



10 Tips for Motivating Teenagers

**YOUNG
LEARNERS
ENGLISH UK**

A special interest group of English UK


STAFFORD HOUSE
Summer

Motivation is one of those ideas like justice or world peace: we all know it's a good thing but it's not quite so clear how to get there

(Tim Ward: OUPELTGlobal blog)

Let's share our concerns regarding motivation

Students won't be interested in the topics I choose

They are self-conscious and don't want to speak out

The too cool for school effect takes over!

They are tired and disengaged

Some student's level is too low which leads to a lack of engagement

My students haven't chosen to be here and are more interested in other subjects



The class isn't used to this communicative style of teaching

Personalisation

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“ Teenagers are ego driven. They are becoming adults and want more control over learning - What does it mean to me?”

- Think about how you can create “Me Moments”?
- **Get to know your students names, personalities and interests**
- Connect their learning to their interests and personal life
- **Listen to your students’ opinions and value them**
- Ensure that our lessons are student centred and include plenty of STT time but be aware of learning style and those who are more comfortable independently
- **Everyone has their own strengths - use these to build up student confidence**

Learner Autonomy

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Involving teenagers in decisions about what they are doing is likely to encourage their engagement”

(Greenaway 2013)

- Can be a big or small choice
- As a teacher, identify the main objective of the task - then you can come up with more than one way of achieving it.
- This could be a given topic with a choice of tasks or a given task with a choice of topics - this will take more preparation, but it's worth it!
- Don't worry about creating sub groups- you don't always have to teach to the whole class
- Classroom management- can be used for praise and discipline - get them to buy in and take ownership
- Develop life and study skills to work independently



Mix it up

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Nationalities

Interaction
Patterns

Language
Abilities

Skills

Types of
activities

The physical
learning
environment

Teaching
Methods

Occasionally do
the unexpected

Balance with
routines

Prop On!

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Set the challenge

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Don't play it safe or let your students to so

- Involve students in goal setting - both group and individual
- give them responsibility for their learning
- Provide plenty of updates and opportunities for feedback
- Employ a “Demand-High” approach to ensure students are taking the next steps forward that they are capable of straightaway
- Encourage healthy competition between students - even older teens seem to engage with this.
- Use teams - this fosters positive group dynamics
- Use an app such as class dojo <https://www.classdojo.com/>

The Classroom Environment

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- Often a forgotten, unloved and unplanned area of our teaching
- How can we personalise the environment to maximise motivation?
- Create a relaxed and supportive environment which they can learn in

Relevant posters
and examples of
student work

Vary seating
arrangements to
create interest and
intrigue

Ensure that there is
adequate space for
mingle activities

Seating plans and
groupings

Exploit areas of the
school environment
outside the
individual
classrooms

Use your local
environment

Music as a
background whilst
working on a project

Let the students be the experts

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Devolve responsibility whilst maintaining control

- Students love to take responsibility even for simple tasks
- assign these on a lesson by lesson basis or for longer periods of time
- If you see that a student is particularly knowledgeable about a certain subject or language point, allow them to explain it to their peers
- Allow students to listen and comment on each other's answers rather than taking on this role yourself
- Use realia - allow students to bring in items to talk about and generate discussion
- Let your students choose phrases and words of the day rather than selecting them yourselves

Bring the outside in or the Inside Out

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- There are amazing opportunities for language learning outside of the classroom
 - Walking tours and visits
 - Surveys and questionnaires
 - Café, tourism office, cinema trips
 - Telephone call exercises
- We can use the local environment for historical, cultural and functional purposes
- There is scope for functional practice in real time which can be a real motivator
- Students are able to speak and notice themselves being understood
- Allowing teenagers to leave the classroom gives them responsibility and provides a changes of scenery
- This can be extended by giving home work tasks of this nature

Let them use their tech and tech skills...

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...some of the time to maintain interest

- Using technology is at the forefront of young people's lives, so this area should be exploited.
- Use kahoots (kahoot.com) for quizzes, revision or homework. Very motivating if done in groups in class.
- Show short videos as a warm up to introduce a topic or to practise a language point. Use virtual tours of cities that they are visiting.
- Allow students to use the internet to research, for example, a topic for project work. This allows them to work at their own pace and read about the subjects that interest them. Students can present their project on PowerPoint or on the interactive whiteboard.
- Start a class blog using, e.g. Wordpress – short stories, poems, essays, etc.
- Webquests – google to find prepared quests
- Be careful not to use too much tech – danger of over-stimulation and not enough quiet time for quieter students.

Take a break

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- This can be used to either raise the energy levels or calm things down after an active activity
- Go outside and run around to release energy if a younger class
- Teach outside if the weather is clement
- Typical EFL games such as stop the bus, hot seat, taboo, to break up the monotony and to get students out of their seats
- Find a new partner to work with, either of their choice or a 'random' choice of your own making
- Comprise your lessons of short sharp activities

Join YLEUK

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YLEUK

- A group for all YL schools that are EUK members and BC accredited
- A great support with 3 meetings a year, an online discussion forum
- Training courses included in the subscription
- Dedicated academic, activities and student welfare meetings

Organisational membership is £300 per year