

# NO ENGLISH 2

## Questions and answers





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and answers

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# Acknowledgments

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First edition 1993

Revised edition 2000

Updated and reprinted 2006

Revised 2014

Published by Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Melbourne

July 2014

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Authorised and published by the Victorian Government,  
1 Treasury Place, Melbourne

ISBN 0 7306 1834 X

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# Introduction

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After working for some time with a newly arrived student who is new to learning English, you will probably begin to notice that your student:

- is becoming more relaxed and confident
- manages the school routine
- tries to communicate both non-verbally and through newly-learnt English
- experiments with English and non-verbal communication
- initiates a 'conversation'
- begins to use some of the English covered in class
- is starting to self-correct.

## **Congratulations to you both. This progress is worth celebrating!**

Take a moment to go back and look at the records you have kept, including your assessment of your student in terms of the [EAL Companion to the AusVELS](#). You may be surprised to see just how much development there has been in both English and social skills. This is not to say that you won't still have concerns and be encountering some difficulties.

The following pages list common concerns of teachers of newly arrived EAL students. You may share some of these concerns regarding your student and the work you have been doing together in the classroom.

## **I think my new arrival now understands much of what I say and much of what happens in class, but there are still times when I'm not sure.**

- He often just sits and watches.
- She's not responding verbally.
- When I ask him if he understands, he often just nods or says 'yes'.
- She is not communicating much with the other students.

(See [Encouraging communication](#).)

## **I know my new arrival is making progress in English language learning, but I don't know how to assess this with any accuracy.**

- Assessment tools that focus on students who are learning English as a first language don't work for my EAL learner.
- How can I assess his progress in the learning areas other than English?
- How long should I expect it to take for my student to learn English?
- I don't know how best to report my student's progress to her parents.

(See [Assessing English language learning](#).)

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### **My new arrival is not mixing well with other children.**

- He doesn't seem interested in anything that's happening in the classroom or in the playground.
- She often seems to be involved in little disputes and disagreements.
- The other students are friendly, but he's not responding.
- She doesn't seem to want to join in during group activities.
- He seems to tire too easily.

(See [Social development](#).)

### **I feel I'm not being supported in my attempts to cater for this student.**

- The school doesn't have an EAL policy.
- Planning work for just one new arrival is taking too much time and effort – I'm feeling overwhelmed.

(See [School organisation](#).)

### **I haven't any EAL resources.**

- There's no course available for me to follow.
- There are no appropriate EAL resources in my school, nor is there money to buy any.
- I can't find books about second-language acquisition.

(See [EAL resources](#).)

### **I can't communicate with the parents of my newly arrived student.**

- They don't speak English.
- They don't return excursion forms sent home to be signed.

(See [Communication with home](#).)

### **I don't know much about the cultural background of my newly arrived student.**

- I'm worried about doing or saying something that is culturally inappropriate.
- She wears clothes that are unsuitable for the activities we do at school.
- He brings unusual food for lunch – the other students think it's funny.
- Her parents don't seem to understand our education system.

(See [Cultural and educational expectations](#).)

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### **I don't think my new arrival has ever been to school before.**

- He has limited literacy and numeracy skills in his first language.
- I don't think she has ever had to concentrate for any length of time.
- He doesn't know how to hold scissors or a pencil.
- She doesn't have a fully developed understanding of school routines and expectations.
- I'm sure he's never been exposed to books before – he doesn't seem to have any concept of print in his first language.

(See [New arrivals with interrupted or little prior schooling.](#))

### **I think my new arrival's year level is inappropriate.**

- This class is too advanced – I want to put her down a year level.
- I think the language in a lower year level would be easier for him.
- She's not going to be ready for secondary school – I think she should repeat a year.

(See [Repeating a year level.](#))

### **I think my new arrival may have a learning difficulty.**

- She can't copy written work.
- He hasn't developed a sight vocabulary or any word-attack skills.
- She doesn't use or understand vocabulary that has been taught and revised many times.
- When I look at the EAL Companion, I can't see that he has made any progress.

(See [Learning difficulties.](#))

### **I think my new arrival may have a speech problem.**

- She's still very difficult to understand.
- He seems unable to make some sounds.

(See [Speech difficulties.](#))

### **My new arrival won't write independently.**

- She copies from books all the time.
- He won't have a go at spelling a new word himself.
- She writes the same personal recount type of story all the time.

(See [Writing.](#))



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**The other students and teachers who help with my new arrival don't seem to know how to talk to her.**

- They use 'baby language'.
- They change their pronunciation and intonation and use incorrect grammatical structures.
- They just name things and get her to repeat what they have said.
- They talk slowly and unnaturally.
- They talk too fast and use difficult vocabulary.
- They are inconsistent in the vocabulary they use.

(See [Talking to newly arrived students](#).)

**I just don't have the time to teach my new arrival what he needs to know.**

- I don't want to have to totally rearrange my whole classroom or program to cater for one new arrival.
- I feel like the other students are missing out because I have to spend so much time with my new arrival.
- EAL teaching is a specialist job, and I don't have the training to do it.

(See [Program organisation and modification](#).)

*No English 2* endeavours to provide some ideas to address the above concerns and help you find further solutions of your own.

# Encouraging communication

**I think my new arrival now understands much of what I say and much of what happens in class, but there are still times when I'm not sure.**

- He often just sits and watches.
- She's not responding verbally.
- When I ask him if he understands, he often just nods or says 'yes'.
- She is not communicating much with the other students.

## Using a new language

Often the thing that worries teachers most about new arrivals is their lack of oral communication. However, it is not unusual for a newly arrived student to be reticent for some time.

When someone is learning a new language, they simply do not have the resources to begin a conversation or reply appropriately to a question, even if, through the context they understand what they are being asked. EAL learners need time to work out some of the rules and vocabulary of English before they can use it for communication.

Students may also be reluctant to use their English if they are unsure about how their attempts will be received. It is important that partially correct or incomplete utterances are accepted for their communicative value. They are a positive sign of second-language development. Too much correction may discourage your new arrival from attempting to use newly learned English. Instead, you can take what is said and expand on it so the student hears a fuller, more correct version, as in the following example of a supportive response to a new EAL learner:

Teacher: What would you like to play with?

Student: Me play jigsaw.

Teacher: OK! James, would you like to play with the jigsaw, too?

Student: Yes, James, play with jigsaw!

Initially students should not be pressured to start communicating orally, but once they start to settle into their new environment, they need to be encouraged to repeat words and phrases, join in with songs, rhymes or familiar stories, and take part in social interactions, such as greetings and leave taking.

The time students take to begin communicating in English varies according to:

- their confidence and self-esteem
- their cognitive development
- the kind of school system they are used to
- their cultural background
- the type of EAL assistance they are given.

Some students will be reluctant to speak to you while others are also listening. Making time to talk quietly with these students can be very valuable in encouraging them to start to use English.

Apart from oral interaction, you can monitor student progress by watching for markers of understanding and involvement. These include:

- communicating non-verbally by nodding, smiling, pointing, and so on
- responding appropriately to instructions
- showing interest in what is happening in the classroom
- watching you and other students to find out what is going on and what to do during an activity.

Remember that all your students will always understand more than they can say, especially when the context is clear. While you may notice the difference more with a new arrival, everybody understands more than they can express, including the native English speakers in your class.



# Classroom practices to encourage communication

## Supporting communication

EAL students will only acquire English if they hear it and use it in a natural context where they need to communicate about real issues and happenings.

A silent classroom is not conducive to English language development. When students are organised in pairs or groups to carry out and discuss shared activities, they talk about real things in a natural way. This is the kind of learning situation that is most supportive of EAL learners.

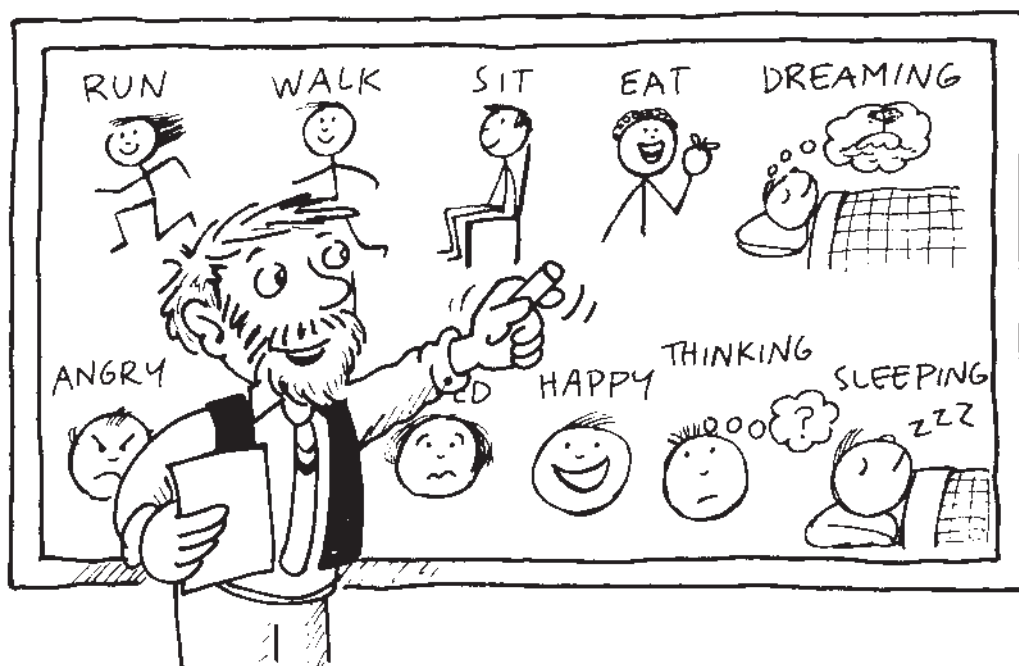
Classrooms where all communication is directed by and through the teacher restrict the amount of learning and interaction to which EAL learners are exposed.

Ensure that your whole program:

- allows and encourages students to discuss things with you and among themselves
- creates opportunities for them to talk with other people so they encounter a variety of language models.

Facial expressions and gestures support oral communication, so don't just rely on talk to get the message across to your newly arrived student – use plenty of gesture and mime too. Visual materials enhance talk, and will help you communicate when other means of communicating are not working. Draw, or use resources such as picture dictionaries.

Use sketches and diagrams to support your talk



## Group work

During group work in the classroom, place a new arrival in a group of supportive students who are competent English speakers. Make sure the group knows that part of its responsibility is to include the new arrival as much as possible. This type of group interaction:

- provides a variety of real situations where the student experiences English used for real purposes
- allows your new arrival to listen to incidental English in a meaningful situation
- reduces any pressure on the new arrival to 'perform' in a large group
- helps your new arrival to develop friendships with the other students (see [Social development](#)).

Try to ensure that your new arrival has a clear understanding of what is expected during group work. Allow time for observation, and then encourage participation.

If the group's task involves a great deal of discussion or reading that will prevent the new arrival helping in a real way (as opposed to sharing in making something or conducting an experiment), it may be better to give the new student a different activity.

## Peer tutoring

Involve other students directly in helping your new arrival to settle in and learn English. A peer tutor can revise and practise known work with the new arrival, for instance, by hearing reading, practising vocabulary, or playing communicative games. Make tutoring sessions short, but targeted.

Try to organise peer tutoring and cross-age tutoring using:

- special friends
- older students who speak the same language
- a secondary college student.

Students who are helping in this way need to be:

- carefully selected
- trained to do the job (see [Talking to newly arrived students](#))
- briefed so they understand exactly what the tutoring session is meant to accomplish
- articulate and expressive English language models
- friendly
- willing to help and interested in assisting the new student.

Don't give too much responsibility to one student, or expect one student to spend a lot of time helping. Spread the responsibility – your new arrival needs ongoing support.

# Assessing English language learning

**I know my new arrival is making progress in English language learning, but I don't know how to assess this with any accuracy.**

- Assessment tools that focus on students who are learning English as a first language don't work for my EAL learner.
- How can I assess his progress in the learning areas other than English?
- How long should I expect it to take for my student to learn English?
- I don't know how best to report my student's progress to her parents.

Using assessment tools or frameworks that have been developed for students who are learning English as a first language will not be very helpful for assessing your new EAL learner's English language acquisition.

As EAL students learn English, and begin to use it for real communication in the classroom, they are clearly following a different pathway of development in this task to your English speaking students, who have begun their English language learning as very young children. This pathway needs to be described and assessed in its own terms.

In Victoria the document used to assess and monitor the progress of new learners of English language is the [EAL Companion to AusVELS](#)

Assessing your learners' development will:

- help you to feel confident about the progress that your students have made
- help you to describe this progress to parents or guardians.

The EAL standards are used in the same way as the rest of the AusVELS, that is, to monitor development, provide curriculum information, and to report progress.

The EAL standards provide information about development in *Speaking and listening*, *Reading and viewing* and *Writing*. They also provide a learning focus at each stage, which outlines the learning that students need to focus on if they are to progress and achieve the standards. They suggest appropriate learning experiences, and teachers can draw from them to develop relevant teaching and learning activities.

The descriptions at each of the EAL stages are 'end of stage' descriptions. For example, the beginning stages describe where your student is likely to be after learning English for some time. However, you are still likely to begin to see some progress on the EAL standards fairly quickly.

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## Using the EAL standards

If your student is in Years P – 2, begin with Stage A1.

If your student is in Years 3 – 6, begin with Stage B1.

If your student is in Years 3 – 6, and has had little or no prior schooling, begin with Stage BL.

The EAL standards focus on what an EAL learner is able to do with English, that is, on 'communicative' use of English. This focus on how EAL learners use their developing English to exchange real meaning in real situations also means that these are the kinds of assessment contexts that should be focussed on. Observation of your student's interaction in a variety of real classroom situations, in an on-going way will give you the information you need to monitor progress on the EAL standards.

Informal testing, for example of English vocabulary may also be done, but remember that the way in which your student uses this vocabulary in real situations will tell you as much, if not more, about English language learning than a test ever can.

## Assessing in other learning areas

Your new arrival will also be making progress in learning in the all learning areas, at the same time that he/she is learning English. However, the gains you see may not be able to demonstrate their learning in the same way that your mainstream students are able to – their achievement may be masked by their inability to explain and demonstrate their learning through English.

You will need to observe your new EAL learner carefully in order to assess his/her understanding of the learning area. At times, standards in the learning areas other than English will be appropriate for assessing your new arrival's learning, at others it may be better to assess and describe it in terms of what your new arrival is able to do.

Using a variety of assessment tasks will also help you to assess the learning of your new arrival. For example, your student may not be able to write about what they know, but may be able to show their understanding through drawings or labelled diagrams.

# Social development

## **My new arrival is not mixing well with other children.**

- He doesn't seem interested in anything that's happening in the classroom or in the playground.
- She often seems to be involved in little disputes and disagreements.
- The other students are friendly, but he's not responding.
- She doesn't seem to want to join in during group activities.
- He seems to tire too easily.

The personality of a new arrival affects the rate of social development in the school situation. Some new arrivals are confident enough to start communicating and making friends with other students straight away; others are very quiet, or unsure of themselves. If your new arrival is one of the latter, help the growth of friendships and social support by setting up a program that involves other students in developing the newcomer's English (see [Peer tutoring](#)). This same program will support the new arrival socially by encouraging the use of English in communicating and making friends (see [Encouraging communication](#)).

Encourage your other students to be genuinely helpful and friendly. Talk to them about how important it is to the new arrival to be in a friendly environment. Ask them how they would feel if they were put into a similar situation. This will help develop empathy.

Take this a step further by asking a bilingual teacher or teacher aide to give your students a lesson entirely in another language so they better appreciate the difficult situation your new arrival faces in communicating in English. Discuss how they felt during the lesson, and whether or not they used other methods to work out what was happening. For example, did they focus on non-verbal language or intonation? Ask them how they can use these strategies to communicate more easily with your new arrival. They will need to explore these other ways of communicating. Children are often exceptionally good at this – friendship doesn't necessarily need a shared first language.

If possible, every student in your class needs to feel some responsibility for helping the new arrival to settle in, however, beware of the 'mother hen syndrome' where other students treat new arrivals like 'pets', and try to do everything for them. Students need to be clear about their role as helper and friend.



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## Strategies to encourage social interaction

- Encouraging non-verbal communication between your new arrival and your English speaking students is a good strategy for getting communication going. Try the following suggestions:
  - Talk about how to use non-verbal communication, and how stress and intonation can carry a lot of meaning, even if the words are not all understood.
  - Stress that non-verbal communication doesn't take the place of talking, but that it supports the English they use and helps to clarify meaning.
  - Talk to them about how the context of a situation can make the verbal communication clearer.
- Give your new arrival time to use special equipment with a partner, for instance, the chance to use a suitable computer program when the class activity is inappropriate.
- Give your new arrival special jobs or responsibilities to complete with a partner. Suitable jobs might include:
  - handing out sports equipment and checking it back in
  - being a lunch monitor
  - being in charge of particular equipment or an area of the classroom.
- Note any particular skills or interests your new arrival may have, for example, music, drawing or sporting skills, and then make sure there are opportunities for these to be incorporated into the program.
- Help your new arrival to mix by changing groups or seating arrangements regularly.

## Behavioural responses

The behaviour your new arrival displays may be a way of working out what your expectations are – pushing the boundary may be the only practical way of discovering where the boundary is!

Behaviour may also reflect the effects of past traumatic experiences, such as war, physical hardship, loss of friends or relatives, and uncertainty about the future. Homesickness and depression can also occur. It takes time to recover from these things. Remember your new arrival's family will probably also be going through a period of uncertainty and adjustment. You may need to arrange (with parental permission) some professional assistance through the guidance officer at your school or through other agencies.

[Foundation House](#) can assist if your student and/or their family are refugees or asylum seekers who have experienced torture and trauma prior to their arrival in Australia.

Previous schooling experiences also influence the way new arrivals behave (see [Cultural and educational expectations](#) or [New arrivals with interrupted or little prior schooling](#)).

Try to make sure that your new arrival knows that you understand how difficult it is not to always understand what is going on. If you make a genuine effort to communicate, it will be appreciated, even if your new student doesn't fully understand. If you don't understand something, don't pretend that you do. When it seems really important to your new arrival to get a message across, then it's time to use an interpreter.

## Tiredness

Tiredness and confusion in new arrivals may be an indication of illness, trauma or homesickness. If this persists, you may need to contact the student's parents or guardians for further information.

However, be aware that an afternoon rest or siesta is usual in many countries. A new arrival who seems tired and disinterested after lunch may simply be used to having a short sleep at this time. In such cases, it will take a while for your new arrival to adjust to working through the day without a sleep.



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Meanwhile, allow the student to rest by providing a quiet, undemanding activity in the early afternoon.

Tiredness can also be an indication of the mental effort that your new arrival is making to understand English and the new environment. A student who appears tired or frustrated can be offered a change of activity, preferably to something less demanding.

## **Inappropriate behaviour**

Occasionally, frustration at not being able to communicate leads new arrivals to be unfriendly and aggressive. This may mean a new arrival demands attention from you or the other students, is reluctant to share with others, or displays other unacceptable behaviour. Other students will find it difficult to be helpful and friendly if they are not offered friendship in return. This situation is best managed by talking to your new arrival with an interpreter or a bilingual aide in order to:

- explain that although you understand the frustration, certain types of behaviour are simply not acceptable
- make the consequences of misbehaviour – especially aggressive behaviour or fighting – as explicit as possible
- ensure your new arrival knows that all students are expected to obey the same rules, and that the same sanctions or punishments are given to all students for the same misbehaviour
- provide alternatives, for example, tell your new arrival to let a teacher know what is happening and that just hitting back is not acceptable.

If talking with your new arrival does not resolve the situation, it is best to arrange an interview with the parents or guardians, using an interpreter when necessary.

Occasionally new arrivals experience intense frustration at not being able to defend themselves and explain their point of view. This may lead to tantrum-like behaviour in otherwise well-behaved students. It is most likely to occur where a new arrival feels a strong sense of injustice, but can't explain what has happened, such as a playground argument or mistakes over the ownership of something. In these situations it is imperative that your student is given a chance to explain, preferably with the help of an interpreter.

Make the rules about ownership and borrowing of school equipment as explicit as possible. New arrivals and their parents may be confused about the use of library books, take-home books, and other school equipment.

When misunderstanding occurs and an interpreter is not available, try to communicate with your new arrival through non-verbal language or drawings.

# School organisation

## **I feel I'm not being supported in my attempts to cater for this student.**

- The school doesn't have an EAL policy.
- Planning work for just one new arrival is taking too much time and effort — I'm feeling overwhelmed.

Catering for the educational development of each student – including new arrivals – is not just one teacher's responsibility...it should be a whole-school commitment. Organise the support your new arrival needs from the school in the following ways:

- Look at how the whole school is organised to help students with particular skills and needs, and then tap into this support network.
- Discuss alternative systems of support at coordinator and staff meetings. In order to release a staff member to work intensively with your new arrival, or to enable you to work with the student, it may be possible to:
  - organise team teaching for some sessions
  - have specialist teachers or other support staff take extra lessons with your class
  - use cross-age or multi-age groupings for some subjects or lessons.
- Make sure that any arrangements made involve genuine timetabled commitments. Support must be ongoing and regular to be of value.

## **Sharing the responsibility**

Every teacher in the school needs to take some responsibility for helping and looking after new arrivals, especially in the playground and in specialist classes.

You may need to work with specialist and support teachers to help them develop strategies for assisting your new arrival. They may be feeling unsure about how to work with a new arrival in their program (see [Talking to newly arrived students](#) and [Program organisation and modification](#)).

If your school is enrolling EAL students for the first time, developing a school EAL policy will highlight the educational needs of EAL learners, and will ensure that meeting their needs becomes a school commitment.

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## Professional development

If your school is not used to dealing with new arrivals, you may need to find out more about how schools adequately cater for this student group. There are various strategies you can use to widen professional contacts.

- Use a professional development day to:
  - visit local schools that have EAL programs
  - visit an English language school or centre
  - visit the [Languages and Multicultural Education Resource Centre \(LMERC\)](#)
  - go on an EAL resources hunt (see [EAL resources](#)).
- Arrange or suggest some professional development for the whole staff to raise awareness of multicultural and EAL issues.
- Attend local EAL network meetings. Get in touch with your regional office or a local English language school or centre to find out details.

# EAL resources

## **I've got no EAL resources.**

- There's no course available for me to follow.
- There are no proper EAL resources in my school, nor is there money to buy any.
- I can't find books about second-language acquisition.

In building up a collection of EAL resources, apply the principles you use for all scarce resource situations: beg, borrow, modify and adapt!

## **EAL-specific teaching resources**

There is no such thing as an EAL course that you can purchase to provide your student with a full EAL program. However, there are some commercial materials for beginning EAL learners that will be useful in assisting you in teaching your new arrival. The librarians at [LMERC](#) can also assist you in finding EAL resources that are appropriate for your learner.

Remember that one of the prime aims of the program you develop for your new arrival should be to help the student work successfully in the mainstream classroom program. Therefore, courses or materials that isolate the student for long periods of time from the other students, or classroom activities, are not likely to be beneficial. Choose materials that make some link with the classroom program, or that include activities that can be shared with other students.

## **Other resources**

Many resources already available within your classroom, school library or school resource collection can be used or adapted for use with your new arrival.

If you work in the upper school, liaise with the lower primary teachers in your search for suitable resources, visual aids and books that are appropriate to your student's age and interests.

Visual aids will initially be your most important resources. All the following are invaluable:

- sets of pictures and posters
- magazines
- picture dictionaries
- photographs taken with your new arrival, at school or on an excursion
- concept development kits.

## Buying appropriate resources

There may be some resources that you would like to buy, perhaps after having borrowed them from the LMERC. Obtain a budget allocation from the following sources:

- the school library – for bilingual materials, big books, cultural material etc.
- the language committee – for sets of pictures, recorded stories, dictionaries etc.
- the professional development budget – for EAL teacher reference books
- the ICT or digital learning budget – for appropriate software and equipment
- the camps and excursions committee – for funding to help cover costs if your new arrival's family finds it difficult to meet these commitments.

Many of the purchases you make will be useful for the school's other students and teachers, especially if other new arrivals are being enrolled.

## Some places to look for resources or assistance

### Languages and Multicultural Education Resource Centre (LMERC)

150 Palmerston Street  
Carlton, 3053  
Tel: (03) 9349 1418

The EAL librarian at LMERC can assist you with:

- advice
- teacher reference materials
- classroom materials
- multicultural resources
- cultural background materials
- digital, visual and audio materials

### VicTESOL

VicTESOL is a professional association supporting English language teaching, learning and multicultural education.

### English language schools and centres

Schools with experience in catering for EAL learners can offer outreach services to support assessment and placement of new arrivals, information about resources and expert advice.

# Communication with home

## **I can't communicate with the parents of my newly arrived student.**

- They don't speak English.
- They don't return excursion forms sent home to be signed.

Establishing good communication between school and home is one of the most important supports you can offer your new arrival. It will help prevent some of the misunderstandings that may otherwise occur.

Begin by checking whether your new arrival's parents or guardians prefer to communicate with the school in English or in their first language. They may already have a network of English language support among friends and family. When they do not have such support, the school will need to assist by setting up some community language support. The language assistance you have arranged through the school for your new arrival, could also be used to support the family.

If the parents do not have English support from family or friends, it is vital that they are told about the education system and the school in their first language.

For information about schooling in Victoria translated into the most requested languages, see: [Translated materials](#).

This includes Multilingual School Notices, such as permission forms for excursions and camps, and invitations to parent–teacher meetings.

Don't ask parents to sign permission forms for excursions, medical checks, immunisations, and so on, unless you are sure that they understand what it is they are signing. Translations should be used if they are available.

## **Translating and interpreting services**

Provided that requests fall within guidelines developed by the Department, government schools can book on-site or telephone interpreters for:

- enrolment and parent–teacher interviews
- information dissemination about specific school programs
- individual student issues relating to discipline or welfare, or to assist with an educational assessment.

You will need to book on-site interpreters well in advance to ensure availability.



This service also offers some free translations of school material. These also need to be arranged well ahead of time. Other language services can be provided on a fee-paying basis. For guidelines for the use of interpreting and translating services in government schools see [Accessing Interpreting and Translating Services](#).



## **Ethnic community associations, some local government or church organisations**

Various bodies may be able to help you find someone in the local community who can provide language support for the family and act in a home-school liaison role.

## **Other schools**

You may be able to arrange access to bilingual aides employed in local schools or English language schools or centres for those occasions when you need to establish telephone contact with parents. It may also be possible to set up a network of local primary and secondary schools, kindergartens, or creches, to provide occasional language support.

# Cultural and educational expectations

**I don't know much about the cultural background of my newly arrived student.**

- I'm worried about doing or saying something that is culturally inappropriate.
- She wears clothes that are unsuitable for the activities we do at school.
- He brings unusual food for lunch – the other students think it's funny.
- Her parents don't seem to understand our education system.

There are many areas where discussion between the school and parents should take place to clarify concerns of students, parents or teachers (see [Communication with home](#)). For example, if your newly arrived student's full involvement in the school program is hindered by lack of participation in excursions, camps, or swimming programs, or by not wearing appropriate clothing for sport or physical education, it is important that these issues be discussed. Arrange a meeting with parents or guardians and use an interpreter to exchange information. By improving communication between home and school, situations causing difficulty are more likely to be resolved. Occasionally a school may need to make policy or resource changes to provide appropriately for all students.

## Parent–teacher discussions

Parents may be unfamiliar with the type of education system they meet with here. Differences may be in curriculum, teaching methods or school and education system organisation. Clarifying the key areas listed below will be helpful.

### Teaching methods

Teaching methods in Australia may seem very different from the methods used in other countries. Parents may not understand the importance that is placed on direct experiences, such as excursions, camps and hands-on activities. They may expect that you will teach English through a grammar-based, rote-learning method where their children formally practise grammatical structures and vocabulary, particularly if they themselves have learnt English this way in their own country. They may also expect you to always emphasise correct use of English rather than emphasising communication. Older new arrivals may have this same expectation. In such cases, discussion will be needed before they understand our different approach.

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## The process of second-language acquisition

Parents need to know that we view English learning as an additive process: we don't expect it to replace the first language. Explain that a child's conceptual development and understanding of the world should continue in their first language, as should their literacy skills. Research shows that, generally, children who have strong concept development and literacy skills in their first language are better able to learn a second language. Therefore parents can help their children best by making sure they retain and continue to develop their first language. They need to know that it is better for EAL students to use their first language at home at a high level, than to use English at home at a more basic level.

## Homework

Don't expect parents or guardians to help with homework or home reading in English if they don't have the necessary English or literacy skills. Suggest alternatives, such as talking about the illustrations and probable story line of take-home books in their first language. The new arrival will then have some knowledge to bring to the text when it is read in English. Parents should also be encouraged to read with their child in their first language, and to talk with their child at home about topics that the class is studying in general studies or science. In this way the new arrival's understanding of concepts will be enhanced. Keep parents up to date with what is happening in class by encouraging students to take home examples of their work to share with them.

## The school system in Australia

Variations between this school system and the one to which parents or guardians are accustomed may include:

- school starting age, and the time of year Preps begin school
- the number of years of compulsory and post-compulsory schooling
- the age at which secondary schooling starts
- the time of year a new school year commences
- the length of the school day
- the number of weeks of school per year
- the year levels at which external tests and exams are conducted.

## Other good ideas

- Arrange for your student's parents/guardians to visit the classroom in the company of an interpreter to explain what is happening and why.
- Make sure parents/guardians know that you can arrange for an interpreter to attend parent information nights and parent-teacher interviews to help them to communicate with teachers.

## Cultural misunderstandings

Cultural misunderstandings can occur between you, your new arrival and the other students. Don't avoid these issues. Treat any discussion in a positive, factual manner, stressing similarities, not differences. Emphasise that it is rewarding to learn about another culture and a different way of viewing things. To avoid misunderstandings, it is important to increase your own knowledge about your new arrival's culture by:

- researching the cultural background to become aware of cultural differences, but avoiding stereotypical views
- discussing issues that may be causing difficulties between the family and your new arrival
- sharing relevant information with other teachers
- sharing information with the other children in your class, emphasising that we all have different cultural expectations and beliefs that others need to understand and respect
- talking about the similarities and differences your other students may be noting, such as:
  - dress
  - physical appearance
  - language
  - food.

Your school's integrated curriculum program needs to reflect our multicultural society, and may already be addressing many of these issues. For more information, see [Multicultural Education](#).

# New arrivals with interrupted or little prior schooling

**I don't think my new arrival has ever been to school before.**

- He has limited literacy and numeracy skills in his first language.
- I don't think she has ever had to concentrate for any length of time.
- He doesn't know how to hold scissors or a pencil.
- She doesn't have fully developed understandings of school routines and expectations.
- I'm sure he's never been exposed to books before – he doesn't seem to have any concept of print in his first language.

It should be clear from information collected at enrolment whether a new arrival has experienced formal education, or has had severely interrupted schooling. Such students may have difficulty in concentrating on school work, lack skills in reading and writing, and have little understanding of school routines. You will find it useful to contact the parents or guardians for extra background information about prior educational experiences and the student's expectations of school.

It is important to remember that lack of literacy is not a reflection of academic potential, but an indication that your new arrival's life experiences have not yet included formal schooling. It is equally important to understand that a preliterate student will need extra help to learn how to read and write in addition to learning English.

## Catering for students with little prior schooling

The best learning situation for a newly arrived student with little prior literacy, especially in the upper primary years, is in an [English language school or centre](#).

When this is not possible, you will need extra support from your school community to adequately cater for the new arrival in the mainstream classroom. An EAL student with little prior literacy has to work at developing literacy skills, as well as English language skills. A special teaching program will need to be developed to cater for both these aspects of learning.

These students' rate of acquisition of both English and literacy skills will depend on their previous experiences, their ability, their motivation, the support they receive from home, and the quality of the program they are offered.

They follow a path of development and understanding, and cannot be hurried through this learning process. They will need a lot of extra help over an extended period.

Some new arrivals with low literacy skills also need to develop basic understandings about what reading and writing are for, so don't expect them to begin reading and writing independently in English for quite a while. These students need lots of modelling of the reading and writing process by their teachers and other students in order to learn what reading and writing are all about.

## Developing skills

Lack of prior school experiences has an impact on the development of many of the skills we take for granted in students who have had years of schooling. For example, if you ask an older preliterate student to draw a person, the drawing may look as if it has been done by a student many years younger. While this may reflect something of the conceptual level at which the student is operating, it may also simply indicate lack of experience with drawing. Learning programs for new arrivals with low literacy skills need to take into account individual skills and prior experience, and the things each student will require to achieve success in school. The points below give some idea of what to include in such programs, and some pitfalls to avoid.

- At upper primary year levels provide opportunities to complete the developmental activities students may have missed out on, such as:
  - pre-reading activities
  - an opportunity to explore and play with things like LEGO and jigsaw puzzles, clay and paint
  - structured activities to get used to routines, such as finishing a task, packing up or changing activities
  - activities to develop fine motor skills
  - experience and play with sports equipment.
- Provide activities that allow a number of experiences to occur at once. For example, incorporate simple manipulative activities, such as cutting and drawing, into other areas.
- Ask parents or guardians to help by letting the student practise some skills at home, such as using scissors, handwriting or drawing. You may need to explain methods to parents in their first language and to provide the equipment.
- Find out a bit about the education system of your new arrival's home country, and the educational expectations and understanding of the family. In many countries, although education is highly valued, children from rural areas may not have access to school.
- Develop new arrivals' confidence and self-esteem. This is particularly important with older students who may be ashamed of their lack of reading and writing skills and so develop unhelpful masking strategies to hide their inability to understand and achieve at school. Sometimes these students spend more time and effort in covering up than they do on trying to understand. Strategies such as the following are commonly used:

- 
- copying someone else’s work
  - always losing their pens and papers
  - pretending to understand
  - fooling around
  - putting their hand up after someone else has been asked to answer.
  - Work with what individual new arrivals can do well, and praise, praise, praise.
  - Allow listening time to let them ‘tune in’ to English. Concepts of what other languages are may be hazy at this stage.
  - Allow them to join in class activities where success will be experienced. Don’t isolate them from the kinds of activities the rest of the class is doing, for example:
    - when other students are writing, your new arrival may practise handwriting skills, copy sentences that you have written, illustrate vocabulary or complete sentence work etc.
    - when others are reading, your new arrival may work on pre-reading activities, such as sequencing, matching etc.
  - All new arrivals feel happier and more confident if they understand the routine of the classroom. If possible, explain routines in their first language and use a pictorial timetable to map out the week. Seeing the week depicted in this way will also help develop concepts of the measurement of time, and give your student experience in gaining information from a table or a diagram.
  - In order to help support your new arrival, the other students in the class need to think about the difficulties the new arrival may be having. They need to understand that:
    - where the new arrival is not operating at the same school level as they are, it is due to lack of the same school experiences, not a lack of ability
    - the new arrival has developed other non-academic life skills that may not be apparent in the school situation.

## Students with low literacy skills

Many students with little or no prior schooling have been refugees, and may have lived for long periods of time in deprived conditions, or have had traumatic experiences. Such experiences can have long term effects on their settlement and learning. For more information, see [Support for refugees](#).

# Repeating a year level

**I think my new arrival's year level is inappropriate.**

- This year level is too advanced – I want to put her down a class.
- I think the language in a lower year level would be easier for him.
- She's not going to be ready for secondary school – I think she should repeat a year.

Newly arrived students should be placed in the year level appropriate for their age. As a rule, repeating a year level (or being 'put down' a year level) is not the answer to a new arrival's difficulty with English. The difference in English language demands between any two year levels is not great enough to make it 'easier' for a new arrival to learn English at the lower level – Year 3 is no easier than Year 4 for a new arrival! The intellectual challenge in learning areas such as science and mathematics may also be unsuitable for older students working at lower year levels.

Repeating a class, or being put down a year level may have connotations of failure for newly arrived families, so these options should not be undertaken lightly. For example, where a new arrival has managed to build friendships with classmates, it could be detrimental both to the student's self-esteem and the support network to make the student repeat a class or move to a lower level part way through the year.

## Involve parents

Involve parents right from the start if consideration is being given to a new arrival repeating a year level. Ask the parents what repeating a class means to them. They may variously view it as evidence of failure, or as a chance to catch up. Composite classes may help ease some worries associated with repeating a year level.

If you feel that repeating is an option, create a checklist of the pros and cons of your new arrival repeating a year level to help you and the parents or guardians decide what is in the best interest of the student. Prepare for this decision making by doing the following things:

- Assess your new arrival's proficiency in the first language by talking to parents, or by using a bilingual aide to talk with the student. [First Language Assessment Tasks in Arabic, Chinese, Khmer, Somali, Turkish and Vietnamese](#) can be used to assess students' reading and writing in these languages. Remember, however, that bilingual aides and most parents cannot be expected to be experts in this area. They can only give you general guidance.
- Assess your new arrival's general maturity level.



- Be aware that visa ages may at times be incorrect. New arrivals may be older or younger than their visas indicate. Verify the new arrival's actual age with parents or guardians if you suspect that a visa age is incorrect. If you think that an incorrect age may be educationally disadvantaging your new arrival, talk to the parents/guardians about matching real age with appropriate year levels. Parents or guardians may need to understand that being in a year level that does not match their child's maturity level can lead to problems in motivation and achievement.
- Look at what has been achieved in class, and how long it has taken.
- Look at your new arrival's prior schooling experiences.
- Look at which year levels younger brothers or sisters may be in. Will repeating mean that your new arrival will be at the same year level as a younger sibling?

## Readiness for secondary college

### What does 'ready' mean?

You cannot be expected to get your new arrival 'ready' for secondary college (if that means teaching all the English necessary to be successful in the mainstream classroom) if your student has only just arrived. It takes years for a student to learn enough English to work academically at the same level as those who have done all their schooling in English. This learning can't be hurried, but your new arrival doesn't need to stay in primary school until some standard of 'readiness' is reached. English speaking students generally move to secondary school according to their age and, in general, it should be the same for EAL learners.

### Should your new arrival repeat Year 6?

You may be concerned that a new arrival placed in Year 6 during the school year will not cope with secondary schooling, so may be considering having the student repeat Year 6. This should not be done as a matter of course, even if your student has arrived in the last six months of the year. A lot can still be achieved socially, culturally, and educationally that will be of benefit when your student begins secondary school.

If at all possible, attending an English language school or centre rather than moving straight to secondary school is the ideal option for such a student. While attending such a school or centre often involves travel, after a few months in Australia, parents may feel happier about the student making this daily trip than when they first arrived. Before making a decision, parents or guardians should be encouraged to visit an English language school or centre to see the type of support and program offered.

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Guidelines to follow when considering whether a new arrival should repeat Year 6 have been provided. Some extra research along the following lines will also be helpful:

- Investigate possible Year 7 placements to find out the type of EAL assistance that local secondary schools can offer your new arrival. Some secondary colleges have English language classes to cater for recently arrived students.
- Encourage parents or guardians to visit a secondary school, or to be involved in orientation programs, so they have some knowledge about secondary education in Victoria.

## Transition to secondary school

When a new arrival is to be enrolled in a secondary college, contact the college as early as possible and be involved in the transition procedures. It is imperative that the school knows your new arrival's background and level of English so that appropriate programs can be prepared ahead of the student's arrival. Try to ensure that any reports go directly to the teachers who will be involved with the student.

# Learning difficulties

**I think my new arrival may have a learning difficulty.**

- She can't copy written work.
- He hasn't developed a sight vocabulary or any word-attack skills when reading.
- She doesn't use or understand vocabulary that has been taught and revised many times.
- When I look at the *EAL Companion*, I can't see that he has made any progress.

You cannot assume that apparent problems with learning English are an indication of learning difficulties. If you suspect your new arrival is having learning difficulties, take the following points into consideration.

- We all learn at different rates.
- Silence does not necessarily mean lack of comprehension or learning. Some new arrivals do not speak until they have worked out the procedures and the rules and feel confident enough to try using English (see [Encouraging communication](#)).
- Your new arrival may be suffering from culture shock or trauma particularly if they are refugees. Children emerge from these conditions at different rates, depending on their personality, the severity of the trauma and the support they receive in their home and learning environments. If you suspect that your new arrival is suffering from ongoing severe trauma, you may need to arrange (with parental permission) some professional assistance through the guidance officer at your school or through other agencies, such as Foundation House (see [Social development: Inappropriate behaviour](#)).
- Your new arrival may not be literate in the first language, or may have had interrupted schooling (see [New arrivals with interrupted or little prior schooling](#)).
- Your new arrival's educational background and expectations may be very different from expectations in Australian schools (see [Cultural and educational expectations](#)).
- The difference between your new arrival's first language and English may affect the initial rate of English acquisition. Your new arrival's first language may be very different from English. For example, some languages are monosyllabic, tonal (where the meaning of a word changes according to the pitch), and share few vocabulary items with English. They may also have different writing systems, for example, Chinese, Arabic and Khmer. Other languages are more like English in that they are polysyllabic, not tonal, share the same writing system and a similar sound-letter system, have some shared vocabulary (particularly in areas such as science and communications), and also share a similar derivational base for some word building. These factors mean some new arrivals get a head start in unravelling the puzzle of English learning, therefore, they may feel more confident in communicating in the early stages.

- Your new arrival is dealing with an immense amount of new information and needs time to absorb it.

## Testing for learning difficulties

Some EAL students have learning difficulties that will almost certainly make it harder for them to learn English. If you suspect that your new arrival is having more than the usual amount of difficulty in learning English, or in coping with school in general, ensure that assessments take place.

Parents and guardians should be involved from the start. Arrange a parent–teacher interview to discuss your concerns. You might like to ask about the student’s educational background, medical history and rate of progress in early childhood. With the parents’ permission, arrange an assessment through a guidance officer. It may be worth starting with sight and hearing checks. Further investigations can then be made if necessary.

It is crucial that the following issues are taken into account:

- When a new arrival is being tested for possible learning difficulties, it must be done with first language support. When assessments are done in a hospital or clinic, make sure the staff at the hospital or clinic know that the student is new to English, and that they will need to arrange for an interpreter to be present.
- Be aware that there may be cultural bias in the tests that are commonly used, such as the type of houses, pets or food. Concepts in your student’s first language may not exactly match concepts in English. This may make the tests inappropriate, and may give a false picture of your new arrival’s abilities. The results of any tests will have to be considered in the light of this possible bias, and any assessments qualified accordingly.

When tests indicate that your new arrival does have a specific learning problem, you will need to follow the usual procedure for getting extra help. Work with the guidance officer or other agencies to ensure support is organised. Possible support for your new arrival could include an integration program, a special school program, or extra help provided by the school.

# Speech difficulties

**I think my new arrival may have a speech problem.**

- She's still very difficult to understand.
- He seems unable to make some sounds.

Many English sounds are specific to English. It takes a long time for most new arrivals to master sounds that are new to them. Meanwhile, they borrow similar sounds from their first language, because even when they are able to hear the new sounds (initially many new arrivals are not able to distinguish these), they can't reproduce them accurately. Differences in stress and intonation between the first language and English will also be apparent.

However, if you suspect that difficulties in English pronunciation may be more than just the usual problems of discovering how a new pronunciation system works, talk to parents or guardians about how they feel their child's pronunciation skills in the first language are progressing. With parental permission, you may also arrange for a bilingual aide or interpreter to informally assess your new arrival's first language for pronunciation problems.

If it is apparent that your new arrival is having pronunciation problems in their first language, do not hesitate to make a referral to a speech pathologist, a guidance officer, or to the family doctor.

It is advisable that all new arrivals have sight and hearing tests. Problems with hearing are likely to affect pronunciation of English. A full hearing test must always be done if speech problems are suspected.

When pronunciation in the first language is proficient and hearing is good, most speech pathologists prefer to wait at least two years (to allow further development in English to occur) before assessing EAL students for pronunciation problems in English. However, don't hesitate to seek help if it is clear that your new arrival:

- is finding it hard to produce English that others can understand
- is becoming reluctant to communicate in English because of concern about not 'sounding right'.

# Writing

## My new arrival won't write independently.

- She copies from books all the time.
- He won't have a go at spelling a new word himself.
- She writes the same personal recount type of story all the time.

Writing independently in English is a skill that typically lags behind the development of listening, speaking and reading skills. Before they can start to write independently, new arrivals need to establish the following:

- **An oral base** – they need enough knowledge of English vocabulary and grammatical structure to be able to say what they want to say. When students can't yet express something orally in English (or construct it in their heads), they can't be expected to write it.
- **Some understanding of the English sound–letter system** – they can then attempt to spell words they have heard, but not seen, or words that they have forgotten how to spell.

This development takes time, especially for preliterate new arrivals and those learning a new writing system.

Also, remember that new arrivals may be coming to terms with new expectations – teachers expecting them to take risks in writing and spelling and telling them not to worry about errors in a first draft. Many students come from education systems that focus more on correctness than on experimentation and risk taking. This dislike of making mistakes may explain why some new arrivals rely heavily on copying from books or from other students, rather than trying to write independently. They may prefer to use strategies that allow them to produce a correct response.



Commonly when EAL students begin to write independently in English, they write in simple first-person recount form, such as retelling the story of a shopping trip or a visit to relatives. This matches what they are initially able to say in English, and their understanding of English grammar. They will move away from this approach into more demanding types of writing as their repertoire of spoken English increases. Modelling the writing of descriptions, reports and procedures will help your new arrival to become familiar with the way in which other kinds of writing are structured, and will encourage them to attempt these kinds of writing in response to classroom tasks.

Process writing is an ideal approach for newly arrived students starting to write in English. The emphasis on drafting, 'retrievability' of errors and the production of a piece of writing as a process rather than as a single activity, allows students to experiment. It also gives them a chance to talk about their writing.

# Talking to newly arrived students

**The other students and teachers who help with my new arrival don't seem to know how to talk to her.**

- They use 'baby language'.
- They change their pronunciation and intonation and use incorrect grammatical structures.
- They just name things and get her to repeat what they have said.
- They talk slowly and unnaturally.
- They talk too fast and use difficult vocabulary.
- They are inconsistent with the vocabulary they use.

*'Believe that your child can understand more than he or she can say, and seek, above all, to communicate. To understand and be understood. There is no set of rules on how to talk to a child that can even approach what you unconsciously know. If you concentrate on communicating, everything else will follow.'*

R Brown, Introduction to Snow and Ferguson (eds),  
*Talking to Children* (Cambridge University Press, 1977, page 24).

Knowing how to talk to a new arrival with very little English in a way that will contribute to their English-language development is a skill that takes time to develop. If your helpers are having trouble maintaining a natural flow of communication with your new arrival, ask them to think about how they would speak to a young child who is learning English as a first language. Encourage them to incorporate some of the strategies they would use with such a child into their interaction with the new arrival, without resorting to 'baby talk'.

Talking to a young child involves 'scaffolding' language with models of grammatical structures and vocabulary that extend the conversation by building on what the child is able to say. It is very much the same with new arrivals. The English used must support and expand what they say, and provide models that can then be used in other situations.

People speaking to young children learning English as a first language don't seem to actively 'teach' the language. They don't respond to the 'correctness' of the talk, they respond to its 'truth value', for example:

- Child* – That horse!  
*Parent* – No it's not, that's a cow!

This type of correction models the correct grammatical structure and vocabulary, but without focusing on the grammatical error that the child has made. This is an ideal strategy when talking with your new arrival. It allows the conversation to keep going and to remain supportive, while still providing feedback to the student on the correctness of the language that is being used.

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## Strategies for supporting communication

Keep the following strategies in mind when encouraging new arrivals to communicate:

- Use simple grammatical structures and short sentences.
- Be ready to say the same thing in a different way to clarify meaning, for example, 'Jenny, shut the door please. That's right, close it!'
- Develop non-verbal communication together with the new arrivals.
- Use English that they understand, and then add some new vocabulary or grammatical structure, in context, to help extend their knowledge.
- Use natural intonation and stress.

After a while this supportive interaction will become automatic and rapport will be built. Your helpers will also need to train themselves to be aware of the language they are using.

Initially the modified English you use with a new arrival will sound somewhat different from the English used with the rest of your students, however, it should not sound stilted with unnatural pronunciation, intonation, grammatical structure or vocabulary.

While correcting every error does not make for a natural, supportive conversation, at times you should focus deliberately on particular grammatical structures to help your new arrival to discern grammatical patterns.

## Training helpers

Apart from training helpers to talk with your new arrival, you may also need to train them in how best to accomplish the teaching task you want them to perform.

You need to be sure that your helper has the resources and knowledge to teach your new arrival. It will be of little benefit to send your new arrival and helper away to a quiet corner to 'learn these words'. Such an activity with an untrained person is likely to degenerate into an artificial naming, question and answer session.

It is much better, for example, to organise them to play a game of Concentration based around a group of words, or to do a matching activity. The English that will emerge under these circumstances will involve not only the target vocabulary or grammatical structures, but also much of the language involved in game playing, turn taking, instructions and social interaction. It is likely to be natural English, because it will have emerged from a real situation. You may need to demonstrate both the appropriate language and the teaching approach to your helper.

Encourage your helper to give you feedback on the new arrival's progress and the helper's own feelings about the teaching session.





# Program organisation and modification

**I just don't have the time to teach my new arrival what he needs to know.**

- I don't want to have to totally rearrange my whole classroom or program to cater for one new arrival.
- I feel like the other students are missing out because I have to spend so much time with my new arrival.
- EAL teaching is a specialist job and I don't have the training to do it.

## Catering for EAL learners in a mainstream classroom

Classroom teachers often worry about their ability to adequately provide for a student with little or no English. Some concerns may be that:

- they perceive EAL teaching as a specialist area and feel that their generalist teaching skills are not up to the task
- they are concerned about the implications for their program of having a student who's unable to communicate in English
- they feel that the new arrival demands too much of their time and that it is impossible to modify their program to suit, or to provide a full program of appropriate activities for one student.

Although EAL teaching is a specialist area, there are many generalist teaching skills that correlate with EAL teaching skills. Even if you do not have the support of a specialist EAL teacher, you can still ensure that your new arrival receives the appropriate English teaching.

English input needs to be at your new arrival's level to begin with, then needs to be progressively more challenging without making the student feel that anything less than total understanding is evidence of failure. The emphasis should be on communication rather than on always 'getting it right'.

You need not provide an entirely separate program. New arrivals need to be involved in class activities for a good deal of the time so they:

- feel part of the class
- see and hear the other students
- talk and mix with the other students and in doing so learn a great deal of incidental English
- have the vital opportunity to make friends
- learn classroom routines.

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## Language box activities

It is a good idea to have a range of activities on hand that you can quickly set your new arrival to work on if you find that a class activity is not suitable. Make a collection of different types of activities and put them in a large box. Update the collection regularly to suit new themes or teaching foci. Your new arrival will always have something purposeful to do when unable to participate in class activities, and you will find that the contents of the box give you quick access to materials such as pictures or real objects that will help you to support your new student on other occasions.

The activities in the box should not be time consuming to prepare. Your new arrival should be able to complete them with little supervision, either with a partner or individually. Suitable activities could include:

- use of audio player
- read/look at books in the first language or English
- review of the previous day's work
- magazines to make vocabulary books and sentence books based around themes or topics
- use of a computer for process writing, mathematics or word games.

Fatigue is inevitable when non-English speaking students are expected to operate constantly in an English-speaking classroom. The language box can also be useful if your new arrival is starting to tire and needs a change of activity.

## Examples of language-box resources and activities

Many of these activities need a partner, who will also enjoy the activity. Rotate partners to spread the responsibility.

### Vocabulary activities

Alphabet sets  
Word Bingo  
Picture–word matching activities: colour, shape, size, animals etc.  
Personal picture dictionary activities, using magazine pictures or student’s own illustrations

### Mathematics activities

Number–word cards for matching,  
Concentration  
Automatic response cards  
Multiplication tables  
Bingo  
Dice  
Calendar  
Play money, shopping lists and catalogues  
Calculator  
Clock  
Tessellations/pattern-making tiles  
Attribute blocks

### Games

Connect 4  
Uno  
Dominoes  
Mastermind  
Draughts  
Chinese checkers  
Jigsaw puzzles  
Card games: Concentration, Fish, Take 5  
Board games: Snakes and Ladders, Ludo

### Mapping activities

Classroom  
School  
Local area  
Australia  
Student’s home country  
The World

### Games from children’s magazines

Word finds  
‘Spot the difference’ pictures  
Mazes  
Dot-to-dot activities  
Picture sequencing

### Reading material

Copies of shared books used in class  
Reading material in the first language  
Wordless books  
Books that your student has previously read  
Books on topics that your student is particularly interested in

### Handwriting activities

Sheets or books appropriate to your student’s age and needs

### Computer programs

Choose programs that use simple, accessible instructions and logos, and where the content is appropriate to your student’s English language development  
Your student may also need practice in using a mouse, or in learning the keyboard.

### Old magazines

These can be cut up to make vocabulary or topic books, dictionaries, colour charts, collections of favourite pictures etc.

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## Primary school program modifications

There will be a number of activities in your program that can be easily modified to meet your new arrival's needs. In general, all new arrivals can and should participate in the same experiences as the rest of the class, however, the listening, speaking, reading and writing activities that follow many experiences are likely to need modification. This is done as a matter of course in most classrooms to cater for the range of student needs.

New arrivals will get something out of an activity, provided they understand what is happening. To make the desired outcome meaningful and relevant, you may need to offer additional visual support during the activity.

The following pages include some activities that routinely occur in primary classrooms. Some indication is given as to the suitability of these activities for newly arrived students, and how they can be modified to be more appropriate. Some activities are not suitable for newly arrived students, particularly if an extensive period of listening without visual support is required. In these situations, new arrivals should be provided with alternative activities.

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## Program modification for lower primary (Years P–2) new arrivals

As well as the list below, read [Program modification for middle/upper \(Year 3–6\) new arrivals](#) for further good ideas.

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Subject area/activity	Suggested involvement	Strategies for involving new arrivals
<b>Assemblies</b>		
Whole-school assembly	Include: this can be an important activity in establishing a routine	Station yourself near your new arrival or make sure that someone who speaks the first language is near.  This can be a good time for your new arrival to sit and observe, but watch for signs of boredom and be ready with an alternative activity when necessary.
Lower-primary-classes assembly	Include: depending on the suitability and the length of the assembly program	Alternatively, assemblies are a good opportunity to timetable additional support for your new arrival, as this activity usually happens regularly.  When support is not available and the program is not suitable, try language-box activities.
<hr/> <b>Classroom organisation</b>		
Roll call, general administrative activities	Include: they teach routine and the English needed to take part in these routines	This provides a good chance for your new arrival to practise greetings, talk about the weather, be involved in some social interaction, for example: <i>Hello, Vinh. Have you brought your take-home book back to school?</i>

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**Subject area/activity****Suggested involvement****Strategies for involving new arrivals**

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Show and tell/share time

Include, but modify

This activity may need to be shortened if your new arrival becomes restless. Encourage the other students to provide visual support to assist the new arrival to understand what is being said. Have a bank of pictures handy to support the talk. Alternatively, try small groups sitting in circles, or limit the activity to three students per day.

Provide support when your new arrival starts contributing by expanding key words or statements and asking questions to prompt further talk. Initially you may be doing most of the talking, for example, when your new arrival brings a book or a toy to school to show the other students. However, at this stage it is important for your new arrival to participate, even if most of the interaction is not oral. Encourage your new arrival to show the other students some of the work that has been done in class.

This can also be a good chance to timetable yourself, or a support teacher, to work with your new arrival on a specific activity, or on following up past work, such as:

- rereading books
- vocabulary practice
- mathematics.

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**Language**

Listening and speaking, reading and writing

Include, but modify

It is crucial for new arrivals to be involved in a wide range of listening and speaking activities. Combine these with reading and writing activities in a language-experience approach.

Language-experience approach

A language-experience approach is an ideal way of introducing new arrivals to new English and for helping them understand the link between speaking, reading and writing. This method concentrates on giving students real experiences, which are used as the basis for reading and writing activities. It provides new arrivals with the English they need to take part in new activities. Use everyday classroom experiences as a focus, for example, reading a new book, playing a new game, an art activity, learning a new song.

Language-experience activities also give students a context for vocabulary development. Concentrate on simple nouns, verbs and concept words related to the experience. For example: if going to the zoo, concentrate on animal names, actions, simple body parts; if eating lunch, concentrate on the names of foods, actions (eat, drink), and when to say please and thank you.

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**Subject  
area/activity****Suggested  
involvement****Strategies for involving new arrivals**

---

If the other students in the class are not involved in similar kinds of language-experience activities, you may need to work with your new arrival on a one-to-one program that introduces basic vocabulary.

Don't expect your new arrival to sit quietly and attentively for an extended period when the rest of the class is involved in more demanding listening and speaking activities – boredom may set in. Before this happens, provide an alternative activity, such as:

- use of the listening post – jazz chants, rhymes, songs, stories etc.
  - language-box activities
  - communicative games.
- 

**Reading**

## Shared reading

Include if the texts are appropriate, not too long or intricate

The use of enlarged texts is particularly supportive for EAL learners, as they provide good visual support through illustrations and allow the students to clearly see the text and the illustrations.

Repeated readings of texts will assist your new arrival to join in.

At each session make sure at least one of your new arrival's favourite texts is read, and provide a focus on one or two key words or repetitive sentence patterns.

Many of the activities around the teaching of visual features of print will be appropriate for your new arrival, for example, finding patterns in words and sentences. Focus only on key words that your student understands, and remember your student will not yet know enough English to be able to discern many of the patterns of English.

Make sure your new arrival has an opportunity to hear both new and familiar texts as often as possible, by:

- listening to a recording of the text
- listening to another student reading it again
- using the text for language-experience activities or individual reading.





**Subject area/activity**

**Suggested involvement**

**Strategies for involving new arrivals**

Small group focus on reading  
Guided reading groups

Provide alternative activities

Your discussion with the other students about the text they are reading will require quite a high level of English language, so, initially, you will be unlikely to be able to fit your new arrival into an appropriate guided reading group.

It may be better to use this time for language experience activities, or have a support person help your new arrival with activities based on a suitable text.

Individual reading

Include

It is important that your new arrival spends time rereading books that have been introduced in other sessions, and browsing through new books. Provide picture storybooks that have been used in shared reading, textless books, texts made in class or books in the first language. Provide a range of factual and fictional texts. Your student can also use a listening post or audio player to revise known texts. Read old favourites with your new student each day. This will help develop confidence, give practice in pronunciation, and provide positive reading experiences.

**Selecting texts:** Remember that books that are at very early text levels may not necessarily be those that are most accessible to your new arrival. Books in later levels may contain more cues to help a new learner of English than books that simply have one or two words on a page. Repetitive texts, with lots of rhyme and rhythm, and with strong, clear, story lines are ideal for new arrivals.

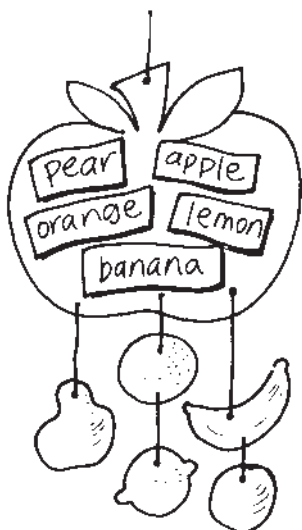
Learning centres

Include, but modify

As with reading groups, some of the activities in learning centres will be appropriate for your new arrival, while others will be unsuitable. It is important that activities are appropriate to your new arrival's stage of English language learning. Use learning centre time to give your student activities that relate to oral or written activities that have recently been done. Remember, new arrivals have a double task in front of them – to learn English, and to learn to read and write it. This is another good opportunity for timetabled help from a support teacher.

Alternatively your student may be able to:

- work on a photocopy of an interesting page from the shared-book text – use it for matching or finding words, sequencing sentences, cloze exercises etc.
- practise handwriting
- work on a personal dictionary
- work on early alphabet activities.



**Subject area/activity**

**Suggested involvement**

**Strategies for involving new arrivals**

**Writing**

Small-group focus on writing

Include, but modify: your new arrival will benefit from observing the formation of letters and the structures of written English.

Small-group focus on writing can be an appropriate activity for your new arrival. Make sure the writing is based around an authentic context and purpose, for example, as part of a language-experience approach. Use the text, or a simplified version of it, for follow-up work such as:

- matching words, unjumbling sentences
- sequencing illustrations or sentences (modify the length of the sequenced piece to two or three simple sentences – try including your new arrival in a cooperative group where the entire group is responsible for sequencing the passage)
- drawing for comprehension, isolating letters, tracing or copying sentences.

The diagram illustrates a language-learning activity. It is divided into three main sections:

- Wall story:** A large box containing a story: "On Friday all the Grade 2 and 3 children went to the zoo. Our grade went on a bus with 2F. There were 2 other buses. The first animal we saw was the gorilla. He was asleep but he woke up when Alby yelled."
- Modified story for your new arrival:** A smaller box containing a simplified version: "We went to the zoo. We went by bus. We saw a gorilla. He was asleep."
- Activities for your new arrival:** A section with several tasks:
  - Reconstruct the story:** Two boxes containing "We went to the zoo" and "We went by bus."
  - Reconstruct the sentences:** A sequence of boxes: "we", "went", "to", "the", "zoo".
  - Reconstruct the words:** A sequence of boxes: "z", "o", "o", "b", "u", "s".
  - Match words and pictures:** Three boxes with words and corresponding drawings: "gorilla" with a gorilla, "tiger" with a tiger, and "bus" with a bus.
  - Cloze:** Two boxes with missing words: "We went [ ] the [ ]" and "We [ ] a gorilla."

Subject area/activity	Suggested involvement	Strategies for involving new arrivals
Whole-class writing share time	Include, but modify, depending on whether or not your new arrival understands what is being written about and will be able to follow the activity	<p>When students are involved in writing a shared class story, let your new arrival:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• draw the main events, if the shared writing is about a shared experience – write sentences for the pictures at a later time</li> <li>• use language-box activities.</li> </ul> <p>When students are ‘publishing’ a shared text, your new arrival can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work on a page with a partner</li> <li>• do some illustrations</li> <li>• work on the front cover</li> <li>• copy and illustrate sentences that you have written</li> <li>• at the conclusion of the activity, place the pages in order.</li> </ul>
Individual writing	Include, as appropriate	<p>It will take some time for your new arrival to learn enough English and enough about how it is written to be able to undertake individual writing. In the meantime, encourage your student to draw, dictate words or sentences to you, or copy scribed sentences. Working on a computer will allow your new arrival to experiment with writing and make corrections or changes simply and cleanly. Have a variety of picture dictionaries in your room, or build up word charts or personal dictionaries for reference.</p> <p>Allow a new arrival who can write in their first language to do so.</p>
Learning centre activities	Include, but modify	<p>Make sure that your student is involved in targeted activities, and follow up with oral work at the end of the session. This can be a good opportunity for your student to work with a support person.</p>
Cloze	Include, but modify so your new arrival concentrates on basic vocabulary development	<p>Make sure the texts are well known to your new arrival. Try:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing two words in brackets for your new arrival to choose from</li> <li>• cutting and pasting key words provided on a separate page</li> <li>• leaving out letters rather than whole words</li> <li>• making this a spoken activity with another student before written work is attempted.</li> </ul>
Handwriting	Include, but modify: scribbling, using symbols, and copying environmental print are all attempts at writing, and are part of the process of learning how to write	<p>Your new arrival may need to be taught correct letter formations, particularly if familiar with a different script. In some cases activities will be needed to develop fine motor coordination. Provide activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• handwriting books appropriate to ability and age</li> <li>• tracing</li> <li>• lots of practice with cutting, drawing, painting, building etc.</li> </ul>

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**Subject  
area/activity****Suggested  
involvement****Strategies for involving new arrivals**

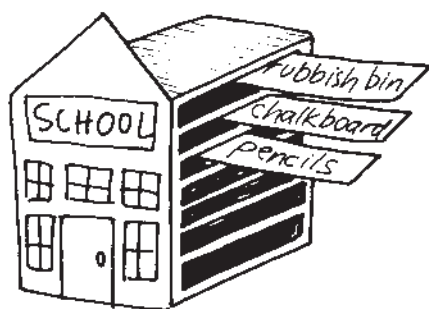
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Word study activities  
Dictionary skills  
Spelling activities

Include, but modify

Start a personal picture dictionary for your student using known words:

- compile collections of words and pictures for a given letter
- as new words are learnt, add them to word lists grouped under initial letters
- choose simple, relevant nouns, verbs and concept words.



Once the student knows the alphabet, the 'Look, Say, Cover, Write, Check' method of learning how to spell words is a good strategy. Common word-family activities, word building and syllabification, word searches etc. are all useful, but make sure that the words that are introduced are in your new arrival's vocabulary.

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**Mathematics  
Number**

Include all aspects of the number strand

It is vital for your student to begin the process of transferring existing mathematical understandings from their first language to English

Your new arrival may already have strong understandings of number concepts, or may be in the early stages of learning about numbers. Some initial assessment (in the first language, if possible) and talking to parents about their child will help you to work out how much your new arrival knows in this area. Watching your new student carefully during activities to note the response to a range of number activities will also help in assessing at what stage your new arrival is in this area. Remember that your new student may be used to different number symbols, and may need to learn how numbers are written in English.

Counting practice and number patterns are very important.

Strategies:

- Daily practice using a number board or a counting frame is essential.
- Allow your new student to practise counting in their first language as well as in English.
- Your student may not be able to tell you about number patterns, but will be able to show you.
- Number rhymes are valuable for practising intonation, fluency and pronunciation, as well as for learning numbers. Clap the rhythms, or record rhymes for later language work.

Remember that when estimating, or doing simple mental calculations, your new student may take longer to come up with an answer than others in the class due to the need to translate from their first language to English.

Subject area/activity	Suggested involvement	Strategies for involving new arrivals
<b>Space</b>		
<b>Shape and space</b>	Include this very important substrand so concept development continues, and your new arrival learns the related vocabulary	Ensure your new arrival works in a small group with first-language support, or a helpful English-speaking student. Visual support is crucial to your student in this strand.
<b>Location</b>		Working with concrete materials is vital to your new arrival's understanding of shape, space and location. Matching, sorting and pattern making with shapes are all good activities that can be completed with minimal instruction in English. Practise having the student follow and give simple directions using the language of position, such as, <i>on, in, under</i> etc. Learning the language of movement is also important for EAL learners.
<b>Measurement chance and data</b>		
<b>Measuring and estimation</b>	Include, but modify activities from all these substrands: your new arrival will work successfully in existing programs, provided there are plenty of hands-on activities, and as long as extra clarification or help is available, if required	Support with visuals and concrete aids. Extra emphasis needs to be put on learning the new vocabulary associated with activities such as measuring and telling the time, or talking about the days of the week and the months of the year. When the other students have started work, spend a few minutes making sure your new arrival understands the task, or revise the target concepts and vocabulary.
<b>Time</b>		To assist your new arrival:
<b>Chance and data</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide some diagrammatic instructions</li> <li>• pair students, so the new English your new arrival is learning can be practised</li> <li>• demonstrate the activity so it is clear what the task is</li> <li>• allow the student to observe the others before attempting the activity.</li> </ul>
<b>Working mathematically</b>		
<b>Mathematical reasoning</b>	Include, but modify	This strand often focuses on students talking about their learning in mathematics and in everyday problem solving. Your student will be able to do this in their first language, but not in English. You will need to watch your new arrival carefully during activities to understand the strategies being used, and the ways tasks and problems are being tackled.
<b>Strategies for mathematical investigation</b>		

Subject area/activity	Suggested involvement	Strategies for involving new arrivals
<b>Health and Physical Education</b>	Include: your new student can take part to the same extent as the others, providing it is clear what is expected	Encourage your new student to watch the other students first, then join in. Emphasise the language of movement and physical activities, and provide simple written instructions and pictures as well as spoken instructions. The written instructions can later be used for follow-up reading activities, such as making a shared book.
<b>Humanities, Science, Technology, Integrated studies</b>	Include, but modify	<p>There is always a lot of discussion, brainstorming and sharing of ideas in these learning areas. <b>Visual support</b>, such as pictures, provide good introductions to key vocabulary when a new topic is being introduced. Talking about pictures, charts or posters also provides good models of social interaction, conversational turn-taking etc. and your new arrival should be included, if possible.</p> <p>Provide activities such as sequencing, matching, sorting, or cutting and pasting to assist your new arrival to learn new vocabulary.</p> <p>Send a note home, translated if possible, telling parents or guardians about the topic that your class is currently studying, and asking them to talk about it with the child in their first language.</p> <p><b>Excursions and other hands-on experiences</b> are a very important part of any program for new arrivals as they provide real experiences to talk about. Where possible, ask a support person to assist with excursions so that your new arrival can talk about the excursion on a one-to-one basis. Stress the importance of concentrating on key words and concepts.</p> <p><b>Cooperative groups and pair work</b> are excellent for involving your new arrival in activities in the learning areas, but make sure the group knows that helping the new arrival is part of its responsibility.</p>
<b>Other Learning areas/specialist teaching areas</b>		See <a href="#">Primary modifications for middle/upper new arrivals</a>

## Program modification for middle/upper primary (Years 3–6) new arrivals

As well as the list below, read [Program modification for the lower primary \(Years P–2\) new arrivals](#) for further good ideas.

Subject area/activity	Suggested involvement	Strategies for involving new arrivals
<b>Assembly</b>	Include: this is an important part of learning school routines	Station yourself near your new arrival, or make sure that someone who speaks the first language is near.
<b>Classroom organisation</b>		
Roll call, general administrative activities	Include: this is a good opportunity for social interaction	<p>Practise greetings, talk about the weather, what TV was watched last night, etc. For example: <i>Good morning, Con. How are you today? Is that a new T-shirt, Van?</i></p> <p>Try teaching greetings in your new arrival's first language (and in other languages).</p>
Morning talk/news-time	<p>Include when the activity is based on social or general interest conversations</p> <p>Modify when lengthy or demanding current affairs topics or formal presentations prove too difficult for your new arrival to understand</p>	<p>Be prepared to shorten this activity and provide an alternative (language-box or listening-post activities) if morning talk goes on for a long time or your student becomes restless.</p> <p>Support your new arrival's contributions at share time by expanding key words or statements and asking questions to prompt further talk.</p> <p>This can be a good chance to timetable yourself or a support person to work with your new arrival on a specific activity, or on following up past work, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reading simple books</li> <li>• pronunciation or vocabulary practice</li> <li>• mathematics.</li> </ul>
<b>Language</b>		
<b>Listening and speaking activities</b>	Include: these are the most important steps in the English-language learning process for new arrivals	<p>Don't expect your new arrival to sit quietly and attentively for an extended period of time. Provide an alternative activity such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listening post – jazz chants, rhymes, songs, stories</li> <li>• language-box activities</li> <li>• communicative games.</li> </ul>

**Subject area/activity****Suggested involvement****Strategies for involving new arrivals**

Songs/chants/poems

Include: excellent for fluency and for practising pronunciation, stress and intonation

Read through using picture support before and during the class activity.

Provide opportunities for rereading with a support person.

**Handwriting**

Include:

- Even when your new arrival has an established handwriting style, handwriting practice will still be useful.
- When your new arrival is not used to writing roman script, a lot of practice will be needed.

When your student needs practice with the handwriting style used at your school, provide a published handwriting book at the appropriate level. Make sure that you encourage development by explaining, checking, praising and directing. Make sure the starting points of letters are correct.

If your new arrival is from a preliterate background, some pre-writing activities to develop fine coordination will also be necessary. Borrow ideas for activities from the lower school, such as:

- tracing
- sewing
- tracking activities
- modelling with clay or plasticine
- dot-to-dot activities
- mazes.

**Process writing**

Planning and drafting

Include, but modify: process writing can initially be done in the first language, but some students prefer to write in English right from the start.

Encourage writing in English as soon as your new arrival has enough oral English, enough understanding of the English sound–letter system, and enough confidence to start to write.

Writing topics should initially stem from shared experiences, school topics, or shared books, as these are the areas where your new student will have had experience with the English needed for the writing.

Use photographs, real objects, or books to give a framework for writing. For example, after reading a shared book, your new arrival can use the same format to write a new story with minor changes.

Strategies:

- Model writing with wall or class stories to help explain the process.
- Accept a first draft from your new arrival. Don't expect a new arrival to be able to self-correct and write subsequent drafts without a lot of assistance. You can help to produce a final draft from the first draft for publication, if appropriate.
- Always link reading and writing activities.
- Have a variety of picture dictionaries in your room, or build up word charts or personal dictionaries for reference.

Using a simple word processing program can make producing a first draft less time consuming and daunting for the new arrival, and changes can be easily and cleanly made.





**Subject area/activity****Suggested involvement****Strategies for involving new arrivals**

Conferencing

Include: all students need to share and talk about their writing

When conferencing a piece of writing with your new arrival, concentrate on just one aspect, such as capital letters, singular and plural forms, spelling, or sentence structure, rather than all the aspects of the text that may need work.

If your new arrival has spent a long time on handwriting a draft, photocopy it and make changes to the copy so the original is kept intact. This work can then be filed to show progress in writing.

Publishing

Include

When publishing, follow the same process as with other students, using your new arrival's translated texts, or texts that have been written in English. Alternatively, your new arrival can 'publish' vocabulary lists, dictionaries, diary sentences or sentence books written in previous activities. These materials can then be used for reading and word-study activities.

Not all writing needs to be published, but make sure that a folio of your new arrival's writing is kept (including first drafts) so that you can assess progress.

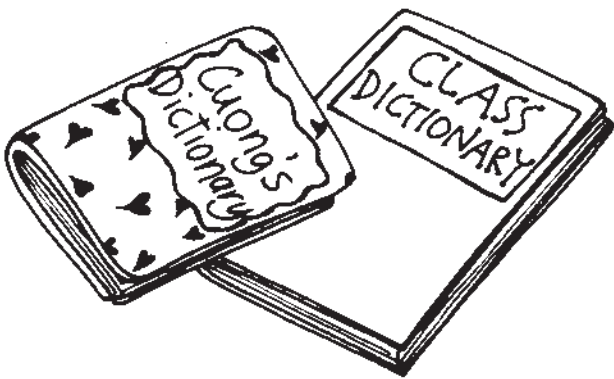
Encourage your new arrival to make use of lots of photographs, magazine pictures, drawings etc. when publishing, as a way of providing additional information.

If students are involved in writing and producing a shared class story or project, try letting your new arrival:

- work on a page with a partner
- do some of the illustrations
- work on the front cover
- copy and then illustrate sentences that you have written
- put the pages in order at the conclusion of the activity.

Alternatively, write a simplified version of the text for your new arrival to work with.

Your new arrival may also like to publish writing done in their first language. If possible, have someone at home or school provide a translation.



**Subject area/activity**

**Suggested involvement**

**Strategies for involving new arrivals**

Spelling/word study

include

Concentrate on the words that are already in your new arrival's English vocabulary.

Use the 'Look, Say, Cover, Write, Check' method of learning how to spell.

Use a support person, or partner, to help your new arrival to study word building, compile lists of word families, complete word searches etc.

The four-book system for supporting spelling development is an ideal one for new arrivals. The books comprise a word family book, a theme word book, a personal word dictionary, and a diary or journal.

Some alphabet work will need to be included as part of spelling activities so your new arrival learns the names of the letters. Try games such as Bingo or Concentration. Simple dictionary work, such as activities involving alphabetical order, are also appropriate.



**Reading**

Group reading activities

Include, but modify: these activities usually involve a great deal of talking and reading of texts, which may not be well supported by additional contextual information, such as illustrations – where this is the case, provide other activities for your new arrival

Your new arrival and a partner, or support person, can read the books currently being worked with.

Class serial reading

Provide an alternative activity: the language is too difficult for a new arrival

Try a listening-post activity, revision of work from other language activities, or activities from the language box.

USSR, SQUIRT, DEAR

Include

Your student can read:

- books from shared reading activities
- picture storybooks
- student-produced books
- the listening post
- books in their first language, if available.

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**Subject area/activity****Suggested involvement****Strategies for involving new arrivals**

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Reading activities

Modify: many of the activities that you use to help your other students access reading texts can also be used with texts that your new arrival is reading, but some modification may be needed



**Cloze exercises** are valuable for helping develop both reading and writing skills. As well as published books, use material from student-produced books, poems, songs and other language activities. This can also be an oral activity undertaken with another student before written work is attempted. Make sure the final text is read aloud by the student to a teacher or another student.

Instead of randomly leaving out words in cloze passages, try:

- leaving out letters rather than whole words
- leaving out parts of words as well as whole words
- leaving out nouns, prepositions, verbs or pronouns, to focus your student on the role these elements play in English grammar.

To assist your new arrival in these activities try:

- providing the alternative answers in brackets from which to choose
- providing the answers on a separate page to be cut out and pasted onto the worksheet
- providing the activity on a computer.

**Reconstructing/sequencing texts**

Once again, use texts that your student knows well. Sequencing and reconstructing texts can focus on:

- jumbled sentences
- jumbled paragraphs
- jumbled captions and illustrations, for example, a recipe, or a set of instructions for a game.

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**General studies**

Social education, personal development, science and technology

Modify: there is often a lot of discussion, brainstorming and sharing of ideas that will not be at your new arrival's English language level, although they may have good understandings in their first language

Where possible, send a note home telling parents about the topic your class is currently studying, and asking them to talk about it with the child in their first language

Always try to support the talk in class with real objects or pictures. Alternatively, provide an activity such as sequencing, matching, sorting, or reading first-language material on the topic. Alternatively your new arrival may be able to write what is already known about the topic in their first language.

**Excursions** are a very important part of any program for new arrivals, as they provide real experiences to talk and write about. Where possible, ask a support person to assist with excursions so that your new arrival can talk about the excursion on a one-to-one basis in their first language or in English.

**Working in groups and in pairs** is excellent for involving your new arrival, but make sure the participants understand that helping the new arrival is part of the group's responsibility. Share this responsibility across the class.

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**Subject  
area/activity****Suggested  
involvement****Strategies for involving new arrivals**

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**Mathematics  
Number**

Include, but at times modify or provide alternative activities:

- this strand need not be a high priority if your new arrival already has good understandings about number and good computational skills, but learning the new English vocabulary associated with the strand is crucial
- initially your new arrival will probably not be able to take part in class activities such as table races and quizzes, unless you use some strategies to make this possible

To establish a new arrival's level of numeracy, sit down with your student and work through a range of counting activities, place-value activities, and estimation and computational tasks. Choose activities that don't require shared oral language and can be done using numbers and symbols. Be aware that there are differences in the way numerals are written, setting out of equations and use of symbols from country to country. Note these as you work, and make a chart to help your new student understand the differences.

Initially, emphasise the language of mathematics rather than extending existing numeracy skills, especially if your new arrival already has good mathematical skills. Your new arrival will need to practise the skills that are already known, so also provide a range of computational activities for your new student.

Teach some basic mathematical vocabulary:

- numbers, both ordinal and cardinal
- the names of the processes
- comparative vocabulary.

**Number and counting**

Counting and number pattern work is an important part of counting in English. Provide daily practice in oral counting using extra support, such as number boards, counting frames, rhymes, and number games, if appropriate. Allow at least five minutes each day for these activities.

**'Tables' activities**

If your new arrival knows tables in their first language, write the equations on cards and encourage the student to:

- write the answers instead of saying them, and later to say the answers in English after having time to think

**Calculator activities**

Use peer and group support to ensure that your new arrival understands how to use a calculator, and the goal of the calculator activities.

**Subject area/activity****Suggested involvement****Strategies for involving new arrivals****Space****Shape and space****Location****Measurement chance and data****Measuring and estimation****Time****Chance and data**

Include activities in all of these strands:

- they provide opportunities for many hands-on activities, in which your new arrival can take part and can experience success and enjoyment
- they are an important vehicle for English language and concept development because they provide opportunities for lots of talk and experimentation with other students

While being involved in activities in these strands, your new arrival will be developing conceptually, even if the English is not yet fully understood.

Mathematics activities in these strands and problem-solving activities are appropriate when:

- written instructions are clarified orally or diagrammatically
- the activity is modelled
- your new arrival is working with a support person or in a group.

So that your new arrival is reinforcing known English, choose activities that tie in with theme work and vocabulary already covered, such as shape, colour, size, space.

When introducing new activities to your new arrival:

- use peer support to model the procedure
- simplify the instructions and make sure that ongoing peer or group support is provided
- make sure that visual support or concrete materials are used wherever possible
- focus on teaching conceptual vocabulary that is transferable to other contexts. For example, in symmetry, teach *same* and *different*, *right* and *left*.

Use graphs, diagrams or tables to show or record data. This will help your new arrival understand tasks. These forms of displaying information are more likely to be understood by your new student than written English. Your student will also be more likely to be able to present results or responses in these forms than in written or spoken English.

**Working mathematically**

You will need to watch your new arrival carefully to understand the strategies being used in tackling tasks and problems, as your new arrival will not be able to use English to tell you about them.

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## Specialist subject areas

Specialist subject areas such as art, physical education and music can provide a rich variety of experiences for English language development while providing alternative avenues for communication. It is important that the classroom teacher has some share in these experiences. Occasionally visit the specialist room with your new arrival so that you have some idea of the new English that is being learnt. You will also obtain ideas for follow-up work in the classroom.

Specialist teachers need to take some extra responsibility for the new arrival. Ask them to help in the following ways:

- Set aside five to ten minutes to give the new arrival some specific English-language work, for example:
  - teach some new vocabulary related to the activities the student will be doing
  - write some simple sentences about what the student has done during she session, so that these can later be used in the student's journal or for shared writing.
- Use visual support to clarify instructions, or ask other students to quickly model or demonstrate what is required.
- Choose the new arrival as a monitor, for example, to work with an English-speaking student in setting up the activity. This will give the student experience with functional English such as instructions and directions. Questions, responses and instructions used by the monitors can be transcribed into the new arrival's personal journal. Back in the classroom, the student can practise this English through role-play or pair work. The sentences can also be illustrated or translated into the student's first language.

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## Art

Make sure that the new arrival understands what is going on by demonstrating and showing an example of the finished activity. Allow time for experimentation with media that may be new.

Talk about texture, shape, size and colour. Transcribe sentences about artwork or about the procedure followed, for example:

We made a... First we... Then we ...

Older new arrivals may need encouragement to explore media and produce creative responses. Students who come from more traditional education systems may expect a lot of direction as to what they should be doing, and what the final result should be like. A new arrival who is allowed to watch other students work, can see that a range of responses is acceptable.

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**Physical education**

New arrivals will not understand all the commands or the rules of games and sports played in Australia. Provide explanatory visuals, or demonstrate what is required.

Allow the new arrival time to observe the activity, so that some of the rules and the object of the activity can be more easily deduced from what is happening. If the activity is a game where points are scored, have the new arrival assist the scorer for a while; this is a good opportunity for the student to watch the new game.

When giving commands and instructions that will be used often, establish a simple way of giving them, and then use them consistently.

When the new arrival shows particular interest, skills or expertise in an area of physical education, focus on that area for a few weeks. This will help give your new student confidence.

When the new arrival does not have the same skills in, say, ball handling and gymnastics, as other students in the class, allow extra opportunities for practice.

Physical education is a good area for developing new vocabulary and concepts that can be followed up in the classroom. The student can make an illustrated book showing:

- names of games and activities
- equipment used
- the layout of the playing areas
- some of the most important rules of each game.

The new arrival may like to show the other students a game enjoyed in their home country.

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**Music**

The new arrival should enjoy participating in music, because of the opportunity to join in with the group in a supportive atmosphere. Singing and rhythm work will help to develop correct pronunciation of English, along with stress and intonation patterns. Try:

- writing songs onto charts, or provide song books, so the new arrival can see the written form
  - using the charts or books as reading material, for cloze exercises etc.
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**Library**

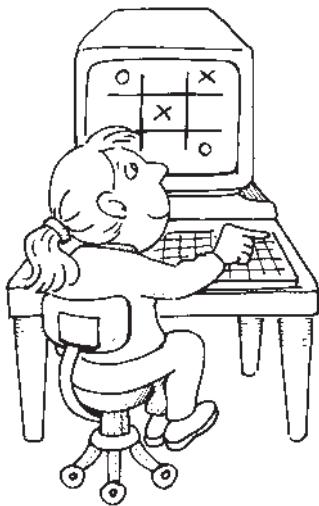
The new arrival will need to learn library rules and simple library skills. Model how to borrow and return items. Guide the student in choosing suitable books, including bilingual and textless books.

The school librarian may be able to arrange inter-library loans of material in the student's first language.

Library time can also be a good opportunity to timetable additional support, as some library activities, such as serial reading and research skills development, may not be suitable for the new arrival.

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## Learning technologies



Appropriate computer programs and applications can be excellent for use with new arrivals. They allow students to work at their own pace, are repetitive, usually give good feedback on progress, and are a lot of fun.

Your student may need to be introduced to basic computer skills or skills for using tablets, such as using the mouse and gestures. The student might also benefit from a program to develop typing skills.

Programs that have been written for both EAL learners and mainstream students can be used, as long as the English language content is appropriate, the learning area content is accessible, and the instructions are clear.

Technology-based activities that do not provide oral interaction, or involve 'real-life English' must not be overused. Students can work in pairs when using computers or tablets, so that they can talk about what they are doing. Using Skype or virtual conferencing technologies in which students connect in real time with other speakers of English can be valuable activities for new arrival students.

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## Languages

If the language other than English on offer in your school is the new arrival's first language, this can be an excellent opportunity to maintain and develop first-language skills, and your new arrival may well be a valuable model for the other students.

When the language on offer is not the student's first language, newly arrived EAL students can often participate with confidence in the class, because they are on par in learning the new language with their English speaking classmates, and in fact, are developing specific language learning skills which will help as they acquire English. Where a newly arrived EAL student would be a beginner language student in an advanced language class, it may be more appropriate to provide additional timetabled EAL support until such time as an appropriate Languages program can be arranged. This may be particularly useful if your new arrival is not literate in their first language.





## **No English 2: Questions and answers**

follows *No English – Don't panic*. It provides answers to some of the concerns primary classroom teachers may have about the English language development of newly arrived EAL learners, and about providing appropriate programs for them.

It shows how, by using the resources available in a school, a coordinated program can be developed which will be appropriate for students and manageable for teachers.