

EAL & NEW ARRIVALS · ALL GRADES

EAL New Arrival — First Day

What to do, hour by hour

How to use this checklist

When a child with little or no English joins your class — often with no warning — this checklist walks you through the first day. The aim is not to teach English in 24 hours. It is to make this child feel SAFE enough to come back tomorrow.

First hour — make them safe

Greet warmly Smile. Say your name. Point to yourself. Wave. Even with zero shared language, warmth crosses any barrier.	Find one word in their language Use Google Translate to learn 'welcome' or 'hello' in their language. Imperfect pronunciation is a powerful gesture of respect.
Pair with a kind buddy NOT your most academically able child. Your KINDEST child. Ideally one who has been new before, or who is bilingual themselves.	Show toilet, water, peg These three locations matter most. Walk to each, point, smile. Use words: 'TOILET. WATER. YOUR PEG.'

First morning — make them comfortable

Lower the stakes Don't expect participation. Give a simple non-language task: drawing, copying, sorting, tracing letters. Let them observe.	Use a visual timetable Pictures of activities in order. Even with no words they can follow LITERACY → SNACK → MATHS → PLAYTIME → LUNCH.
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Keep them in your eyeline Sit them where you can see them easily. Their face will tell you when they're confused or lost.	Don't speak louder Speak SLOWER and SIMPLER, not louder. 'Sit. Here. Please.' not 'Could you please find a seat over here for me darling.'
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First afternoon — make them want to come back

Notice and celebrate Anything they did well — keeping their belongings tidy, helping someone, smiling — call it out warmly.	Give them something to take home A small drawing, a sticker, their name on a label. Something that says 'today happened, you did well, I noticed.'
Send a gentle note home Use Google Translate. Two lines. 'Hi. I'm [child]'s teacher. They had a good first day. Welcome to our class.'	Don't promise things Avoid 'we'll do X tomorrow' until you can keep it. Their trust is fragile. Better to under-promise.

End of day — what you should know

By the end of day one, aim to know:

- What language they speak at home
- Roughly how much English they have (none / a few words / can have a basic conversation)
- Whether they can read in their first language
- Their name pronounced correctly (ASK them, don't guess)
- One thing they like (football? drawing? a particular toy?)

Don't formally assess on day one. Watch and listen. Formal assessment can wait a week.

