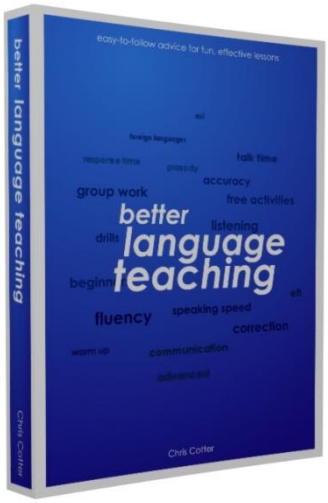
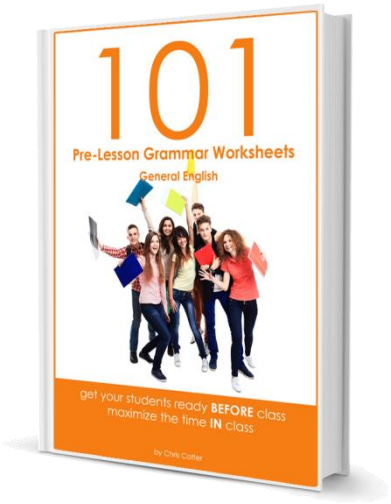
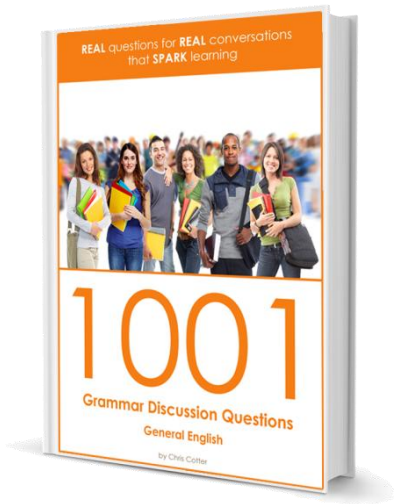
HEADS UP ENGLISH's store

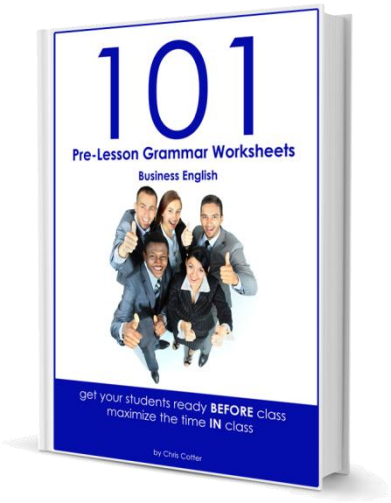
find solutions.
reach goals.
engage your students.

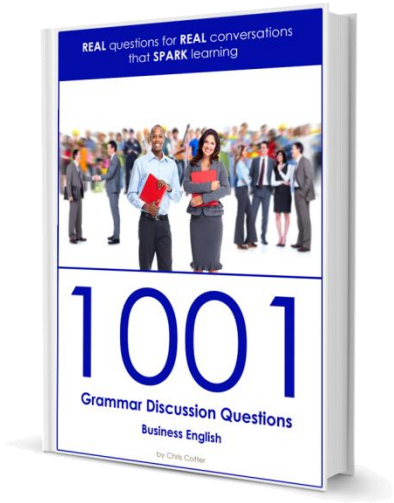
awesome resources ready for immediate download!











Become a Better Language Teacher

Join the Newsletter for Ideas, Answers, and Help!

30 DAY 30 Day Money Back Guarantee

Secure Checkout

VISA MasterCard AMERICAN EXPRESS DISCOVER

the ARTICLE (for teachers)

Wikipedia as an Educational Tool

Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia in which anyone with an Internet connection can add new entries or amend existing ones. There are more than ten million articles in over 253 languages, a behemoth when compared to a well-established encyclopedia such as Britannica, which has only 500,000 entries. But given the fact that anyone can make changes to the content, specious and subjective information can and does appear. University professors have been inclined to forbid students from using the source, at least until now.

At the University of British Columbia, Jon Beasley-Murray allowed his students to write entries for the online encyclopedia in lieu of the usual term paper assignment. One student said it was initially daunting to work online, where anyone could watch. But she found the assignment exciting and meaningful, significantly more so than a term paper which often gets filed away forgotten once the semester ends. A second student revised his entry 1,000 times, and a third student regularly slaved away at the project until the early hours of the morning.

As a means to improve the quality of the content, Wikipedia has begun to run featured articles each day on its homepage. Featured articles "provide thorough, well-written coverage of their content, supported by many peer-reviewed publications." Of all the entries at Wikipedia, only about 2,000 have been designated for this top rank, a very small percentage of the total. It's an issue of great concern to the encyclopedia.

Beasley-Murray's class did quite well. Of the students who took up the assignment, three entries worked on by nine students made featured article status. Unfortunately, a few students had their work instantly deleted by other users. Overall, though, most agreed that it was a great learning experience.

Teacher's Notes:

* Underlined words in red typeface may be vocabulary unfamiliar to the students.

the Article (for students)

Wikipedia as an Educational Tool

Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia in which anyone with an Internet connection can add new entries or amend existing ones. There are more than ten million articles in over 253 languages, a behemoth when compared to a well-established encyclopedia such as Britannica, which has only 500,000 entries. But given the fact that anyone can make changes to the content, specious and subjective information can and does appear. University professors have been inclined to forbid students from using the source, at least until now.

At the University of British Columbia, Jon Beasley-Murray allowed his students to write entries for the online encyclopedia in lieu of the usual term paper assignment. One student said it was initially daunting to work online, where anyone could watch. But she found the assignment exciting and meaningful, significantly more so than a term paper which often gets filed away forgotten once the semester ends. A second student revised his entry 1,000 times, and a third student regularly slaved away at the project until the early hours of the morning.

As a means to improve the quality of the content, Wikipedia has begun to run featured articles each day on its homepage. Featured articles "provide thorough, well-written coverage of their content, supported by many peer-reviewed publications." Of all the entries at Wikipedia, only about 2,000 have been designated for this top rank, a very small percentage of the total. It's an issue of great concern to the encyclopedia.

Beasley-Murray's class did quite well. Of the students who took up the assignment, three entries worked on by nine students made featured article status. Unfortunately, a few students had their work instantly deleted by other users. Overall, though, most agreed that it was a great learning experience.

Notes:

STEP ONE

Brainstorm: Brainstorm with a partner(s) words and ideas associated with "Wikipedia" for 2 minutes. Spend another 5 minutes or less discussing the words and ideas together.

STEP TWO

Discuss: Do you agree or disagree? Why?

a.	I often contribute to blogs and forums on the Internet.
b.	I would like to write an article or a blog on a topic I know very well.
c.	The Internet is my main source of news and information.
d.	There's a lot of interesting information on the Internet, but it's not suitable for academia.
e.	The Internet will become an important teaching tool in the future.

STEP THREE

The Article: Read the article, and work with a partner to understand it. Lastly, summarize in your own words.

STEP FOUR

Discuss: Talk about the following questions in pairs/groups. Remember to support your answers!

a.	What was your general impression after reading this article?
b.	What do you know about Wikipedia? Do you use the site often?
c.	Do you think Wikipedia is a useful tool for teaching? Why/not?
d.	If you were a professor, would you allow students to use Wikipedia for term papers and essays?
e.	Do you think the Internet will become a key resource for education in the future? Why/not?
f.	What will education be like in the future?

STEP FIVE

Discuss: How can Wikipedia be used to study English? Work with a partner to brainstorm three activities that use Wikipedia. Next rank each activity in order of usefulness, and think of the pluses and minuses of each activity. Lastly, compare your answers with another pair of students.

Activity:	Rank:	Pluses and Minuses: