

What You Can Do With Songs, TV Series, The Internet, a Whiteboard, a Blindfold, Photos, an Egg Timer...

... a Ball, a Box of Odds & Ends, Clothes, a Cell Phone, Food, a Whistle, Flashcards, Your Body...

... the Coursebook, TV, a Poem, Brochures & Flyers, a Paper Bag, Fall Leaves, Newspapers, and more!

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What You Can Do With a Song: 5 Creative ESL Listening Activities

PRACTICING LISTENING SKILLS IN CLASS CAN BE A REAL DRAG TO A STUDENT, MARKING THE CORRECT ANSWER IN THEIR WORKBOOK, WHILE LISTENING TO REPETITIVE DIALOGUES VOICED BY THE SAME PEOPLE, OVER AND OVER AGAIN. THIS IS WHERE THE STUDENT'S MIND BEGINS TO SHUT DOWN AND TAKE A FIVE-MINUTE BREATH, AND WHATEVER HAPPENING OUTSIDE CAPTURES THEIR WANDERING ATTENTION.

Listening involves a great deal of concentration, and so when the brain has switched off and gone for lunch, the listening skills follow suit. **How can teachers avoid this from happening, you ask?** Well, the answer is simple. Why not try something a little different. Think outside of the box and provide the students with something that you may not have tried before. Songs provide a great alternative to listening tasks, as they are effectively the same dull listening exercises, but **dressed in disguise as something that's entertaining and fun.** Another reason why songs are great in the classroom is that they can be used as part of an entertaining and amusing, yet thoroughly educational warmer that will set right tone for the remainder of the lesson. You don't have to do a song and dance about it? Just a song on its own would be fine, thank you. Adding the occasional song along with an accompanied activity to your class every once in a while, **you're giving the students more variety in the class.** This keeps their attention towards you, their brain's switched on and a stronger ability to listen for detail in the long run. Here's some creative activities that are aimed to not only entertain students, but to inspire and educate as well.

5 CREATIVE ESL SONG ACTIVITIES

1 AN OPENER FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS AND DEBATES

Before getting started on a debate, a song could be played to give an idea of the situation. So for example, a classroom discussion on crime and punish-

ment is on the cards, an oldie but a goodie like The Clash and Bobby Fuller Four's '*I Fought The Law*' provides a great little opener while getting the students thinking about the concept of "*Fighting the law*" and the law winning. This can also lead to some interesting topics such as why people turn to crime, justice, as well as the consequences of crime.

2 TENSE EXPLANATIONS

As English grammar is heavily reliant on whether an action is completed or unfinished, songs can help paint a clear picture of the timing implications tense. A great song that provides a good example is Stevie Nicks and Fleetwood Mac's '*Landslide*.' A much simpler explanation, for example between present tense and past tense is '*Yesterday*' by the Beatles. An easy lesson plan for pre-intermediate level students is to print out the lyrics, play the song numerous times, and get the students to underline the present and past tenses in different colours. An adaption to this activity give the choice between the present and past tenses, with the students required to underline the correct form of the verb. Boring exercise made fun with the simple introduction of a song.

3 CONDITIONALS

There are literally hundreds of sounds out there that involve conditionals. Using a song like Beyonce's '*If I Were A Boy*' will not provide a clear image to the concept of conditionals, but also **bring you to new levels of "cool" in the eyes of your students.** The entire song details some of the things she would do if she was just a boy for one day. Getting your students to put their thinking caps on and be a little creative, get them to talk about if they could do something for just one day. The whole class will surely have a laugh at some of the hilarious responses.

4 NEW VOCABULARY BUILDER

Songs can also be used as an aid to build the vocabulary of students. With songs on practically every topic on the planet, **it's incredibly simple to find a song relating to a specific topic and us-**

ing examples from the song to teach the students. One example of this is a note taking activity using the song '*New York*' by U2. If, for example, the topic of the class is cities, the students would be instructed to take notes about specific details in the song relating to one of the most famous cities in the world, New York. Note taking is an important skill for students as many will one day be faced with that challenge in their professional lives, while the song adds an element of depth to the class.

5 WORKING OUT THE CONTEXT

One of the great things about some of the more lyrical songs is that **they don't serve the answers up to the student on a silver platter.** They involve the student to think about what is really going on, based on not just the words but also the feelings, emotions and other variables. One example of a song that really gets students thinking is the song '*Father and Son*' by Cat Stevens. What makes this song quite a brain bender is Stevens' singing both the parts of the father and the son. If students can work out the context of what is being said, the answers become blindingly obvious. An exercise like this works out great with a conversation class as the students can put forward their ideas about what is happening in the song.

SO THERE YOU HAVE IT, A FEW SIMPLE ACTIVITIES THAT WILL ACCLAIM FROM YOUR STUDENTS AND ADD THE ALL-IMPORTANT VARIETY INTO YOUR CLASS.

All it takes is a little bit of adaption and some creative thought. **A few final points of advice for using songs in the classroom:**

- If you use a cassette tape to play the song, anyone in the class born after 1995 will look at you in total confusion and puzzlement.
- Don't play songs like Bob Dylan – Subterranean Homesick Blues, not even we know what he's talking about there.
- Listen to the CD before you play it in class. The last thing your four-year old kindergarten students need is to hear your mix tape of death metal or happy hardcore.

What You Can Do With a TV Series: 8 Creative Ideas You Can Use

ONE OF THE FANTASTIC THINGS ABOUT ESL TEACHING IS THAT IT CAN BE INCREDIBLE FOR BOTH THE STUDENT AND THE TEACHER. COMPARED WITH OTHER SUBJECTS, SUCH AS MATHS, CHEMISTRY OR PHYSICS, LANGUAGES CAN BE LEARNED USING A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT MEDIUMS AND STIMULATE LEARNERS IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS.

A TV series can help provide a balanced mix of entertainment with education, not to mention your rise in status to Ms, Mrs, or Mr Popularity with the students. Before we begin to show you some of the cool things that can be done with a TV series, we thought we would cover some important points to think about when choosing a series. **Your class is the audience, not you** As much as you love watching House MD and the team unravel their way through a range of diagnoses, we would bet that your students hate it. Choose a series with simple theme and a relatable story line. Glee is a fine example of this, as it is based around school life, which is something that we can all relate to. Mr Bean works excellently for lower levels and children. **Educational value** A good teacher ensures that whatever they are showing to their class has some educational value. Showing a movie, series or TV show to a class without a reason is a 'must avoid' habit. **No surprises** Pre watch the material before you play it in class – it's common sense, have a quick run through prior to using it in your class just to make sure that all content is suitable for your students.

1 REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

So the little dears have worked incredibly hard lately, reward them by adding some variety into the class by showing them a popular series. On the other hand, if they have been evil, punish them by showing them a video... But giving them some difficult worksheets and questions to go along with it.

2 SHOW THE CLASS AUTHENTIC HUMAN INTERACTION

TV series are one of the best ways that students can experience two or more native speakers having a conversation. As opposed to monotonous dialogue that's voiced by a couple of English teachers on the hunt for extra cash, showing a TV

series can help really put the usage into perspective. Get the students to take notes of some of the expressions that they felt were interesting, and then try to get them to incorporate those expressions into a conversation.

3 THE 'ALL-IMPORTANT' CONTEXT

English is just one of those languages where sometimes you really need to keep track of the context, or else you'll find it pretty difficult. Many of the students are left bewildered at the unspoken context of speech. By providing the students some clear examples of the subtle nuances and idiosyncrasies that we often use in conversation, they will be able to recognise this more in everyday speech, which will, in turn, help their listening skills. In a very easy-going lesson without too much going on, stop the video after an inference is made and ask the students if there was any hidden meaning or if anything else was implied other than the words spoken. Higher levels may pick up on some of the subtleties, but lower levels may require some explanations.

4 ROLE PLAYS

A favourite for virtually any class, role plays provide a great chance for students to put the language, grammar, and structures into practice, as well as help contribute to a fun and lively classroom atmosphere. Many teachers like to show the students a clip from a highly dramatized episode, and then get them to act it out as naturally as possible.

5 LISTENING FOR IMPORTANT INFO

One of the key skills required for international examinations is the ability to listen for essential information. In the IELTS examination, students are required to listen to dialogues in order to dissect and disseminate information. For higher levels, prepare some questions about the episode they have just watched - in the style of IELTS or TOEFL, and present them to the students to complete in a "test-like" environment. The students enjoy this as it provides them with a wide range of skills that they can use in the

exam, while providing topics which are more interesting than found in the usual test material.

6 PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE

For the lower levels, a good idea is to find a lower-level series that uses a wide variety of common English expressions or greetings. Stop the video after a target phrase, word or expression and have the students repeat it, trying very carefully to mimic the accent and minimise their own accent. This is also good as it builds confidence and the students find the TV series interesting at the same time.

7 FOLLOWING THE DIALOGUE

Whether to turn the subtitles on or off while watching a video in class is an age-old question that has as many different answers as the number of people you ask. For lower levels, we find that having English subtitles displayed while watching a TV series can actually help bring the students up to speed with their speaking and listening skills. Following the dialogue on the screen as it is spoken can work wonders in helping the students increase the pace in which they can listen and speak. Students can practice in pairs, in front of the class, or even in a one-on-one situation with the teacher.

8 OPINIONS

Sometimes getting some creative and independent thought from a student can be like drawing blood from a stone. In these cases, you may want to play an open-ended plot from a well-known TV series and stop it just as an important turning point is about to take place. Ignoring the sighs of disgust and annoyance of the students, instruct them to decide how it ends. Students can free write an idea of how the story ends, what happens to the characters, and then present to the class. If you're a nice enough teacher, you can show them the actual ending of the show. Using a TV series will make your students excited about learning, while providing them with a wider range of interesting materials to learn from. Oh yeah, this also makes you a better teacher!

What You Can Do With The Internet: 6 Creative Online ESL Activities

When we look at the ESL business and the major breakthroughs that have taken place, one of the biggest would be the photocopier, which has allowed teachers to simply and easily provide student with a worksheet in a matter of seconds. The other significant breakthrough is the Internet.

For over a decade, teachers have been using the Internet as a resource for lesson plans, searching for jobs and to communicate with other teachers and to find out background information on potential locations and employers around the world. The Internet is also currently in the potential position where it poses a threat to many ESL positions, given the rising interest in teaching live over the internet using applications such as Skype.

However, it is the students who are the ones that can benefit the most from the Internet, and it is the teachers who should be harnessing this invaluable resource and incorporating it into their class. **The Internet is a great tool that entertains students, while providing subtly educating them requiring them to use a mixture of the four skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking.**

HOW YOU CAN USE THE INTERNET IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 GAIN INVALUABLE RESEARCH SKILLS THROUGH UNFAMILIAR TOPICS

One of the major skills that are required throughout life, and especially at university, is researching a topic that is relatively unknown. The Internet is a great place to look to obtain background information and formulate a picture of the background of a topic that is relatively unknown to a student. You can assign your students a topic, such as 'volcanos', and give them the task to find out the different types of volcanos that exist, and to explain some of the similarities and differences between the different types. This activity provides students with the ability to practice a number of skills that is involved in the research process, while at the same time giving them useful reading and speaking practice. To create an

interactive element to the exercise, students can form pairs or groups in order to discuss the information that they come across, and then present their findings to the rest of the class.

2 INTERNET TREASURE HUNT

This is a great activity that can be adapted for students of all ages and abilities. Create a worksheet with a series of questions for students to research and find the answers. Students can work individually or in groups in a race to see who can successfully navigate the Internet to find the answers to the questions.

3 PRESENTATION ASSIGNMENTS

As an increasing number of students are beginning to attend foreign universities, the need to present information in a variety of forms other than essays is becoming more and more widespread. Dossiers are a common form of presentation styles of assignments at universities throughout the world.

You can assign your students with a country to research and find out certain information, preferably a country that is not too familiar to the student. You would generally ask your students to find out information about population, religion, food, system of politics, environmental issues and current news items, and present the information in the form of a dossier. Rather than focus on the structures of writing, a dossier looks at the student's ability to research information, focusing on the ability to summarise and dissect a large sum of information. Students also enjoy collecting the information and presenting the information in a colourful and creative way.

4 NEWS TASKS

It is a common belief that students should know what is happening in the outside world, and one of the best way for the students to practice their English and find out what is happening in the outside world is to make use of the Internet and take a deeper look at the news happening around the world. You can ask students to bring in an item of news once

a week and to discuss it with the rest of the class, adding their own opinions and possible solutions to the situation. This activity can potentially turn into a classroom discussion or debate, and gives the students control over the material used in class.

5 EMAIL BUDDIES

While Facebook and Twitter may initially appear to be a distraction to the learning process, teachers can easily harness the popularity of social networking and use it to their advantage. I like to encourage my students to find what we used to call a pen pal, and write on a regular basis. **An email buddy gives students the chance to personalise the structures and grammar used in class** and put it to practice on a personal level with someone that they can grow close too and become friends with. They can develop this relationship over a period of time and report back to the class over time and talk about the ups and downs that happen in their email buddy's life.

6 SURVEYS

Ah yes, the age old school activity where we used to go to our local shopping centre and ask members of the public various questions, which the answers we will correlate at a later stage. Well, as technology has advanced, students can conduct their surveys on the Internet. I like to give my students a topic and then get them to conduct an online survey. The survey could be about any topic at all, and students could conduct the survey with their friends using social networking websites such as Facebook. Surveys are great for students to analyse responses and provide a short writing that allows the students describe the findings. This is an important skill that students will need later on when undertaking task 1 of the writing component of IELTS.

SO, THERE YOU HAVE IT. IN ADDITION TO CHECKING WHETHER YOU HAVE BEEN PAID, BITCHING ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL ANONYMOUSLY ON THE FORUMS, OR EVEN FINDING A GIRLFRIEND, THE INTERNET CAN TURN YOUR CLASS INTO ESL GOLD THAT INSPIRES YOUR STUDENTS.

What You Can Do With a Whiteboard: 10 Creative ESL Games

WITH ALL OF THE TECHNOLOGY WE HAVE AT OUR FINGERTIPS AND INFORMATION THAT TRAVELS AT LIGHTNING SPEED ON THE INTERNET, IT'S NICE TO GO BACK TO BASIC TOOLS LIKE OUR TRUSTY WHITEBOARD.

We examined the chalkboard vs. whiteboard dilemma in our article, *Whiteboard Markers – Stinking Monsters or Life Savers?* and yes, we agree that whiteboard markers have their weak points, but one of the advantages is that you can use them to play some great, fun ESL games with your students.

HOW YOU CAN USE A WHITEBOARD: 10 ESL GAMES

1 JEOPARDY

Based on the classic TV game show, this game will require your students to put on their thinking caps. Divide your whiteboard into columns for vocabulary categories and rows with different point values. Like this:

| Countries | Clothes | Animals | Foods | Colors |
|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 25 pts | 25 pts | 25 pts | 25 pts | 25 pts |
| 50 pts | 50 pts | 50 pts | 50 pts | 50 pts |
| 100 pts | 100 pts | 100 pts | 100 pts | 100 pts |

Divide your students into two teams. Each team chooses a category and the points they want to play for: *We choose Countries for 25 points.* Supply a clue or definition: *This country is south of the US, and they eat tacos there.* They must guess the right country in the form of a question: *What is Mexico?* If they answer correctly you erase the points from the chart and add them to the team's tally until they're all wiped off. Adapt this game to any level of difficulty and include as many categories as you wish.

2 SUCTION CUP BALL

Buy one (or several!) inexpensive suction cup balls, and your whiteboard games will never be the same! These balls are made up of several tiny suction cups that stick to whiteboards. There are many games you can play - as many as your imagination will allow - but here are two:

- Draw a target with concentric circles on the whiteboard, each with a different point value. Quiz students and if they give you the right answer they get to throw the ball for points.
- Fill your whiteboard with letters or syllables and each student has to supply a word that starts with the letter or syllable they hit.

3 Pictionary

This is a classic and one that may easily be adapted to any level. Students are split into two teams and they take turns drawing words, actions, or situations that they have drawn from a pile of cards. Teammates guess what is being drawn.

4 HANGMAN

Another popular game that may be adapted to your needs. Play the classic game where students have to guess a word, or a more sophisticated version where they have to guess entire phrases, expressions, movie or book titles.

5 TIC TAC TOE

Too simple? Not really. Make it as challenging as you like. Say you want your students to practice the simple past tense. Draw a 3 by 3 grid on the whiteboard. Write a sentence in each square, with a gap where the verb should go. Write a list of 10 verbs on the side (one of them won't be used). They must supply the right form of the verb to complete the sentence till one of the teams gets a Tic Tac Toe. Try it with any gap-filling exercise!

6 HOT SEAT

Place one student in the hot seat, in front of the whiteboard, with his or her back to it. You and another student stand behind the student in the hot seat. Write a word, movie, or book that the student must describe for the other to guess.

7 EARTHQUAKE

Draw a 5 by 5 grid on the whiteboard and label each column from A to E and each row 1 to 5. Each team chooses a square, say "A5" - you ask a question you have previously prepared. Before starting the game choose three squares that won't have any questions, and when a team chooses one of these, tell them an earthquake has just swallowed up some of their points—deduct 5 points.

8 BARNYARD DASH

The goal is for students to identify a barnyard animal from the sound it makes. Depending on your students' level, you can either draw the pictures of animals on the board or write the words for each. Give each team a different color marker and have them line up. Make the sound yourself, i.e. crow like a rooster, or have a CD ready with animal sounds. As they hear each sound, students race to the board and circle the right word or picture. You can adapt this game to all types of sounds, like a phone ringing, a car honking a horn, or someone sneezing. You may also record expressions or phrases that they have to circle on the board, like *"Thanks!"* and *"You're welcome"*.

9 WRITING RACE

This game is similar to the race mentioned above but in this case students race to the board to write a letter, a word, or a complete answer to a question. You can have each student write the complete answer or play it like a relay race where each student in the team only writes one word, then races to pass the marker to a teammate who must write the next one, and so on.

10 BACKS TO THE BOARD

Great for practicing numbers, especially those tricky ones like 16 and 60, 13 and 30, etc... Write several numbers on the board. Give each team a different color marker. Have students stand with their backs to board. Call out a number. Students turn, try to find the number and circle it. At the end of the game, tally up the scores by counting the different color circles.

HAVE FUN PLAYING THESE GAMES WITH YOUR STUDENTS!

What You Can Do with a Blindfold: 10 Fun ESL Games

BORED OF ALWAYS USING THE SAME OLD GAMES WITH YOUR ESL STUDENTS? CHANCES ARE, THEY ARE JUST AS BORED AS YOU. SOMETIMES, THE INTRODUCTION OF ONE ELEMENT, JUST ONE ITEM, WILL COMPLETELY TAKE YOUR CLASS BY SURPRISE AND INSTANTLY LEAVE THEM GUESSING WHAT'S TO COME NEXT.

Enter a simple blindfold – the kind they give away in airlines or a simple scarf. Your class will be giddy with anticipation about the game that is to come next!

10 BLINDFOLD ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 MYSTERY OBJECT

It's very simple to play, but oh, so much fun for students, plus a **fantastic way to review any type of vocabulary**. Place several items inside a bag, like classroom objects. Divide the class into two teams and students take turns wearing the blindfold. They must take an item from the bag and feel it to say what it is. There are plenty of ways to make this game more challenging, like using items that have a similar texture, like a bag of clothes.

2 TRUST ME

Re-arrange the furniture in the classroom so it resembles *an obstacle course* or *maze*. Divide students into pairs and give each pair a blindfold. Students have to guide their partners, without touching them, through the maze by giving directions. You may choose to add more obstacles like an overturned trash bin, or a "puddle" made out of cardboard. Once students have successfully passed through the maze, they switch roles with their partners.

3 STRIKE A POSE

Students are divided into groups of threes. One student wears a blind-

fold, another strikes a pose, and the third student must guide the one wearing the blindfold till he or she is imitating the pose.

4 HOW TALL ARE YOU?

Give several students blindfolds and tell them to stand one next to the other. Next, tell them they must **arrange themselves according to height**. Students must collaborate and ask each other, "*How tall are you?*" till they achieve the desired arrangement. You may also ask them to arrange themselves in alphabetical order, or any type of order, in fact, like age.

5 FOLLOW THE PATTERN

This one is similar to the previous, but in this case one student is blindfolded and must **arrange objects according to a pattern** set forth by the teacher. For example, objects from smaller to bigger, longer to shorter, in alphabetical order, etc.

6 GUESS WHO?

Students stand in a circle with one blindfolded student in the center. The teacher spins the student wearing the blindfold. Each student they face asks them a question, and they must guess who it is. Tell students they must use a particular tense, like the simple past, and encourage them to mask their voices, so it's not so easy to guess. Students who guess correctly are given points or stickers.

7 FOOD TASTING

Similar to Mystery Object, this is a fabulous way to review foods and drinks. Students must guess what food or drink they are tasting. A great game for special Holiday lessons, like Halloween, Thanksgiving or Christmas.

8 PIN THE TAIL ON THE GLOBE

Students take turns wearing a blindfold and mark a location in a world map with either a marker or push pin. They must then tell the class what the weather's like there. And there are so many variations to this game! Ask students what language they speak there, or have them choose two places and practice comparatives and superlatives. For example, the student first lands in France and then in the US. The student must make comparisons between the two countries.

9 MAKE A FACE

To practice the parts of the face (or body) use a cardboard circle for the face and make eyes, ears, nose, mouth and hair, with either magnets or tape on the back. Make two sets if you wish to divide your students into two teams and compete. The blindfolded students must take the parts and assemble them into a face with guidance from their classmates.

10 HIT THE TARGET

Draw a large bull's-eye in the center of the board. Divide students into two teams. One student from each team is blindfolded. Spin both of the students a bit to disorient them. Each team has to guide its blindfolded student to the bull's-eye and the one who makes it there first wins. Rearrange the classroom furniture to make it more challenging.

BEAR IN MIND THAT SOME STUDENTS, LIKE TEENS, MAY BE SELF-CONSCIOUS ABOUT WEARING A BLINDFOLD, BUT THEY'LL SOON LEARN IT DEFINITELY PUTS A NEW SPIN ON A LESSON THAT WOULD OTHERWISE BE JUST LIKE ANY OTHER.

It also helps develop listening skills as students are blindfolded, and they can't rely on their sight. Use blindfolds in class, and use them often. Your students won't be blinded to the learning opportunities.

What To Do With Reading Texts: 10 Creative Ways

THIS LIST OF 10 CREATIVE WAYS TO WORK WITH READING TEXTS WAS KINDLY SHARED BY CHURCHILL HOUSE, AND IS AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC DOWNLOAD ON THEIR WEBSITE WWW.CHURCHILLHOUSE.CO.UK.

The web is a great source of textual information, but if you are like us, you won't have the time or inclination to spend hours turning pages from the web into complete lesson plans with worksheets, handouts etc. So here are our **top ten ideas for taking ANY text and using it in class with the least amount of preparation time on your part.** Enjoy!

1 EXPAND THE TEXT

With short, simple texts, get students to add an adjective in front of every noun / an adverb to every verb etc.

For slightly longer texts - before class write (10) extra clauses or sentences that can be inserted into the text. Write these up in jumbled order on the board and get students to add them in the most appropriate places.

2 REDUCE THE TEXT

Get students to reduce the text to EXACTLY (100) words OR reduce the total number of sentences by (50%).

3 RECONSTRUCT THE TEXT

Before class, write a list of key words from the text in jumbled order on a sheet of paper. Make one copy for each group of students.

In class, give out the text to all the students. Get them to read it through. Now ask them to turn over the text. Hand out the jumbled keywords. Ask students to put the keywords back into the correct order **WITHOUT LOOKING AT THE TEXT**. When they get stuck, allow them to reread the text (but first get them to cover up the jumbled words again.)

When all the students have got the words in the correct order, take the text away. Get students to reconstruct the text (orally or in writing) from the key words.

4 MATCHING

Before class, get a heavy black pen and cross out the first sentence of each paragraph. (If you downloaded the page off the web, use your word processor to delete the sentences before printing.)

In class, write the missing sentences up in jumbled order on the board and get students to add them back into the text in the correct place.

Note: choosing the first sentence of a paragraph is particularly useful as these often summarise the main idea of the paragraph. Students can use these sentences to help them understand and structure the text.

5 TRANSFORM THE TEXT

Students must transform the text in some way, for example:

- Retell a story in the first person not the third person
- Retell a story from the perspective of a different character in the story (e.g. from the wolf's perspective, not from Little Red Riding Hood's.)
- Present a news story as a TV news item instead of a newspaper item.

6 DEDUCTION

Copy the text onto a piece of A4 paper. Tear off a column (say 4cm wide) down the left hand side of the copy and a similar sized column off the right hand side. Photocopy and hand out the remaining "middle" part of the story. Students must work together to deduce the whole story from the bits they have. Hand out the original story for comparison at the end.

7 TEXT QUIZ

Hand out the chosen text to the class. Give them time to read it, check new words etc.

Now get the students in groups to prepare (15) questions about the text which another group will have to answer from memory. Questions should be factual.

When the groups are ready, cover up all copies of the text, then get groups to swap their question sheets and answer each other's questions. The group that answers the most questions correctly wins.

8 WORD PARTNERSHIPS

Before class, find (15) useful word partnerships in your chosen text. Write the first word of each partnership down the left-hand side of a piece of paper. E.g. *Solve...*

(Don't forget that word partnerships can consist of two or three words, and also that sometimes a word is partnered with another one in a completely different part of the text. E.g. "The puzzle, which had baffled experts for well over 20 years, was finally solved by a 12-year-old girl from Ramsgate.")

In class, hand out the text. Allow students time to read and ask questions.

Now get the students to complete the sheet that you prepared by finding the partners for each word.

As a follow-up, students can test each other by covering up one of the columns on their sheets and trying to remember the missing word partners.

9 REACTIONS

Before class, prepare a list of sentences along the following lines:

What I found most interesting about this text was...

boring
shocking
amusing
irritating
baffling
incredible
etc.

In class, allow students time to read the text and check out any problems. Then ask them to complete all / some of the sentences from your list.

When they have finished, put them in groups to discuss their reactions.

10 TALK ABOUT THE TEXT

One of the things we often do in real life is tell someone else about a story / news item / magazine article etc that we read.

To do this in class, all you need is a text and a group of students. Get the students to read the text. Now ask them to describe the text and their reactions to it to their partner. Get them to start like this: *"I was reading this (story) the other day and it was really interesting. What it said was..."*

Variation: have two or more texts and get different students to read and talk about different texts.

What You Can Do With a Magazine: 10 ESL Speaking Activities

IN AN ESL CLASSROOM, A PILE OF OLD MAGAZINES CAN BE A GODSEND. MAGAZINES ARE HIGHLY VERSATILE RESOURCES AND OFFER AMAZING POTENTIAL NOT ONLY FOR CLASSIC CLIPPING, COLLAGE AND ART PROJECTS, BUT ALSO SPEAKING ACTIVITIES.

And to prove it to you, here we present 10 creative ESL speaking activities that only require the use of a few magazines and great deal of your imagination:

HOW TO USE MAGAZINES IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 CURRENT EVENTS READING AND SPEAKING

Particularly with advanced adult students, magazine articles from magazines like *Time* and *Newsweek* spark discussion and debate. Choose an article that suits your students' level, make enough copies for all, introduce vocabulary, present the topic through an engaging warm up activity, then read. End the lesson with a debate or discussion on the topic: try to present specific thought-provoking questions, rather than a simple, "Discuss!"

2 CELEBRITY COMPARISONS

This is a great activity for teens or beginners who are into celebrities. Magazines like *People* will work best in this case: the more celebrity pics, the better! Use celebrity photos to spark comparisons: *Arnold Swatznegger is taller than Tom Cruise. He's also bigger. But Tom is a better actor.* Who's the most talented actor of them all? Or songwriter? See what your students have to say!

3 A SEARCH FOR WORDS

Little ones LOVE cutting up magazines. Ask them to look through a pile of magazines and cut out all of the fruits and vegetables they can find, or people playing sports, or clothes - you choose the set of vocabulary you want them to practice. Once you have

all of their cutouts, prompt them to say whatever comes to mind about each: *Apples are red. I love apples. I don't like tomatoes. I hate lettuce. I eat bananas every day for breakfast, etc...*

4 WHAT'S HAPPENING?

This a wonderful way to practice tenses like the present continuous and not have to resort to the same illustrations your students have already seen countless times before. Choose a photo from a magazine - make sure it's a scene where there's a lot going on, like an airport, restaurant, a family doing things outdoors. Simply show them the picture and ask: *What's happening in this picture? What's the father doing? What's the mother doing? etc.*

5 ON THE COVER

Magazines are also excellent authentic materials that provide a great deal of information about more cultural aspects. Choose magazines that cater to specific audiences or shed some light into the American culture. Show your students the cover and ask them what they think this magazine is about: is it an entertainment, fashion, or news magazine? Who or what is on the cover and why? Ask them to guess what each story is about based on the headline.

6 FOCUSING ON HEADLINES

The headlines themselves may spark great speaking activities, as well as a glimpse into newspaper and magazine headline language. Before asking students to open the magazine, list some of the headlines featured in the magazine and ask them to say what they think each article is about. Write a list of topics that correspond to those headlines. Ask students to match the right topic to the right headline.

7 WHERE WOULD YOU FIND INFORMATION ON...?

Bring several different types of magazines to class, the greater the variety,

the better. Give your students a few minutes to browse through each and get a feel for the content. Then ask them: where would you find information on the latest iPhone apps? Where would you find information on dog breeds? What kind of person would buy *Rolling Stone*? What kind of person would buy *Car and Driver*? What interests do they have?

8 TOPIC OF INTEREST

Ask students to browse several magazines and choose one article or topic that interests them. Tell them that they can read the article, but they must be prepared to tell the class about it in their own words.

9 WHAT WAS THAT QUESTION AGAIN?

Choose a magazine article that features an interview or information on a celebrity. Ask students to think of what questions the interviewer asked to get this information. Ask students to supply any other questions they may want to ask.

10 FIND THE DIFFERENCES

Show students two magazine pictures that present a similar situation: people in an office, people playing sports, people showing different emotions. Show students each set and ask them to tell the class what these pictures have in common and how they differ.

CHOOSE UNUSUAL, ABSTRACT MAGAZINE PHOTOS AND LET YOUR STUDENTS' IMAGINATION RUN WILD. CHOOSE MAGAZINE ADS FOR A VARIETY OF PRODUCTS AND DISCUSS MARKETING OR ADVERTISING STRATEGIES. THERE ARE AS MANY WAYS TO USE MAGAZINES IN AN ESL CLASSROOM AS THERE ARE MAGAZINES IN A NEWSSTAND. BUT NO MATTER WHICH ACTIVITY YOU CHOOSE, MAKE SURE YOU GIVE YOUR STUDENTS A CHANCE TO SPEAK UP!

What You Can Do With Photos:

10 Creative ESL Games/Activities

Most ESL students have taken enough courses and classes to become accustomed to pictures, flashcards and illustrations. So accustomed, in fact, that they may not be fully engaged in some activities. After all, why should they care about “Mr. Thompson” or “Susan”, or “Betty”?

They do care, however, about their family and friends. Which is why using photos in your ESL classroom will breathe some fresh air into any activity.

10 ESL ACTIVITIES USING PHOTOS

1 MAGNETIC PHOTOS

If you happen to have a magnetic whiteboard, get your hands on some Avery Magnet Sheets or similar magnetic printable paper, and print one head shot for each of your students. You will have personalized magnets that your kids will absolutely love, and which are great for any number of games or activities. Leave the corner of your whiteboard for the *Student of the Week* and simply stick the student's photo there. Or use them to spark some friendly competition! Ask students to take out a sheet of paper, imagine they had to interview their favorite sports or movie star, and tell them to write as many questions as they can. Walk around the classroom and see how many each has written. On your whiteboard, place their photos from top to bottom to show who's written more so far.

2 WHAT'S ON THE MENU?

Why use only magnetic photos of your students when you print any type of photo out of magnetic paper? It may be more expensive than regular paper, but *oh, so worth it!* In this case, take a few days to get some snapshots of real meals, anything from a plate of spaghetti to a burger with fries. Print the photos on magnetic paper and presto! They will be ready to create their own menus. Smaller boards are ideal for them to create a menu and practice restaurant role plays.

3 COMPARATIVES AND SUPERLATIVES

Ask students to bring in some family photos, particularly where you can see people standing as a group. Have students compare them by saying who is taller than who, who's the shortest, etc.. but don't stop at physical descriptions. Have them share with the class who's the most musical, most artistic, better at sports, etc.

4 PHOTO ALBUM

Try this great worksheet where students use the possessive case to talk about their families, but replace the black and white illustrations with photos of real people, members of your family. Ask students to guess or imagine details about them, who they are, what they do, etc. You may choose to correct them in the end and supply the real facts, or not.

5 PHOTO NOVEL

This is a wonderful extended class project. The first thing you have to do is get your hands on a Polaroid camera, or simply use a regular digital camera and print the shots later. Have your students come up with an idea for a short story plot. Take a sequence of photos of your students acting different scenes of the plot. Once you have all of the photos printed out, students assemble them into a book or magazine format and write the captions below each one.

6 INQUISITIVE MINDS

Ask students to bring 4 or 5 photos from home, any type of photo as long as the student does not appear in it: trips, vacations, family members, objects, pets, etc. Tells students not to show them to their classmates. Mix them up and stick them onto the board. Students ask each other questions (using Present Perfect, for example) to find out which photo belongs to whom: Diego, have you ever been to Rome?

7 A SEQUENCE OF STEPS

At home, take photos of something being done in steps, for example someone baking a cake. First, you get a shot of the eggs in the bowl, then the flour being added, everything mixed, then poured into a cake tin, etc. Bring the

photos to class and ask your students to put them in the right order. Finally, have them write step by step instructions using vocabulary for sequences: first, second, then, next, etc.

8 WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

You can have a lot of fun with this one! This is a great way to practice modals like should, shouldn't, must, or mustn't. Take a few pictures of objects or things around the house in places where you wouldn't ordinarily find them. For example, shoes in the fridge, a pizza on a pillow, a stack of magazines in the bathtub. First ask students what is wrong with each picture and then to tell you where this item should be: The shoes shouldn't be in the fridge. They should be in the closet. You mustn't eat pizza in the bedroom. You should eat it at the table.

9 WHAT'S THE STORY?

Bring photos that show something interesting or that could spark a conversation, for example, a photo of someone reading a book, building something, or carrying out any type of activity. Hand them out and ask students to write a paragraph imagining the story behind the photo. Encourage them to get as creative as they can be, and tell them there are no right or wrong answers.

10 A PICTURE SAYS A THOUSAND WORDS

Bring photos of different types of landscapes. Give one to each of your students and ask them to write a description of what they see. Stick the photos vertically on one side of the board/wall and the descriptions on the other side. Students take turns matching the right description to each photo.

THERE ARE SO MANY WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN USE PHOTOS TO ENHANCE ACTIVITIES AND ENGAGE STUDENTS. CHILDREN LOVE LOOKING AT PHOTOS, AND IT'S A LOT EASIER SOMETIMES FOR THEM TO CONNECT TO REAL PEOPLE RATHER THAN CARTOONS OR ILLUSTRATIONS.

Also, bear in mind that if you want to

What You Can Do with an Egg Timer: 8 Fabulous ESL Activities

TIME FLIES WHEN YOU'RE HAVING FUN AND ISN'T IT GREAT WHEN YOUR ESL STUDENTS ARE SURPRISED TO SEE IT'S TIME TO GO HOME? SOME MAY NOT EVEN WANT TO GO HOME!

One great way to put some fun into your ESL class is to introduce some timed activities – it's amazing how fired up and competitive students get when they're on the clock.

8 ESL ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO WITH AN EGG TIMER

1 TIME TO WRITE!

For this writing activity, your students will write a story as a group. First, you'll need an idea or prompt to get them started: you can give them the title of the story or the first line/words. Set your timer to one minute (or 30 seconds depending on your students' level, and ask them to continue the story.

When their time is up they must pass the sheet of paper to a classmate – it doesn't matter if they have to stop midsentence. The next student has to pick up where the previous left off. When all of your students have had the chance to contribute to the story, you can go on for a bit longer but ask them to wrap it up.

2 BEAT YOUR OWN RECORD

This is a great activity for one-on-one classes. When a student takes classes alone, he/she doesn't have the chance to compete with other students. So give them a chance to compete against themselves! Ask your student to write as many new words from a recent lesson as they can. Give them one or two minutes to do this. Count the number of words. Next time, encourage your student to beat their own record.

3 RACE AGAINST TIME

Make your relay races extra competitive and super charged by giving your teams two minutes to complete the task. One relay race that works well like this involves word order. Team members must take a word from a pile on one desk and run to another desk, where they must place them in the right order one at a time. The team that completes a sentence first and within the 2-minute limit gets the point.

4 TICKING TIME BOMB

Choose a vocabulary category you'd like to practice. Set your timer to one or two minutes, say an item that falls into this category, for example "fox" for "animals" and pass the timer to a student. Students must each name an item in the category and pass the timer to a classmate. The student who has the timer when it goes off loses a life.

5 TIMED READING

This is a really useful way to get students focused on a reading task. Simply give them a text, story, or article to read, together with a set of comprehension questions to answer. Set your timer. Students must complete the task before the timer goes off. This is also a great way to prepare them for international examinations with timed reading sections, like the Cambridge examinations.

6 THINK FAST!

Give each of your students 60 seconds to name as many items in a category as they can. First, divide them into two teams. Then, one team picks a card with a category out of a bag, say "professions". The clock starts ticking and the first team member starts naming professions. If they get stuck, they may say "pass" and the next team member continues naming, but they can't repeat a pro-

fession that has already been named. When the 60 seconds are up, you tell the team how many words they named correctly with no repetition. The other team picks a category and does the same.

7 TIME TO GET ORGANIZED

Give your class or a team of students one minute to arrange themselves according to age, birthdays, alphabetical order, etc. They can only speak English for this challenge.

8 WHAT'S DIFFERENT THIS TIME?

Arrange a set of objects on a table. Be sure to include plenty of classroom objects. Take a picture, if you can, with a camera that has a display on the back. Ask a student to look carefully at the arrangement and try to memorize it. Ask student to leave the classroom. Move some of the objects around, but no more than three. When student comes back into the classroom, he/she has 60 seconds to tell you what's different. They must use prepositions of place: "The blue pen was next to the teacher's book, but now it's under it." Confirm with the photo you took.

Keep in mind that you can also use a cell phone, in case you don't have an egg timer – plenty of phones come with a timer. If you have a computer in the classroom you may also use an online timer like this Online Egg Timer, which rings at the end of the countdown just like a real one.

THE CLOCK'S TICKING! NO TIME TO WASTE! TRY SOME OF THESE ACTIVITIES IN YOUR ESL CLASS, AND YOUR STUDENTS WILL HAVE THE TIME OF THEIR LIVES!

What You Can Do with a Ball: 7 Fun ESL Games

ESL STUDENTS HAVE TO MAKE THE EFFORT TO COMPLETE TASKS, DO HOMEWORK AND STUDY. BUT WHEN IT COMES TO PROVIDING FUN, CHALLENGING ACTIVITIES THAT WILL MOTIVATE THEM TO LEARN, THE BALL IS IN YOUR COURT.

And while we're on the subject - here are some great activities for your ESL class that will only require a ball.

HOW TO USE A BALL IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 SPELLING BALL

This game is as simple as ABC. Have your students stand in a big circle. Say a word and toss the ball to one of your students. Student says the first letter of the word and tosses the ball to a classmate, who has to say the second letter, and then tosses the ball to another. Students who make a mistake must sit down and play starts again with the teacher. The last student standing is the winner!

2 SHOOT FOR POINTS

Set up a trash can, bin, or any container that will serve as your "basket". Students line up. Choose a topic or grammar point, for example Past Simple. Ask each student a question: Where did you go last weekend? If student uses the verb in simple past correctly, they may shoot for points: 10 points if they score, 5 if they miss, but answered the question correctly.

3 CHOOSE YOUR VICTIM

This is a great way to make a Q & A session more "active". Students stand in a circle. Give them a grammar point to practice through questions, for example, tell them to ask questions with "ever" so they practice Present Perfect. First student asks a question with

"ever" (Have you ever been to London?) and tosses the ball to a classmate who must answer correctly to stay in the game and earn the right to ask a question. Those who make a mistake must leave the circle.

4 FREEZE!

This game is ideal for little ones! Practice vocabulary with flashcards. First, teach students the meaning of "Freeze!" as stop. Students sit in a wide circle with a set of flashcards in the center. Students pass the ball around the circle. Tell them they can't hold the ball for more than a second. Cover your eyes while they do this and say, "Freeze!" The student who has the ball must stop and take a flashcard from the pile. Depending on your students' ages and level, ask them to either say the word or use it in a sentence.

5 IT'S A BOMB!

This is a great way for students to introduce themselves and learn their classmates' names in a first lesson. Also a fun way to practice or review possessive pronouns! Have students sit in a circle. Give one of them the ball, and say, "It's a bomb! The timer is ticking (use an egg timer!)" Tell them they have to say their name, pass the ball, and say their classmate's name: My name is Juan. Your name is Maria. The student who has the "bomb" when the timer goes off, leaves the circle. Have students re-arrange themselves in the circle so they're sitting next to different students, and start again.

6 DESCRIPTION DODGEBALL

Use a very light, soft ball for this game, as students will be trying to hit each other! Have students line up on one side of the classroom (if you can play this in the schoolyard, better!) One student stands in the front

next to you holding the ball. Describe one of the students in your class: This student is the tallest in the class. The student you are describing has to run to avoid being hit by the student with the ball. If the student is hit, he/she becomes the next thrower. You may also have students wear tags with names of cities, animals, or places for you to describe.

7 BASKETBALL DARE

Practice giving commands. Set up a "basket" far enough away for it to be a challenge, but not impossible for students to score. Students line up and shoot for the basket. If students score, they get to give you a command you must follow: "Walk like a monkey", "Say something in Chinese", "Stand on one foot for 30 seconds", etc. Make sure you establish some ground rules, for example, students can't give you commands that involve shouting, leaving the classroom, etc.

SO, SOMETIMES LOW TECH IS BETTER, RIGHT? WITH THIS ARTICLE, WE'VE PROVEN TO YOU THAT EVEN THE MOST FINANCIALLY LACKING CLASSROOMS OR SCHOOLS CAN STILL PROVIDE FUN, CREATIVE ACTIVITIES FOR THEIR ESL STUDENTS.

What You Can Do With a Box of Odds and Ends: 10 Creative ESL Crafts

A BOX OF ODDS AND ENDS IS MORE THAN A SIMPLE CONTAINER FOR SCRAPS AND EXTRAS. IT IS A TREASURE TROVE OF GREAT CRAFTS SUPPLIES, ALL THE MORE TREASURED BECAUSE IT GIVES US A CHANCE TO RE-USE AND RECYCLE MATERIAL THAT WOULD OTHERWISE END UP IN THE TRASH.

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS FOR CREATIVE ESL CRAFTS - PROJECTS THAT WILL COME ALIVE WITH ODDS AND ENDS YOU'VE COLLECTED FROM OTHER PROJECTS.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 FROM OLD CRAYONS TO NEW SUNCATCHERS

For this project, you'll need crayon shavings, wax paper and an iron, plus some aluminum foil to protect it. Let your students make the shavings out of old broken crayons with pencil sharpeners. Separate colors in paper cups. Then, fold some wax paper in half and sprinkle a small amount of crayon shavings onto one half of the sheet. Fold the wax paper over the shavings and place hot iron on medium heat over it to melt the crayon wax. Let the layer of wax cool and help students cut it into shapes. These make great spring butterflies that you can hang and let the sun shine through.

2 WRAPPING PAPER DOLLS

Scraps of wrapping paper that are not big enough or too wrinkled to re-use to wrap other gifts are perfect for this project. Review clothes vocabulary by making paper dolls and having your class dress them up! Students cut out pants, skirts, dresses, and even hats from your wrapping paper scraps.

3 NEWSPAPER FLOWERS

Spread several sheets of old newspaper on the floor and ask students to brush watered down tempera paint over them. Encourage them to use as many colors as they like and

let the colors swirl together. When the paint has dried, have them cut out irregular circles of different sizes. Help them form their flowers by stacking one circle above the other from the biggest to the smallest till they have from 5 to 10 circles. Roll up another sheet of newspaper for the stem and pin everything together with a paper fastener right through the flower's center.

4 CARDBOARD NAPKIN HOLDERS

These funky napkin holders make great holiday gifts! Help students cut the cardboard tube into smaller rings and decorate with whatever else they can find in your box of odds and ends: sequins are great for a flashy New Year's Eve theme, seeds and beans work great for Halloween napkin holders, or decorate with green and red yarn for festive Christmas napkin holders.

5 PIPE CLEANER AND CRAFT BEADS ORNAMENTS

Got an assortment of pipe cleaners and craft beads? Make some Christmas ornaments! Help your students thread the beads on each pipe cleaner and shape into stars, wreaths, Christmas trees, candy canes, etc. Leave a little on both ends so you can tie them up (except for the candy cane – in this case, curl the ends to keep the beads in place). Voilà! Beautiful ornaments for the classroom or perfect gifts to take home.

6 POMPOM PETS

Help your students make a cardboard circle – the bigger the circle, the bigger the pompom, but they'll also have to use more yarn. Instruct them to cut out another smaller circle in the center, so that they have a cardboard ring left. Show students how to wrap a section of yarn around the ring. If they run out, they can tie another piece and continue till the entire ring is tightly wrapped. Next, they take their scissors and cut the yarn along the outer edge. They take another piece of yarn and tie

the yarn through it center, thus creating a perfect pompom. Finally, they glue cardboard snouts, ears, and eyes to create their pompom pet.

7 BUTTON LETTERS

Redecorate your ESL classroom with the help of your students! Gather up all of the buttons you can find in your box of odds and ends. Cut out the letters of the alphabet from cardboard or colored construction paper, and have your little ones decorate them with the buttons – one type of button for each letter, or all mixed up!

8 CONFETTI ART

Show students how to make confetti with a hole puncher and scraps of construction paper. Students glue their confetti dots into shapes, animals, flowers, etc.

9 FABRIC PENCIL HOLDER

Give each of your students a tin can, or ask them to bring their own. Give them loads of fabric scraps to glue onto their cans and make colorful pencil holders.

10 ODDS AND ENDS PHOTO FRAME

A great keepsake for your students! Take a class photo and print enough copies for all of your students. Cut out two 8x8 squares of framing mat board for each student, one of the squares with a 3x5 section cut out from the middle (this is where the photo will go). Students decorate their frames with whatever they find in your box, and assemble their frames. If you've ever been accused of being a pack rat, this is definitely one case in which it pays off!

SAVE ALL OF THOSE BITS AND SCRAPS, AND YOU'LL NOT ONLY GIVE YOUR CLASS GREAT MATERIALS TO WORK WITH, YOU'LL ALSO HELP OUT THE ENVIRONMENT BY RECYCLING. CREATE BEAUTIFUL ART FROM ODDS AND ENDS!

What You Can Do with Clothes: 8 Great ESL Activities

WHEN YOU HAVE TO TEACH CLOTHES VOCABULARY, DO YOU ALWAYS USE FLASHCARDS AND ILLUSTRATIONS? WHY NOT GIVE YOUR STUDENTS THE REAL DEAL? CLOTHING ITEMS SUPPLY PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR KINES-THETIC ACTIVITIES WITH YOUNG LEARNERS, AND IF YOU USE THEM WITH ADULT LEARNERS – THEY’LL CERTAINLY BE SURPRISED!

Try to have a bag with an assortment of clothes ready for lessons in which you’ll talk about clothes. For little ones, a trunk full of clothes in the corner of the classroom guarantees instant fun.

8 GREAT ESL ACTIVITIES WITH CLOTHES

1 FASHION SHOW

This is the perfect way to practice, “I’m wearing...”. Students choose three items to wear from your trunk or bag and take turns modeling them.

2 CLEARANCE SALE!

Why practice clothes shopping role plays with imaginary clothes, when it’s so much better to use real ones? First, prepare the items by giving each a price tag – you can have this ready beforehand, or ask your students to help you. Students take turns buying and selling items. For extended practice, expand the role play to include the fitting room conversation: The jacket fits/doesn’t fit. It’s too long/short. Could I have a smaller/bigger size?

3 STORY TIME

Young learners can be very dramatic, and they love to dress up! Have your own little class play and provide them with the clothes to wear. You can put on a play or show for another class or your students’ parents.

4 FASHION SENSE

Lay several items of clothing and accessories on a table. Give your students commands like, “Put on the red scarf”. Make it more challenging and test their listening skills by having similar items of different colors: “Put on the scarf with green and blue stripes”. Ask one student to put on several items at the same time for a fun, ridiculous look that will make your students laugh.

5 THERE’S BEEN A ROBBERY

Practice prepositions of place. Arrange several clothing items around the classroom which will be your “shop”. Drape a sweater over a chair. Put a scarf under a desk, and so on. Ask your students, your “shop clerks” to take a long hard look at the classroom and try to remember where everything is. Ask a student to step out of the classroom. Take two or three items and hide them. Ask the student to come back and say there has been a robbery. They must report what was stolen from the “shop”: There was a green sweater on the chair and a red scarf under the desk.

6 WHOSE SHIRT IS THIS?

This is a fun way to practice possessive pronouns. Ask each student to bring an item of clothing to the class. It can be anything they want to bring. Before class they must give you their items without showing them to any of their classmates. Place all items in a bag or box and have each student take one. Each student has to guess whose it is. The student has three chances to say whose it is, and if they can’t guess correctly they get to ask, “Whose belt is this?”

7 THESE OR THOSE?

Clothes are great items with which to practice demonstrative pronouns. You’ll need several simi-

lar items like several pairs of socks and shoes, plus scarves, belts, shirts, skirts, etc. Place a scarf close to students and one further away. Say, “This scarf is blue and that scarf is red”. Do the same with pairs of socks for these and those.

8 SEASONAL ITEMS

Place a suitcase full of clothes in front of your students. You can do two things. You can either have them sort them into what is more appropriate for each season, or you may also describe some weather conditions and have students choose what they should wear: “It’s cloudy and windy. It’s about 75 degrees.” Students should choose items that are appropriate for rainy weather.

If you want to give your students clothes worksheets to continue practicing, you’ll find over 80 worksheets you need in our clothes section on BusyTeacher.org.

REAL ITEMS AND PROPS ALLOW STUDENTS TO USE SEVERAL OF THEIR SENSES AT ONCE.

MOREOVER, ALL STUDENTS CAN EASILY RELATE TO CLOTHES. BECAUSE IT MAY RESULT BULKY, TO BRING IN PILES OF CLOTHES TO THE CLASSROOM, TRY BRINGING A FEW AT A TIME AND STORE THEM IN YOUR CLASSROOM. BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, YOU’LL HAVE A GREAT COLLECTION OF CLOTHES FOR YOUR STUDENTS TO PLAY WITH!

What You Can Do with a Cell Phone: 7 Great ESL Activities

IN THE ESL CLASSROOM, DO YOU CONSIDER THE CELL PHONE YOUR FRIEND OR FOE? YES, IT'S A HUGE DISTRACTION FOR TEENS AND ADULTS, AND THE USE OF CELL PHONES IN THE ESL CLASSROOM SHOULD BE MANAGED APPROPRIATELY.

But here lies the key. If managed appropriately, the cell phone could be a wonderful, powerful tool in the classroom, particularly if you have adult learners. And to prove this, here are some great things you can do with a cell phone in class:

7 GREAT ESL ACTIVITIES THAT INVOLVE CELL PHONES

1 NUMBER CRUNCHING

This is a very useful way to practice saying very large, 6 or 7 digit numbers—no need for you to have to write them all down on the board. Ask students to use the “calculator” function in their phones. Give a student two numbers to add – 354,455 plus 21,998. Students add the numbers and must say the result correctly in English. It's also useful when you practice shopping situations, and they must calculate percentages and say them in English. If you have Business English students ask them for more complicated calculations like taxes or the bottom line in a Profit and Loss statement.

2 ONE-SIDED CONVERSATION

Take your cell phone and pretend you are talking to someone. Students will hear only your side of the conversation. When you're done talking ask students to guess who you were talking to and what the conversation was about. This is something you can really target to your students' needs: you can have all types of business scenarios like complaints, delays, deadlines, etc.

3 MATCHING CONVERSATION

Say you are teaching your students the four seasons. Use your phone and pretend to talk to someone about the weather. Have four different conversations. Students have to match the conversation to the right season. For example: “Oh yes! Just lovely!..... I'm enjoying this weather so much..Went out for a walk. You know, after spending so many months indoors, it was so nice to enjoy the fresh air....Have you seen how many flowers are blooming?.....” Students would have to guess you were talking about spring.

You can also match type of holidays, professions, sports, etc. Just remember that you can't give away any of the key words. Students must guess from other clues.

4 TAKE A SNAPSHOT!

This is a wonderful activity for ESL learners who are either in an English-speaking country or are traveling to one. Many ESL students don't feel confident enough in an English-speaking setting. So, provide them with a great tool. Show them just how useful their cell phone camera can be.

Play this fun game. Take pictures with your own phone of important intersections in town. Ask students if they can identify them. They must name the exact intersection and if possible famous landmarks that are nearby. Show students that they can do exactly the same when they are in a foreign location and take pictures of key streets and locations.

5 PLAYBACK

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could play back everything students say to show them the mistakes they've made? With a cell phone you can! Use your phone to record a student speaking about a topic or a role play between two students. Then, play the recording and see if students can cor-

rect their own mistakes. Play back a second time for you to show them the mistakes they didn't catch.

6 MY FAVORITE THINGS

What are the chances of getting your students to bring some of their favorite items to class? If they are small enough, that's no problem, but what if you want to talk about their favorite clothes, shoes, or even a room in their house. This problem is easily solved with a cell phone camera. Ask students to take a picture of their favorite room in the house. They must bring it to class, share it with the group, describe it and say why it is their favorite.

7 HOW FAR HAVE YOU PROGRESSED?

Film your students with your cell phone. They may be participating in a role play or discussion. Save this video till the last day of class. You may ask them to have a similar role play or ask the very same discussion topic. Ask them if they can tell the difference and see how much they've advanced!

Please note that for the One-sided Conversation and Matching Conversation, you may choose to use a toy phone, and it will get the job done just as well as a real phone. Also, these activities don't include tasks that involve texting or emailing you, for example, but those are also great options.

IT HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO COMPLETELY BAN CELL PHONES IN THE ESL CLASSROOM, ESPECIALLY IN ESL SCHOOLS. CAN WE ASK STUDENTS TO TURN THEM OFF DURING CLASS? ABSOLUTELY! CAN WE ASK THEM NOT TO BRING THEM TO CLASS? IT IS VERY LIKELY THAT OUR REQUEST WILL BE MET WITH RELUCTANCE. SO, WHY NOT USE THIS TOOL INSTEAD OF FIGHTING IT? YOUR STUDENTS WILL CERTAINLY BE MORE MOTIVATED!

What You Can Do with Food: 6 Games Your ESL Students Will Love

OLIVER TWIST COULDN'T HAVE SAID IT BETTER WHEN HE SANG, "FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD!" IN THE MUSICAL "OLIVER"! TO REALLY BE APPRECIATED, FOOD HAS TO BE TASTED, SMELLED, AND SAVORED.

Of course, for practical purposes, food vocabulary is taught in ESL classes through flashcards and illustrations. But wouldn't it be "glorious" to actually use real food? Or at the very least plastic, toy food?

6 ESL GAMES & ACTIVITIES WITH FOOD

1 ROTTEN APPLES

Tell your class they'll be going to the market today! Divide your class into shoppers and stall owners. Give each stall owner a booth (a desk) and a set of plastic fruits or veggies they must sell at \$1 each. Give your shoppers \$30 in play money. Give them enough time to go around and shop for fruits and vegetables. They must use the expressions and phrases they've learned for shopping. Then call out the name of one of the items, say "apples" and tell them they're rotten. All of the students who bought apples must place them in a separate container – the "trash". Allow them to continue shopping and then call out the name of another "rotten" item. At the end of the game, the student who has the most items – the one who relinquished the fewest "rotten" items – wins.

2 EATING OUT

There is no better way to practice ordering food in restaurants than by actually getting a plate of food! Set up a kitchen area with the set of plastic food you have available. As a warm up activity, have your students create a couple of menus that include the foods they have to offer. They can draw on their menus, use images they have cut out from magazines or simply list the items. Go over the different categories that are usually found

in menus: drinks, appetizers, entrees, and desserts.

When the menus are ready, students take turns eating out and serving the food in your restaurant. You may even have several "tables" at once with several waiters. Waiters and waitresses go to the kitchen to fill the orders, but if a particular item is no longer available they must go back to the table and offer an alternative: I'm sorry, we have run out of Coke. Would you like some juice instead?

3 FOOD PYRAMID

Teach your students how to eat a healthy, balanced diet. Use the Nutrition Worksheet from BusyTeacher.org combined with a good variety of plastic foods. There are several activities suggested in the worksheet, but there's no better way to get the point across than by using real or plastic foods.

Ask your students if they eat fruits and vegetables. Which ones? Can they find them among the fruits and veggies spread out on the table? Which foods are not so healthy? Which should be eaten in moderation?

Hand out the worksheet called "Food Math" (found within the Nutrition Worksheet on BusyTeacher.org). Students must plan four meals for a child their age and be sure to include foods from each food group. Instead of writing down their menu, they must use the plastic food they have available – arrange it in a plate for each meal.

4 THANKSGIVING CELEBRATION

How do you explain to an ESL student the food that the pilgrims ate for Thanksgiving? Isn't it a lot better to taste it? Have your own special Thanksgiving celebration with your class and sample some traditional dishes like pumpkin or apple pie, berries, or cornbread. Since carving a turkey in the classroom is not very

feasible, you can have turkey sandwiches instead. Other holidays you can celebrate with real food include Halloween, Christmas, the Fourth of July or Easter.

5 A RACE FOR HEALTH

This is a wonderful activity for your youngest learners. Start a discussion with your students on which foods are healthy and which aren't. Why is it important to have a healthy diet? Divide your students into two teams. Each team has to line up next to a bin with plastic food. On the other side of the room each team has two trays - one for healthy food and one for junk food. When you blow your whistle, the two students at the front grab a food from the bin, race to the other side, and deposit the food in the correct tray. Students return to the back of the line and the team member who's next in line does the same. When the time's up, you check their trays. Have students tell you what each item is and if it's healthy or not. The team who placed the most food in the correct trays wins.

6 FRUIT SALAD

Make a fruit salad with as many fruits as you can. Students take turns being blindfolded and guessing the fruit they've been given to taste. You may divide them into teams, give them points for correct guesses, but above all - let them enjoy a healthy snack!

IN CASES IN WHICH BRINGING LARGE QUANTITIES OF FRESH PRODUCE IS NOT FEASIBLE, REMEMBER THERE ARE COMPLETE SETS OF PLASTIC FOOD AVAILABLE IN THE MARKET AT VERY AFFORDABLE PRICES. BEAR IN MIND THAT IT IS A ONE TIME INVESTMENT, AS THEY ARE USUALLY VERY DURABLE TOYS. YOU MAY EVEN SHARE THE INVESTMENT WITH OTHER ESL TEACHERS AND HAVE A BOX OF FOOD SUPPLIES READY FOR ANY OF YOUR LESSONS.

What You Can Do With a Whistle

- 7 Fun ESL Games and Activities

LONG GONE ARE THE DAYS IN WHICH AN ESL CLASSROOM HAD TO BE ABSOLUTELY STILL, WITH ALL STUDENTS SITTING QUIETLY AT THEIR DESKS. KIDS ARE NOISY BY NATURE, AND THEY LOVE TO MAKE NOISE - ESPECIALLY WITH WHISTLES!

USE THIS GREAT LITTLE INSTRUMENT FOR SOME FUN LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND GAMES.

7 FUN ESL GAMES AND ACTIVITIES WITH A WHISTLE

1 IF YOU KNOW IT - BLOW YOUR WHISTLE!

Get your students in a TV game show type of mood. Divide them into two teams and have each team line up behind a desk with a whistle in the center. The students at the front must stand with their hands behind their backs. Show them a flashcard. The student who can name the object tries to grab the whistle first and blow it. If they do so correctly, they get a point for their team. Then, both students at the front go to the back of the line. You may ask them to use the word in a complete sentence or ask a question with it. This is also a great way to practice grammar points, for example, give them a verb and they must say it in past.

2 BLOW THE WHISTLE ON YOUR CLASSMATE

Students need to learn to recognize mistakes in order to learn, whether they are their own or others'. Have a Q & A or drilling session, during which students take turns blowing a whistle each time a classmate makes a mistake. For example, drill your students on the First Conditional. The student with the whistle must blow it every time they think someone has made a mistake, and then correct it. When a student has correctly identified three mistakes, they must pass the whistle to another student.

3 FILL IN THE BLANKS

Try using a whistle the next time you give your students a dictation - dictations will never be boring again! Give them some gaps to fill and use the whistle to indicate where each gap goes: "Last weekend, I (whistle) to the park. It (whistle) a beautiful day. I (whistle) my bicycle for a while and then (whistle) some football with my friends."

4 PASS THE BUCK

Instruct a student to start writing a story on a sheet of paper. Tell him/her that when you blow your whistle, he/she must pass the sheet to another student. Once you blow the whistle they must stop writing - they can only finish a word, but not the sentence.

After everyone has had the chance to contribute to the story, read it out loud to the class.

5 WORD SCAVENGER HUNT

This is a wonderful game for young learners. Place different flashcards throughout the classroom on or under desks and chairs, or on shelves. Tell students they must roam around the classroom looking for "animals". When they find one they must bring it to you and tell you what it is. At some point during the game, blow your whistle and shout out, "jobs". Now, students must look for flashcards with these items. Then, blow your whistle and say "colors".

To make it more challenging, blow your whistle every minute or so, going from one category to the next.

6 VERB COP

Each day, make one of your students responsible for looking out for one verb. Give the student a whistle and a verb, for example, "go". Each time this verb is used in any tense the student must blow the whistle and say whether it was

used correctly in the sentence. You may choose to limit this to only specific drilling sessions or activities and not for the duration of the class.

Make sure you tell your "verb cop" when they have to be on the alert for "infractions" and tell them if they did a good job at the end of class.

7 HOW HIGH CAN YOU GO?

Divide students into two teams and have them line up across from the board. One student from each team must run to the board and write down a word that fits into the category you will give them, for example, "weather". After they write the word, they must run back and pass the marker to a classmate. They must start at the bottom of the whiteboard, and work their way up.

The team that has reached the highest (written the most words) when you blow your whistle will be the winner.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO MAKE SOME NOISE IN CLASS! AS LONG AS IT'S NOT DISRUPTIVE TO OTHER CLASSES IN YOUR SCHOOL, YOUR STUDENTS WILL REALLY ENJOY SOME ACTIVITIES WITH A WHISTLE.

KEEP IN MIND THERE'S NO BETTER WAY TO SIGNAL THE START OR END OF A GAME, OR TO LET YOUR STUDENTS KNOW WHEN THEY MUST TRANSITION INTO ANOTHER SEGMENT OF AN ACTIVITY.

What You Can Do With Printable Flashcards When Teaching ESL

FLASHCARDS CAN BE AN EXCELLENT LEARNING AND TEACHING TOOL ESPECIALLY WHEN INTRODUCING NEW VOCABULARY OR DRILLING FAMILIAR WORDS. BESIDES BEING USED BY THE TEACHER, THEY CAN ALSO BE USED IN A VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES AND EVEN POSTED AROUND THE CLASSROOM FOR STUDENTS TO REFERENCE.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 INTRODUCING NEW VOCABULARY

The words on these flashcards should be in a simple font, large enough for students at the back of the classroom to see, and printed in an easy to read color. Generally the reverse side of the card would have an image or a translation. When introducing new vocabulary hold the flashcards up high enough for everyone to see and do some choral repetition with students one word at a time revealing the reverse before moving on to the next word. It is easiest when holding a set of flashcards to remove the front card and move it to the back as opposed to moving them back to front.

Especially with beginners, only a handful of words should be introduced at a time.

2 DRILLING VOCABULARY

After introducing new vocabulary, it is a good idea to review it often. At first, pronounce each word, have students repeat each word as a class, and prompt them for the translation. This will be slower in the beginning however as they become more familiar with the words, there will be no need for you to demonstrate pronunciation or prompt them.

When the students get to this stage with a set of vocabulary, challenge them by flipping through the words at a faster pace. Translations are no longer necessary.

3 PRACTICE

Small sets of flashcards can be used in a variety of fun activities. Here are some easy ones.

- A variation on Snap

Cards can have words, pictures, or numbers printed on one or both sides. Students play in groups of three to five. First have students spread the cards out (face up) on the desk in the middle of each group. Then simply say one vocabulary word aloud at a time. Students, upon hearing the word, must repeat it and slap the corresponding card.

The student who slaps the correct card first gets to keep it and the student with the most cards in each group wins the round.

- Go fish

Cards can have printing on only one side and must be opaque. The deck must have two or four of each card depending on how many vocabulary words you would like to use. Around 50 cards in a deck would be good. Students play in groups of three to five. First have students shuffle the deck and deal five cards (face down) per student. Put the remaining cards in a pile (face down) in the middle of the desk. Students take turns asking other members of the group for cards trying to gather the necessary two or four cards of a particular word.

You can make the asking and answering dialogue more or less complicated depending on your students. The simplest method is to have the student whose turn it is look directly at another student and simply say the word he is looking for.

The student being asked for a card can then either respond by saying the word and handing the card over or saying "Go Fish" in which case the student whose turn it is must draw a card from the center pile.

- Memory

Cards can have printing on only one side and must be opaque. The deck must have two of each card or perhaps have an image and a word for each vocabulary word. Students play in smaller groups usually no more than four. Students should start by shuffling the cards and laying them out (face down) in a square or rectangular grid.

Students take turns flipping over two cards trying to find a matching pair. If a matching pair is found, the student whose turn it is gets to keep both cards and the student with the most cards at the end of the game wins the game.

4 REVIEW

Before tests and quizzes, challenge your students with lots of flashcards by combining all the sets they need to review. It may be a bit overwhelming but if they have truly been building upon their knowledge during the course of their lessons, they should perform well.

Difficulties with large sets of flashcards or vocabulary would suggest that they require more practice when new vocabulary is introduced and more consistent practice of words they have already learned.

THERE ARE MANY GAMES, WHICH YOUR STUDENTS ARE SURE TO ENJOY, THAT MAKE USE OF FLASHCARDS. AS LONG AS FLASHCARDS ARE CLEAR AND SIMPLE, THEY CAN BE INVALUABLE IN YOUR TEACHING.

What You Can Do With Your Body: Teaching With Gestures & Mime

A LOT OF TEACHING ENGLISH IS ABOUT ACTING.

KEEPING YOUR ENERGY HIGH AND BEING CREATIVE WITH YOUR LESSONS WILL MAKE YOUR STUDENTS MORE ATTENTIVE. OUTSIDE OF ROLE PLAY ACTIVITIES, YOU CAN USE GESTURES AND MIME IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS. THESE CAN AIDE YOUR STUDENTS IN COMMUNICATING, UNDERSTANDING, AND PARTICIPATING DURING YOUR LESSONS.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 GIVING DIRECTIONS

Using particular gestures or expressions in the classroom will lead students to associate them with a particular thing. For example, if you always use the same gesture when you say "Please stand up." students will become accustomed to it and stand up when you use that gesture even if you occasionally leave out the oral instruction. You can have gestures for when you want students to repeat something after you, make groups, or sit down too.

This can be especially handy when you want to communicate something to your students in a noisy setting. For instance, if you say "Please turn your desks to make groups of four." students will begin moving around and making noise as they rearrange their desks so they may miss your verbal instructions to sit down but if you also gesture for them to sit down, at least some students will see it and react accordingly which will cause the remaining students to follow suit.

2 VOCABULARY

Using gestures and mime is important when it comes to vocabulary too. You can use them to elicit certain words and phrases from students. If you teach very young students, it is also common to associate gestures with words to help students remember vocabulary better. Using the same gesture every time you say a particular

word or phrase will help these students associate the two.

3 PRACTICE

In practice dialogues, you can incorporate gestures and mime. If you are teaching a conversation where a customer is complaining about something to a store clerk, for instance, you can tell students that the store clerk should act completely shocked at hearing the news, look apologetic, or whatever else you can think of to make the scenario more realistic. In a conversation where two people are meeting for the first time, have students shake hands as they would do a real life situation.

These details make practicing dialogues more fun and interesting.

4 PRODUCTION

Activities and games which use gestures and mime can be fun for the whole class. If you have just finished a section on feelings, make a list of feelings on the board and have students choose a slip of paper from a hat. Each slip of paper should contain a sentence such as "You are happy." Students should keep their sentences a secret. Have one volunteer at a time mime his/her sentence while the rest of the class tries to guess it. This would be a good review activity.

To check individual comprehension, you can use the same basic idea but instead turn it into an interview activity where students have a sheet of paper with all the emotions listed as well as their secret emotion. The idea is that students go around the classroom miming and guessing emotions in pairs and getting a student signature for each emotion.

When you go through the worksheet as a class you can have students read aloud from their worksheets sentences like "Jane is sad." and ask Jane to mime being sad for the class.

5 CULTURAL

If you are teaching English in a country such as Japan, it is important to consider the fact that lots of communication is nonverbal. When your students have the opportunity to go abroad or interact with other native English speakers, your students may use polite language but if their body language is interpreted differently, they will not have made as good an impression as they were capable of. Your use of simple gestures will help your students.

For instance, you can shrug when you do not know the answer, wave to students when you see them outside the classroom, and gesture for students to come up to the board. This will expose students to the types of gestures common in a culture different from their own.

Certain gestures may be the same but have different meanings so it is important to explain what they mean to you so that students are not confused.

Gestures and mime can be really helpful in numerous classroom situations and using them often can assist both you and your students.

DO NOT FORCE YOURSELF TO USE CERTAIN GESTURES BUT DO WHAT COMES NATURALLY AND WHEN YOU FIND WHAT WORKS FOR YOU, STICK WITH IT AND YOUR STUDENTS WILL ADAPT.

What You Can Do With The Coursebook: 7 Creative Ways

MOST ESL TEACHERS NEED A COURSEBOOK TO FOLLOW. IT GIVES US A STRUCTURE. IT GIVES STUDENTS A STRUCTURE.

But it does not give us fun, engaging speaking tasks. At least, most coursebooks don't, which is unfortunate since most students sign up for ESL classes to learn to speak English. However, because we are resourceful teachers, we can always supply the engaging speaking tasks that coursebooks seem to be missing.

Here are some great ways to turn that boring coursebook around:

7 THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH THE COURSEBOOK

1 YOU GOT THE JOB!

Most ESL coursebooks include a unit on jobs or professions. Activities usually involve describing what each profession does or involves. To make these tasks a little more engaging, have your class conduct job interviews instead.

Divide students into pairs - one student is the interviewer and the other is the interviewee. Go around the class and give each pair a different profession or job to interview for.

2 SHOPPING INFORMATION GAP

An information gap exercise is a great way to engage students in speaking tasks. In this Shopping Information Gap, students are divided into pairs, and each is supplied with a worksheet with some information missing from it. Students ask each other questions to find the missing pieces.

3 FIND SOMEONE WHO

This is another classic activity, one that is quite popular among ESL teachers. Students are given a worksheet, like this Winter Vacation Find Someone Who, and their task is to

ask the questions that are modeled in the worksheet, or come up with the right questions to find out who among their classmates has done something in particular. A great way to practice present perfect questions with "ever". Try using a famous fictional character, like James Bond and ask your students to find someone who "has driven a sports car", "been to India", "used a spy gadget", etc.

4 MEET MY FRIEND!

This is the ideal speaking task for beginners. In the worksheet, you'll find cards with personal information on one side, and blanks to be filled in on the other. Students are divided into pairs, and they interview each other. They must supply the information given on their card, and take notes on their partner's. Then, each must report what they have found out about their new friend.

5 ROCK N' ROLE PLAY

Role plays are another classic speaking activity. And most coursebooks include role plays. But not all students enjoy them or take advantage of their opportunity to speak. The problem is not acting out the role play but how well the roles have been set up. To ensure successful role plays, you must go beyond the typical, "Student A is the client, student B is the customer". When preparing role play cards or instructions include a lot of details and complications.

For example, divide students into groups and tell them they play in a Rock n' Roll band. Give each of them a different weekly schedule of activities. They must check their schedules and set up at least two practice sessions for the week.

The more filled up their schedules are the harder it will be for them to schedule their rehearsals.

6 TABOO

This popular board game can be

adapted to suit any vocabulary. Some course materials even come with their own Taboo cards. But it's not too hard to make your own. Each card should have a word to be described, as well as a few others words that can't be used in the description. For example, if the word is "cow", the other words that can't be used might be "milk", "dairy", or "udder".

Award one point for each word guessed correctly, and the team with the most points wins.

7 LET'S DEBATE!

Class debates are amazing opportunities for extended speaking practice. As in the role plays, the effectiveness of the debates lies in how successful you are at engaging students. Some great topics for debate are:

- Pros and cons (of social media, email, the Internet, etc.)
- Solutions to a problem (global warming, energy crisis, etc.)
- Planning meetings (city planners deciding which problems need to be addressed, for example, and encourage students to use modals to say what should, could, or must be done)

Feel like throwing the boring coursebook out the window? No need to!

IF YOU CAN'T BEAT 'EM, JOIN 'EM, RIGHT? INSTEAD OF WORKING AGAINST IT, WORK WITH IT. TAKE WHAT YOU NEED FROM IT AND CREATE YOUR OWN ENGAGING SPEAKING TASKS. OR TRY ANY OF THESE IDEAS AND YOU WILL NOT ONLY GET YOUR STUDENTS TO SPEAK, YOU MAY HAVE A HARD TIME GETTING THEM TO STOP!

What You Can Do With Food: How To Teach ESL With Cooking

MOST BEGINNER ESL CLASSES TEACH A UNIT ON FOOD, BUT THERE IS NO REASON TO LIMIT YOURSELF TO A FOOD UNIT TO TEACH WITH COOKING. THERE ARE MANY WAYS AND MANY REASONS TO BRING FRESH FLAVOR TO YOUR ESL CLASS THROUGH COOKING.

HOW TO TEACH ESL WITH COOKING

1 EXPERIENCE A DAY IN THE LIFE

If your class is reading a novel, short story or other piece of literature together, you may be able to help your students relate to the characters with classroom cooking. Give your students a taste of the fictional character's life by whipping up a batch of a food mentioned in the text. (For example, Turkish Delight if you are reading *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, fresh maple candy if you are reading *Little House in the Big Woods*. etc.) There are many resources both in print and online where you can get recipes for unusual foods mentioned in literature. To search simply type the word recipe and then the food you are looking for in your favorite search engine. You are sure to find many options for preparing that food. Do not limit yourself to literature, either. Even business articles have the potential to include cooking. One of my students' favorite activities in our unit on businesses that give back was when I brought in a pint of Ben & Jerry's ice cream for the class to share. Many companies that your students read about every day are related to food. Likewise, there are plenty of geographical locations with food connections. Spice up your classroom style with a taste of something different by bringing those connections into your lesson.

2 MEASUREMENTS

Cooking is also a great way to introduce measurements to your students in a way that is realistic and practical. Since most areas of the world use the metric system, this may be the first opportunity your students have had to learn the U.S. measurement system.

You can introduce this foreign concept to your students by using familiar food. During your lesson, you can cover typical cooking measurements like cups and teaspoons, but why stop there? Teach pounds and ounces while whipping up a pasta salad. Let your students feel how heavy a pound of cheese is by passing it around (keep it wrapped, please!) before mixing it into a batch of macaroni and cheese. Even if you are teaching with the metric system, your students still need to learn the English vocabulary for those measurements, so let them see and feel how heavy or long or big these measurements are.

3 COUNT AND NON-COUNT NOUNS

Can you give each student a bread? No, you will have to give them slices of bread, grains of rice or glasses of milk. They can see and feel a cup of coffee, a splash of cream, or a tablespoon of peanut butter. You can give out one banana and one knife to each student. These are just a few of the count and non-count nouns you can cover when the class cooks up a set of peanut butter and banana sandwiches or has a spontaneous coffee house. Food provides a great opportunity to introduce or review the concept of count and non-count nouns since so many food items are non-count. Through cooking, though, you can take a potentially dull and boring topic and make it enjoyable and memorable, and it does not even have to be expensive. If you have no heat sources, make a sandwich (count). If you can get a portable burner or have access to a stove, make bean (count) and cheese (non-count) quesadillas. Even rice pilaf is possible with rice (non-count), veggies (count), and dressing (non-count). Let your creativity flow and give your students a perk in the middle of class.

4 CLASS PREPOSITIONS

You can use cooking as an opportunity to create or strengthen relationships among your students, too. Tell your students to each bring in a piece of fruit the following day and then surprise them by making fruit salad as a class.

You may want to do the cutting yourself to keep things simple and safe (depending on the age of your students), but if you let your students cut up the fruit for the salad, make sure they wash their hands and keep things clean. As you put the different elements in to the bowl together, review prepositions of place. The apples are under the oranges. The banana is on top of the oranges. The oranges are beneath the banana. If you have a glass bowl or use individual clear cups to assemble the salad, your students will be able to see the placement of each type of fruit more easily. The seeds are in the grapes and the pit is out of the peach. As the teacher, try to bring more unusual items or items that are local or culturally unique. Most students will probably bring apples, oranges and bananas. Even if your salad is limited to three or four fruits, once you review the prepositions mix it up with a cup of yogurt (any flavor is okay) and enjoy a snack. Have napkins handy, too.

5 IT ALL GOES BACK TO CULTURE

Most importantly of all, food screams culture. Give your students a chance to talk about their home cultures when they share a food typical of home. This works great as a presentation to the class. It is a perfect opportunity for public speaking when your students demonstrate how to prepare a traditional or typical food, and the smells drifting into the hallway will make students in other classes jealous. Do not stop with a simple presentation, though. Get some writing practice in by having another student retell the process of making a food. You may want to schedule time for pairs of students to interview each other. Students presenting and writing will both have to describe the steps in the procedure and will have to explain the process in chronological order, an important organizational strategy. Do not let intimidation stop you from bringing flavor and flair to your not so typical ESL class. You can use cooking in many different ways and for many different purposes. Your students are sure to find it fun and memorable, and you will have a great time, too. **Everyone will be walking with a satisfied stomach and a smile on his face.**

How To Use TV In Your Classroom: 6 Creative ESL Approaches

ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO EDUCATE STUDENTS ACROSS ALL SKILLS IS VIA THE MEANS OF TELEVISION. WHILE MANY TEACHERS AND PARENTS ARE PROBABLY UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT THEIR CHILD OR STUDENT IS NOT LEARNING MUCH WHEN WATCHING TV, IN THE RIGHT CIRCUMSTANCES A TV SHOW OR A NEWS BULLETIN CAN PROVIDE A FUN ALTERNATIVE TO REGULAR CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES.

Television programs also provide students with realistic conversation and dialogues, which aid listening skills by offering a diverse range of accents for the students to hear. Another advantage is that the majority of TV programs use relatively simple language - otherwise they provide the viewers with a clear explanation.

Television can be used in a number of ways to add that all-important element of depth to your class. Here's a few of our favourites.

6 CREATIVE WAYS TO USE TV IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 ENTERTAIN

Ah, yes. Entertainment. Where would we be without it? And especially television. Well, just like we get bored with monotonous things, our students do as well. So in order to give them a short break from books, grammar and structures, television programs work a treat. However, teachers shouldn't use this as an excuse to be lazy: even entertainment lessons, for example, at the end of a course, should contain a worksheet or simple task to go along with it. Best TV programs - Any appropriate movie or a TV episode that fits well into the class.

2 IMPROVE LISTENING SKILLS

50 percent of TV involves us listening to it, so why not leave the 15 year old cassette player in the teachers' room, and bring in a DVD to add a little variety to your class. Even preparation for IELTS and TOEFL classes can benefit

from watching an appropriate TV show in class. Teachers simply have to create a worksheet containing questions in the style of TOEFL or IELTS that relate to the content. One TV show that I like to use with these classes, and can be used with practically any class is Man Vs Wild. Man Vs Wild makes for a great classroom activity, and will have the students sitting on the edge of their seat. It's even better to see their faces when he eats a worm or a frog. Best TV programs - Man Vs Wild, Air Crash Investigation, House MD.

3 LEARN ABOUT CULTURE WITH NEWS

I am a strong believer that classes should not just be about English, but also contain elements of cultural tid bits that the students use if they travel overseas at a later date. One quick and easy way to gain a deep insight into various cultures around the world is through an ordinary nightly news bulletin from any commercial broadcaster. Commercial broadcasters are ideal as they aim to appeal to the masses, maintaining a simple level of language and popular stories. Best TV programs - Any news bulletin from BBC, CNN or Al Jazeera, or for a laugh, try Fox News.

4 INTRODUCE ASSIGNMENT WORK

Keeping the class up to date on current affairs of the world is fun for me, as a news junkie, while offering variety for the students. BBC News offers a very short news program called 'Around the World in 80 Seconds', which provides brief snippets of news from around the world. I like to use this as an introduction to assignment work on world news. Students will watch the broadcast two or three times while taking notes. They can then pick one of the issues heard in the broadcast to research and write about, handing it in the following week. While not only improving their English skills, it also prepares students with some of the research that they may have to undertake at university. Best TV Program to use - BBC's Around the World in 80 Seconds.

5 "LEARN ENGLISH" TV PROGRAMS

If you feel that you're students may be more responsive to a TV than you, simply let the TV do all the work! Well, not really, use it sparingly as a tool to maintain a good mix of variety. While it's not as interactive as a teacher, it can provide some very good examples. I have found myself trying to explain a point, and later seen it in a "learn English" TV show explained with succinct explanations and easy-to-understand examples. These are a good way to complement what the students learn in class while providing a mix of accents and voices that provide enough variety for the students to practice. Best TV Program to use - There's so many out there, but I find 'Australia Network' to have the most comprehensive range of "Learn To Speak English"-style programs, including 'Study English', 'English Bytes', and much more. 'Australia Network' also features one of the best IELTS tips programs of anywhere I have seen. IELTS teachers should take a look at "Study English - IELTS Preparation 1 & 2".

6 A VISUAL EXPLANATION

If a picture tells a thousand words, then obviously a video must tell a whole lot more! Television programs can provide a detailed explanation on topics that can be quite difficult to explain. Some localised sports, such as cricket or curling can be an incredibly difficult for an ESL student to comprehend, which is where visual aids, such as videos, come in amazingly handy.

BY PUTTING ON YOUR THINKING CAPS AND USING SOME OF THAT GREY MATTER THAT'S IN YOUR HEAD, VIDEOS CAN PROVIDE US WITH PEACE AND QUIET, WHILE OUR STUDENTS TAKE ADVANTAGE AND PRACTICE THEIR SKILLS WHILE HAVING A GOOD TIME. AS A TEACHER, YOU WILL BENEFIT AS WELL. MOST TV PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES THAT WORK WELL CAN BE RE-USED OVER AND OVER AS YOU TEACH NEW CLASSES.

What You Can Do With A Poem:

9 Activities For Teaching Verse

TRY ONE OR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR ESL STUDENTS TO HELP THEM APPRECIATE THE FINER LANGUAGE OF VERSE.

10 FUN ACTIVITIES TO TEACH VERSE

1 MAKE A POETRY CONNECTION BY WRITING HAIKU

If your students know how to count syllables in words, they can write haiku. This simple 3-line poetry form follows a pattern of 5 syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the third. Haiku also typically contains the mention of a season or an image from the natural world. Get your students thinking about the natural world around them, and if possible take them on a nature walk. Encourage them to use all of their senses while on the walk and then to translate those sensory perceptions into their haiku.

2 HOST YOUR OWN POETRY SLAM.

In a typical poetry slam, participants recite a poem for the audience who judges the performance based on the poem itself and the performance. You can find details on hosting a poetry slam at poetryslam.com and get a feel for what a poetry slam is like. Feel free to allow your students to perform either their own poems or those of favorite poets, and have the class vote for a winner by applause. Your students will benefit from memorizing poetry and have fun with the performance aspect of their reading, just make sure you provide adequate time in class or at home for your students to memorize their poems.

3 INTRODUCE YOUR STUDENTS TO THE POPULAR PIECE 'KEEP A POEM IN YOUR POCKET'.

After reading this poem with your class, use envelopes to make and decorate pockets that your students can attach to their desks. Each day of your poetry unit, have your students copy a favorite poem on to an index card and put it in their pocket. At the end of your unit, have your students make a cover

and bind the index cards into a book. You can also challenge your students to memorize one of the poems they copied. You can ask them to perform the poem in front of the class or simply share with a friend or family member and relay the details of the experience.

4 USE A SET OF MAGNETIC POETRY

This simple collection of magnets sports one word on each piece of magnet. If you give students a magnetic white board or other magnetic surface, they can compose their own free verse poems with the available words. Your students will have fun exercising their creativity through play. Even if they only use the words to create long sentences, they will be practicing their grammar skills and word order rules through an activity that feels more like a game than language studies.

5 HAVE THEM WRITE SIMPLE POEMS BASED ON "BEANS, BEANS, BEANS" BY LUCIA AND JAMES HYMES IN HOORAY FOR CHOCOLATE.

Read the poem to your class and then write it on the board. Go through the poem and label each "beans" as a noun and each of the words that describe the beans as adjectives. Then write a class poem modeled after "Beans, Beans, Beans" using the noun pie, for example. Brainstorm a list of different pies and then arrange them to fit into the poem in place of the different types of beans. Your students will find this poetry puzzle enjoyable, and then challenge them to write their own poems in the same style. They can use the noun bugs or pickles or books - any noun will do as long as they can think of descriptive words for it.

6 REVIEW THE PHONICS OF VOWELS.

Though many words with the same final spellings rhyme, that is not always the case. Review with your students the different sounds that vowels and vowel combinations make. Point out to your students that although word pairs like "look" and "spook" are spelled the same (after the initial consonant sound) the words do not rhyme. If you can, let your

students look through a rhyming dictionary to find other pairs of words which do rhyme but are not spelled the same.

7 AN INDEPENDENT COMPUTER LAB ASSIGNMENT

Have each student or pair of students choose a favorite poem of at least five lines. Then have him create a power point presentation to illustrate the poem. He should write out one line per slide and find a picture that goes well with the line. Once all the presentations are complete, have a poetry "reading" in which you play the presentations for your class. Lead a short discussion following the "reading" asking your students how the slide shows helped them understand the poems.

8 REVIEW STRESS IN PRONUNCIATION.

Many poems follow a pattern not only for syllables but also for stress. The most well known stress pattern in poetry is probably the iambs which traditionally make up a sonnet. An iamb is a two-syllable word or pair of words which follows the pattern of unstressed/stressed. Iambic pentameter, five sets of iambs, is the structure of one line of a traditional sonnet. If you like and your students have the language ability to do so, look at one of Shakespeare's sonnets and have your students identify the stressed words throughout. Then have your students try their hands at writing their own sonnets. They do not have to be love poems: you can write a sonnet about anything.

9 LIMERICKS

The basic pattern of a limerick is five lines following the rhyme pattern AABBA. The A lines should have three sets of three syllables each, and the B lines should have two sets of three syllables each. Limericks are often humorous and lighthearted, sometimes making a joke. Encourage your students to be funny if they can when writing limericks, and be sure to share some examples with them, but keep them clean.

What You Can Do with Brochures/Flyers: 7 ESL Activities

MOST OF US HATE THE JUNK MAIL THAT CLUTTERS UP OUR MAILBOXES – ALL OF THOSE PAMPHLETS, BROCHURES AND FLYERS FOR COMPANIES AND SERVICES WE ARE NOT INTERESTED IN. BUT WAIT! DON'T THROW THEM AWAY! PUT THEM TO GOOD USE IN YOUR ESL CLASS.

Brochures, flyers and all forms of advertisement offer great, real information that your students can practice with. Here are 7 fabulous activities you can try with your class:

7 CREATIVE ESL ACTIVITIES WITH BROCHURES AND FLYERS

1 WHAT ARE YOUR HOURS?

Gather plenty of library, bank, car rental agency, museum, travel agency, etc. brochures. Use any brochure where the hours of business are clearly visible. Give a student a museum brochure, for example, and tell them they work in the museum. Another student calls the museum and asks about hours. You can have several role plays with as many places/brochures as you like. This is also great way to review the days of the week.

2 FOOD SORTING

Supermarket flyers are awesome materials for an ESL class. They come filled with pictures. Give your students several of these and have them cut out all of the foods. When they're done, all of the pictures are placed in one big pile. Give your students a large sheet of poster board. Tell them they must first sort the foods into different groups: dairy, meats, fruits, vegetables, cereals, etc. Then they must glue the different groups onto the poster board. You may also teach them about the food pyramid and have them illustrate it with their pictures.

3 MY DREAM DESTINATION

Present your students with a variety of travel brochures. Talk about each of the destinations. What's it like there?

What activities can you do there? What's the weather like this time of year? Is it expensive to travel there? Is it far? Have each student choose one of the destinations and write about why they would like to travel there.

4 A MEDICAL CONDITION

Try to get several copies of the same brochure from a doctor's office. The brochure can be about any medical condition or health issue. Some really good ones are the "How to Prevent...." type. Say you have a brochure for "How to Prevent Tooth Decay". Introduce the topic with warm up questions: How often do you brush your teeth? Do you brush your teeth after every meal? Then have students read the brochures individually or in pairs. Give them some comprehension questions to answer. End the activity by asking what they've learned about tooth decay. Keep in mind that although medical topics may be hard for some ESL students to understand, medical brochures are written in a very simple, clear language that anyone can understand. They are much better sources of information for ESL students and make better reading material than medical books or encyclopedias.

5 HOW DO I GET THERE?

Gather different types of brochures that include a map. Students study the maps and take turns asking for and giving directions.

6 WHICH BROCHURE SHOULD I READ?

Present your students with different types of brochures for a variety of businesses. Give them enough time to peruse each and get a general idea of what each company does. Present them with a situation: I need to open a bank account. Which brochure should I read? A student chooses the bank brochure for you and scans the information to answer some questions from you: Where is the bank located? What are its hours? You may easily target your questions to your students' level.

7 PLANNING A SOCIAL ACTIVITY

Try to get some flyers for cultural activities that may include theater, movies and concerts. Students make plans to go out. First, they must agree on what they will see or do. Then they must arrange the date and time, say who else is coming, and whether they'll be doing anything afterwards like going out to dinner.

For those ESL teachers who may not be living in an English-speaking country and may not have access to brochures in English, some websites have printable brochures (Google "printable brochure" and you'll find some, like this one for Ashegon Lake Resort). Also, most travel agencies or tourist information offices have brochures in English. Pool resources! Ask colleagues who travel abroad to bring you some! Brochures and flyers offer a tremendous wealth of information: rates, prices, contact info, hours, cultural facts, etc. Some brochures may not be appropriate for all levels but you can always target the information you need like addresses and phone numbers, hours, etc.

THERE ARE ALSO GREAT BROCHURES AND FLYERS FOR CHILDREN. THE VARIETY AVAILABLE IS ASTOUNDING! THEY'RE EVERYWHERE! ONCE YOU START USING THEM IN CLASS, YOU'LL NEVER THROW AWAY ANOTHER FLYER AGAIN!

THERE IS A SAYING THAT GOES, "WHEN LIFE GIVES YOU LEMONS, MAKE LEMONADE". HERE AT BUSYTEACHER.ORG, WE SAY, "WHEN PEOPLE GIVE YOU FLYERS, USE THEM IN YOUR ESL CLASS!" YOU WILL ALSO BE MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE ENVIRONMENT BY KEEPING MORE PAPER OUT OF THE TRASH.

What You Can Do with a Paper Bag: 9 Splendid ESL Activities

“PAPER OR PLASTIC?” IS THE QUESTION SUPERMARKET SHOPPERS HAVE BEEN ASKED FOR YEARS, AND THOUGH THERE IS STILL MUCH DEBATE ON WHICH IS THE MOST ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY CHOICE, ESL TEACHERS SHOULD DEFINITELY GO FOR PAPER BAGS – THEY CAN BE REUSED IN THE CLASSROOM FOR LOTS OF FUN, CREATIVE ACTIVITIES. LIKE THESE, FOR EXAMPLE:

10 ESL ACTIVITIES WITH PAPER BAGS

1 SCRAMBLED EGGS

Take egg-shaped pieces of paper and write one word in a sentence in each piece of paper. Place the words in a paper bag. Prepare one bag for each team of 2-3 students. Give each of your teams one bag. Students take out the “eggs” and try to form a sentence with the words. The first team to complete theirs wins. This is a fun activity for Easter, but you can adapt it to any holiday or special lesson – use pumpkins for Halloween or Thanksgiving, and stars for Christmas.

2 PUPPET PETS

Your class can make puppets of virtually any animal they like out of paper lunch bags – lions, zebras, cats, dogs, or even birds. All you have to do is instruct them to use the bottom, folded part of the bag for the face – this is where their hand will go. For example, try the octopus, turtle, or fish templates for puppets – or create your own!

3 BACK TO SCHOOL BACKPACKS

One of the activities suggested in this wonderful Back to School Arts and Crafts worksheet is making a backpack out of a paper bag. Give each of your students a large paper bag and have them follow the instructions on the worksheet to create and decorate their backpacks. Students take them

home and fill them with things they want to share with the class: photos, small toys, books, a card collection, etc. they bring their backpacks to class and take turns sharing.

4 MONSTER MASKS

This works particularly well for Halloween, but you can make masks for any holiday or special lesson. Students take large paper bags and cut out holes for the eyes and mouth. They can then decorate the bags to create their own monster: Frankenstein, Dracula, an alien, even a one-eyed Cyclops. No need to bring a costume for the class Halloween party – they’ll have their masks!

5 KINGS AND QUEENS OF ESL LAND

Wouldn’t your students love to be queen or king for the day? Take a large paper bag and draw zigzags about 2 ½ inches from the top of the bag. Cut it out and you’ll have a crown for your students to decorate. You can make several from one paper bag. These go great with a fairy tale lesson.

6 WHAT’S IN THE BAG?

How about a different way for your students to practice describing things? Put an object inside a large paper bag. A student puts his/her hand inside the bag and feels the object. He/she must describe it: It’s large/small, rough/soft, made of metal/plastic, etc. Take the object out of the bag and confirm if your student was right.

7 PLAY BALL!

What happens if you want to use a ball in your ESL class, but you forgot the ball? Make one out of a paper bag! All you have to do is stuff the bag with newspaper or any scrap pieces of paper, then either close the top with a rubber band or tape it closed with packing tape. It’s not exactly the same as a real ball, but it’ll get you out of

a bind. Make small balls with lunch bags or large ones with grocery bags.

8 MAIL CALL!

Have your students write letters – and have a postman deliver them! There is a very simple way to make a postman’s bag out of a large paper bag. Just punch one hole one either side – reinforce the holes by sticking some masking tape over them before you punch through so they won’t tear. Tie a long ribbon or string from one side to the other, and the bag’s ready to be filled with letters.

Students must write a letter to another classmate about what they did over the weekend or a special holiday – Student A writes to B, B to C and so on, so everyone gets a letter. They place their letters in an envelope and address them. The student who finishes his/her letter first gets to be the postman, collects the letters in the bag and delivers them.

9 BROWN PAPER CARDS

Students cut out cards out of a large paper bag with pinking shears. They may choose to cut out simple rectangles, heart-shaped cards, or stars depending on the holiday or celebration you’ll be making the cards for. Students punch holes around the edges of the card and then thread ribbon, string, or yarn around it. They tie the ends into a ribbon and decorate the card. Mother’s Day, Father’s Day or Christmas – these make great cards for any holiday.

IF YOU TAKE YOUR GROCERIES HOME IN PAPER BAGS, MAKE GOOD USE OF THEM. BY USING THEM FOR CRAFTS, YOU WILL SAVE ON OTHER FORMS OF PAPER, LIKE POSTER BOARD OR CONSTRUCTION PAPER. AND THAT’S NOT ONLY GREAT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT. IT’S GREAT FOR YOUR STUDENTS, AS YOU’LL BE TEACHING THEM THE VALUE OF REUSING MATERIALS.

What You Can Do with Fall Leaves: 7 Fantastic ESL Fall Crafts

MOST WOULD AGREE THAT THE BEST THING ABOUT THE FALL IS ITS COLORS: DEEP RUSSETS, BRIGHT YELLOWS AND GOLDEN BRONZE BROWNS. YET, ALL TOO SOON FALL GIVES WAY TO WINTER AND ALL OF THOSE COLORS ARE GONE. WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT TO PRESERVE THEM SO THEY LAST ALL THROUGH THE YEAR?

Here, we'll not only show you a great way to preserve fall leaves, but also how you can later use them for fantastic fall crafts your ESL students will love.

First, of course, you'll need to gather your leaves. You may gather them with your students in the school yard or ask them to do it over the weekend and bring the prettiest leaves to class.

HOW TO PRESERVE LEAVES:

Teach your students how to preserve fall leaves. There are several methods, some of which involve the use of an iron and wax paper or even a microwave. The best one for your ESL class is the easiest. Prepare a mixture of two parts water and one part glycerin. Place the mixture in a bowl or flat pan. Students brush off any dirt from their leaves – they must be nice and clean. Students take turns dipping their leaves in the mixture and setting them aside to dry. If you leave the leaves in the mixture for a few days, they'll absorb the liquid and become bendable and soft.

You may also show them this video from About.com, which illustrates a similar technique.

FALL CRAFTS WITH LEAVES:

1 FALL LEAF COASTERS

All you will need for this project is some contact paper and your students' colorful leaves. Cut the contact paper into coaster-sized circles or squares – two for each student. Students peel the backing off one of the circles and

arrange a few leaves – or just one in the center – onto the sticky side. They remove the backing from the other circle and press firmly onto the leaves to seal them between the two sheets of contact paper. Trim the edges with pinking shears for some stunning fall coasters. With this technique you can also make placemats.

2 FALL WREATH

This will make a great piece to take home to mom and dad! Give each of your students a paper plate and instruct them to cut out the center. Next, they glue their leaves around the rim for a colorful fall wreath.

3 FALL BOUQUET

For this project you'll need some craft sticks and glue – if you have a glue gun, so much the better. Also, you'll need "flower pots" – empty tin cans will do nicely. Help your students glue their leaves to the craft sticks. Then, they decorate their flower pots and place their "flowers" in them. The more colorful the leaves, the more colorful the bouquet!

4 LEAF RUBBINGS

Get your young learners set up with some crayons, paper and plenty of leaves in different sizes and shapes. Make sure they are not too dry and won't crack with the rubbing. Students place the paper over the leaf and rub with a crayon. Use the rubbings to decorate the classroom for the fall – they'll make a gorgeous bulletin board.

5 LEAF PRINTS

For this project, you'll need paints and paintbrushes, construction paper and scrap pieces of paper. Instruct your students to brush some paint onto a leaf, then place it – painted-side down – on the construction paper. They must place the scrap piece of paper over it, gently rub the leaf, then remove the paper and peel off the leaf to see the stamp it has left. Encourage them to try this with leaves

of different sizes and shapes.

6 LEAF MAGNETS

In addition to the usual supplies, like glue and scissors, you'll also need sheets of craft foam and magnets or magnetic sheets/tape. Students choose a leaf. They trace the outline on a sheet of craft foam. They cut out the foam outline and then glue their leaf onto it. All that is left to do is glue the magnet on the back.

Canadian children can make a maple leaf magnet for Canada Day, for example.

7 FALL MOBILE

Wouldn't it be great to bring the outdoors inside during the fall? Show your students how they can make a fall mobile to hang in their bedrooms. In addition to their leaves, children must bring two small branches each. Tie the two branches together at the middle so they form a cross. Use a glue gun to secure the binding, if necessary.

Students punch holes through the tops of 5-6 leaves. They tie them with string and attach them to their mobile.

IN MANY PLACES, FALL IS A WONDERLAND OF COLORS WITH THICK, RICH CARPETS MADE OF FALLEN LEAVES. CHILDREN LOVE TO PLAY WITH THEM OUTDOORS – WHY NOT PLAY WITH THEM INDOORS AND IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM? MAKE SURE YOU ENCOURAGE THEM TO GATHER ONLY LEAVES THAT HAVE FALLEN (NOT TO PLUCK THEM FROM THE TREES), TO WATCH OUT FOR BUGS OR INSECTS, AND TO KEEP THEIR LEAF COLLECTION CLEAN. THERE'S NO BETTER WAY TO ENJOY NATURE IN THE FALL.

What You Can Do With Newspapers: 11 Surprisingly Engaging Activities

ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDENTS DISCOVER A WHOLE NEW WORLD THROUGH NEWSPAPERS, NEW WORDS, NEW PHRASES, NEW IDEAS AND EVEN NEW FACES! THEY MAY HAVE READ THE NEWS IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGE BUT READING IT IN ENGLISH IS SO MUCH MORE EXCITING AND PUTS THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN TO CONTEXT FOR THEM.

Students love being able to understand and read current news in English and there is something to interest everyone in a newspaper. The average reading age for most newspapers is approximately 11-13 years old, just perfect for those learning English as a foreign language. Newspapers are also a handy resource for English language teachers.

If you are teaching in an English speaking country look out for the free press newspapers. Try to collect enough newspapers so that you have one copy between two students. You can get heaps of activities from just one edition of a newspaper so don't throw them away after just one session, share them with other teachers in your school. If you are not in an English speaking country you could print articles from news websites such as the BBC or CNN.

Here are a number of ways you can use a newspaper in your English language lessons. You can even do some of these lessons without a newspaper if you can't get your hands on one. You can adapt the activities to work in pairs, small groups or even as a whole class. Suggestions have been made for how these lessons will work but do think about your students and what would suit their level of language best.

HOW TO USE NEWSPAPERS IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 THE ROLE OF NEWSPAPERS IN OUR LIVES

Talk about the role of newspapers in daily life as a whole class, in pairs or in small groups. Do you read newspapers? Why do you read them? Which

newspapers do you prefer and why? How often are newspapers published, daily, weekly? How much do they cost? Where can you buy them? Are they expensive or cheap? Do you believe everything you read in the newspaper? Why? Why not? Has the role of newspapers changed over the years? Do you think newspapers will die out with news on the internet? Why or why not? Talk about the newspapers in your student's country. How do they vary? What news do they report on? Which newspapers do you read and why? If your students don't read newspapers then talk about why they don't.

2 DIFFERENT SECTIONS OF A NEWSPAPER

Give students two minutes to list as many sections of the newspaper that they can – then ask them to compare their lists to the person sitting next to them. Discuss the different sections of a newspaper: news, classifieds, cartoons, horoscope, weather, opinion piece, letters to the editor, travel, advertisements, editorial, sport. What would you expect to read about in each section? Which sections usually appear where in the newspaper? For example, news at the front, classifieds at the back.

Ask students to find an example of each in a newspaper. Students could also write a piece to illustrate one or more sections of a newspaper.

3 WORKING FOR A NEWSPAPER

Explore the idea of working for a newspaper. Who writes for the newspaper? What is the role of the editor, journalist, photo journalist, photographer and advertising sales? How do you get a story into the newspaper? What would you like about working in one of these roles and what wouldn't you like? How do newspapers make money?

Discuss in pairs and report back to the class for further discussion.

4 JOB SECTION

Look at the jobs that are advertised in the careers section of the newspaper. Ask students to choose a job that they would like to apply for. Get them to write or discuss what skills they would need for this job. They can then discuss this in pairs. Talking about jobs and how to find one is particularly relevant if you are teaching foreign adult students in an English speaking country. If this is the case, you can expand this lesson to include CV writing and role play interviewing each other for a job. How and where do you look for a job?

Students can exchange tips to help each other find a work in their new country. What jobs are your students currently working in? Do they like this job? Why or why not?

5 HEADLINES

Write the headline of an article on the board or just read it out – ask students to guess what the article might be about. Then read the matching article. Were they right? How different was the real story from what they thought? Why is the headline often misleading? You can also cut up a number of articles and headlines. Hand them out to students and ask them to guess the story from the headline. Then give them the matching articles to read to see if they were close.

6 NEWSPAPER TREASURE HUNT (20 QUESTIONS OR JUST 10 - MAKE IT A FULL LESSON OR JUST A FILL IN!)

Collect enough newspapers to share one between two – free press papers are really good as articles are not long and are usually easy to read. Prior to the lesson go through the newspaper and come up with a list of questions that relate to the articles and advertisements that appear throughout the newspaper.

For example: What is the temperature in London? Who won £100,000? How many people were

hurt in the Manchester fire? What is the name of the policeman who rescued Josie? Where can I buy a washing machine? How much will it cost me to buy?

You can make these as hard or as easy as you like depending on the language levels of your students.

Students can work in pairs to read through the newspaper and come up with the answers. When everyone has finished go through the answers together. Don't forget to ask them to write down which page they found the article on.

7 ARTICLES

Ask students to work in pairs to read and summarise an article that interests them. Each pair of students can then work with another pair to talk about their article. Each pair then reports back to the class about the article they read. List words or phrases that students did not know on the board and explain as needed.

8 WORK THROUGH AN ARTICLE AS A CLASS

Pick an article and ask individual students to read a paragraph or sentence each. Discuss as they read, explain grammar and meaning of unknown words. This can be a very intense session depending on the language level of your students. You might be surprised at how hard it can actually be to go through a whole article together. It does allow for lots of discussion, particularly around what the writer really meant by the words that they used.

9 CLASSIFIEDS

Turn to the classifieds section. Ask students to find a builder, plumber, caterer etc. Talk about each of these professions. What type of work do they do? Discuss the for sale ads. What are people selling? Discuss the other types of advertisements in this section. What are they advertising? What does the

advertisement tell you? Students can write a short advertisement and share with a partner. Would you ring this person/company based on this ad? Does the ad work? Why or why not?

10 PHOTO ARTICLES

Ask students to find a photo in the newspaper. Ask them to write their own headline and/or short article to match the picture. Students can read their articles to the class or work in pairs to share their work. This is also a good homework exercise.

11 PRODUCE YOUR OWN CLASS NEWSPAPER/S.

Ask students to take on different roles to produce a newspaper. Students could work in groups of two to four to produce different sections of a newspaper or produce a short newspaper as a whole class. They could produce any type of newspaper and have as many different sections in it as they liked.

Making decisions about what the newspaper should be and how to do it could be part of the lesson. This would take some time for them to do so you could do it in class over a number of sessions, (perhaps dedicate the last half hour) and include some home work as well. Photocopy the finished product for each student to read.

Discuss the contents of the newspaper and the whole process of producing it.

AND FINALLY FOR A BIT OF FUN ASK EACH STUDENT TO MAKE A HAT OUT OF A SHEET OR TWO OF NEWSPAPER!

What You Can Do With Recipes:

10 Yummy ESL Activities

We all love to eat and some of us love to cook. Learning to cook in English can be great fun but can your students read and follow recipes? It's not as easy as you think. There are lots of strange words and instructions to be found in recipes, not to mention strange ingredients. You will find recipes in magazines and newspapers that you have at home or visit your nearest charity shop to buy old magazines and recipe books that you can cut up. Aim to have one recipe per sheet of paper. Start collecting recipes now so that you are ready to do some of the activities listed below.

ESL RECIPE ACTIVITIES

1 WARMING THINGS UP

Give out your recipes, one between two students and ask them to read the recipe to each other. They should write down and guess the meaning of any words they don't know. When they have read one recipe they can swap with someone else and do the same again. Students can do this until they have read all the recipes or you can limit the time that they have to complete this task. Come together as a class and talk about the new words they have learnt. List these on the board. Drill right down into the vocabulary - whisk, stir, beat, mix. What do all these words mean? How are they different and when would you use them? What would you stir? What would you whisk? Ask students to use these words in sentences and role play the actions for each.

2 SAY THE RIGHT WORD

Depending on the size of your class ask students to stand in two or three lines facing you. Ask them questions about words that they have learnt in the recipes. You will have collected some from activity 1 to get you started.

Ask students questions like these: What's another word for courgette? (Zucchini), What's another word similar to stir? (mix or beat), Name a cooking utensil (Wooden spoon), If you put meat in the oven what would the cooking process be called? (Roast). The first person to say the right word scores a point for their team. They go to the back of the line. Keep playing as long as you have questions or time. The team with the

highest score wins.

3 CUISINES

As a class, list all the different cuisines that students can think of... Italian, Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, Chinese. Give examples of some meals for each cuisine. Find out if any of your students know the recipe to make any of these dishes? Students work in pairs to describe how they would go about making some of the dishes listed under a cuisine then swap partners and exchange recipes. Would you all make the dish the same way?

4 ALL ABOUT RECIPES

As a class or in groups, talk about which recipe they have followed before or would like to make from the ones that you have. Would it be an easy recipe to follow? Talk about time in recipes, oven temperatures and also whether you would have the meal as an entree, main course or dessert. Students could take their favourite recipe home and try to make it then report back to the class about how they went. Perhaps they could even bring in a sample for tasting!

5 FAVOURITE RECIPES

Ask students to write down their favourite recipe and then share it with the class. This is a great activity for giving instructions and speaking in front of the whole class. Ask them to stand at the front of the room. They might also like to draw on the board as they talk about their recipe. This creates a bit of extra fun.

6 FESTIVE RECIPES

Talk about different festivals where the food we eat may be different from any other time of the year. List the festivals: Halloween, Christmas, Birthdays, Weddings. Break the class into as many groups as you have festivals. Ask each group of students to list the meals that they would cook for one of these festivals. Then ask them to write up the recipes for some of them. Then mix and match the groups so that you have at least one person from each festival represented in each of the new groups. Students can now compare meals that they would have at each festival and

take turns to tell the group about their festival, specific meals and the recipes they have created.

7 MEALS

Write down some basic or well known meals on the board or write them on cards to hand out to students in pairs. Students could also help you come up with these. Some examples of meals might be: spaghetti bolognese, meat pie, roast chicken, mashed potatoes. Ask students to describe how they would go about making these meals. They should list the ingredients first and then describe the cooking process. Students can then swap meals and partners and do the same again.

8 SHOPPING FOR INGREDIENTS

Where would you go to shop for your ingredients? Talk about the different options. For example, supermarket, grocer, butcher, market, delicatessen, fishmonger, market garden. You could make this into a quick game asking students to list down as many as they can think of in 2 minutes. The student with the longest list wins. Discuss what you can buy at each of these shops or places. Where would you go to buy exotic ingredients? Why would you go to one and not the other? Where do you prefer to shop and why? If you had the opportunity to work in one of these shops which would you most like to work in and which would you not like to work in? Why or why not?

9 GUESS THE RECIPE

Cut out some recipes from magazines or newspapers - but without the titles. Ask your students to guess what each recipe is for!

10 COOKING CLASS

If you have the facilities, and the courage, hold a cooking class as part of your lesson. Iced biscuits are really easy with young ones. Just use coloured icing and lollies to make faces on round biscuits. Try fried rice with older students. All you would need is an electric wok or frying pan which is relatively easy to transport.

What You Can Do With Comics:

10 Creative ESL Activities

EVERYBODY LOVES A GOOD LAUGH, AND WHAT BETTER PLACE TO GET THAT LAUGH THAN IN THE FUNNY PAPERS? BUT SUNDAY MORNING IS NOT THE ONLY TIME TO TURN TO THESE UNIQUE EXPRESSIONS OF THE WRITTEN WORD.

Take a look at these activities that you can do with comics, and you will find that there is more to the three framed gems than you may have thought.

HOW TO USE COMICS IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 Even though classes do not meet on Sundays, that does not mean that your class cannot practice their reading skills by reading the comics from last week's paper.

Start collecting the Sunday comics section from your newspaper one to two months before you plan to share them with your class. Then divide up the papers you have and pass them around. Let your students read the pages, and then talk about the humor expressed in some of the more popular strips. You can point out to your students that most of the writing in comics is dialogue between characters. Allow your students some time to share their general thoughts on what they have read.

2 With that in mind, why not use comics as a jumping off point for writing dialogue of your own? You can point out to your students the correct way to punctuate dialogue when it is written in pros (using quotation marks) rather than in speech bubbles. You can even have your students compare and contrast the two types of written dialogue.

3 After your students have practiced writing traditional dialogue, challenge them to exercise their funny bones by writing new dialogue for short comic strips. Take a black and white, three-panel comic strip and use white out to remove the current dialogue. Then make copies of several strips for your students and ask them to write new dialogue. They should remember to make the dialogue consistent with the pictures in each panel. Post all the new dialogues and allow your class to vote for their favorites.

to talk about character in fiction.

The main characters of comics run the gamut between very realistic people (like Dick Tracy) to strange and humanized animals (like Garfield). Have a class discussion about what types of characters they see in comics. Why do they think each of these character types is included? What purpose or role does each character play in the comic as a whole?

5 Now that your class has practiced writing comic strip dialogue and talked about characterization, why not ask them to create their own comics? You can find printable comic panels at several web sites. Just print out a variety for your class to choose from and let them create their own comic book heroes or characters. They can make their comics funny or serious: just require that they have dialogue in each frame.

6 Are you looking for a creative activity that is not as involved as writing comic strips? If you can, get a hold of Ed Emberley's Complete Funprint Drawing Book and copy some of the pages for your class. This book teaches how to turn fingerprints into cartoon characters or simple drawings. Let your student look at some of the examples, and then let them express their own creativity with a stamp pad and a pen. The results are sure to be refrigerator door worthy.

7 Just because a cartoonist appears in a national newspaper does not mean he or she does not want to be connected to fans. Encourage your students to make connections with their favorite cartoonists by writing a fan letter. Start by asking your students which of several comics they like most, then point out the creator's names on the printed material. Then, after reviewing how to write personal letters, have your students write a letter of thanks saying how much they enjoy the comic strips. Mail the letters and see how many students get a response from the artists. You can even post the responses in your classroom so the entire class can enjoy them.

8 Comic strips are also a ready resource to work with sequencing. Cut apart the frames from a six-panel comic from the Sunday paper or from a collection of comic strips. (You can

find these collections at your library and then photocopy pages for the activity.) Have your students read the dialogue and look at the pictures, and then ask them to put the frames in the correct sequence. They will have to use logic and context to make the correct decisions. Then have them explain how they came to their decision and check to see if they were right.

9 Now that your students have put the frames in the correct sequence, have them write a description of the comic strip's events. They can tell the story of the comic strip in pros form. This is also a natural opportunity to review reported speech with your students, so make sure they are using this format when retelling the events of the comic strip.

10 Finally, let your students' creativity come out in full force with a wild reinterpretation of a comic strip. Provide your class with a variety of single panels (you can use the ones from activity #8 or put together another set) of either one comic or a variety of comics. Then challenge your students to select between four and six panels, not necessarily featuring the same characters, and put them in an original order. They can then compose a piece of creative writing that tells a new story that follows the frames they have chosen. You can have your class read their stories if they feel comfortable doing that or compile them into a class book for everyone to enjoy during free reading periods.

COMICS ARE NOT JUST FOR SUNDAY MORNING AS THESE ACTIVITIES HAVE SHOWN. BRING THESE LIVELY AND CREATIVITY BOOSTING PROPS INTO YOUR ESL CLASSROOM FOR SOME FUN YET FOCUSED LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES. YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS ARE SURE TO HAVE A LAUGH IF YOU DO.

10 Lesson Activities You Can Do

With Stamps

Not many teachers have the budget to take their students on a field trip around the world, but that does not mean you cannot leave your classroom far behind. Stamps have made travels around the world before they end up in your hands. With these activities centered on stamps, your students will feel like they are exploring far off places although they will not even have to get up from their desks.

10 CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO WITH STAMPS

1 STAMPS ARE EASY TO GET AND INEXPENSIVE - STOP BY YOUR LOCAL HOBBY STORE AND BUY A LARGE BAG OF USED STAMPS FOR YOUR CLASS TO EXAMINE. YOU CAN GIVE YOUR CLASS AS MUCH TIME AS YOU WANT TO LOOK THROUGH THE STAMPS AND MAKE MENTAL NOTES, THEN SEE IF EACH STUDENT CAN FIND A FEW STAMPS FROM THE SAME COUNTRY. IF POSSIBLE, STAMPS FROM DIFFERENT TIME PERIODS ARE IDEAL. Then have each student compare and contrast each of his stamps with the others in his set. Are there any consistencies? What are the differences? Have each person share with the class his observations.

2 AFTER EACH STUDENT HAS DONE SOME COMPARING AND CONTRASTING ON HIS OWN, HAVE GROUPS OF STUDENTS COMPILE STAMPS FROM ONE COUNTRY. EACH GROUP SHOULD LOOK AT THE SYMBOLS THAT ARE ON THE STAMPS IN THEIR COLLECTION. WHAT CAN THE GROUP GUESS ABOUT THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN BASED ON WHAT THEY OBSERVE IN THE STAMPS? Can your students determine what is important to the people of the country? What historical events are portrayed? If possible, allow your groups to do some research to see if their predictions are right.

3 ANOTHER ACTIVITY THAT YOU CAN USE STAMPS FOR IS TO LOOK AT THE VARIOUS SYMBOLS FOR MONEY USED AROUND THE WORLD. MOST STAMPS WILL HAVE SOME KIND OF MONETARY VALUE PRINTED ON THEM, SO HAVE YOUR

STUDENTS MAKE A LIST OF ALL THE SYMBOLS (SUCH AS \$ OR ¢) THAT ARE USED TO REPRESENT THOSE MONETARY VALUES. ONCE THEY HAVE THE SYMBOLS, HAVE YOUR STUDENTS FIND THE WORDS THAT THOSE SYMBOLS REPRESENT (SUCH AS DOLLAR AND CENT). You should encourage students who are familiar with other monetary systems to share their knowledge with the class and add whatever information they can to the class data compilation.

4 STAMPS ARE AN INTERESTING WAY TO GET A GLIMPSE AROUND THE WORLD WITHOUT ACTUALLY LEAVING HOME. START A STAMP COLLECTION IN YOUR CLASSROOM ON A LARGE WORLD MAP. AS STUDENTS DISCOVER STAMPS FROM A COUNTRY, HAVE THEM TAPE THAT STAMP ON OR NEAR ITS COUNTRY ON THE MAP.

Throughout the year, see how many countries' stamps your class can collect. Encourage any students or teachers who receive letters from other nations to donate their stamps to the collection.

5 DO YOU WANT TO MAKE THE WORLD STAMP COLLECTION MORE COMPETITIVE? CHALLENGE YOUR STUDENTS TO A RACE AROUND THE WORLD USING STAMPS. SET UP A BULLETIN BOARD WITH EACH OF YOUR STUDENTS' NAMES IN A LIST. Then give each student a stamp from your current country. The challenge is to see who can get farthest in a race around the world using stamps. If a student locates a stamp from a country neighboring yours, put that stamp in line after the one from your current country. That student should now aim to find a stamp from a country adjacent to the second one. After he locates and posts that one, he should look for a stamp from the next country in the geographic line. In this manner, see how far around the world each of your students can get over the course of the year. If anyone is able to make it all the way around the world and "arrives" back at the starting country, hold a class celebration in honor of that person.

6 AFTER YOUR STUDENTS HAVE HAD SOME EXPERIENCE LOOKING AT REAL STAMPS, BRING IN A CREATIVE ELEMENT BY LETTING THEM DESIGN THEIR OWN STAMPS. USING STAMPS FROM AROUND THE WORLD AS INSPIRATION,

HAVE EACH STUDENT DESIGN A STAMP OF HIS OR HER OWN. SHE SHOULD THINK ABOUT WHAT COLORS AND SYMBOLS SHE WANTS TO USE IN HER DESIGN, AND THEN, IF POSSIBLE, ALLOW HER TO DESIGN THE STAMP DIGITALLY. If not, crayons and paper are always an option. Then scan the stamps and print them out to use in a class post office or just display on a bulletin board for your class to peruse at leisure.

7 YOU CAN FIND TEXTS ON STAMPS AT DIFFERENT LANGUAGE LEVELS AT ONESTOPENGLISH.COM WHICH YOU CAN USE WITH YOUR ESL STUDENTS.

There are reading selections as well as comprehension questions and additional activities ready to use in your ESL classroom.

8 DID YOU KNOW THAT STAMPS OFTEN HAVE HIDDEN MESSAGES PRINTED WITHIN THE PICTURE?

This lesson plan on the micro printing in stamps may surprise you. If you and your class want to dig a little deeper into what stamps really say, take a look at this information lesson plan on micro printing.

9 STAMPS ARE NOT THE ONLY THING A PERSON CAN COLLECT. IN FACT, MOST STUDENTS WILL COLLECT SOMETHING: MUSIC OR TRAVEL DESTINATION PENNIES, FOR EXAMPLE. ASK YOUR STUDENTS TO WRITE A SHORT PARAGRAPH OR TWO ABOUT THEIR COLLECTION. They can include information about why they collect these items and which item in their collection is their favorite.

10 AFTER WRITING ABOUT THEIR COLLECTION, DO A LITTLE SHOW AND TELL WITH EACH OF YOUR STUDENTS. ASK EACH PERSON TO BRING IN ONE ITEM FROM HIS OR HER COLLECTION AND SHOW IT TO THE CLASS. EACH STUDENT SHOULD GIVE INFORMATION ON WHAT THE OBJECT IS, HOW HE OR SHE GOT IT AND WHAT HE OR SHE LIKES ABOUT IT. Then allow your class to ask questions about the object or about the collection in general.

What You Can Do With Money: 10 Activities For Your ESL Classroom

MONEY PLAYS AN IMPORTANT PART IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES.

Why not kick off a lesson about money by asking your students to explain what these statements mean: Money makes the world go round. Money doesn't grow on trees. Can they think of some others? Do they have similar sayings in their own language?

Here are some other tried and tested activities that also build on the theme of money:

10 ESL ACTIVITIES WITH MONEY

1 CURRENCIES OF THE WORLD

List as many as your students know. They could do this in pairs or even make it a game - see who can come up with the longest list. Students should also be able to tell you which country the currency belongs to.

2 EMPTY YOUR POCKETS

Ask students to empty their pockets and count how much money they have. Ask them to tell you what they could buy for this amount of money. For example, for 50 cents I could buy an ice cream or for \$150.00 I could buy a television. Is it a lot of money or not? What do they plan to spend this money on? Do they always carry money? Why or why not? Take a look at the coins and notes. Talk about what is on them. Who or what is it? What do they represent? How old is the money? If they are from another country - what is the money like in their country? How many coins and notes do they have?

3 BANK TERMINOLOGY

Talk about going to a bank. What can you do with your money in a bank? Invest, withdraw, deposit, borrow. Talk about the products and services a bank provides - mortgage/home loan, credit card, savings card, insurance. Talk about interest rates, fixed and variable. What are all these things? Discuss each one and any others that your students have heard about. It's worth taking a trip to the bank yourself or asking students to go to a bank before this lesson to collect withdrawal and deposit slips, and

any brochures. This will give you ideas for further discussion around money and banks. Try to read some of the brochures together. This can be very difficult – discuss why they are often difficult for even English speaking people to understand.

Students can fill in loan applications, withdrawal and deposit slips. It's all good real life practice.

4 MONEY ROLE PLAY

Role play – Handling money in a shop. Ask students to work in pairs. Together they should decide on a type of shop. One student becomes the shop keeper while the other is the shopper. Practice asking for items, adding up and giving change. Swap roles and do the same again. Elicit some common phrases on the board together before they start. You could use real or play money or make some of your own.

5 SAVING AND WASTING MONEY

What do students do to save money? What could they do to save more money? If they saved 10 cents a day, how much would they have saved in a year, in 10 years, in 100 years? What do they consider to be a waste of money? What sorts of things do they save money for? Is there one thing that they would most want to buy but can't afford right now? How much money do they think is enough money?

6 MILLION DOLLARS

Ask students to write or discuss in pairs or small groups, what they would do if they had a million dollars. Share their ideas with the whole class.

7 HEADS OR TAILS?

Play a game of heads and tails. Talk about when and what this game is used for? Why is it called heads and tails? Students play in pairs, the best of five wins. Keep playing until you have a class champion if you have time. Talk about who won. How many times did they get heads? How many times they get tails?

8 BARTERING... HAGGLING... BARGAINING...

Bartering, haggling and bargaining. What's the difference? Practice haggling and bargaining. It's traditional in some countries. Do you know which ones? China, Egypt and Turkey are a few examples.

9 VIRTUAL SHOPPING SPREE

Collect some shopping catalogues and ask students to go shopping using the catalogues. What would they buy and for how much? They love to go through and compare prices.

10 DISCUSS & SING ALONG!

Find the lyrics to the song Money from the musical Cabaret on the internet. It includes the words 'money makes the world go round'. Talk about what the lyrics mean then sing the song!!

Raising money for charity is a fantastic team building exercise as well as a great ESL experience. Ask students to do some research into local charities for homework. Then discuss how, as a class, they would go about raising money to support one of these charities. For example, host a cake stall, sell second hand clothes and other house hold items, or host a morning tea.

Decide as a class which charity you will support and hold one of the activities at your school to raise money.

INVITE SOMEONE FROM YOUR CHOSEN CHARITY TO BE A GUEST SPEAKER - ASK THEM TO TALK ABOUT THEIR CHARITY AND HOW THE MONEY YOU HAVE RAISED WILL BE USED. YOU COULD PRESENT THEM WITH YOUR DONATION AT THIS SESSION TOO – MAKE IT A CEREMONIAL EVENT. WHY NOT DELEGATE THE JOB OF CONTACTING THE CHARITY AND ORGANISING THE GUEST SPEAKER TO SOME OF YOUR STUDENTS!

10 Activities You Can Do

With A Flag

FLAG DAY IN THE U.S. IS JUNE 14, BUT IN AN ESL CLASS, FLAGS ARE A NATURAL TOPIC ANY DAY OF THE YEAR. WITH FLAGS, YOUR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE PART OF THEIR CULTURE AND HISTORY.

HERE ARE SOME ACTIVITIES YOU CAN BRING INTO YOUR CLASSROOM WITH FLAGS RAISED HIGH.

WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH A FLAG

1 QUIZ

Can your students match a set of world flags to their corresponding countries? You can use this online flag quiz or make one of your own by photocopying or color printing some flags of your choice. If you do so, make sure you include the national flags of all the students in your class.

2 LOOK AT WORLD FLAGS

Make available to your students a variety of world flags and have them take a survey of the colors in those flags. Challenge your students to make a list of all the colors that are used and which are most popular. Why do they think that some colors are used most often? Why are other colors not used?

3 BUT WHY LIMIT YOUR COLOR ACTIVITIES TO THE COLORS THAT THE FLAGS USE?

You can take this starting point as an opportunity to do a comprehensive color review with your students. Busy Teacher has several color worksheets available to you, and you can choose one or more that are most appropriate to your class. Then work together to brainstorm a list of as many English color words as you can think of!

4 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ELEMENTS

For example, the U.S. flag uses

the colors red, white and blue because of her historical connection with Great Britain. The stripes represent the thirteen original colonies and the stars represent each of the current states. The design of the U.S. flag has changed over time to reflect the changes in the number of states that are part of the union. Ask your students what they know about their native flag and encourage questions and discussion among your students.

5 BRAINSTORM A LIST OF ALL THE DIFFERENT SYMBOLS AND ELEMENTS THEY FIND AMONG THE FLAGS

In groups or as a class, have them discuss why they think these elements have been included and what they mean. Do they think there would have been any better symbols to include on these flags?

6 DESIGN A CLASS FLAG

They should discuss what is important about their class and what they think is most essential to represent on the flag. Then give them some basic art materials and let them make a large class flag to display either inside the classroom or near the entrance to the room. If you like, take a picture of this flag and use it as a logo for any correspondence you send home to parents.

7 DESIGN A PERSONAL FLAG

Have your students design a personal flag that they can use to represent their lives up until this point. After each student has designed and produced a personal flag, have him or her give a presentation to the class explaining how he or she designed the flag and why the different elements were included.

8 USE THESE FLAGS TO REVIEW PREPOSITIONS OF LOCATION

Play a 'Simon says' style game where you tell your students to put the flag, "under your desk, over your head, beside your hand," and several other locations that are expressed with prepositions. If anyone fails to follow the directions correctly, he or she must place his flag face down on the desk and he is out until the next round. Do you want to make the activity more challenging for your students? Actually play Simon Says and practice their listening skills in the process.

9 CHALLENGE YOUR STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILLS BY PLAYING A SHORT VIDEO ON HOW TO FOLD AN AMERICAN FLAG AVAILABLE ON YOUTUBE

After watching this or another similar video, have your students answer some comprehension questions about the process of folding a flag and about the specialized vocabulary that was presented in the video.

10 FINALLY, SET YOUR STUDENTS TO DO SOME RESEARCH ABOUT A FLAG THAT THEY ARE NOT FAMILIAR WITH.

You can have them look for information on a state flag or the flag of another nation. If your students write reports on the flags, you can create a display in your classroom displaying the report and its corresponding flag.

THERE ARE MANY ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO WITH FLAGS, AND THESE ARE ONLY A FEW. WITH THE OPPORTUNITY FLAGS BRING TO TALK ABOUT CULTURE AND HISTORY, YOUR CLASS WILL HAVE MORE RESPECT FOR AND BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR CLASSMATES AT THE END OF THE UNIT.

What You Can Do With Index Cards: 10 Amazing Activities

CAN A SIMPLE INDEX CARD HOLD THE KEY TO A CREATIVE LANGUAGE ACTIVITY FOR YOUR ESL STUDENTS? READ THE FOLLOWING 10 IDEAS BEFORE YOU GIVE YOUR FINAL ANSWER.

10 THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH INDEX CARDS

1 NEW PERSPECTIVE

How you look at life all depends on your perspective, right? If that is the case, why not force a perspective change with this observational activity? Give each of your students an index card, and tell him to poke a hole in the card using a pen or pencil. It should only be big enough for him to see through it a little. Then have each of your students look around the room and write a description of something he sees through the hole (without naming the object). When finished, the rest of the class should listen to the description and try to identify the object.

2 NEWSPAPER HEADLINES

When it is time for your students to learn some new vocabulary or just practice what they already know, look to the newspaper for some inspiration. Cut out interesting individual words from the headlines and tape each on to its own index card. Then have your students each select two to three cards randomly. They should then try to combine the words into a coherent sentence or original newspaper headline. If you like, have your students write the article that follows the headline.

3 WHY-BECAUSE

For a little index card fun, give two cards to each student. On one card, have each student write a question that begins with the word "why". Then on the second card, he or she should write the answer beginning with "because". Collect all the 'why cards' in one pile and shuffle and do the same with the 'because cards'. Then pull one card from each pile and read them together. You should end up with some funny combinations. After reading all of them, you can challenge your students to match up each question with an answer that makes sense.

4 WHO AM I?

Index cards have their place in speaking class, too. Collect one card for each student and put the name of a famous person that your students would know on it. Then tape one name to each student's back, and he "is" that person. Give your students enough time to walk around the room and ask each other yes/no questions about who they are. (One question per person and then he must move on to another student.) If a person guesses his identity correctly, he may sit down. Keep playing until everyone has guessed who he is.

5 STORY STARTERS

If you give your students any free writing time in class, they may sometimes need a nudge in the right direction. When that is the case, have available a stack of story starters (one on each index card) that they can pull and use when they are looking for inspiration. When she is finished writing, have your student turn in her story with her card paper clipped to the top for your review or designate an area of the classroom to post original stories.

6 MEMORY GAME

Memory is another simple game you can play with index cards. This is especially useful when reviewing vocabulary. Simply write each vocabulary word on one card and its definition on another. Shuffle the cards and place them face down on a table. Each person can turn over two cards on his turn. If he is able to match the word to its definition, he may keep the set and go again.

7 ANTONYMS

When you want to make the memory game a little more challenging, instead of matching words to their definitions, match words to their antonyms. Your students will still get practice using their vocabulary words as well as challenging their memories.

8 ORDER, PLEASE!

If you want to cast a wider net than isolated vocabulary, write one sentence of a narrative on each card. Then challenge groups of students to use transi-

tional words and signal words to put the sentences in the correct order.

9 TAKE 5 NOTES!

Anytime your students are doing research, index cards are a functional and flexible place to take notes. You can find information on how to take notes on Busy Teacher or teach your students your preferred method for taking notes. Challenge them to read a magazine article and take at least five notes on index cards, and then have them use those cards as part of a larger research assignment. They will have the flexibility to rearrange notes as they like without losing valuable information in a cumbersome notebook.

10 OH, HOW PRACTICAL!

Index cards do not have to be relegated to the world of fun and games. They have practical uses as well. They are a concise place to keep emergency contact and allergy information about your students. It is especially helpful to have this information in one place should you ever need a substitute teacher.

WHEN YOU CAN GET ONE HUNDRED INDEX CARDS FOR ONLY A DOLLAR, THE POSSIBILITIES FOR YOUR ESL CLASS CAN BE ENDLESS AS WELL AS INEXPENSIVE. THE NEXT TIME YOU ARE LOOKING FOR SOME INSPIRATION, SHUFFLE ON DOWN TO YOUR LOCAL STORE AND GET A BACK OF THE 3X5 WONDERS. WITH A LITTLE CREATIVITY AND SOME BLANK CARDS, YOUR ESL CLASS CAN DO MORE THAN YOU MIGHT THINK.

10 Things You Can Do

With Game Pieces

WAIT! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? DO NOT THROW THOSE RANDOM PIECES OF BOARD GAMES AWAY! YOU CAN REPURPOSE THEM FOR YOUR ESL CLASS WITH ALMOST NO WORK!

Here are some ideas to get that junk out of your closet and into the classroom for some fun and creativity.

10 GREAT THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH GAME PIECES

1 DICE

Everyone has dice laying in the bottom of a closet or drawer somewhere at home just getting in the way. Dice in the classroom, however, make for a lively and fun idea generating activity. Come to class with a list of categories you may want your students to brainstorm. You can tie these topics in to an area you are already studying (types of food, types of travel, colors, clothing, etc.) or list some not related to class. Before telling your class what the topic is for the round, have each student roll two dice and write their number at the top of the page. Then tell them the topic, and explain that whatever number they rolled is how many examples they must list. After students complete their lists, have them share their creativity with the entire class or with a small group.

Keep playing until you run out of categories or until you run out of time. Your students will have fun thinking up new ideas and trying to roll low or maybe high numbers.

2 TWISTER SPINNER

You say you have a Twister spinner but no game board? Well, you would not want to ask your students to roll around on the classroom floor anyway. Instead, use the color-coded spinner as a spark for an I-spy style game! Have each student take a turn spinning, he must then think of something that is the color he spun. For example, if he spun the color red, he might think of an apple, lips or a fire engine. (You may want to specify that items that can be any of the colors be excluded, a sweater or book, for example.) Give his classmates a set amount of time (between one and five minutes depending on the level of your students) to ask as many yes/no ques-

tions about the item as possible. At the end of the time, allow each student to guess and award points to any student who gets the answer right.

If no one can guess the item, the student who spun gets the points (as long as it was a fair item).

3 GAME BOARD

What can you do with a game board if you have no other pieces from the game? There's an activity for that as well. You may decide to run this activity for one class period or longer, up to a week. Have your students choose items to use as markers – coins, buttons, or other small, heavy items work well. Then set the rule for moving along the game board. Do you want your students to use current vocabulary words in the appropriate context? Are you looking to hear a particular grammatical structure? As you go about your daily activities, every time one of your students uses the goal word or structure appropriately, allow him to move his marker one space.

You can use any game board that has spaces that players travel along – anything from Candyland to Balderdash. The game you use will determine how quickly students can reach the end of the board. When someone does, acknowledge his accomplishment and set a new language usage goal for the next week.

4 CARDS

You do not need to play with a full deck to benefit from this cross breed between a number review and a math game. With aces counting as one point and face cards counting as ten points each, divide as many cards as you have among four students. On the word go, each student flips over the card on the top of his pile. The four students must then determine how to reach the answer twenty-four with the numbers on the cards. They may use addition, subtraction, multiplication or division.

When using this as a number review (always a challenge to students of a second language) make sure the explanation is stated correctly before awarding a point to the player with the answer.

5 SCRABBLE

Is your Scrabble or Upwords game not as complete as it once was? Letter tiles make a useful item to keep in the ESL classroom. Just throw them all together in a bag for this activity. Have one student select eight to ten tiles and put them where everyone can see them or write the letters on the board. Give your students five minutes to make a list of all the words they can think of that are spelled with just the letters on the board.

When time is up, have your students compare their lists and eliminate any repeated words. Whoever has the most words remaining wins the round.

6 LETTER TILES

Another activity you can do with letter tiles is a Scattergories style activity. Give your students between five and ten categories of items such as sports, boys' names, world leaders, food or colors. Then have a student pull one letter from the bag. The challenge is to list a word that fits each category that begins with the letter your student pulled from the bag. Give your students a certain time limit, three minutes is a good length of time.

Depending on the letter, this activity can be very challenging. Your students may want to use dictionaries, but discourage that until after the round is over. You may want to compile a running list of the words students used in a class book or have your students copy them into their vocabulary notebooks.

7 INSTRUCTIONAL CARDS

Many games come with instructional cards. They may be the Community Chest cards from Monopoly or the direction cards from the game of Life. When you do not know what to do with all your loose cards that no longer make up a complete game, put them all together as a bank of story starters. With intermediate and advanced students, you can instruct each student to select one card from the bunch. (More advanced students should select their card without reading what is printed on the card before hand.) The writing homework is to write a story in which the directions on the card can be quoted and make sense in context.

This activity will challenge your students' creativity as well as their language skills. Most often, the quotations will most easily fit as dialogue, but encourage other creative uses as well. If you like, you can display your students' stories in your classroom with the game cards hanging next to them.

8 MORE CARDS

Other games contain similar cards with pictures of people or items on them (think Clue). You can present a similar challenge to your students with these cards by asking them to write a story in which this character appears. Using the picture, students can also write a character description.

For lower level students, you may simply want to provide a list of questions about the person and have your students answer them.

9 STACKING BLOCKS

You can encourage conversation among your students with stacking blocks like those from the game Jenga. Write one icebreaker question on each of the blocks before bringing them to class. Then, as you play, have each student answer the question she pulls from the stack. Your students will learn about one another as they learn new vocabulary. It does not matter when the stack falls or if all the pieces to the game are there since the main purpose is to get your students talking to one another.

10 CREATE YOUR OWN GAME

Finally, collect all your pieces, cards, spinners, dice and anything else you can find and put them all in a box for your students. Have each student select one item from the box and then divide your class randomly into teams of four students. The task those students now have is to create a game using at least two of the pieces the group has selected. They can make additional items for use with the game.

After giving the groups time to work together, have your students practice

giving instructions by explaining the game their group created. You may want to try to play the game and see how well your students communicated their instructions to the rest of the class.

**WITH A LITTLE CREATIVITY AND
INGENUITY, EVEN SEEMING
USELESS ITEMS CAN FIND A
PURPOSE IN THE ESL CLASSROOM.
IF YOU DO NOT HAVE PIECES OF
YOUR CHILDHOOD GAMES LAYING
AROUND, DO NOT DESPAIR. THE
NEXT TIME YOU DRIVE BY A GARAGE
SALE CHECK TO SEE WHAT GAMES
THEY HAVE (THEY WILL BE VERY
INEXPENSIVE, ESPECIALLY IF THEY
ARE MISSING PIECES) AND USE
THE ITEMS YOU FIND. ONE OF THE
BEST PARTS OF BEING A TEACHER IS
USING YOUR CREATIVITY, AND STU-
DENTS WILL LIKE THAT CHALLENGE
AS WELL!**