

# ELL Tips for Math Teachers

## Part I: Getting Started



### Welcoming Students

Welcome students with smiles, friendly greetings, and positive body language. Show respect for students' languages and cultures.

HELLO  
MY NAME IS

### Learning Students' Names

Learn to say and write students' names correctly. Refrain from using nicknames or making comments about students' names.



### Students' Interests

Get to know your students' interests and look for ways to tie math to those interests, like sports, hobbies, or other school activities.



### Students' Life Experiences

Look for ways to tie math to students' home responsibilities, such as jobs they have and helping with family finances.



### ELLs' Math Backgrounds

Learn about ELLs' prior schooling. Some students may have had consistent schooling, while others may have limited schooling.



### Math: More Than Numbers

Even if ELLs have strong math skills, they will need to learn the language needed for certain math tasks (e.g., explaining how to solve a problem).

To see more great tips, visit the [online version](#) of this article!



Colorín Colorado is the nation's leading website serving educators and families of English language learners. Major support provided by our founding partner, AFT.



# ELL Tips for Math Teachers

## Part II: Planning Instruction



### Background Knowledge

Keep an eye out for the [background knowledge](#) students will need to solve word problems (e.g., What is a sale? A discount? A tax?)



### Hands-On Learning

Use [scaffolds](#) such as visuals, graphic organizers, manipulatives, and anchor charts. Teach students how to read [charts and graphs](#).



### Math Vocabulary

Teach [key math vocabulary](#), such as academic words (**estimate**); words with multiple meanings (**yard**, **plane**, **table**); and homophones (**eight/ate**).



### Sentence Frames

Use [sentence frames](#) to model key phrases students need to say or write, such as, "A \_\_\_\_\_ has \_\_\_\_\_ sides." (A **triangle** has **three** sides.)



### Students' Languages

Use [bilingual glossaries](#) and [cognates](#), which are related words in two languages (e.g., the English-Spanish pair **circle/círculo**).



### Co-Planning Math Lessons

Try co-planning a math lesson with your [ELL colleagues](#), who have valuable expertise. Together, you can identify your lesson's language tasks.

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