

## TEACHING ENGLISH VIA RADIO

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### Introduction

In many low-resource contexts, a radio learning programme for out-of-school students means more students can learn, compared to using a TV- or internet-based solution. In areas where TV, internet and smartphone coverage are low, 'non-smartphones' and simple analogue radios are often available in students' homes, and these devices can access broadcasted lessons. Simple audio-based lessons can be developed to reach and support learning in the home, with few resources needed on the side of the parents and students.

### Getting started

- **Do your research:** You will need to investigate radio coverage in your country and look into which radio stations can cover different regions. You may need to broadcast the lessons on multiple stations to maximise coverage.
- **Decide on length of lessons and frequency:** How long will each lesson be? Often for radio, shorter, more frequent lessons are most effective. Repetition is also valuable. The same lessons can be repeated at different times of the day or twice a week.
- **Advertise the schedule:** It's important to raise awareness and advertise the lessons in as many places as possible. You can include messages for parents in the adverts and also remind them to support their children to listen and help them to be prepared for the lesson with anything they might need (e.g. a notebook and pencil).

### Planning lesson content

- **Agree a scheme of work:** Are the radio lessons going to cover new topics or review and consolidate previous learning? Are they to be linked to the national curriculum or any textbooks that pupils may or may not have access to in their homes?
- **Starting and finishing lessons:** It helps to use a lesson format that students will learn to recognise, for example starting and finishing with a song that students can join in with.
- **Keeping students engaged:** The lessons need to be fun and interactive to keep students interested. Include lots of activities that require students to participate; these can include guessing games, activities where pupils have to point at objects or do actions, and stories that students can join in with and do actions to.
- **Helping students understand:** If students are young or at a low level, then understanding radio lessons can be a challenge. During a face-to-face lesson you can use lots of visual clues, such as gestures and images, to help students understand, but for radio they have to rely on listening skills alone. To help, include lots of sound effects, keep instructions clear and simple and give an example for each activity. If possible, include some basic instructions in the learners' home language too.

## Tips for teachers

- Make sure your students know when and how to listen.
- If you have contact with your students via phone, SMS or online, link that to the radio lessons. Send short quizzes after each lesson via SMS or include pre-listening preparation and follow-up activities in any online work.
- Set students 'homework' to do after each lesson. Completing writing tasks during the radio lesson is not necessarily the best use of broadcast time, so use the radio lesson for listening and speaking, and follow up with some written tasks.
- Try and be creative – can you write a short story and read a section of it out each lesson? If you always end each section with a 'cliffhanger', this can encourage the students to listen to the next lesson!
- Use the lessons as teacher development activities too – can you use some of the same activities in your classes when you return to school? Which of your best classroom activities can be adapted for radio? It's really useful to share ideas with other teachers.

## Tips for parents

Try to share these ideas with your students' parents or caregivers so that they can support them with their learning. You could share these via SMS or as part of the advertising you do about the radio lessons series.

- Make sure your children know when and how to listen.
- Help your child to prepare for the radio lesson by completing any preparation tasks and having a notebook and pen with them ready for the start of the lesson.
- Join in the lesson with them! You can support them to understand, and it can be fun to do the activities together. Siblings can also join in.
- Make notes of what the teacher says during the activities so that you can review with your children after the lesson.
- Remember any fun songs or games used in the lesson. You can repeat these yourself with your child later.

## Useful links

- Ideas for songs, stories and activities to adapt: <https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/>
- An old publication but with useful ideas for using media, including radio, to teach English: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/use-media-english-language-teaching>
- A series of radio programmes for teacher development from India: <https://www.britishcouncil.in/teach/teachingenglish-radio-india>
- Some examples of radio dramas for English language students: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02pc9s1>