

I-We-You Method for Activity Directions

When introducing a new activity, it's common for teachers to want to give the directions as quickly as possible so that the learners will have more time to work on the activity. Unfortunately, rushing through the directions can leave many learners unsure of what they are supposed to do. This can result in unhelpful behaviors, such as copying from a neighbor, asking for help in the first language while the teacher is still talking, or waiting for the teacher to come around to repeat the directions to each learner individually.

There is a very simple approach to giving activity directions that will support the learners' understanding. It's called the **I-We-You** method, and it gradually releases responsibility for the activity to the learners. When a teacher uses the I-We-You method for giving group directions, it makes it easier to support learners at all levels and helps cut down on the need for classroom management. This method is a useful tool for planning lessons, because it helps the teacher to think through how they will introduce, model, and check learners' comprehension during activity directions.

The first step in the I-We-You method is "I Do It." During this step, the focus is on the teacher. The teacher introduces, explains, and models the activity. This step may be very short, particularly for lower level classes with limited listening skills.

The second step in the I-We-You method is "We Do It." During this step, the focus is on the teacher and the learners. The learners do guided practice to demonstrate their understanding of the directions. The teacher asks the learners to give examples, model the activity, and answer questions about the directions. This step is very important and should not be skipped. The "We Do It" step allows the teacher to assess the learners and see if they have the language and understanding needed to work on the activity independently, and provides learners with the repetition that is necessary for understanding. If the teacher misses this step, they will frequently have to provide additional explanation to individual learners.

The final step in the I-We-You method is "You Do It." During this step, the focus is on the learners. The learners independently practice the activity in small groups, with a partner, or individually. While the learners work on the activity, the teacher moves around the room, answering questions and supporting learners as needed. If the teacher follows the first two steps, learners generally need much less support during this step of the activity.

Let's look at an activity that is popular in adult ESL classrooms. First, read the overview of the activity.

The Flyswatter Game

Purpose: to help learners build their skimming and sight word recognition skills

Preparation Time: 5 minutes

Materials Needed: two flyswatters

Procedure:

1. Write 15-20 words on the board in random order. The words can be vocabulary from the weekly unit, sight words that learners should know, or a blend of past and current vocabulary words.
2. Divide the class into two teams. Have one representative from each team come up and stand in front of the board. Give each one a flyswatter.
3. Call out a word from the board. The two learners race to be the first ones to hit the word with their flyswatter. The learner who hits the word first wins a point for their team.
4. Play the game until everyone has had a turn, or until all of the words have been called.

Now, let's look at how the teacher can use the I-We-You method to give the directions for the activity to the learners.

I Do It

The teacher tells the class that they are going to play a game that will help them to be faster readers.

The teacher points to and reads each word out loud and has the class repeat it.

The teacher points to the words in a random order and has the class read them out loud, going faster and faster.

The teacher says a word out loud and models hitting it with the flyswatter.

The teacher reviews direction words (left, right, up, down, straight) with the whole class by pointing and having the class say the directions out loud.

We Do It

The teacher says a word and has the class call out direction words for where to find the word (e.g. "up and left" or "down and straight").

The teacher asks the class, "When you hear the word *drink* what do you do?"

The teacher asks a learner to volunteer to come to the front of the room, gives them the flyswatter, and has them model hitting some words while the class calls out direction words. The teacher reminds the class to use the English direction words.

The teacher has two volunteers come up, gives each of them a flyswatter, and has them model racing to hit some words while the class calls out Directions. The teacher reminds the class to use the English direction words.

You Do It

The teacher divides the class into two teams. Learners from each team come up and race to hit the words. The teacher calls out words, keeps track of points, and makes sure that everyone gets a turn.

Here are some additional suggestions for tasks the teacher can do during each step:

<p>I <i>Explanation and Modeling</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set the context • Demonstrate multiple examples of how it is done • Explain why skill is important • Explain how activity will help • Find out what learners already know • Review needed information and vocabulary • Give multiple examples of how it's done • Go through each step and talk aloud about how to do it
<p>We <i>Guided Practice</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get learners to restate directions • Work through problems/examples as group • Call on learners to demonstrate • Provide clarification and correction • Ask specific questions (what, where, when) to have the learners demonstrate understanding • Affirm and compliment efforts • Remain available to answer questions
<p>You <i>Independent Practice</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor if learners understands the activity, the learning process, and the answers • Extend practice outside of a workbook/worksheet • Revisit modeling (I) or guiding (We) steps as needed • Provide feedback on progress • Float around the classroom and assist as needed

Reading Reflection Questions:

1. Who is the focus on during the “I Do It” step? Who is the focus on during the “We Do It” step? Who is the focus on during the “You Do It” step?

2. Why is it important that the teacher not skip the “We Do It” step?

3. What are two tasks that the teacher can do during the “I Do It” step? What are two tasks the teacher can do during the “We Do It” step? What are two tasks the teacher can do during the “You Do It” step?

Giving Directions: Video Reflection Questions

Giving Directions Version 1	<p>What issues did you see with how the teacher gave directions? What do you want to avoid doing?</p> <p>How did the learners respond to the directions?</p> <p>How would you suggest this teacher modify the instructions to better support the learners?</p>		
Giving Directions Version 2	I Do It	We Do It	You Do It
	<i>What did you see happen? Check all tasks that apply.</i>	<i>What did you see happen? Check all tasks that apply.</i>	<i>What did you see happen? Check all tasks that apply.</i>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Set the context <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate multiple examples of how it is done <input type="checkbox"/> Explain why skill is important <input type="checkbox"/> Explain how activity will help <input type="checkbox"/> Find out what learners already know <input type="checkbox"/> Review needed information and vocabulary <input type="checkbox"/> Give multiple examples of how it's done <input type="checkbox"/> Go through each step and talk aloud about how to do it	<input type="checkbox"/> Get learners to restate directions <input type="checkbox"/> Work through problems/examples as group <input type="checkbox"/> Call on learners to demonstrate <input type="checkbox"/> Provide clarification and correction <input type="checkbox"/> Ask specific questions (what, where, when) to have the learners demonstrate understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Affirm and compliment efforts <input type="checkbox"/> Remain available to answer questions	<input type="checkbox"/> Monitor if learners understands the activity, the learning process, and the answers <input type="checkbox"/> Extend practice outside of a workbook/worksheet <input type="checkbox"/> Revisit modeling (I) or guiding (We) steps as needed <input type="checkbox"/> Provide feedback on progress <input type="checkbox"/> Float around the classroom and assist as needed <input type="checkbox"/> Affirm and compliment efforts
<p>What worked well during this video? How did the learners respond?</p> <p>Are there any additional tasks the teacher could have done to better prepare the learners for the activity?</p> <p>Is there anything you would like to “steal” from the teacher to incorporate into your own teaching (e.g. classroom management)?</p>			

	I Do It	We Do It	You Do It
	<i>What did you see happen? Check all tasks that apply.</i>	<i>What did you see happen? Check all tasks that apply.</i>	<i>What did you see happen? Check all tasks that apply.</i>
Giving Directions Video 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Set the context <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate multiple examples of how it is done <input type="checkbox"/> Explain why skill is important <input type="checkbox"/> Explain how activity will help <input type="checkbox"/> Find out what learners already know <input type="checkbox"/> Review needed information and vocabulary <input type="checkbox"/> Give multiple examples of how it's done <input type="checkbox"/> Go through each step and talk aloud about how to do it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Get learners to restate directions <input type="checkbox"/> Work through problems/examples as group <input type="checkbox"/> Call on learners to demonstrate <input type="checkbox"/> Provide clarification and correction <input type="checkbox"/> Ask specific questions (what, where, when) to have the learners demonstrate understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Affirm and compliment efforts <input type="checkbox"/> Remain available to answer questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Monitor if learners understands the activity, the learning process, and the answers <input type="checkbox"/> Extend practice outside of a workbook/worksheet <input type="checkbox"/> Revisit modeling (I) or guiding (We) steps as needed <input type="checkbox"/> Provide feedback on progress <input type="checkbox"/> Float around the classroom and assist as needed <input type="checkbox"/> Affirm and compliment efforts
<p>What worked well during this video? How did the learners respond?</p> <p>Are there any additional tasks the teacher could have done to better prepare the learners for the activity?</p> <p>Is there anything you would like to “steal” from the teacher to incorporate into your own teaching (e.g. classroom management)?</p>			

What are your top three takeaways from the videos?

What do you want to try out the next time you give directions for a new activity?

Giving Directions: Your Turn!

Pick out an activity that you will lead in the class that you teach. Plan how you will give directions for this activity using the I-We-You method.

	I Do It	We Do It	You Do It
Name of Activity:	<i>What do you plan on doing? Check 1-3 tasks that you will incorporate.</i>	<i>What do you plan on doing? Check 1-3 tasks that you will incorporate.</i>	<i>What do you plan on doing? Check 1-3 tasks that you will incorporate.</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Set the context <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate multiple examples of how it is done <input type="checkbox"/> Explain why skill is important <input type="checkbox"/> Explain how activity will help <input type="checkbox"/> Find out what learners already know <input type="checkbox"/> Review needed information and vocabulary <input type="checkbox"/> Give multiple examples of how it's done <input type="checkbox"/> Go through each step and talk aloud about how to do it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Get learners to restate directions <input type="checkbox"/> Work through problems/examples as group <input type="checkbox"/> Call on learners to demonstrate <input type="checkbox"/> Provide clarification and correction <input type="checkbox"/> Ask specific questions (what, where, when) to have the learners demonstrate understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Affirm and compliment efforts <input type="checkbox"/> Remain available to answer questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Monitor if learners understands the activity, the learning process, and the answers <input type="checkbox"/> Extend practice outside of a workbook/worksheet <input type="checkbox"/> Revisit modeling (I) or guiding (We) steps as needed <input type="checkbox"/> Provide feedback on progress <input type="checkbox"/> Float around the classroom and assist as needed <input type="checkbox"/> Affirm and compliment efforts
	<i>Write down some suggestions for the language you will use during this step.</i>	<i>Write down the prompts you will use to get learners involved during this step.</i>	<i>Write down how you will address confusion or questions during this step.</i>

Reflection Questions: After Teaching

What went well during the activity directions?

What was challenging? What do you want to continue to work on?

How did the learners respond?

What are two goals you have for giving directions in your future teaching?