration to hit me when I least expect it. The former plan is full-proof while the latter plan is not. Just start hiring people. You’ll contribute to the economy while also saving yourself a lot of time and energy.

Aside from worksheets and PPTs and outsourcing and board games, keeping organized is also critical to your success in getting the little tykes off your back. You have to constantly be on top of what’s going on in your school community and pressing people for details. Make following-up your mantra, along with good documentation. It will save you from stressing in the long run when people get on your back about not realizing that you had a winter camp coming in the following week or that you were supposed to plan a lesson for the day when no one had said anything about being required to attend school on a holiday. Actually, very often it's the students who will be the most genuine and honest bunch of the entire school community, and the teachers are the ones that you'll have to look out for. Don't be afraid to reach out to the students themselves and ask them what's going on in the community. Sure, some teachers might think this is incredibly unprofessional and that it demeans your authoritative presence within the school, but no one really has any reservations about what you're doing in the school, except maybe you. At least usually. Sometimes it's clear. Sometimes you're in the school to do some major pedagogical stuff, but sometimes you're just there to babysit and look foreign. You'll have to assess what your status is within each school before determining how you're going to act. Many first time teachers often feel like they are going to change the school community wth their teaching. However, years of literature on the Peace Corps has shown that this is not only impractical, but it's unrealistic. No one is going to welcome you with open arms until they determine that you're non-threatening. And even then, you're still going to end up doing a lot of the fun activities that you did even after you start feeling comfortable with your students. Further, if you come into the school with some grand mission to get the students fluent in less than three months, you're bound to be disappointed. Be open and receptive and ask a lot of questions, while keeping documentation about who said what.

When you follow up with teachers and they give you set dates, make sure to put those dates in your Evernote planner or whichever planner you use so that you won't be surprised. Remember that the more you know in advance, the easier it will be to get the little tykes off your back. And finally, there are many resources you can use to do the work for you. You can create your own worksheets or take them from other people on message boards and websites. If you don't have the exact authentic thing that you are looking for, and you don't want to spend the energy making it yourself, then you can farm out the task to someone on Fiverr.com who will likely do the task for you at only a fraction of what you're being paid. Earn a lot of money and then spend a modicum of it on outsourcing your work to other people to significantly reduce the burn rate of your energy and willpower. You won't regret it.

If you're stuck, please visit the resources in the back of this book to get you to a place of solutions. There are so many resources on the net that it can be overwhelming just pouring through them all to find what you're looking for. You can use up all of your energy and willpower for days just looking for the appropriate material. When this happens, I either court people's recommendations or I just go ahead and make my own, outsourcing the grunt work for other people to do. I've done this so many times that it has become second nature, and I still end up saving money over time. It's the 21st century folks, and geoarbitrage is in! Don't be afraid to use it when you need it! I hope you've gotten a lot out of this. Of course, if you still have some questions about anything I have just said, do not hesitate to contact me and I will get back to you within a timely manner.

**Key Points to Take Away from the lesson**

**References at the end for books that they can use**

Strategies for the School Community

We've already covered teaching in the classroom. It actually never ceases to amaze me how so many TEFL and TESOL programs renege on teaching teachers proper modes of behavior when in the host country. Sure, teaching within the classroom is a skill that must be addressed, but most programs tend to falsely assume that the teaching ONLY happens inside of the classroom, much in the same way people had used to assume that women's jobs were only at work and never outside of work, never a second shift. So allow me to set you straight here.

Part of the life of an English teacher is doing multiple shifts, and not getting paid for it. In Asia in particular, you'll be working multiple hours of unpaid work. The classroom environment will continue outside of the classroom, as a rule. It will take place in the hallways, in the school corridors, on the field of the school playground, in the parking lot, and restaurants and cafes and just about anywhere else where you could conceivably run into a student or teacher from your school. I've had more incidences like these then I care to recount, and the questiion always becomes one of what to say and/or how to behave. Because many people will not speak English well, conversations have this tendency to devolve into translation work or at worst, another class. Even if the person isn't from your school, but manages to strike up a conversation with you, there's a tendency for you to start running your own English classes right then and there.

When I was running Meetup groups in Busan, for example, there would sometimes be the occasional few who would come to my group to practice their English, nevermind the fact that my group was about creating businesses that prosper without your help. People still wanted to converse and practice listening to English. This was cute at first but it soon became rather exhausting as the fine line between teaching and socializing became increasingly blured.It wasn't these people's faults or anyone else for that matter. It's just the nature of the beast. If you're going to live in a country that's not where you were born, then you're going to have get used to the fact that you're not going to have immediate access to fluent speakers who fully grok what it is that you're taking about or saying. This can be frustrating when you want to separate your work and life, but most countries don't have a concept of this kind of separation, which makes it all the more difficult to manage. In order to fully realize the strategies in this book, you are going to need to create some kind of separation between yourself and your profession. Ideally you'll have to divorce yourself completely because otherwise, you will burn out. Working 9-to-5 is difficult enough. You're observed a lot. You have to put on a front for people sometimes. You have to manage kids and their varying and sometimes unpredictable needs. And then there's the lesson planning that can be stressful. I'm not saying don't completely divorce yourself from the people in your school life, but at least create some distance so that you can regroup when you need to.

There are several strategies that I have learned to use over the years to maintain the distance and allow myself the time and space to re-energize when I need to. One of the most important words that I have learned in the English language since starting my teaching career is “no.” There's nothing quite as powerful as this word. Let me explain.

In school life and within the community, you’re going to be constantly called upon to do some activities that you don’t necessarily want to do or have the time to do. In my first year of teaching in South Korea, I was courted to teach additional night classes for a local public high school. The pay was great for an English teacher and since I was hard up for cash at the time, I figured why not. It would add to my resume and provide me with more money than I would have had. However, I quickly learned that teaching beyond 20 hours per week was well beyond what I could afford to do. Actually, it was over 40 if you count the hours that I spent in school. Every week, I found myself preparing multiple lessons for two high schools, one middle school, and one adult class. I also had separate lessons for lunchtime activities. I was quickly burning myself out and my lessons started to show this burn out. Thankfully, the experience of teaching in these multiple schools didn’t last very long and I was able to successfully finish my responsibilities without burning bridges and getting totally destroyed by all of the responsibilities that I had. This is exactly the kind of responsibilities that you might be courted to do. If you are asked to work beyond 20 hours of work, just say “no.” If you’re asked to do any work outside of the classes that you are contracted to teach, just say “no.” You can say “no.” People often say that you can’t because you’re in another country. Some people will feel more comfortable than others doing this. But you know what? You don’t have to. You don’t have to compromise anything if you don’t feel comfortable. Just say “no.” If taking on added responsibility means that you’re compromising your main responsibility, then you absolutely must put your foot down because you will not be able to function properly. People often worry about money so they take on added responsibilities to get more of it or to prove to some people that they are capable of doing many things and thus can take on added tasks and get more money. These are silly rules that English teachers impose upon themselves to measure where they are achieving the goals that they value most. I’m saying this is all well and good but you need to modify your rules so that you can be the healthiest while in the foreign country, and one rule that is certainly not worth holding onto is the rule that says you’re not a competent and worthy instructor unless you’re doing multiple things at once and affecting many people’s lives. Not letting go just leads to indentured servitude.

There are other things that teachers might ask you to do. My contract in Korea stated that I had to agree to added tasks that the co-teacher or other administrators might ask me to do. This was WITHIN the contract and the previous incident that I just recounted was outside of my contract. There are other things that you’ll probably be asked to do that are outside of your contract. You may be asked, for example, to make a powerpoint for a festival or to put on a theatrical production for your students to do during a festival. You’re going to have to use your judgment but if you find that these such activities prevent you from having a life outside of the school, you absolutely must drop the responsibility immediately. There’s no use being a martyr for the cause and sacrificing your life force just to please a co-teacher who wants to put on an extra show and endear himself or herself to the administrators. It’s just not worth it. In one incident of teaching in Korea, I was told to put on a theatrical rendition of Iron Man and Good Will Hunting. It was the most exhausting (not to mention embarrassing) experience of my life because it was just done poorly and without the needed supervision that was required to put on a show of such caliber. I made sure to explicitly voice my complaints to the teacher and told them what the type of project would require. Yet, they went ahead and had me do this show despite all of my protestations and warnings. These are just the sorts of things you have to look out for, and reading your contract over and over and over again is never a bad practice to get into. Heck, getting into the hobby of reading your contract at least once a week is probably not a bad idea as you’ll be able to cite verbatim the text that has hopefully been crafted in such a way as to favor the employee and protect you from unnecessary exploitation. And exploitation is such a huge part of EFL that you absolutely have to be wary at all times of what you’re getting into. Thankfully, there are many reputable review sites and Facebook groups in the world to help steer you in the right direction. One of my favorite resources is ESLWatch.info where English teachers anonymously post reviews of their experiences with teaching in different programs and schools, both good and bad. You’ll get all of the good, bad, and ugly from this site so you are strongly encouraged to do your due diligence and read/watch this website regularly, not to mention ask around. The best way of avoiding the issues I have just brought up above is asking around and trying to strike up a one-on-one conversation with an English teacher who is presently in the field and thus in a position to offer valuable recommendations.

Before coming to Korea, I was dialoging constantly with people who had been where I was going. I read about Waygook.org from a book on teaching English in Korea and then reached out to some teachers about their experience and then courting feedback about what to look out for and who to get in touch with for a possible job opening. It was through this experience that I eventually applied for EPIK and made the decision to accept a job offer with to my mind was probably one of the better companies offering English services to Koreans at the time. I have no regrets about having done this and this type of research is advice that I would offer to anyone seeking to teach overseas. When I was in Mexico, I worked at this company for a very short period. This was my first teaching experience and I had done absolutely no research whatsoever on this company. I spent hours teaching students from a mandatory book that they were required to read. And then, after spending those hours, I wasn’t paid. This was a nightmare. Research your companies wisely, country customs, and make sure, at the very least, that your school is going to be in a position to pay you responsibly (i.e. on time and in full). I know this sounds sort of obvious to you, probably, but you’d be surprised how different countries are with respect to customs on paying people. In many countries, the employer has the right of way and it doesn’t matter what kind of complaints you lodge against the company or the employer—you just ain’t getting paid until the employer says so.

I recall Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs as I am writing these words. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs says that in order to achieve full satisfaction, you need to be able to have the most basic of needs met first—food, shelter, clothing, love. And then afterwards, you move on to more pressing interests, like satisfaction, feelings of accomplishment and achievement, and the sense that you have made a difference in the world. Let me say that you will not be able to reach those high stratospheric levels of Maslow’s chart if you don’t have your basic needs covered. It never ceases to amazing me how many English teachers I know say “I love teaching and it’s the profession I truly want to be in.” Well, I’ve got news for you: Virtually any profession—even one that you quote unquote love—can become a living nightmare if it’s a profession that entraps you and keeps you from living a more free and flexible and ultimately comfortable life. Any profession. Being able to *not* worry about expenses coming in and *not* worrying about food, shelter, and clothing will go a very long way in ensuring that your love for teaching holds up. Because as much as I have loved teaching as well, there were definitely moments when I absolutely hated the shackles it made for me. Don’t let this be you.

Another strategy I can’t recommend enough is going out and meeting local citizens. You MUST do this. Absolutely must in this day and age.