What is an English Corner?

An English corner is a way of organising your classroom where you give learners an opportunity to use English. It needs a bit of tender loving care to keep it running smoothly, but it should be a place where children can work with a minimum of supervision on their own English skills. So, what should it contain?

**Materials**
This is an area where you can keep all of your materials together. You can see all of your books and games and so can the learners. The children use the area to work on their own and improve their English skills. This means that the corner reflects the work you have been doing in English and gives the children a chance to practise the words they have been learning. For example, if you are doing a topic about animals in your English lessons, then the books you should have on display should all be about animals, you should have toy animals for the children to touch, English word cards, pictures of the animals to look at and internet sites to check out. The corner should attract children into it and then challenge them to learn!

**Display**
It is important to display things in this area. Attract the children to read in English by putting interesting books out! Read a book to the class then put it in the corner where they can come and pick it up. Put comfortable chairs in your corner so that children want to sit and read. Why not have cuddly toys to read to? For some ideas, look at the photos and read descriptions of these book areas: [www.bulletinboardpro.com/readingcorner.html](http://www.bulletinboardpro.com/readingcorner.html)
Is the book a bit difficult to read alone? Let the children listen to it on a CD or read an e-book on the computer. Ask the children to read in pairs. Have picture books, information books, magazines and cartoons, anything that will encourage them to look for meaning in English – even instruction booklets! Check out the stories on [this site](http://thissite).
Use the walls to display pictures and posters in English. Put anything you stick up at the eye level of
the children! If you put things up too high, children will not even see them, let alone be able to read
them. For example, put up an alphabet frieze, a poster of an author, advertisements for a book,
English calendars or jokes. Put up posters from your course book in the English corner.

**Touch**

Make sure there is a display surface, such as the table or the top of a cupboard, where you can place
objects to touch and feel. Write the names of objects on cards and stick them onto the object itself.
At the end of the time you spend on the topic, keep all of your cards to re-use as flashcards or for
word games. Remember to store them in your English corner.

Board games are a great way to get children to speak to involve kinesthetic learners. Print out some
of the board games [here](#) such as “Action verbs” and let the children play them together. Buy board
games such as “Scrabble” or get [Top Trumps](#) cards in English.

**Activities in an English Corner**

Try to use the English corner to encourage the children to communicate with each other in English.
Here are some ways to do this.

**Things to say**

You could make large speech bubbles with useful classroom language and stick them up here, such
as:

- “What do you call it?”
- “May I go to the toilet please?”
- “Give out the books please.”
- “Tidy up!”

**News board: write your news here!**

You just need a small board and pens or chalk. Encourage the children to post news in English on the
board or write little messages.

**What do you think of this book?**

Evaluation cards for the books you have in your class. You will need one card per book, with the title,
author and comments:

*This book is very easy/ easy/ not very easy.*

*This book is not very interesting/ interesting/ very interesting.*
Borrowing chart: write the name, date and titles of the books the children read on a chart or keep a reading diary.

**Make your own story books**
Have a supply of ready-made blank books for the children to write their own stories in. Let them read these to one another.

**Make a poster**
Design a poster about your favourite book/film star/pop star/author.

**Song book**
Share the words of your favourite class songs in a poster or song book, use them for karaoke sessions! Keep it in your English corner.

**Activity cards**
Children choose and perform an activity, perhaps it could be a puzzle or a game on a website or a webquest.

**Dictionaries**
Buy an address book at Hema, use it as a class dictionary. Have a picture dictionary such as Usborne’s *First 1000 words in English*.

**Here’s a checklist for setting up an English area!**

1. Choose a place. This should be an area easily reached by everyone who is going to use it. Try to find a place where you can use a computer and a CD/MP3 player, where there is enough space for a small group to sit. Think about some chairs and a table.
2. Think about storing books, CDs and games here. What will you need? Drawers? A cupboard? Boxes?
3. Make the corner as attractive as you can, with comfortable seating, a few cuddly toys to read to, plants, a display table or notice board and some posters or pictures.
4. Do you have earphones?
5. Who is going to look after the corner? What about keeping it tidy? Who is allowed in the corner, when? Can you take things away? Do you have a borrower’s book?
What are you going to put in it?
Books, with CDs where possible
CDs to listen to
Games
Flashcards
Things to look at and touch
Dictionaries
Word games
Letter cards
Writing materials

What should the children do in the English corner?
✓ Read books
✓ Listen to stories and songs
✓ Use computer programs/internet – English sites of course!
✓ Play games in English – crosswords, word searches, Monopoly, Top Trumps, Scrabble
✓ Play games with flashcards e.g. match the toy word to the toy, match the clothes word to the clothes
✓ Make your own books or stories
✓ Talk to each other in English!

What can a classroom display look like?
Take a look at these school photos to get some inspiration. A display should celebrate children’s work and effort, it should be used to reinforce learning and give positive feedback to a child. Work should be presented beautifully and valued as something to be proud of. Above all, it is inter-active, where they can learn from each other, discover new things and take pride in their achievements.