

Teaching philosophy

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As a beginner teacher who only started teaching in September 2025, I feel like I have yet to develop my own teaching philosophy. I am still on the journey of adopting and understanding this new role, so right now, I am learning either by listening to my colleagues' experiences or through trial and error. I am often struggling with impostor syndrome, wondering how and why I was even allowed to start teaching in the first place. However, despite feeling inadequate at times, I have managed to learn a few things over the past six months.

After having worked as an English teacher for three months, I began to notice how many students were in desperate need of encouragement and positive feedback. Many of them have very little confidence in their abilities and are overly critical of themselves, which often stops them from even trying. They tend to assume they will fail before attempting. This lack of confidence becomes a significant roadblock to effective learning. Learning this, I realised that teaching is so much more than just presenting the course content and explaining grammar rules. First and foremost, a teacher's goal is to be a role model and a supportive mentor for their students. Sure, a good teacher should be knowledgeable about the subject they are teaching, but they do not have to be an expert. Sometimes, it helps students to see that everyone makes mistakes. This helps create an environment where students feel less afraid of making mistakes themselves.

In order to become a role model, it is useful to create a connection with your students. This does not mean becoming overly familiar with the students as the natural authority and boundaries between teacher and student should still be maintained. Still, simple small talk and brief conversations can make a big difference.

It shows students that you actually care about their well-being. For instance, starting a lesson by asking "How was your weekend?" or "How are you feeling today?" helps to form a connection with the students. Sometimes, students' replies to these questions can give you a lot of insight about what you should keep in mind in your classroom. A little humour can also be very beneficial as students are more eager to learn when they feel happy.

In this short time, I have also learned that the old principle of "start strict and become friendlier later" definitely holds up. I remember being terrified when I taught my first lesson and wanting the students to like me so badly. Sure enough, I was not strict enough at the beginning, and now I often struggle with classroom management. Establishing clear ground rules for the classroom is essential as students need routine and clear expectations. Once students learn that there are no consequences to their bad behaviour, they will start taking advantage of this. It is very difficult to change this later on. If I had the chance to go back in time, this is the one thing I would do differently.

Another thing I have learned is that it is good to switch things up in the classroom, but not in every lesson. In the beginning, I was worried that my students would be awfully bored in my lessons and tried to find fun, interactive activities for each lesson. However, it quickly became clear that these activities did not yield any results: students did not learn how to produce language. Now, I am still excited to try out new activities in my lessons, but only after we have completed the basics: reading, writing and speaking activities.