

English Lesson plans for English teachers

The Big Fat Summer Research Project

The school year is over but you are worried your students may enjoy their holiday way too much? No worries! There are plenty of ways to keep them busy.

Seriously now! A summer research project can be a great way to have your students do some work, while actually having fun. It also teaches them to take initiative, manage their time, and polish their writing and presentation skills.

The following points will help you guide your students through the process of completing a real research project:

1. Give them great topics!

Choose the topics depending on the level and interests of your students or better yet, have them choose the topic. Make sure to spark their interest in advance, even try to build it during the last few months of the school year. It is crucial that they look forward to the task, and enjoy it thoroughly, otherwise they will not be motivated enough to complete it without supervision.

2. Let them know what you will expect.

Be precise in your requirements. Set clear evaluation criteria if there will be formal evaluation. Do not set the requirements too high. The students should not feel overwhelmed, especially during the summer when they will not be able to consult with you.

3. Show them an example of an already completed research project.

It will help them understand/ visualize what is expected from them. It will also inspire them!

4. The research process!

After the topic, the next big question is how the students are going to gather information: online or real life. That also depends entirely on your goals.

If the students are elder and more advanced, you may want to teach them about literature review, and how to properly cite sources.

If you want to get them out of the house, however, you may have them talk to people, observe animals, or describe changes in the weather. More often than not, the solution is more complex but again, it needs to correspond to students' interests and abilities and is fully customizable.

Some research methods to introduce to the learners are observation and description, interviews, and book research, etc.

An example of a field trip inspired research:

Ask the students to visit the zoo, assign different animals to each (or divide them in groups). Students need to observe the animal, describe it, then interview a staff member about its eating habits, behavior, character, etc. They could take pictures or draw the animal. Then, process and present the information to the class.

All in all, the options are countless. But the whole process boils down to: engage your students and provoke their curiosity in advance, so they can be autonomous throughout the summer, explain all the steps, and expect great presentations!

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