

**Your favourite website:** There's a streaming service I use to binge watch series such as Westworld, Better Call Saul, Deadwood, Lucifer, the Walking Dead.

**A gadget you can't live without:** I don't have a mobile phone so it can't be that. I may have one by the time the conference comes round but then again I've been saying *I'm going to get one next week* for the last two years. I saw a chat show where the host asked the late Prince: *How do you survive without a mobile phone?* And his answer: *Everyone I know has one.*

I like the Kenrick coffee grinder my brother gave me. Maybe I showed you a picture of that before.



Image:[https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/lot-images.atgmedia.com/SR/35004/2914446/826-2014915194437\\_original.jpg](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/lot-images.atgmedia.com/SR/35004/2914446/826-2014915194437_original.jpg)

**Something you'd never throw away:** My passport – not because I'm particularly attached to any one land mass or flag – but because it's just so difficult to get on a Vueling or Ryanair flight without one.

I did lose it once. It was the night before I was due to fly to Lisbon for a conference. I realised I'd lost it at about one am (passport is usually the last one to go into the suitcase). From one till four I was hunting feverishly round the house before accepting that the flight was not going to happen. Between four and six I'd located

a Blah Blah car user driving from Seville to Lisbon and had the money he requested taken out of my account - only to have it returned because he'd failed to make contact with me prior to the scheduled departure time. By eight-thirty I was on a bus. It made for a long day but I got there and gave my sessions and managed not to let my friends at APPI, the Portuguese Association of English Teachers, down. They still make jokes about my passport occasionally – and I still have a sneaky little look round the house for it once in a while.

**Who or what inspires you?** Straight lines delivered without over-embellishment. Two Mexican farmers approach Yul Brynner's character, Chris, in the *Magnificent 7*. One of them says: *We came to you because we think you're a man we can trust*. To which he replies simply: *Thankyou*. But there is a pause and slight head movement. Golden. For me that's his best delivered line of the film.

The colour green inspires me too – on a base level, cellular almost. Blue perturbs me. I'm not bothered much about the sky or the stars. And the sea... some people can spend a long time looking out at it. I get bored after 10 seconds. It's constantly shifting. I don't trust it. But green woods and hills, I like them a lot.

**Useful teaching tool:** I did a piece for ETp magazine a few years back about having 4 whiteboards in a classroom – one on each wall. My academy let me keep them and they have come with me to several different classrooms and teaching centres since. At some point in the future I may have to go back to a one board set up but for the time being, they have become an integral part of my teaching practice.

**Your favourite lesson:** Woodwork. At school. In 1984. I was eleven. The teacher smoked a pipe in the workshop. He gave us the choice of which hardwood we wanted to work with. He appointed a tea monitor. If the milk in the fridge was off you had to go to the local shop and get some more. If the cup of tea you made him was decent you could make yourself one. Eleven years old, chiselling away on a piece of walnut with a cup of cha on the side. It knocked the spots off sitting behind a desk in rows putting your hand up to answer questions.

**Your favourite bit about your talk:** It's hard to choose between the pyrotechnical effects or the go-go dancers in cages. Seriously though, it's probably the start of the talk - but I mean the very start; eighteen months ago when the first few ideas found their way as scribbles onto café serviettes, the back of electricity bill envelopes or spare photocopies of worksheets. It's the journey from seeing something in class, then thinking about it some more or from thinking about trying something out, tweaking it, taking some photos of the activity in progress and moving on to framing a narrative for the session. That's what enriches my regular working week.

I like giving the actual talks for sure. It's nice to have your say for an hour and it's nice to have everyone in the room listening and understanding something that isn't graded language or the rules for the present perfect continuous but it's the creating

of the session that fuels me. That's what gets me on a bus and into the academy long before my first class starts.

**Six lessons you've learnt while teaching:**

- 1) It doesn't matter how long you've been doing the job, you can't get by without correcting your students work.
- 2) There's a difference between planning and preparing. I can plan a lesson in a minute and a half now, but to set the room up, put my papers in order, get things ready for the little ones, have links and clips ready or audios to hand etc. still takes 20 minutes minimum for each class.
- 3) Some people will say they want to learn a language but everything they do will suggest the opposite.
- 4) Not everyone is equally good at learning languages.
- 5) You can over prepare. If you start too early in the teaching day then there can be nothing left by the time you reach your last class.
- 6) Getting a good night's sleep, regularly, improves your teaching.