

How to make the most of Trinity's Skills for Life resources



Kris Knauer is an ESOL tutor from Morley College. We caught up with him to discuss Trinity Skills for Life exams, Trinity's resources and his top tips!

Why do ESOL exams?

As ESOL practitioners, we all know that we need good exam results for the funding of our courses, so achievement rates are crucial for our managers, colleges, organisations and not to mention our jobs. Some might call it a slightly cynical approach, others a very practical one. Furthermore, the transformation of the learners' approach to life and education after each successful exam result is phenomenal, which is the biggest incentive for tutors to know everything there is to know about the exams in order to prepare learners well. And this is where Trinity comes in very handy.



Why Trinity?

I have taught for 26 years, 14 of which I have spent teaching ESOL to our marvellously multi-ethnic, mixed ability adult learner groups in south London. After a few years of learning the specificity of ESOL and of the nature of the exams, I started to have great success rates regardless of which awarding body our college booked exams with. Yet, I have never been so sure of the exam results as I now am since we started to work with Trinity. We only switched two years ago.

Trinity offers a *lot of support* for the centres, including staff development sessions for the teaching staff, which I personally found extremely useful. Trinity also values our feedback and has made changes we requested during consultations and briefing seminars.

Most importantly, *Trinity has a wonderful website, full of resources and information* about all the exams they provide. I use the website regularly and share the link with my students for them to access past exam papers, sample exam papers (with answers) and sample videos. The website also offers sample answers in the case of Writing tasks along with rationale for the grades awarded in regards to both modules (Speaking & Listening and Reading and Writing).

All of those resources consequently translate into better results and pass rates, providing that you use them, share the relevant ones with the learners and teach them how to practise their exam skills, using the website.

Finally, listening skills are assessed in a *real conversation* with the assessor who can be asked for clarification, which is much more natural than listening to a recording.

Top Tips

A full qualification may be quite overwhelming for most learners, so it is best to stagger the modules over two terms and teach each task separately with enough innovative 'drilling' practice. What is essential however, is that we give learners the tools to be autonomous and understand the purpose, form and assessment criteria of each task. Students can then work in groups or pairs, peer assess and find the best solutions for themselves with a little bit of guidance.

For example, all S&L tasks lend themselves to pair work so learners can give each other feedback on how well they performed, swapping roles of assessors and candidates that they take on in sequence. This is always a source of fun, which is extremely therapeutic and eventually most of the stress is gone and their skills are enhanced.

Writing tasks such as planning, report writing or even an article or a letter are also perfect for group work at any stage from brainstorming to writing together on flipchart paper and giving feedback on the other groups' work. You can make small interventions, making sure that each group has subheadings in a report and not in an article, or that they use linking phrases. There might be a little bit of competition, which is not necessarily a bad thing, but if learners find ways of giving constructive criticism, they learn a lot more than just how to go about planning and writing each task but also 'skills for life.'