

Teacher Tip

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Level: Intermediate

Title: Rotating Class Stations

Purpose: This activity helps manage differing student abilities. Students are grouped by ability (e.g., low, mid, high performers) and these 4 groups rotate through 4 different stations, each focused on one particular activity. For this example, each station practices one of the following tenses: simple past, past continuous, past perfect, or present perfect. This activity can be adapted to any topic, and station tasks can be tailored to specific learner needs. (Synthesis practice)

Preparation and Materials: Whiteboard, projector (to display instructions/objectives). Paper handouts (e.g., with 4 sections for notes from each station) or blank paper for students to create their own 4-section dividers, pens, pencils. Materials defining the task for each of the 4 stations (e.g., a different tense prompt or activity at each). Clear classroom management expectations for movement and group work. You'll need about 50 minutes.

Procedure:

- (1) Welcome students into the room, stimulate previous recall and help them connect to their knowledge of the different tenses (present perfect, past perfect, simple past, and past continuous tenses).

- (2) Explain why mastering these tenses can help them to achieve their goals and what personal benefits they will derive from it.

(3) Give out the handout (e.g., with 4 sections for notes from each station), or show them how to create a 4-section divider on their own paper.

(4) Show the objectives visibly on the board for anyone that doesn't understand verbal instructions.

(5) Divide the students into the groups by performance. It can be helpful to have already completed a pre-assessment test earlier on in the year or to base it on their grades; just don't tell them they are a low-performer.

(6) Direct groups to their starting stations. At each station, students work together to create accurate examples for the specific tense/task of that station. Each student must record their own unique example on their paper. This encourages peer teaching and addresses learning gaps.

(7) After a set time (e.g., 8-10 minutes per station), the teacher announces "SWITCH!" Students then move with their groups to the next station. Emphasize calm transitions to prevent hazards.

(8) Facilitate the process with little help, making sure that the students are honest. I've found this helps a lot before mid-terms or final exams to practice different categories. Also, to make this more communicative it's very important for students to only speak in English during the lesson.

(9) When all of the students have completed all of the stations, you can direct them back to their seats to quietly complete some independent practice while you review the groups and the papers. During this time of looking at the groups you can identify any outliers.

(10) Award and announce the winning group. You could offer bonus points from the start. Make sure the students know not to leave anyone behind, otherwise they could be negatively impacted.

(11) Discuss metacognitive questions related to different tenses and talk about how this can be extended into real situations, emphasizing again the importance of these conjugations to communicate effectively.

