

Language focus: Memorising irregular verb forms

Level: Elementary to advanced

Time: 5 minutes

Preparation: Select a list of irregular verbs you want your students to remember.

in class

1. Ask your students to stand up and watch you. When they are attentive, say the first form of an irregular verb that has all three different forms, carrying out a specific movement at the same time. Then say the past form, make a different movement, and finally say the past participle, again making another – again different – movement. For example:

Say

write
wrote
written

Do

stretch out your arms high above your head
touch your knees
touch your toes

2. Ask your students to say the forms and carry out the actions with you. Then ask them to work through another irregular verb in the same way (again, select one where the three forms are different from one another, e.g. *swim*).
3. Then select an irregular verb where past and past participle forms are the same, e.g. *find*, and ask your students to work through it. Many students will repeat the three different movements, but you should get them to make an identical movement for *found* (past) and *found* (past participle) instead.
4. Then get them to do an irregular verb where all three forms are the same, e.g. *put*; they will need to make only a single movement.
5. Carry on practising with all the irregular verbs you want your students to consolidate.
6. The next time you do the same activity, your students will be making three different movements the first time (because you will have named an irregular verb with three different forms), so praise them and say YES, holding up three fingers as a visual anchor. Do the same with two fingers (for a verb with two different forms) and one finger for a verb whose three forms are all the same. These finger signs will further help students to remember the irregular verb forms.

Note

This activity too starts from a kinaesthetic learning experience, and gradually leads over to the students' visual memory.

Acknowledgement

We learnt this activity from Gertrude Wissiol, a teacher in Munich.