



TIP #1 Dismiss Assumptions

Examine your own preconceptions and understand that differences are not deficits.

TIP #2 Spot While Planning

Use questions on the right to double check your lesson plans and see where more explanation and exploration might be needed.

TIP #3 Engage With Activities

Provide interactive learning experiences to provide background information and give meaning to language.

TIP #4 Adjust Your Language

Adjust the way you phrase questions and comments to explore rather than to imply.

TIP #5 Ask Your ELL Specialist

Collaborate with your ELL specialist and ask for tips on building background knowledge with your ELLs.

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for more information on supporting English Language Learners.

Questions to Identify Areas that Need Background Knowledge

CONTENT	
1	Are there examples or assumptions tied to “mainstream” Euro-American pop culture?
2	Do the experiences mentioned require expenses from the family? For example, families must pay to go the movies or visit a theme park.
3	Is there an ethnocentric point of view or a negative view of another nation? For example, when studying a historical conflict in a social studies classroom, allow all perspectives to be shared and heard.
4	Is there an experience or reference that assumes American Citizenship such as voting?
5	Are there any experiences, references or viewpoints that place Christianity or “church” at the center? For example, Easter or Christmas may be present in (elementary) schools but not all students are Christian.
LANGUAGE	
6	Are there idioms in the text or video?
7	Is the language typically associated with an “American Holiday” such as the 4th of July or Thanksgiving?
8	Is there any slang or are there other colloquiums?
9	Are there words with multiple meanings, such as table, figure, or close?
10	Does the language contain double negatives?
11	Are there examples of nominalization? (This is when nouns are turned into verbs, typically by adding -tion, such as in evaporation, irrigation, and complication.)

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