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Big FAT Juicy book
of
Teaching ideas
Learning Activities,
&
Educational Games
(that work!) in the
ESL/EFL
CLASSROOM

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The Big Fat Juicy Book of Teaching Ideas, Learning Activities and Educational Games (That Work!) In the ESL / EFL Classroom

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INTRODUCTION

For many, many years, I've been collecting and creating lessons and educational activities. Most of these ideas are written on slips of paper, napkins, backs of envelopes; a few were even recorded on my palm until I could transfer them to paper. I have kept them in an (highly unorganized) accordion file and I'm always adding new ones. One day I decided to try to organize the lesson ideas and this book is the result.

I think of these lessons in my accordion file as my giant toolbox; I use different activities for different needs, students and moods (my own as well as theirs). Using a pair of pliers to drive a nail is as inefficient as using a hammer to turn a screw. The teacher is the Master Builder and the students are the Apprentices, at least that's how I've always thought and taught.

Admittedly, many of the lesson ideas found in this collection are old; they've been around since the earliest cave drawings. They are included here because they are still great lessons even if there are fewer and fewer mastodons to hunt. Others are variations of other common activities found throughout English teaching resources including the internet. Still, many of these lesson ideas have never been published before.

* * *

I've used four criterion for including lessons in this collection. First, each one needs to be educational in some way. Second, the lessons must be fun (for students and teacher alike). Third, since most teachers are busy, each activity should not require a lot of teacher prep time. Fourth, the teaching ideas need to be uniquely different from each other (OK – some of them do overlap a bit, but all of them are different).

The lessons in this collection are organized, roughly, from those requiring the least amount of English language ability (translated: easy!) to those requiring a high amount of English language skill (brain-stretchingly difficult!).

A core element of the arrangement of these lesson ideas is the Apple Coding. This coding relies on both color and count. The lighter the green color of the apple, the less demanding the lesson is in terms of English ability. The darker the apple and the more red, the higher demand of required English skill. To put it bluntly:



The greater majority of these teaching activities have been marked with three or four apples. This means, of course, that the lesson is flexible; it's up to the teacher to adjust the target structure to fit the needs and the abilities of the students.

* * *

The second Apple Coding method is connected to the number of apples; the fewer the apples, the younger the students, the more apples, the greater the maturity. A lesson

with two green apples will be a disaster with high school, university or adult students. On the other hand, a lesson with four or five apples will be a catastrophe for elementary or beginning students of English.

As a rule of thumb, if the number of apples is multiplied by the magic number four, an approximate age level will be the result. (One apple = four years of age, two apples = eight years, three = 12 years, four = sixteen years and five = adult.)

But, there are many exceptions –easily detected by the color of the apples:



Five green apples means that the activity is not difficult at all and that students ranging from very young to adult will enjoy and benefit from the lesson.



Since the first apple on the left is a rather dark green and the last one on the right is a dark red, this lesson would be best suited for high school, university and adult students due to the difficulty.

* * *

In addition to the Apple Coding, the approximate **Time** requirement, the lesson's **Objective** and, in some cases, the material(s) **Needed** for the activities are clearly printed just beneath the apples. With a quick glance at the top of each lesson, the teacher can easily estimate if any particular teaching idea will be appropriate for the class.

To save the teacher valuable preparation time, many of the '**Need**' items have active **URL** links to which the teacher can click, visit, download and print out free teaching materials. Also, scattered throughout this collection of activities are additional **URL** links to free downloadable worksheets from the **EFL4U.com** homepage site.

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ON, ON, ON A PLANE



Time: 5 - 10 minutes (done a couple times a month)

Objective: Playing with prepositions, Competing, Physical activity

Need: Pieces of paper with one preposition written on each ([URL](#))

Before the class begins, the teacher makes preposition words by cutting them out of paper. In class, having all the desks moved out of the way, the students stand in a circle and the teacher places the preposition papers on the floor (but not within the circle).

Then, the teacher calls out one of the prepositions. The first student to run to it and stand on it gets a point. Then the students return to the circle and the teacher calls out another preposition, and so on.

On another occasion, the activity continues as above, but this time, the students need to put the preposition into a short sentence such as: "On, on, on a plane," "In, in, in a house," "Under, under, under a table," etc. In the corner of her eye, the teacher spots Russell who is hollering: "Out, out, out the window," to which she replies: "Get back in here, Russell!" Brenda says: "Let him go!"

The winner is given a point (students keep track of their own points). Then the teacher calls out another and another preposition until the students drop from fatigue (a definite extra merit to this activity!).



HOW EMBARRASSING



Time: 10 - 15 minutes

Objective: Clothing items, Practicing colors, Describing, Listening

Need: Enough sets of clothes for every student (but one) to have two socks, one pair of jeans or shorts, gloves or mittens, a shirt, a scarf and a hat (more if enough sets can be found)

At the beginning of this activity, the teacher introduces all of the items of clothing including their colors then throws them all into a pile on the floor, all jumbled up.

Then, with students sitting in a circle around the clothes, the teacher says: "A mitten, a mitten, a grey mitten." All of the students rush to the pile of clothes and try to get the gray mittens (there are only two gray ones). If they can not acquire a gray one, they need to grab for any color mitten. One student will not be able to find a mitten. Poor guy!

Students return to the circle and the teacher announces the next item: "Jeans, jeans, black jeans," and again the students rush to grab the only pair of black jeans. If already claimed, any color of jeans is OK - but, as before, one student will not have any jeans to wear (thus the title). This activity continues until all of the clothes are gone from the pile and are now being worn by the students.

The winner is the one wearing the most number of correct items. Finally, students describe what they're wearing: "I'm wearing a tan hat, a blue scarf, a yellow T-Shirt, a pair of blue jeans, one pink sock, one white sock, one gray mitten and one green mitten. Etc.



WHO HAS AN F?



Time: 10 minutes (Depends on the number of words created)

Objective: Identifying alphabet letters, Teacher assisted spelling

Need: Alphabet cards ([URL](#))

The students and the teacher sit in a circle (or arc) and each student is given a handful of alphabet cards. Any order is OK, but there should be enough alphabet cards in order for eight to ten simple words to be formed without running out of cards.

The teacher says a word, for example, 'flower,' then says: "Who has the letter 'F'?" One student finds that letter among her cards and says: "I have the letter 'F,'" then she pushes it to the middle of the circle. Then the teacher says: "Who has the letter 'L'?" another student finds the letter and says: "I have the letter 'L,'" and pushes it next to the 'F' in the middle.

Next, the teacher proceeds to the 'O,' the 'W,' the 'E,' and finally the 'R.' Now students can see the word flower written neatly in the middle of the circle. The teacher says the word 'flower' and students repeat the word in unison.

Then the teacher suggests another word and students, as before, find the appropriate letters and push them to the middle where the second word is eventually written.

With each new word, the teacher should begin with the first one and have the students repeat each one: "flower," "table," "sugar," "diamond," etc.



WHO HAS AN F? (Continued)

On another occasion, this activity could be done exactly the same except that the teacher doesn't announce the target word at first. For example, if the target word is 'lemon,' as the letters are laid out, one by one, first the letter 'l,' then the letter 'e,' one student might say 'leather,' and the teacher says: "Sorry, this word isn't leather (but that was a mighty fine guess on your part)."

Another student might suggest: "leopard," and the teacher complements the student on the wonder guess but also says: "Sorry, the word isn't leopard." Russell volunteers: "Leprechaun?" and the teacher says: "Nice word, Russell, but it isn't leprechaun."

Eventually the third letter will be given and students guess, for example: "Lemming?" "Lemur?" "Lemniscus?" until someone eventually guesses: "Is it lemon?" and the teacher says: "Yes, that's right. The word is lemon. Nice thinking!"

The first student to guess 'lemon' gets a point.



A SNACK OR A SNAKE?



Time: 10 - 20 minutes

Objective: Answering questions, Finding a treasure or terror

Need: One small pop-up pup tent (or a large refrigerator box), a rubber snake (anything icky is OK), snacks

In class, the teacher sets up a pup tent in the middle of the classroom and hides one snack and the rubber snake in the tent. The teacher tells the students: "We are camping in the wilderness. And you know, there are all kinds of creatures out there in the wilderness. Somewhere in the tent, you can find a yummy treat, but be careful, there may also be a slimy, yucky ugly rubber snake in there too."

Students will be divided about going into the tent, but since they're pretty sure the teacher wouldn't allow them to be real snake bait, their appetite for a snack will usually prevail.

The teacher then says: "The first person to answer the question correctly can go into the tent, OK?" Students will be warily looking at the tent, but with growing excitement. The teacher asks the first question, for example: "What forest animal is brown with white spots, has antlers and eats grass?"

The first student to say: "A deer," is the lucky one who can now go into the tent. Crawling on all fours, the student enters the tent. While there, the teacher asks: "Carmine, can you see a snack or a snake?" and Carmine replies: "Not yet," "I see a snack," or "I see a snake!" If she says she sees a snack, the teacher says: "OK, pick it up carefully and come out of the



A SNACK OR A SNAKE? (Continued)

tent." If she sees a snake, the teacher says: "Oh no, come out of the tent now before it bites you!"

Afterward, the teacher puts another snack somewhere in the tent and begins the activity all over. "What kind of dog never bites?" and Russell is the first to answer: "A hotdog!"

Like a shot, Russell dives into the tent. All's quiet for a moment and then the pup tent starts rattling and shaking about and a bloodcurdling scream pours out of the tent. Then it's quite once more and Russell comes out of the tent with the snake's head in his mouth and the rest of it in a strangulation grip around his neck. Guess that's the end of this activity, at least for today.

[Question and answer style lessons are the mainstay of most English learning classrooms, but the simple addition of a tent, a snack and a snake make it not only exciting, but spurs the students to a real life simulation - a lesson with intent!]



IT'S WARM AND SUNNY TODAY



Time: 10 - 15 minutes

Objective: Reviewing 'above,' 'below,' 'to the left,' 'to the right,'
Prepositions, Ordinals, Listening, Competing

Prior to the beginning of class, the teacher writes an appropriately difficult sentence. The sentence should have at least two (or three?) lines. For example, the sentence might be:

It was cold and windy yesterday,
but today it is warm and sunny and
tomorrow will be warm but cloudy.

OR

There's nothing in life worth doing
unless it's worth doing well.

In class, the teacher explains: "This is a competition between teams. I'm going to tell you to write letters of the alphabet, but you need to write them in exactly the position I tell you to. Some of the letters will need to be written above another, some below,, some to the left and some to the right. Ready?"

Then the students are divided into two relay-style teams. The teacher divides the blackboard into a left side for one team and a right side for the other. Using the first example sentence above for this explanation, the teacher writes the letter 'a' exactly in the middle of each side (which is



IT'S WARM AND SUNNY TODAY (Continued)

the letter 'a' in the word 'warm' in the second line).

The first student in each team has a piece of chalk. Then the teacher says to the first student in both teams: "Write an 'r' to the right of the letter 'a.'" Students dash to the blackboard and write the letter 'r' to the right of the letter 'a,' and return to the back of their relay team.

Then, the teacher says: "Write an 'e' below the 'a'" and students run to the board and write an 'e' below the 'a.'" (This letter 'e' is from the word 'be' in the third line below the word 'warm.')

Students return to their teams and go to the back of the line.

Next, the teacher says: "Write a 'w' to the left of the 'a,'" and students run to the board and write a 'w.' Then the teacher instructs the next students to write a 'w' above the 'a,' and the next students write an 'i' above the 'm,' etc.

Because there are spaces between the word, the teacher merely needs to say: "Leave a space to the left of the 'w' in the first line and write a 'd' to the left of the space, etc.

Additional preposition could also be used, for example: "Write an 'i' between the 'l' in the first line and the second 'w' in the third line," OR "Write an 'n' between the 'r' in the first line and the 'c' in the third line," etc.

Letter by letter, the words will start to form (and the students will begin to tire out). The first team to finish the sentence accurately is the winner; then all of the students crash into their seats for a well deserved rest.



RUNNING OUT OF STUFF



Time: 5 - 10 minutes

Objective: Simple Q & A, Listening, Working with the phrase
'ran out of'

Starting this lesson with a bang, the teacher shouts: "Oh no, there aren't any cookies left!" Students should be encouraged to repeat the sentence. Better yet, they should turn it into a question: "Aren't there any cookies left?"

Either way, the teacher confirms their statement or question by saying: "We ran out of cookies two days ago." Then the teacher hollers: "Oh no, there isn't any juice left!" Students either repeat or say it in a question: "Isn't there any juice left?" and the teacher confirms: "That's right. We ran out of juice three days ago."

The goal of this lesson is to get the students to say phrases with 'ran out of.' So, the teacher says: "Oh no. There aren't any ice cubes left!" Hopefully, by now, at least a few of the students will say: "That's right. We ran out of ice cubes four days ago."

At this point, the teacher could ask students for things; one student might say: "Oh no. There isn't any candy left!" and the other students say: "That's right. We ran out of candy five days ago."

As students are leaving class, Russell whisks past the teacher and says: "Too bad, teach, there isn't any time left. We ran out of time and I'm running outta here!"



ANIMAL CRACKERS



Time: 15 - 20 minutes

Objective: Q & A, Listening, Animal body parts

Need: A box of animal crackers

Students, in pairs, are given one different animal cracker each which they must not show to their partner. They try to guess what the animal is: "Does it have four legs?" "Is it dangerous?" "Does it have a tail?" "Is it big?" etc.

When an animal is identified "Is it a tiger?" the animal cracker needs to be eaten, right? So the student bites off a part of the animal. Now the partner needs to find out what was bitten off: "Did you bite off the head?" "Did you bite off the front legs?"

Every time the answer is: "Yes, I did," the student takes another bite until there's nothing left of the animal cracker.

The activity could end here or the students run up to the teacher for a new animal cracker.

For review with simple pronouns, students first identify whether their animal is male or female. Then, the questions would be worded: "Did you bite off her tail?" "Did you bite off his front right leg?" "Did you bite off her head?" etc.



ANIMAL PAIRS



Time: 10 - 15 minutes (depends on the number of rounds)

Objective: Finding a partner, Q & A, Listening

Depending on the age of the students, there are a variety of targets that this activity can elicit. For younger learners, practicing or reviewing vegetables, animals, colors, etc., would be appropriate.

For older (even adult) learners, reviewing or practicing careers, synonyms, geography, etc., would be in order.

The following explanation targets younger learners. The teacher whispers the name of an animal (cow, pig, bear, raccoon, eagle, etc.), to each student; two students are told the same animal.

Then, students mingle among themselves asking 'Yes' 'No' questions to find their partner: "Are you large?" "Do you have four legs?" "Can you fly?" "Do you eat people?" "Do people eat you?" etc.

The pair of students who find each other first are the winners.

This activity can easily be adopted to assist students with the target on other kinds of categories: weather words, clothing items, jobs, vegetables, etc. For adults, categories could include famous paintings, composers, sport teams, medicines, careers, etc.



GREEN THINGS



Time: 10 - 15 minutes (depends on the number of students)

Objective: Practice with 'there is' & 'there are,' Reviewing colors

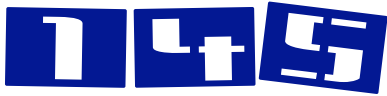
The teacher thrusts her head out of the window for dramatic effect and says to the class: "Wow!. There are many green things out there! There is a green bus, a green umbrella, many green trees, a green sweater and a green traffic light."

Then the teacher invites one of the students to see how many blue things they can see in 10 seconds of window head thrusting. The student returns to the front of the room and the teacher asks: "What blue things did you see?"

The student says (with editorial help from the teacher): "There is blue sky," (the teacher corrects): "There is a blue sky," "there is blue cars," (corrected): "There are blue cars," "there is a blue jeans," (teacher): "There are blue jeans," "and there are blue flowers."

The teacher invites another student to see what brown things she can see out of the window (the things should be out of the window, not the student!) and after 10 seconds she reports back (with grammatical help from the teacher).

For speaking practice, the whole class could be encouraged to repeat - in unison - each item as corrected by the teacher.



USING THE BEAN



Time: 10 minutes

Objective: Numbers, Listening, Ordinals, Articles, Competing

Need: Copies of the same calendar, one per student (or pairs of students), beans (or any kind of tokens)

This activity works best near the middle of the month. All students receive a copy of the calendar and the teacher tells students to put a bean (coin, token) on today's date on the calendar (for example's sake, say the 15th).

The teacher confirms that all students have put their tokens on the 15th. Then the teacher says, "put your bean on tomorrow," The students say: "That's the 16th." Then the teacher says: "Put your bean on yesterday," and students say: "That's the 14th." "Put your bean on the day after tomorrow," and students say: "That's the 17th."

The teacher can instruct all kinds of places on the calendar including: "Four days from now," "Last Friday," "Ten days ago," "The last day of the month," "The Monday before last," etc.

Each time, students need to say the date, for example: "That's the 8th," "That's the 23rd," "That's the 19th," etc.

If the students are in groups, this could be a competitive activity; the first group to place its bean on the right day gets a point.



SPELLING DASH



Time: 15 - 20 minutes

Objective: Spelling, Writing, Relay, Physical activity

Need: Cards with pictures ([URL](#))

The class is divided into two (or three) groups. Students stand in a line, relay style, at the back of the room (all furniture having been cleared).

The teacher holds up a picture card and the teams of students compete against each other to be the first to spell whatever the picture is. But, there's a catch. Since this is a relay, the first student from each team must run to the blackboard, write the first letter of the word, dash to the back of the room, hand the piece of chalk to the second student in the team who then rushes to the blackboard and writes the second letter of the word, and so on.

Teams are allowed to coach their mates if they have written the wrong letter while spelling the word.

This could also be done with sentences; the teacher says a simple sentence two or three times so that all students have memorized it. Then the first student in each relay team writes the first word, the second student writes the second word, and so on.

The fastest (and most accurate) team is the winner.



DOG FIGHTS



Time: 15 - 20 minutes

Objective: Q & A, Reviewing anything, Writing

Need: Blunt-nosed paper airplanes

Perhaps it's an international axiom, students shy away from answering questions posed by the teacher. This activity aims to reverse that trend; the teacher sends paper airplanes to the students. Written somewhere on the inside of the plane is a question.

The student who catches the paper airplane reads the question aloud and answers it as well. Then the student writes a new question on the plane and sails it off to another student.

Soon, paper airplanes will be as thick as confetti and students will be busy either reading, writing, tossing or catching paper airplanes.

A more silent version would be to have the students write out the answers and sail the paper airplane back to the teacher.

The teacher could encourage the students to write their own questions and send them off to another student (or the teacher) in class. What normally is a stressful Q & A class completely changes with the simple addition of adding a physical action like throwing paper airplanes around the room.



THEY'RE NOT MINE



Time: 10 minutes

Objective: Working with possessive pronouns, Q & A, Listening

Need: A pair of (bulky) socks, freshly washed

Students sit in circle. The teacher pulls out a balled pair of socks from the desk, holds it up to his nose and feigns asphyxiation from the pretended fumes. Then he asks the students: "Are these stinky socks yours?" If they are not tongue tied from fear, excitement and anticipation, they should reply: "No, they're not mine!"

Then the teacher asks another student: "Are they Serena's stinky socks?" Students reply: "No, they aren't hers." Then the teacher asks: "Are they Ramon's stinky socks?" And students reply: "No, they aren't his!" The teacher asks: "Are they John and Dorn's stinky socks?" The students say: "No, they aren't theirs!" "Are they yours and mine?" and students say: "No, they're not ours!"

When this part is going smoothly, it's time to change the activity.

Hamming it up as much as he likes, the teacher says: "Well, I know they're not mine!" and tosses the socks (gently, of course) to one of the students. She must say: "They're not mine!" faster than the student on her left or right can say: "They're not hers!" If she is faster, she simply tosses the socks to another student across the circle who then must say: "They're not mine!" faster than the students on the left and right can say: "They're not his!"



THEY'RE NOT MINE (Continued)

If the student holding the socks is slower than either the student on the left or right, she must take a huge whiff of the socks, stick out her tongue, roll her eyes and collapse on the floor, dead.

But only momentarily. She can recover, sit up, shake the vapors out of her nostrils and then toss the socks across the circle to another student.

If two students catch the socks, then the students on the left and right must say: "They're not theirs!" faster than the two students holding the socks can say: "They're not ours!"



BROKEN LINKS



Time: 20 - 30 minutes

Objective: Writing, Q & A, Listening

Need: Strips of paper, glue or tape

In groups of four or five, students work together to write one question per slip of paper. The questions should be personal such as: "What did you eat for breakfast?" "How do you spell my name?" "How much money do you have?" etc.

After groups have written three questions, the teacher shows the students how to curl the strips into rings (with the questions on the inside). Then, as each ring is added, a chain begins to form.

Once all of the slips have been linked to the chain, and the ends of the chain have been connected, the activity is ready to begin.

Without looking at the hidden questions, one student randomly picks one of the links in the chain and breaks it free. The broken chain is given to another student to repair with glue or tape. The student with the link then asks anyone in the group the question written on the paper.

Then another student removes another link from the chain, the chain is repaired and the question is asked to someone in the group. The process continues until all the links in the chain have been used.



ALPHABET DICTATION



Time: 20 minutes (depends on the students' and teacher's patience)
Objective: Ice breaker, Recognizing spelled words

When parents don't want their young children to know what they're discussing, they often resort to spelling: "Did you B-U-Y the B-I-R-T-H-D-A-Y P-R-E-S-E-N-T yet?"

This activity is fun yet it helps students to mentally connect the letters of the alphabet as spelled out into actual words.

The students should be discouraged from writing anything during this activity. Once the teacher has explained the gist of this lesson, he should begin by spelling out a common greeting such as: H-I C-L-A-S-S, H-O-W A-R-E Y-O-U? With a little patience, someone will usually reply with I A-M F-I-N-E A-N-D Y-O-U? (If no one replies, the teacher just repeats the original spelled message.

After receiving a reply, the activity continues: I A-M E-X-C-E-L-L-E-N-T. W-H-A-T- D-I-D Y-O-U H-A-V-E F-O-R L-U-N-C-H T-O-D-A-Y.

And on and on until it's enough. As a variation and once students are getting faster at this, the teacher could spell out a short joke, literally.

If the joke is funny, students might actually laugh at the punch line (of course, they should laugh by spelling H-A, H-A, H-A!).



ESTHER LEFT FIRST



Time: 15 - 20 minutes

Objective: Ice breaker, Learning classmates' names, Thinking quickly

The class sits in a circle and students say their first and last names (if the others don't already know). Then one student calls to another student and says: "Esther, Left! First!" Esther must say the first name of the student on her left, for example: "Julianne."

If Esther says the correct name, then she does the same with another student: "Raul, Right! Last!" and Raul must say the last name of the student on his right, for example: "Kranston."

If students take too long to reply (maximum of ten seconds, if they get the name wrong or say the name of the wrong student) they need to stand up (but remain in the activity).

The last person sitting is the winner. If many students are standing early on, (because they don't know the names of the others), this activity should be done a second or third time; this will help reinforce the memory of everyone's names.

Once students are pros at names, the teacher tells them to continue with the following pattern: "Wendy, Right! Last. Wendy, Left! First!" and Wendy says the last name of the student on her right and the first name of the student on her left.



SOUTH PAW PENMANSHIP



Time: 10 - 30 minutes (depends on the number of sentences called out)

Objective: Ice breaker, Listening, Writing, Physical activity

The teacher divides the class into three relay style teams (standing in lines facing the blackboard). The first student from each team approaches the board, chalk in hand, and prepares to write with their left hand (or right hand for southpaws).

The teacher says a sentence and the students compete against each other to be the first to write the sentence accurately, (and more or less legibly) on the board. Correct spelling is important.

If the sentence has errors, the other members of the relay team can shout out tidbits of advice. The writer looks to the teacher for either a 'thumbs up' or 'thumbs down,' to confirm the accuracy of their writing.

When all of the writers have a correctly spelled and grammatically accurate sentence, the teacher awards 3 points to the writer with the best southpaw scrawl, 2 points to the second best scratching and 1 point to the student with the worst penmanship.

The writers return to the back of the lines and the second student from each team approaches the board. The teacher says a different sentence and students compete against each other to write the sentence accurately and legibly.



SOUTH PAW PENMANSHIP (Continued)

The winner is the team with the most points at the end of the activity.

A variation of the above, but much more active (and fun!) is for the teacher to say a sentence with as many words as students in the relay team (teams must have an equal number of students). If the teams have seven students the teacher's sentence could be: "Giraffe's are mild mannered denizens of Africa."

Then, the first student in each relay team dashes to the board, writes the first word of the sentence 'Giraffe's' with their left hand, looks to the teacher for a spelling 'thumbs up,' then dashes to the end of the relay team.

Then the second student races to the blackboard and writes the second word 'are.' If a 'thumbs up' from the teacher, that student runs to the back of the line and the third student makes a bee line for the board, and so on.

If the first student has trouble with the word 'Giraffe's,' teammates may, of course, offer advice. Eventually someone will get it right and the other struggling spellers will see it written correctly on the board.

The first team to accurately write the complete sentence is declared the winner.



FINGERTIP PAIRS



Time: 20 - 30 minutes

Objective: Parts of speech, Spelling, Creating sentences, Matching

Students think of two 5-letter words, one adjective the other a noun (no proper nouns). They do not need to be related to each other, for example: 'happy / broom,' 'rainy / angel,' 'quiet / tiger,' etc.

Using a marker, pen or pencil, students write the adjective on their fingertip pads of their left hand and the noun on their right, one letter per finger. When ready, all students begin to mill around the class, left hands trying to meet a right hand, and right hands meeting left hands. The object is to pair one adjective with one noun and create a reasonable sentence.

For example, if one student has the adjective 'happy' printed on her left hand fingers, she may find another student with the noun 'tiger' printed on his right hand fingers. Students press their fingertips together (one student's left hand and another student's right hand) thus creating the two words 'happy' and 'tiger.'

Now the students create a sentence using these two words: "I'm as happy as a tiger eating a lamb," "When the tiger escaped from the zoo, she was really happy," "My cat's name is Tiger and she's always happy," etc.



FINGERTIP PAIRS (Continued)

While the two hands remain in contact, students try to find a match for their other hand. The second match needs to be with another student. When a match is found, another sentence needs to be made.

Eventually, all of the students will be spread out into a large circle with all of the students pressing their left hands against the right hands of another student and vice versa.

Once the whole class is in a circle, each pair of students with their hands in contact say the created sentence. Going around the circle may sound like this: "I'm as happy as a tiger eating a lamb," "The groom at the wedding was as quiet as a broom," "It was so rainy that the angel couldn't fly," etc.

(As an extension of this activity, on another day, students think of four 5-letter words, one a verb, one an adverb, one a noun and one an adjective. Then students write the verb on the fingertip pads of their left hand, the adverb on the fingertips of their right hand, the noun on the toe pads of their left foot..... on the other hand, forget this idea.)



EATING MY WORDS



Time: 20 minutes

Objective: Spelling, Requesting

Need: Cans of Alphabet soup, table spoons, paper towels

Sometimes, getting one's fingers all gooey and sticky can be fun. Students, in groups of four, each have a spoon, a wet paper towel in front of them as well as a bowl of cold alphabet soup (most of the liquid drained and vegetables removed) in the middle of the table.

Students fill their spoons with alphabet soup letters and dumps them on the paper towel. Then they try to make sentences (or questions) from the letters. In most cases, students will need some additional letters to complete their sentences and they may have quite a few unwanted letters as well.

Students then ask to trade some of their unwanted letters for other needed letters: "Samantha, I'll give you an 'R' for an 'E,' OK?" Samantha may not want an 'R,' or she may want to keep her 'E,' so she says: "No thanks, I don't need an 'R' and I want to keep my 'Es.'" Or, Samantha could simply say: "OK," and the students exchange the letters.

The first student to finish a sentence is the winner and then eats the words or all students put them back into the bowl (before they've been eaten!) and the activity begins again.



CARRIER PIGEONS



Time: 15 - 20 minutes

Objective: Writing, Q & A, Flying, Delivering messages, Physical activity

Need: Lots of small slips of paper and rubber bands

The class is divided into three groups, one group stands or sits on one side of the room, the other on the other side and the third group stands in the middle. Each of the students in the third group is given a rubber band to attach on her wrist.

The teacher gives all of the students on the opposite sides of the room a bunch of slips of paper (about 8 or 10 slips of paper) to each.

The teacher explains that the students with the rubber bands are 'carrier pigeons' who will deliver messages back and forth from one side of the room to the other. Messages need to be folded and placed under the rubber bands on the wrists of the 'carrier pigeons.'

When the teacher says "Go!" all of the students with slips of paper write a message to someone on the other side of the room and then calls for a pigeon to pick up the message (they shout out the pigeon's name).

The pigeon swoops down to the message writer, has the slip of paper snapped in place under the rubber band, and the writer tells who the message is for: "Fly this message to Guinevere, OK," then the pigeon (cooing) soars off to the other side of the room to deliver the message.



CARRIER PIGEONS (Continued)

Since there are twice as many message writers as pigeons, the pigeons will become very busy (and tired!) but that's the hard life of a carrier pigeon.

The teacher could be the malevolent / benevolent hunter and when a pigeon looks about to drop from exhaustion, the hunter shoots the tired pigeon who can then return to his seat for a richly deserved break.

This activity works just fine without a specific language target, but it also will work well if students are given a target to shoot at (not the pigeons!). For example: Inviting everyone to a party, Planning a dance, Finding out what everyone had for breakfast, Detailing their summer vacation plans, etc.



WRONG IS RIGHT



Time: 10 - 15 minutes

Objective: Fluency, Q & A quickly, Tag questions, Listening

Students stand in a circle. One student, Nicky, stands in the middle and points to or addresses students in random order. She asks tag questions as quickly as possible (she can not repeat a question) and others must answer as quickly as possible.

But the answerer can not answer the question correctly, it must be an inaccurate answer.

Typical tag questions could include: "Today's Thursday, right?" If, in fact, today is Thursday, the answerer needs to say: "No, it isn't." Then Nicky points to another student and asks: "You're 18 years old, aren't you?" If that student is 17, she would need to say: "Yes, that's correct."

Nicky points to another and says: "My name's Keith, isn't it?" and Keith says: "Yes, you name's Keith." etc. Also, negative tag questions work well: "You aren't a girl, are you?" "Your blouse isn't orange, is it?" "You don't have 11 fingers, do you?" etc.

Students must answer within three seconds (the others in the group are the judges); if a student takes too long to respond, messes up the grammar or answers correctly, that student steps into the middle to replace the first student.



A MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE



Time: Many, many years

Objective: Writing, Reading, Q & A, Waiting

Need: Empty bottles (PET bottles work well), enough for every student in class

The teacher asks if anyone has ever heard of a message in a bottle. A brief explanation might be useful for students who aren't familiar with this unreliable yet romantic means of communication.

Then the teacher sets aside five minutes for students to compose their own message to be placed in a bottle. It might be best if students write as if they were someone other than themselves. The message usually includes some kind of brief introduction, likes and dislikes, a few questions for the finder and, of course, the date.

Students can use any date they like because in a few moments, these bottled messages are going to be set adrift in the ocean and who knows how long it will take for them to be found.

When finished, the teacher hands each student an empty bottle, the message is inserted and the bottle is 'sealed.' Then all of the bottles are thrown into the ocean (if there isn't an ocean nearby, a plastic garbage bag will do).

Students then pick out a bottle from the ocean, unseal it, read the message and write a response. The response and the original message



A MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE (Continued)

are then put back into the bottle, resealed, and thrown back into the ocean.

Miraculously, after many, many years, the message with the accompanying response finds its way back to the original sender (students search through the other bottles to find their own), and read the response.

If interest in this activity still has any life left, the teacher could then ask students to mill around the room to find the person who wrote the response. This can often be fun because the person who wrote the response will probably not know the identity of the original sender.

The teacher could invite any pair of students with a particularly interesting message and response to read their correspondence to the rest of the class.



AN ELEPHANT UNDER A THIMBLE



Time: 10 - 20 minutes (depends how many things there are)

Objective: Q & A, Listening, Working with 'There is,' 'This vs. That'

Need: Four to six thimbles

The teacher aligns the thimbles on her desk and tells the students, pointing to the first thimble: "There's an animal under this thimble." Students ask 'Yes' 'No' questions to discover what the animal is: "Does it have four legs?" "Does it eat meat," "Does it live in the desert," etc.

If students get stumped, the teacher offers a hint: "It has big ears," "It has a long nose," "It's really big," "It's native to India, Thailand and Africa," etc.

Once students have discovered what animal is under the thimble, the focus turns to the second thimble and so on.

When finished, and for review, the teacher points to the first thimble and asks: "What's under this one?" Students say: "There's an elephant under that thimble," and so on.

For a much more difficult lesson, the teacher could have abstract items such as freedom, honesty, peace, evil, etc. Students ask 'Yes' 'No' questions to discover what is under each thimble.

For example: "Does it have anything to do with politics?" "Is it related to space travel?" "Is this something I would think is a good thing?" etc.



DICTIONARY (What's wrong?)



Time: 10 - 20 minutes

Objective: Spelling, Competing, Prepositions, Ordinals, Competing

The class is divided into three (or four) teams. The teacher writes one slightly difficult word on the blackboard, but the word has one letter missing (dictionary could be dictinary, library could be libary, superstition could be suprstition, etc.

The first student to say the missing letter (for dictinary the answer is 'o,') so the student says: "The missing letter of dictionary is an 'o,'" and her teams gets a point.

A bit more difficult variation is to misspell a word (dictionery) and students race to be the first to correct the spelling: "The 'e' should be an 'a' in dictionary." After each word is corrected, it's erased and the teacher writes a new one on the board.

To raise the difficulty of this activity, the teacher writes a sentence on the board with many of the words being misspelled. For example, the sentence might be something like: Last Febuary, fourty eight meckanics held a convintion in Shicago.

The first student to find all the errors gets a point for her team: "There should be an 'r' between the 'b' and 'u' of February, the 'u' between the 'o' and 'r' in forty is wrong, the 'k' in mechanics should be an 'h,' the first 'i' in convention should be an 'e,' and the first letter of Chicago should be a capital letter 'C.'



GETTING A HANDLE



Time: 5 - 10 minutes

Objective: Ice breaker, Thinking quickly, Competing

This is a very quick activity which can be used as a warm-up activity to another lesson or for an easy way to separate students into groups.

To begin, the teacher says: "Tell me things that have a handle." Students say, for example: "A door," "A cabinet," "A briefcase," "A shovel," "A fork," "A guitar case," etc.

The teacher may want to insist that the answers are in complete sentences: "A door has a handle," "A bucket has a handle," "A briefcase has a handle," etc.

This can be a competition-style lesson; the first group of students to think of ten things with a handle would be the winner. Or, as a whole-class activity, the challenge is to think of as many items with handles as they can within two minutes without repeating any of the items.

On other occasions, the teacher asks for things with a 'plug,' a 'spring,' a 'hinge,' a 'knob,' a 'lid,' an 'arm,' etc.



ODD WORD OUT



Time: 20 - 30 minutes

Objective: Reading, Thinking, Competing

The teacher divides the class into three (or more) teams and writes four words (hidden from the students) on the blackboard. One of them will not 'fit with the others. For example: owl, eagle, penguin, sparrow / piano, guitar, violin, trumpet / train, car, truck, bus, etc.

Then, still covering the four words, the teacher says: "Go!" and students compete to be the first to identify the 'odd' word. If the four words are: 'owl, eagle, penguin, sparrow,' one may say: 'penguin.' The teacher asks: "Why did you say 'penguin?'" and the student says: "Because a penguin is the only one who can't fly."

Another student may also say 'penguin,' and the teacher asks: "Why did you say 'penguin?'" She might say: "Because a penguin is the only one who keeps its young in a pouch rather than a nest."

Other students may have other answers. For each different and accurate answer, students get a point for their teams. The first team to reach 15 points is the winner.

At times, a team may identify the 'odd' word, but it may not be the same one the teacher had in mind. In cases like this, the teacher asks: "Why did you say that word?"



ODD WORD OUT (Continued)

If students can put up a reasonable defense, the teacher could give them a point (or two!) for creativity.

For example, with the four words: train, car, truck, bus, the obvious choice would be 'train,' because it can't go anywhere except for where the rails lead it, it's usually not publicly owned, it usually doesn't have rubber tires, it goes from station to station, etc.

Perhaps a group said: "car." The teacher asks: "Why did you say that?" And students could explain, for example: "A car is the smallest," or "A car only has four tires but a truck, train and bus can have many more," etc.



TOO MUCH



Time: 20 - 30 minutes

Objective: Listening, Working with non-count nouns

Students, in groups of five or six, sit in a circle. One student begins by saying: "I have too much (something)." The student on the right says the same thing but with a different object. For example, the first student might say: "I have too much energy," the second student might say: "I have too much emotion," the third student says: "I have too much free time," etc.

The goal is to be the first team to go around the group two (three?) times. But there are rules: First, no object may be repeated. Second, students must respond within 15 seconds. Third, students may not misuse the non-countable object, for instance: "I have too much friends," is clearly an error.

If a student breaks any of the above rules, the group must begin at the beginning once more (second time they do this is much faster).

The winning group, (the one to complete two cycles first) should then repeat their performance for the rest of the class.

The above activity is equally rewarding to use the following expressions: 'I don't have enough (something),' 'I have too many (something)' and 'I have too few (somethings),' 'I have too little (something).'



TEACHER'S DIARY



Time: 20 - 30 minutes

Objective: Discussing, Listening, Writing, Q & A, Humiliating the teacher

This can be a really fun and unexpectedly revealing lesson, not only for the teacher but for the students as well. The teacher begins by explaining this activity: "Imagine that you have recently found my personal and very private diary; one I kept ten (twenty? thirty? fifty?) years ago when I was a wild college student.

Of course, I don't know that you have found it and I definitely don't remember anything I wrote so long ago. For the next 15 minutes or so, I want you to 'write' three days of entries in my old college diary. Later you'll have a chance to read them to the class. OK?"

Students are paired and try their skill at 'recreating' the life of their teacher so many years ago. The results can often be shocking, embarrassing, rude and enlightening, but they will surely be interesting.

After students have finished writing, pairs read the diary entries to the immense entertainment of the others at the expense of the poor old teacher.



SPEECH DARTS



Time: 20 - 40 minutes (depends on the students energy level)

Objective: Making short speeches, Competing

Need: Toy Velcro Dart game

The teacher divides the class into teams (the more teams, the longer the activity). On the dartboard, the teacher tapes speech topics around the circumference (travel, food, superstars, soft, green icky things, etc.).

Students stand a predetermined distance from the dartboard and take turns throwing a dart. If the score is under 10, the 'thrower' must talk for 30 seconds (or more?) about the topic indicated by the dart (assuming the dart actually hit the board!).

If the score is over ten, the 'thrower' can command another student to talk for 30 seconds about the topic. If the student gets a Bull's Eye, she can command the teacher to talk for 30 seconds about the topic (or, in this case, assign the teacher a new topic such as: "Tell us about your first date.").

If a student misses the dartboard all together, the class should have some prearranged penalty (sing a song, hop around the room like a kangaroo, write his name on the blackboard with his foot, etc.).



WHERE ARE WE?



Time: 20 - 30 minutes

Objective: Discussing, Writing, Presenting, Listening, Q & A

In pairs, students think of a location (the more unique, the better) and then they write a four line dialogue that might be heard at this location, but the actual location can not be said.

For example, if the location is in a Laundromat, the dialogue might sound like this: A: "Do you have enough coins?" B: "I think so, enough to do most of it." A: "How long do you think it will take?" B: "Probably 30 minutes for each one."

One pair comes to the front of the class and reads the dialogue, the other students guess where this conversation is taking place by asking 'Yes' 'No' questions such as: "Are you in a restaurant?" "Are you in a gasoline service station?" "Are you at an amusement park?"

The student who correctly guesses the location gets a point. Then another pair comes to the front and the activity continues as above.

Rather than simple questions and answers, students could be encouraged to follow up each question by asking, for example: "Why do you think we are in a restaurant?" to which the student must explain: "Well, you said something about how long it will take, so I thought you might be waiting for your order."



THE KEYS TO LIFE



Time: 20 - 30 minutes

Objective: Q & A, Describing, Listening, Explaining

In groups of three students, one of them, Lorna, pulls out her keys (everyone in the world has keys in her bag or pocket, right?) One of the students points to one of the keys and asks: "What's this key for?" Lorna begins to explain what that particular key is for. "This is my bicycle key."

Others ask additional questions to learn more information about Lorna, by asking about the key, questions such as: "How old is your bicycle?" "What kind of bicycle is it?" "Did you ride it here today?" "Where do you usually park it?" "How often do you ride it?"

When no one has anything else to ask Lorna about her bicycle key, another student points to another's key and the process continues.

Almost certainly, a couple of students will have keys that they no longer have any use for, the Q & A about them can be hilarious.

The amount and duration of this simple lesson can be amazing, not only for the teacher but also for the students.

Students should also ask about the key ring or key holder (if any) because these often have very interesting histories as well.



MYSTERY GUEST



Time: 15 - 20 minutes

Objective: Interviewing, Q & A, Listening, Guessing, Competing

The teacher invites someone not from the class (a janitor, a friend or relative of the teacher, a cafeteria worker, the principal, etc.), to come to the classroom. This person needs to be completely hidden or disguised so that students can not recognize (or see?) him. Students ask 'Yes' 'No' questions to identify who this person is; "Do you work at this school?" "Are you older than 30?" "Do you know any of the students in this room?" "Do you drive a navy blue Volvo?" "Have you worked here more than ten years?" "Are you related to the teacher?" etc.

The student who makes the actual correct guess is the winner.

This kind of activity can be repeated occasionally with different 'Mystery Guests;' an interesting side effect is that if the 'Mystery Guests' are school employees, they are seldom noticed by the students. Once attention is drawn to this person as a 'Mystery Guest,' students will be sure to notice him from that moment on and may even offer casual greetings.

[If the classroom is equipped with a telephone with a speaker phone, this will work nearly as well.]



DATING ETIQUETTE TEST



Time: 20 - 30 minutes

Objective: Discussing, Writing, Listening, Q & A, Guessing, Competing

Students sit in pairs and discuss and write down ten multiple choice questions that involve dating etiquette. Each question should have four possible answers.

For example: Question 1: On a first date, do you think the boy should...

a) ask the girl to marry him? b) take her to a public library? c) tell the girl everything he likes about sports? d) be polite and mannerly?

When the pairs have finished creating their dating etiquette tests, one pair comes to the front of the class and administers its test to the other students BUT the correct answer should not be given yet.

The other students keep track of their answers (a, b, c or d). After all of the questions have been asked, the presenting pair asks the class: "Who thinks the answer to the first question is 'a'?" "Who thinks the answer is 'b'?" etc. Students indicate their guesses by raising a hand. After all four possible answers have been voted on, the pair administering the test reveals the answer. Students who chose correctly get one point each.

There may times when an ambiguous or controversial answer rears its head. In that case, students should defend their choices through discussion (debate, argument?). The student(s) with the most points is announced as the winner.



CLASSROOM GARAGE SALE



Time: 20 - 30 minutes

Objective: Listening, Q & A, Persuading, Competing

Need: Play money

A week or so prior to this lesson, the teacher announces that the class is going to have a 'classroom garage sale' and students need to bring three things from home to sell. On the day of the sale, students display their goods and put prices on the three items they are selling.

The teacher gives everyone about \$100 and tells the students that they need to sell all three items as well as buy three other items from the other students. "But," explains the teacher: "before you can actually buy an item, you must ask the seller three questions about the item. For example: "How old is it?" "Where did you get it?" "Why don't you want it anymore?" "Do you have any more of these," etc.

Finally, after the three questions have been asked and answered, you should try to negotiate for a cheaper price."

At this point, the teacher invites a 'volunteer' to negotiate with her:

Teacher: "How much do you want for that pair of ski gloves?"

Student: "I'd like five dollars."

Teacher: "Hmm. How about three?"

Student: "OK, four."



CLASSROOM GARAGE SALE (Continued)

Teacher: "OK, four dollars if you include this scarf."

Student: "It's a deal."

When students understand the *Garage Sale* concept and how to negotiate, the teacher adds the final instruction: "At the end of the garage sale, the student with the most money will be declared the winner. Ready? Go!"

The teacher should monitor the students to be sure that they are asking three questions about each item before making a purchase and doing their best at negotiating.

If time remains, the teacher could ask each student for a report; students, one at a time, explain what they sold (and for how much) and what they bought (and for how much and why they wanted these three items).



SOLOMON'S TIME



Time: 20 - 30 minutes

Objective: Listening, Persuading, Competing, Explaining

Need: A timer or a stopwatch

The class is divided into two or three teams (or more - but with more teams, this activity becomes increasingly difficult to manage). The teacher explains the nature of this lesson: "The object is to have the whole class agree on a specific time, any time is OK, but the whole class must be unanimous.

I'm going to say some everyday actions such as having breakfast, doing homework, going to bed, etc. Each team can call out any typical time for the everyday activity, but then everyone must agree on just one time.

If, for example, I say 'eat breakfast,' and Team Number 1 says '7:30,' Team Number 2 says '7:00,' and Team Number 3 says '8:00,' then we have three different times. Only one time can be accepted so the teams need to try to persuade the other teams to accept their time. The team whose time is agreed upon gets a point.

But there's one teensy weensy little catch, the whole class only has one minute to agree, if no single time can be agreed upon, no team can get a point. Ready?"

Now the teacher calls out some common, everyday activity such as "Read the newspaper," and starts the timer. One team may shout out '6:30,' another may say '5:15,' and another might say '11:00.' Any of these times



SOLOMON'S TIME (Continued)

are OK - but only one of them will count as a whole class answer. To do that, students, within one minute, need to try to convince the other groups of the merits of their selected time.

They may say, for example: "People always read the newspaper early in the morning, usually around 6:30." Another group might counter with: "I think people read the newspaper when they come home from school or work so 5:15 is a more reasonable time.

Since the clock is ticking, groups need to come to a conclusion as quickly as possible or no team will get a point.

If the whole class agrees to go with '6:30' above, the team that first said the time gets a point.

Then the teacher continues with another daily activity including: 'brush your teeth,' 'take a shower / bath,' 'watch TV,' 'have dinner,' 'take a nap,' 'feed the peacock,' 'change the kitty litter,' etc.



THE WORLD'S ENDING IN THREE DAYS



Time: 30 - 50 minutes

Objective: Discussing, Conditionals, Q & A, Listening, Guessing

The teacher tells the students (with a smile so they know it's an imaginary activity) that a giant asteroid or comet or galactic ice ball has suddenly been discovered to be on a collision course with the earth. When it hits, our poor little earth will be smashed to smithereens.

The teacher explains that we all have only three days to live. Students are put into pairs they make a list of three (or more) things that they are going to do before the end of the world.

The only rule is that both students must agree to do these same things. They don't have to do these things together, they just agree that these are the things they would do.

When finished, two pairs are put together into a group and one pair tries to guess what the three things are by asking questions: "Does it have anything to do with your family?" "Does it have anything to do with religion?" Russell asks: "Does it have anything to do with criminal activity?" etc.

This activity can be either competitive or cooperative; in most cases, students will be so involved in discovering the three things that they'll keep going at it until all are known. Afterward, the teacher asks for any particularly interesting answers.

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HOT HEAD, LEAD FOOT



Time: 10 - 30 minutes (depends on the number presented)

Objective: Ice breaker, Learning slang, Guessing, Q & A

Prior to class, the teacher prepares a list of slang phrases which begin with an adjective and end with a body part. In class, the teacher reads the first one from the list, for example, 'hot head.'

The teacher asks the students if they know what this phrase means. If not, students ask 'Yes' 'No' questions such as: "Does it mean that someone is really smart?" and the teacher says: "Nope, it doesn't have anything to do with intelligence."

Another student might ask: "Does it mean someone has a fever?" and the teacher replies: "Sorry, it has nothing to do with health." Students continue guessing until someone asks: "Is it someone who easily gets angry?" and the teacher says: "Yes, that's right, a hot head is someone who easily loses his temper or someone who has a short fuse." The guesser gets a point.

Then, the teacher says another one such as 'lead foot' and students continue to guess its meaning. The first student to say: "Lead foot means someone who drives very fast," gets a point.

Other phrases could include 'sweet tooth,' 'cold feet,' 'redneck,' 'blue blood,' 'sticky fingers,' 'green thumb,' 'eagle eye,' 'thin skin,' 'glass jaw,' 'southpaw,' 'funny bone,' 'trick knee,' 'sweetheart,' etc.



DISHEVELED



Time: 15 - 20 minutes

Objective: Ice breaker, Commanding, Listening, Following orders

Either the teacher or a 'good-sported' student takes a few minutes outside of the classroom to become a complete disheveled wreck. Buttons will be misaligned or unbuttoned, one or both shoes untied, necktie askew, hair tousled, shirttail flapping out, buckle unhitched, zipper at half mast, lipstick smeared, one pant leg rolled up, a pocket or two inside out, etc.

In class, the other students need to undishevel the disheveled items. "Your shoes are untied, they should be tied." "Your shirttail is out, it should be tucked back into your pants." "Your necktie is crooked, it should be straightened." Etc.

The teacher will need to assist students with vocabulary because many of these directions will relay on phrases which may be unknown to the students.

When finished, another student comes to the front and the others dishevel him; just the reverse of the previous student. "Untie your left shoe," "Unbuckle your belt," "Unbutton the third and fifth button of your shirt," etc.

When finished, the class needs to undisheaval the clothes by giving commands.



MATCHBOOK MYSTERIES



Time: 20 - 30 minutes

Objective: Explaining, Q & A, Listening, Creating reasons

Need: A variety of matchbooks from restaurants and bars ('less than-reputable establishments' make this activity funnier)

The teacher divides the class into groups of four and gives everyone a different matchbook. The teacher then explains the lesson: "All of you were somewhere last weekend and you picked up the matchbook you are holding. Now you have to explain where you went, what you were doing there, who you were with, how long you stayed there, and finally, why you took the matchbook."

Students show theirs to the others in the group. Someone begins by asking another: "Where did you go last weekend?" and with that question, the discussion begins.

Without even thinking, students will be communicating with each other naturally and with a high degree of interest in both listening to the other people, but also in explaining the reason behind the possession of their matchbook.

When finished, the teacher asks for any particularly interesting or funny explanations which are shared with the rest of the class.



TELLING A JOKE



Time: 20 - 30 minutes

Objective: Reading, Memorizing, Presenting, Explaining

Need: The teacher prepares one short joke for each student

Either from a joke book, the internet or from the teacher's memory, the teacher prepares one joke for each student and says: "Read, practice and memorize this joke, OK?"

Students are given about ten minutes to memorize their jokes then a 'volunteer' tells her joke from memory (no papers are allowed).

Afterward, if no one is laughing, the student has the task of explaining the humor of the joke.

The teacher could opt to just go to the next student, or, if brave, could try to explain the joke which is usually disastrous. Often, students understand the storyline, but it's just not funny to them.

Sometimes students will laugh at the wrong time or, even worse, start asking 'Why' and 'How' questions: "Why did the gorilla walk into a bar?" "Why can the gorilla talk?" "How did he escape from the zoo?"

Students will probably not be making the circuit of comedy clubs any time soon, but they will have at least one joke under their belts.

A month later, the teacher says: "Does anyone know a good joke?"



THE COLOR OF LOVE



Time: 10 - 20 minutes

Objective: Listening, Explaining, Competing, Philosophizing

This can be a fun and interesting lesson if the students are feeling creative and imaginative. If, after the first few tries, and nothing is happening, it's time to move on.

The class is divided into two (or more) teams. Students sit or stand together with their teams and the teacher asks: "What's the color is love?" Each team must offer an answer, even the same answer is OK (but the reason for that answer must be different!).

Love is a good first question because students will almost always say: "The color of love is red." Of course, any color is OK; it's the REASON behind the color that counts.

The first team to call out a color will also have the first shot at giving a reason; that's important because it's much easier to give the first reason than have to come up with a new one. [This point doesn't need to be explained because students will quickly figure it out on their own.]

The following is an example: One team shouts "Red," another team shouts "Red," a third team shouts "Blue," and a fourth team shouts "Red." The teacher needs to remember the order (in terms of speed) in which the different teams answer.

Then the teacher asks the first team that answered: "Why do you think



THE COLOR OF LOVE (Continued)

the color of love is red?" Someone from that team needs to explain: "The color of love is red because red is the color of passion and feeling."

The teacher says: "OK, thanks." Then turning to the team which answered second: "Why do you think the color of love is red?" This team can not repeat the same reason, so they might say: "The color of love is red because Valentine's Day is red and roses are red."

The teacher thanks the speaker and asks the third team. "We think the color of love is blue because it's pure as the blue sky and wide as the blue ocean." The teacher thanks the speaker and goes to the next team.

After every team has had a chance to explain the reason behind the color of love, either the teacher makes the judgment or the whole class can vote for the best reason. The winning team gets a point.

Then the teacher asks the next question: "What's the color of friendship," and the whole process begins again. Of course, since the reasons are more important than the speed of replying, students may want to consult among themselves before shouting out a color.

Additional questions could include: "What's the color of fear?" "What's the color of trust?" "What's the color of excitement?" "What's the color of life?" etc.



BUNCHES OF PUNCHES



Time: 20 - 30 minutes

Objective: Writing, Listening, Guessing, Cooperating, Q & A, Ordinals, Competing

Need: A short paragraph of text (from a newspaper or magazine is good), paper punch

Prior to class, the teacher makes two copies of the same short paragraph text (Paper A and B) and folds the pieces into halves. Then, using the paper punch, the teacher punches five or six holes in each folded paper; the holes should be in different locations between Paper A and B. These papers are then unfolded and copied so that there are half as many copies of each as there are students.

In class, students are paired and each one receives one copy of Paper A or Paper B. The teacher explains that students may not show their papers to their partners (it may be a good idea to have students sit back to back!).

Students need to write out the entire text on notebook paper. The problem is that some of the text is missing (because of the paper punch). By working together, students should be able to piece together the original text.

To do this, they'll need to question each other similar to the following dialogue: "What's the seventh word in the top line? I can only read 'gro___ h.'" The partner says: "Well, I can't read the first letters, but it ends with 'owth.' I guess the word is 'growth,' right?"



BUNCHES OF PUNCHES (Continued)

Then the other partner asks a question: "What's the third word from the right on the second line? I can only see the ending letters, 'crete.'" The partner says: "The third word from the right on the second line?" to which the partner confirms: "Yes, that's right." "OK, the word is 'concrete.'"

Students continue in this fashion until the entire text has been written down. The first pair to finish presents their handwritten copies to the teacher who confirms the accuracy. If the written text is exactly the same as the original (including correct punctuation), the first pair could receive a point for their efforts.

If pairs of students finish this too easily, one (or more) of the following could be done before attempting this activity again:

- 1) more holes are punched in the papers before making copies
- 2) a larger diameter paper punch could be used (an electric drill works nearly as well)
- 3) text with a smaller type font could be selected.

An interesting alternative is for the teacher to prepare four copies of the original text, fold the papers and punch 15 or 20 holes in different locations among the four papers (15 holes punched in a folded piece of paper results in 30 holes!). This way, it's completely impossible to even guess what the complete text says.

But with four students to a group, nearly all of the words should become clear. This four-student group will need to communicate a lot in order to arrive at the original text!



WARMISH, 7-ISH, PINKISH



Time: 10 - 15 minutes

Objective: Ice breaker, Q & A, Using '-ish' to mean 'about'

Although most native speakers of English will substitute the words 'about' or 'around' with the suffix 'ish,' this may not be known by many learners of English. The teacher asks: "What time is it?" Someone will say: "It's 9:54," for example. The teacher says: "So, it's 10-ish, right?"

The teacher points to another student and asks: "What color is her hair?" Someone will say, perhaps: "It's brown" The teacher asks: "It's brownish?" "Students say: "Yeah, it's brownish."

By now they may be catching on. The teacher continues: "OK, it's brownish, how long is it?" Hopefully someone will say: "It's longish," to which the teacher says: "Right, you got it. It's longish."

The class is divided into groups of three and students write five (or more) questions to which the answer can contain an '-ish' adjective, for example: "What's the weather like today?" ("It's warmish!") "What time does the movie begin?" ("It begins 7-ish!") etc.

When groups are ready, one group reads their questions to the rest of the class who try to answer them using an '-ish' suffix within the response.



THE MOST ROMANTIC PROPOSAL EVER!



Time: 30 - 50 minutes (depends on the number of students)

Objective: Discussing, Writing, Q & A, Comparatives & Superlatives

The teacher asks students if they can recall any romantic movies, books or stories which involve a romantic proposal. Also the teacher should try to elicit any romantic proposals in real life they may have heard of.

An interesting side question (that could be a whole lesson in itself) would be to have students describe their own father's proposal.

Then the class is divided into groups of three and students are told to create a list of five 'super romantic proposals.' Each proposal should include the place, the season and time of day, any necessary equipment, an explanation of the timing, an estimate of the costs involved and what the couple should be wearing (if important) and the exact wording of the proposal.

When finished, one group reads its first proposal to the rest of the class. Students may want to ask questions and offer opinions as to the 'romantic nature' of this proposal. The group which created it must, of course, defend its value.

Then the second group reads its first proposal, then the third, fourth, fifth, etc. Each one is considered and discussed.



THE MOST ROMANTIC PROPOSAL EVER! (Continued)

During the presentation of the proposals, students should be encouraged to say, for example: "I think proposing during halftime of the world series is more romantic than skywriting 'Marry me, Barbara,' don't you?" "I think that's the most romantic proposal we've heard so far today," "I don't think that's as romantic as the first one we heard," etc.

Then all groups read their second, third, fourth and fifth proposals. Along the way, several of these will catch the attention of the whole class and students will laugh for days to come.

When all proposals have been read, the whole class votes for the top five with the most romantic proposal winning an award.



WHAT'S THE MORAL?



Time: 15 - 20 minutes

Objective: Listening, Q & A, Discussing, Writing, Giving examples

Need: A collection of Aesop's fables

Once a week or so, the teacher reads one Aesop fable but doesn't read the moral at the end. Students are then paired and together they discuss the moral and create a sentence which explains the moral succinctly.

For example, the story of *Sour Grapes* teaches the moral that when people can't get what they want, they will claim that they really didn't want it in the first place and, in the second place, the desired thing probably isn't worth having anyway.

These morals are then read to the rest of the class and the teacher (or whole class) votes for the most fitting moral. This is also a great way to launch a class discussion about the timelessness of the moral.

Students discuss whether or not they agree with the moral. Additionally, students could offer real life examples of situations which would reflect the fable and consequent moralizing.



A GAPLACUS IS IN MY GARDEN!



Time: 20 - 30 minutes (or longer)

Objective: Listening, Q & A, Vocabulary building

The teacher begins this activity with a model sentence: "This morning, I saw a gaplacus in my garden!" Students, of course, will ask: "What's a gaplacus?" to which the teacher replies: "Well, I don't know the English word, but it's brown." Another student asks: "Is it a toad?" and the teacher says: "No, I'm sure it's not a toad. It has four legs and can run really fast." Another student asks: "Is it a chameleon?" to which the teacher says: "I'm pretty sure it isn't a chameleon, but it does have a tail and it eats insects."

Another student might ask: "Is it a salamander?" And the teacher says: "I'm not sure, what's a salamander?" And the student says: "It's like a small lizard; it can't change color like a chameleon, but it looks like one." The teacher says: "You're probably right, a gaplacus is a salamander."

Next, the teacher says: "There's a hildrox in my garage." Students ask: "What's a hildrox?" to which the teacher says: "Well, I don't know the English word for hildrox, but it's made of metal with a long wooden handle," and so on.

After the teacher has gone through the process a few times, students could be invited to explain things they've found. "I saw a fubrillo this morning."



MNEMONIC DEVICES



Time: 20 - 40 minutes (depends on the number of students)

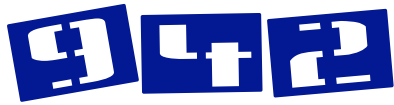
Objective: Building vocabulary, Remembering new words

The teacher divides the class into groups of three students each then explains the concept of mnemonics: to associate one thing that is familiar with another which is unknown. Eventually, by remembering the known parts, the whole of the unknown can be easily remembered.

Students then scour through a dictionary and find a word with at least three syllables, this should be a word that everyone is sure none of the other students is likely to know (anachronistic, necrophagous, soucouyant, etc.)

For example's sake, the word 'supercilious' will serve nicely. The teacher demonstrates how to break the word down to its individual syllables 'super' 'cili' and 'ous.' Super is not a problem since all students know the meaning, 'cili' is pronounced as 'silly' and silly is easily defined as 'crazy' 'without sense' 'ridiculous.' The last syllable, 'ous' can be pronounced as 'us,' which everyone also knows.

So, 'Super' + 'silly' + 'us' will result in the correct pronunciation of 'supercilious,' (thus being easy to remember) and its definition converted to: ('us' = 'we,' 'super' = 'very,' and 'silly' = 'ridiculous') 'we are being very ridiculous' therefore helps students remember the meaning of 'supercilious.' Groups do a similar break down of the word they found and take turns presenting their word.



LANGUAGE DRILL (with a twist!)



Time: 15 - 20 minutes

Objective: Giving detailed instructions, Listening, Following orders

Need: Two small pieces of wood, an electric drill (and bits), some small screws, a screwdriver (a third piece of wood to protect the desktop!)

At first, the teacher lays out all the items, holds them up one at a time and asks students what they are. Students say: "That's a piece of wood," "That's an electric drill," "That a drill bit," "That is a drill bit key," "They are screws," "That's a screw driver," etc.

The teacher says: "Right. Now, let's look at the parts of the drill itself. What's this," the teacher says pointing, and someone says: "That's the drill bit holder." Then the teacher points at something else and asks: "What's this?" and someone might say: "That's the trigger," etc.

Then the teacher says: "I want you to tell me how to screw these two pieces of wood together, OK?" Students say: "OK," then the teacher asks: "What should I do first?"

One student may say: put a drill bit into the drill." The teacher asks: "Which one?" Another student might say: "One that is slightly smaller than the width of the screw." The teacher says: "I don't know, you choose," and gives the case of drill bits and one of the screws to a student. The student says: "Here, use this one," and the teacher obliges. But, not knowing much about carpentry, the teacher asks where the drill



LANGUAGE DRILL (with a twist!) (Continued)

bit needs to be placed (after trying to insert it into odd places of the drill).

A student says: "Put the drill bit into the tip of the drill shaft," but since the tip has been deviously closed tight prior to class, the drill bit can not be inserted. The teacher shows the impossibility of doing this.

A student says: "Open the drill bit holder with the bit key," etc. Eventually, the bit will be inserted properly into the drill bit holder and locked securely with the drill bit key.

Students need to explain all of the rest of the following, clearly and succinctly: "Place the protective piece of wood on the desktop, place the two other pieces of wood on the protective piece, set the drill bit length to measure about $\frac{3}{4}$ the length of the screw, drill four holes (one per corner), place a screw into each drilled hole, screw the two pieces of wood together with the screw driver...." (Other students could assist with this part).

A task as easy as this is a snap to demonstrate, but it takes a great deal of careful explanation and directions for students to verbalize each step. When students say an erroneous or vague instruction, (such as drill a hole without specifying where!), the teacher follows the directions literally.

This is not only funny, but students quickly learn that little things like articles, plural noun forms, verb tenses make a huge difference.



GREEN EYED MONSTER



Time: 20 - 50 minutes (depends on the amount of discussion)

Objective: Writing, Presenting, Q & A, Voting, Discussing

Students, in groups of three, think of scenes that would make a boy or girlfriend jealous. For example, a girl talks a lot about her former boyfriend, a boy carries a picture of his ex-girlfriend in his wallet, a girl still gets phone calls her ex-boyfriend, a girl wears some jewelry from her ex, a boy keeps his ex's initials tattooed on his shoulder, a girl mistakenly calls her boyfriend the old boyfriend's name, a boy constantly girl-watches while shopping together at the mall, etc.

Groups need to think of four (or more) scenes or situations that might rile a current flame. When the groups have finished, one group comes to the front of the class and reads their first scene. The wording should be something like: "Would you get jealous if your current girlfriend (boyfriend) occasionally talked about her former boyfriend?"

Other students might ask questions: "How often is occasionally?" "What kind of things does she talk about?" Once all of the questions have been asked and answered, the teacher says: "All of you who would get jealous if your current girlfriend occasionally talked about her former boyfriend, please raise your hand."

After counting the hands in the air, the teacher asks the opposite question: "OK, all of you who wouldn't get jealous if your current girlfriend occasionally talked about her former boyfriend, please raise your hand."



GREEN EYED MONSTER (Continued)

After the hand count, the teacher could invite the presenting team to go on to its next scene, or open the class up for a discussion about the first one.

If a discussion is the choice, the teacher could ask, for example: "Andrea, why wouldn't you get jealous if your current boyfriend occasionally talked about his former girlfriend?" Often, this first answer will spur the others into an open (and lively!) discussion. The teacher then asks: "Tim, why would you get jealous if your current girlfriend occasionally talked about her former boyfriend?"

After the discussion, the presenting group then reads its second scene and the process continues as above. Once that team has finished, another team comes to the front of the class and so on. Obviously, if two or more teams have the same scene, all but the first should be omitted from the lists.

After all teams have presented their situations, students have indicated their opinions and students have discussed the scenes, the teacher could say something like the following: "OK, we've had 15 interesting situations about jealousy. How often did you say you would get jealous and how many times did you say you wouldn't? Brad?"

Brad might say: "I'd get jealous five times and I wouldn't ten times. I'm not a very jealous person." Then the teacher calls on another student: "Wisteria?" And Wisteria might say: "I'd get jealous 14 times and I wouldn't get jealous only one time. I guess I'm a very jealous person." Etc.

Students may be very curious about the teacher's views on the given jealousy-invoking situations; if students don't inquire on their own, the teacher needs to merely say: "How do you think I'd answer that scene?"



SMOOTH TRANSITIONS



Time: 20 minutes

Objective: Increasing fluency, Making smooth transitions

The teacher writes three unrelated topics on the blackboard, for example: hometown, the moon, computers. In groups of three, each student picks one of the topics. One of them starts a conversation about his chosen topic. The other two students need to participate in the conversation BUT they must try to change the topic of the conversation to their topic as naturally as they can.

For example, the first student, Conrad, picked 'the moon,' and the second student, Bev, picked 'computers.' Conrad, could begin by saying: "I wonder if we will ever be able to fly to the moon as easily as we fly to another country." Now Bev needs to steer the conversation towards 'computers' but with a smooth transition from 'the moon' to 'computers.' Bev might say: "That's a good question. Probably 30 years ago, the idea of people flying to the moon would have been just fantasy. But because we live in the age of computers, it may be a common experience in the near future."

The third student, Mitch, would then need to use a different transition in order to include his topic, 'hometown' in the conversation: "Even if we can all fly to the moon one day, there will still be lots of people who have never been on an airplane." And the discussion continues, each time students using a smooth transition to go from the previous speaker's statement to his own.



CONTROVERSIAL PHENOMENA



Time: 10 - 20 minutes

Objective: Discussion, Q & A, Listening, Agreeing / Disagreeing, Explaining

The teacher begins by explaining that there are still many mysteries existent in the world. For example, there are 'crop circles.' First the teacher asks students if they know what crop circles are. Then the teacher asks how they are made? Additionally, the teacher asks if they could have been produced by extraterrestrials.

For the next five or ten minutes, the students should be involved in a bristling discussion, debate or argument concerning crop circles.

Shawn, for example, the class skeptic might say: "It's just a bunch of baloney. You can't really believe that crop circles were made by extraterrestrials, can you?" and Else retorts with: "Why not? Have you seen some of them? The really good ones are so intricate, it's not possible that humans made them." And on it goes.

On another occasion, the teacher offers the topic: 'big foot,' 'the Loch Ness monster,' 'the Bermuda Triangle,' 'Kappa,' 'UFOs,' 'ghosts,' and on and on.

(Mustn't forget the Muses, nymphs, fairies, guardian angels, pixies, leprechauns, the tooth fairy, the Easter bunny, gnomes, goblins, elves, sprites, trolls, imps and clairvoyants.)

WEB RESOURCES

(Alphabetical Order By Category)

Abbreviations

<http://www.abbreviations.com/>
<http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0775271.html>

Acronyms

<http://www.acronymfinder.com/>
<http://www.all-acronyms.com/>

Anagrams

<http://wordsmith.org/anagram/>
<http://wordsmith.org/anagram/index.html>

Clipart (Free)

<http://www.clipartconnection.com/>
<http://www.barrysclipart.com/>
<http://www.1clipart.com/>
<http://classroomclipart.com/>

Dictionaries

<http://www.m-w.com/> (Merriam-Webster Dictionary with Thesaurus)
<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/> (Dictionary with Thesaurus)
<http://www.yourdictionary.com/> (Dictionary with Thesaurus)
<http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/features/dictionary/dictionaryhome.aspx>
(Dictionary with Thesaurus)
<http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org/> (Dictionary with Thesaurus)
<http://nhd.heinle.com/home.aspx> (American English Dictionary)

Flashcards (Free)

Assorted

<http://www.mes-english.com/flashcards.php>
<http://www.eslflashcards.com/>
<http://www.eslhq.com/gallery/> (Requires free registration)
<http://www.1-language.com/eslflashcards/index.htm>
<http://www.eastoftheweb.com/games/index.html>

Creating Flashcards (and other worksheets)

<http://www.educationalpress.org/educationalpress/>
<http://www.flashcardexchange.com/> (One time fee of: \$19.95 USD)

Games (Free, On-line)

<http://www.english-online.org.uk/games/gamezone2.htm>
<http://www.abroadlanguages.com/al/la/english.asp>

Homophones (Free, On-line)

www.funbrain.com/whichword/index.html
<http://www.bifroest.demon.co.uk/misc/homophones-list.html>
http://www.cooper.com/alan/homonym_list.html

Jokes

http://www.sunvv.com/english/list_15.html
<http://www.teacherjoe.us/Jokes.html>
<http://www.ewsonline.com/jokes/clean.html>

Mad Libs (On-line)

<http://www.eduplace.com/tales/>
<http://us.penguinroup.com/static/packages/us/yreaders/madlibs/fun.html>
<http://www.funbrain.com/brain/ReadingBrain/ReadingBrain.html>
http://www.teach-nology.com/web_tools/games/mad_libs/
<http://www.rinkworks.com/crazylibs/>

Morse Code

<http://users.scoutnet.nl/~inter/morse/>
<http://home.clara.net/rod.beavon/morse.htm>
<http://morsecode.scphillips.com/jtranslator.html>

Newspapers (on-line)

<http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/>
<http://library.uncg.edu/news/>
<http://www.newspapers.com/>

Numerology (Free On-line)

<http://willmaster.com/numerology/>
<http://www.facade.com/numerology/>

Pen Pals

<http://www.abroadlanguages.com/penpal/>
<http://www.epals.com/>
http://www.europa-pages.com/penpal_form.html

Pictures & Videos (Funny)

<http://www.funnyhub.com/>
<http://www.funnyjunk.com/>
<http://www.jokefrog.com/>
<http://www.amuzensantics.com/>

Puzzles (on-line)

<http://www.puzzels.bambamscorner.nl/englishpuzzles.html>
<http://www.manythings.org/cs/>

Riddles

<http://www.englishclub.com/esl-jokes/>
www.riddles.com/riddles-new-list.php?pagenum=0&catid=5
<http://www.azkidsnet.com/riddles.htm> (for kids)

Recipes

<http://allrecipes.com/>
<http://www.recipesource.com/>
<http://easy.betterrecipes.com/>

Rhyming Words

<http://www.rhymezone.com/>
<http://www.rhymer.com/>

Rebus Puzzles

<http://www.zakadoo.com/games/rebus.html>
<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/kids/braintpics.htm>
<http://www.puzzlesoup.com/>

Translators (Machine)

<http://translation2.paralink.com/lowres.asp>
http://www.google.com/language_tools
http://www.worldlingo.com/en/products_services/worldlingo_translator.html

Songs

<http://www.lyrics.com/>
<http://www.azlyrics.com/> (can find many lyrics)
<http://www.elyrics.net/>

Word a Day

<http://www.oed.com/services/rss-feed.html>

<http://wordcentral.com/cgi-bin/bwwod.pl>

<http://education.yahoo.com/college/wotd/>

<http://wordsmith.org/words/today.html>

Word Games (On Line)

<http://www.eastoftheweb.com/games/>

<http://www.scrabulous.com/index.php>

<http://www.shockwave.com/wordgames.jsp>

<http://www.manythings.org/wbg/>