

# SCRIMP

Do not “SCRIMP” on any of these elements in your teaching, especially in reading or in *Persona Especial* student interviews. This is a backward mnemonic, in that ***you should do each of these***, rather than scrimp on them, or not do them at all, but that extra bit of concentration will make it even more memorable.

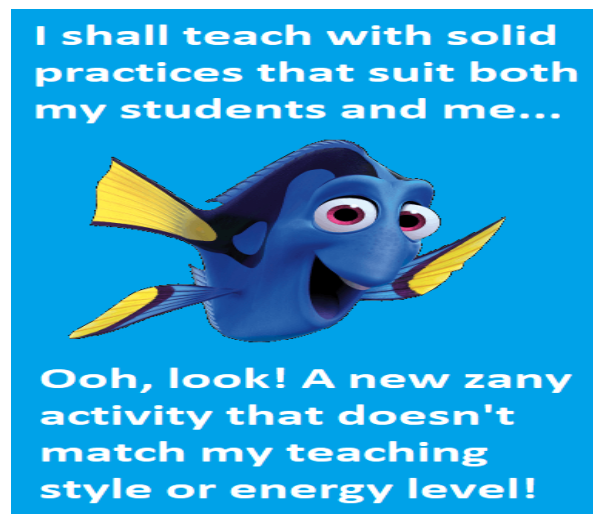
The elements in SCRIMP access both systems in the brain: the fast and the slow thinking systems, the emotional and the intellectual.

Are all of these elements obvious in your teaching...?

**S Sustainable:** Teaching is a marathon, not a sprint. Set a pace you can maintain. Do not try to imitate the wild and zany antics of some wacky, high-energy presenter. That is not doable for every teacher. Do not put that kind of pressure on yourself. The supposed high-energy folks may not maintain that pace all the time in their classes either, so don't get down on yourself if you try the wildly entertaining and hilarious techniques and find that you cannot sustain them.

You need to set a sustainable format and a sustainable pace.

- Are you setting a pace you can maintain week after week?  
The school year is a marathon, not a sprint.  
You need to be able to keep up with what you begin.
- You need to teach in such a way that both you and your students can stick with it week after week.
- Is there a structure that allows for both predictability and flexibility?
- Can students bear the lesson with no breaks?
- Students need breaks: both physical and mental breaks.
- They will learn more if you give them short, frequent, purposeful breaks.



**C Comprehensible:** Students must understand most of what you are saying or it is gobbledygook. They must understand the message in the target language or they will not acquire.

Are your messages clear to all students?

*You* already speak the language, so we are not talking about *you* here.

- How are you checking to be sure everyone understands?
- Do you have a system to check comprehension at different levels?
- Do students have a signal they can give you to:
  - show they do not understand?
  - show that they want you to slow down?
  - show that they want a phrase to be repeated?
- Are the slowest getting something too?
- Are students in the middle getting lost in the shuffle as you attend to lower and higher levels?
- Are you only speaking to the top of the class?
- Are the most advanced students being challenged?
- Are all getting everything they can?

Comprehension checks can be incorporated without writing separate lesson plans for different levels of students. See here for ideas: <https://www.brycehedstrom.com/wp-content/uploads/Contrastive-Grammar.pdf>

**R *Repeated:*** Repetition is the mother of learning. Most students need to hear a new word many times to get it. 50 times for the average student, perhaps 150 times for a slower student.

Are your hearers getting enough repetitions to make the lesson stick?

- Repetition is what makes students learn.
- Meaningful repetitions is the key.
- You don't need the extra repetitions. We know you get it. Will your students?

**I *Interesting:*** Content sticks better when it is inherently interesting to students. Interviews do that because we are talking about real things in students' lives. And not just the dry facts—their hopes, frustrations, fears and dreams often come out. Nothing too personal that a parent would not want us to know, but there are plenty of fascinating stories that every student wants to tell.

Is your message capturing your students' imaginations?

- Is it touching their hearts, or is it merely satisfying brief intellectual curiosity?
- If it is only *your* agenda, it's not enough. It must be compelling to them too.

**M *Meaningful:*** The content should have meaning for students. Dry, random facts do not stick in the memory. It is not the curriculum or the teacher's agenda. We are not just going down the list of questions.

Is each lesson more than a mere academic exercise?

- What are the consequences of this lesson?
- Is it clear how they will use this?
- What are the worthwhile and useful elements students will get from it?

**P *Personalized*:** Learning sticks best when there is a personal connection. Interviews do this by the implicit comparison and contrast going on in students' minds during every interview.

Is there something for each student to take away from your message/lesson?

- Can each student apply something from the lesson in their own situation?
- Are students merely sitting dutifully, or a
- Are they getting a nugget to use or ponder in their own lives?
- Have you checked at the end of the period to see if they got the personalized message?