

**TPRS®**  
**Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling**

Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition

meaning vs mechanics  
comprehensible input  
unconscious process  
low anxiety  
varied repetition  
listening comprehension  
reading comprehension

Brain Friendly

1. We don't pay attention to boring things.
2. We have 30 seconds to repeat something before it is forgotten.
3. Students must pay attention in order to learn.
4. Most of what we learn is visual.
5. Initial learning is important.
6. There are two types of memories:  
    declarative—the facts  
    non-declarative—motor memory

Information is remembered best when it is elaborate, meaningful,  
and contextual.

Learning vs Acquisition

**Learning** is artificial, involves memorizing vocabulary, and grammar rules must be learned and applied.

**Acquiring** is natural, involves comprehensible input, and grammar rules are internalized intuitively.

Time

As teachers, we have only 600 hours  
of comprehensible input in 4 years.  
As a 4-year-old child, they would  
have more than 14,000.

In order to successfully teach **FLUENCY**, the teacher must focus on the details of the story and **NOT** focus on the language.

### 3 Keys to Fluency

1. Comprehensible
  - ✓ use words students know
  - ✓ speak slowly
2. Repetition
  - ✓ repetitive questions
  - ✓ continually start over
  - ✓ add details
  - ✓ multiple locations
  - ✓ multiple characters
3. Interesting
  - ✓ unexpected details
  - ✓ “playing the game”
  - ✓ personalization
  - ✓ positive exaggeration

### Teach to the EYES

- ★ Teach students not curriculum—Students set the pace of the class, not the curriculum.
- ★ Teach for mastery rather than cover curriculum
- ★ Look in individual students’ eyes when teaching—Looking in their eyes is a way to connect with students and be sure communication is taking place.
- ★ Hold students accountable at THEIR level.
- ★ Always check for understanding—when you see a student who doesn’t answer, ask him/her, “Why didn’t you answer my question?”

### Shelter vocabulary NOT grammar.

The average two-year old has a vocabulary of about 300 words and the average three-year old has a vocabulary of about 900 words. The average adult only uses about 1,800 different words in everyday speech (Jim Trelease in *Read Aloud Handbook* ).

Mark Davies in the *Spanish Frequency Dictionary* said the 50 most common words in Spanish make up 60% of the language and the top 1000 words make up 85% of the language.

We therefore limit the vocabulary we teach to a few hundred words. Limiting vocabulary is the only way we can be repetitive enough for our students to learn to speak.

In TPRS®, we teach grammar as vocabulary. Grammar is taught through meaning by getting students to *feel* the grammar. We try not to shelter tenses or structures. We introduce whichever tense or structure we need to tell our story and communicate.

Our students focus on the details of the story, not the language. Students pick up the structures unconsciously. Learning the structures by feel is the key to learning how to speak a language.

## Circling: The Heart of TPRS®

TPRS® uses repetitive questions. It is our way to practice the language. We circle to build confidence. No one learns with one or two repetitions. We only learn with extensive repetition.

Here are the steps to circling:

1. Start with a statement.
2. Ask a yes/no question where the answer is YES.
3. Repeat back the answer.
4. Ask an either/or question.
5. Repeat back the answer.
6. Ask a yes/no question where the answer is NO.
7. Repeat back the wrong answer and restate the correct one.
8. Ask a who?, what?, where?, how?, why?, etc. question.
9. Repeat back the answer.
10. Add a detail and start circling again.

### IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER!

For lower levels, you need to circle almost every, if not every sentence of your story.

For upper levels, you **ONLY** circle new structures.

Remember to circle the subject, the verb, and the complement/object.

**Don't stick to the above order of things. Mix it up or your questions will get predictable.**

**TRICK!!** If you write out your questions before class, you can slide your thumb randomly up and down your list of questions for each sentence and just read the question your thumb lands on.

## Creating a TPRS® Lesson

### Backwards Plan

1. Start with all high-frequency vocabulary, structures, and culture you must teach.
2. Break that down into two halves (semesters) and create your final exams.
3. Break each semester in half into what you need to teach each quarter and create your 1st and 3rd quarter exams.
4. Break your quarters down into weekly lessons teaching 3-6 phrases per week and create 2 vocabulary, culture, listening, reading, writing, and speaking quizzes for each quarter.
5. Create your weekly lessons (stories).
  - start with a statement using one of your 3 target phrases
  - create a problem
  - create 3 possible locations (starting point, attempts to solve problem in 2nd location, problem solved or not in 3rd location)
  - create possible solution

### A Typical TPRS® Week

Monday:

- What did you do on the weekend?
- Introduce song—cloze activity
- Step 1: Gesture & PQA new vocabulary
- Step 2: Ask the story—background info

Tuesday:

- Free Voluntary Reading
- Sing & gesture song
- Review background info from yesterday
- Step 2: Ask the story—introduce problem, attempt to solve problem, and finally solve problem

Wednesday:

- Timed-writing
- Sing & gesture song
- Step 3: Read & discuss—extended reading: background info

Thursday:

- Free Voluntary Reading
- Sing & gesture song
- Step 3: Read & discuss—extended story: read, translate, discuss

Friday:

- “Kindergarten Day”
- Song competition
- Story strip
- Step 3: Read & discuss—novel

## Assessments & Grading

- Base grades on proficiency levels rather than assignments turned in
- Use skills rather than products to assess students:
  - grading categories should be culture 10%, listening 15%, reading 15%, writing 30%, and speaking 30% rather than homework, quizzes, tests, and projects
  - 50-60% of the overall grade should be dedicated to writing and speaking
  - 30-40% of the overall grade should be dedicated to listening and reading
- Participation/effort is not a grade—do not grade on behavior—use as citizenship grade
- No more than 1 (sometimes 2) assessments per week
- Don't assess writing or speaking during 1st quarter of level 1
- All quizzes are UNANNOUNCED
  - goal is 80% of students earning 80% or better—if not, reteach and reassess

## Participation

- Start students out with 70 participation points per quarter
- Students earn extra participation points (1 at a time) for speaking in the target language, answering questions, acting in stories, writing over 100 words on a timed writing or improving their word count over the previous week, or anything else that adds to them acquiring the language.
- Students lose participation points (5 at a time) for hall/bathroom passes, absences, tardies, speaking English, behavior issues, etc.
- Students may make up lost participation points (5 at a time) by writing a 100-word story in the target language using 10 current vocabulary at least twice. For level-1 students during first quarter only (before they have started to write stories), they can write 10 current vocabulary 3 times each in both English and the target language.
- Participation grade = Citizenship grade
  - 90-100 total participation points = Outstanding
  - 80-89 total participation points = Satisfactory
  - 60-79 total participation points = Needs Improvement
  - 0-59 total participation points = Unsatisfactory

## Resources

teachforjune.com  
blaineraytprs.com  
susangrosstprs.com  
tprspublishing.com  
inputmatters.com  
benslavic.com  
fluencyfast.com  
tprstories.com

TPRStalk.com—TPRS® forum

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/moretprs/> — TPRS® listserve

## “CIRCLING” TEMPLATE

Statement using a student as the subject and proper noun or cognate as object: (**Lana finds a Rolex.**)

Circle the **subject**:

+ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Does **Lana** find a Rolex? Yes, Lana finds a Rolex.)

or \_\_\_\_\_  
(Does **Lana** find a Rolex **or** does **Pat** find a Rolex? Right, Pat doesn't find a Rolex, Lana finds a Rolex)

- \_\_\_\_\_  
(Does **Pat** find a Rolex? No, Pat doesn't find a Rolex, Lana finds a Rolex)

? \_\_\_\_\_  
(**Who** finds a Rolex? That's right, Lana finds a Rolex.)

Circle the **verb**:

+ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Does Lana **find** a Rolex? Yes, Lana finds a Rolex.)

or \_\_\_\_\_  
(Does Lana **find** a Rolex **or** does Lana **eat** a Rolex? Lana doesn't eat a Rolex; Lana finds a Rolex.)

- \_\_\_\_\_  
(Does Lana **eat** a Rolex? Of course not, Lana doesn't eat a Rolex; Lana finds a Rolex.)

? \_\_\_\_\_  
(**What** does Lana **do**? Lana finds a Rolex.)

Circle the **complement**:

+ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Does Lana find a **Rolex**? Yes, Lana finds a Rolex.)

or \_\_\_\_\_  
(Does Lana find a **Hummer** **or** does Lana find a **Rolex**? Lana doesn't find a Hummer, Lana finds a Rolex)

- \_\_\_\_\_  
(Does Lana find a **Hummer**? How ridiculous, Lana doesn't find a Hummer; Lana finds a Rolex.)

? \_\_\_\_\_  
(**What** does Lana find? That's right, Lana finds a Rolex.)

Affirmative/Negative **Assessment** (to see who is ready for extended output):

\_\_\_\_\_ **Does** Lana find a Rolex or **doesn't** she find a Rolex? **Does** Lana eat a Rolex or **doesn't** she eat a Rolex?)

\*\*\* Ask questions in random order. An open-ended question is typically asked after every 2 -3 circling questions. This makes the questions (and the target sentence) longer and more interesting.

Susan Gross

[www.susangrosstprs.com](http://www.susangrosstprs.com)

# The 3 Steps of TPR Storytelling®

## Step 1 Establish Meaning

Write the English meaning on board

Gesture (younger students require gestures)

**Personalize** the phrases:

Ask questions using the new words.

Ex: If the word is a noun, ask if a student likes it. If the word is a verb, ask if he does it.

Show interest by asking follow-up questions.

Ask the entire group about the first student.

Invite reactions by entire group.

Ask similar questions of another student.

Compare and contrast students.

Always look for confusion (hesitation or no response) and use translation to clear it up.

Make sure that **every** student understands everything.

Show interest and enthusiasm.

Capitalize on the comparison between students to make a little story about them.

## Step 2 Story

Actors dramatize the story. They perform after each statement.

Spend plenty of time on the story (do NOT hurry.)

Follow each statement with many questions. Use a variety of questions: translation, low-level, open-ended, and creative.

Use translation to clarify grammar and structure. (Pop-up frequently throughout the story.)

Creative questions (that have no answer yet) invite unexpected or personalized details.

Students respond to statements with “Ohh?”

They must answer all questions.

Use the information that you learned about students to personalize the story. Recycle parts of the story.

Retell the story (without actors, or everyone acting with a partner, or illustrating) if you need/want to.

Teach to the eyes! Look at the audience, not at the actors.  
Enjoy the sparkle students.

## Step 3 Literacy

Give students a printed story.

Students **translate** the story, (either as a group or one at a time.)

Make sure that students understand each paragraph.

Use translation to explain grammar so that grammar is tied to meaning, not to a grammar rule.

**Discuss** the paragraph in the language.

- Relate the situation, characters, and plot to students.
- Ask if they have ever been in such a situation.
- Capitalize on the cultural information in the story.
- Use the story to teach life lessons.
- Give a short quiz on the reading.
- Act out a scene from a novel.
- Discuss character development, choices and values.

Repeat step 3 for as many readings as you have. Extended readings and novels can also be translated in this manner.

*It is the teacher's job to show enthusiasm and to be supportive at every step of every lesson.*