



*A Handbook on  
Oral Interaction  
in ESL at the  
Elementary Level*

## Let's Begin Talking!

by Judith Rohlf

Inspired by "Let's Talk! A Handbook on Oral Interaction for Secondary" (available on the SPEAQ website) and created through a grant from Canadian Heritage and SPEAQ.

*Gratitude is extended to the following people for their collaboration and contribution:*

**Olga Chashka**, école Marguerite-d'Youville, CS des Découvreurs

**Anne Paradis**, école des Hauts-Clochers, CS des Découvreurs

**Majid Tounsi** (*for the filming and production of the video clips/DVD*).

*Finally, a special thank you to all ESL specialists who inspired the creation of this handbook by their enthusiasm and dedication.*

May 2011

DOCUMENT AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD ON THE SPEAQ WEBSITE  
speak.qc.ca

## Introduction

Don't expect interaction in English in the ESL elementary classroom to "just happen," because chances are, it won't.

Unfortunately, you can't merely place students in groups, give them a topic or a prop and ask them to talk about it. Most students won't know what to say or how to say it, so they will remain silent, speak French, or worse yet, just "give up," resulting in frustration for both the students and the teacher. The activity bombs and discipline problems begin.

**Oral interaction in English must be set up, modeled and practised.** At first, the exchanges will be very short, structured and "controlled." But, oh how rewarding to walk around the classroom and observe students involved in a task, albeit a simple one, and speaking in English only! Their motivation is catchy!

It is helpful to remember that **accomplishment, satisfaction and success often come in small packages.** Like when a student spontaneously makes a pertinent comment in English using functional language or an expression seen in class previously...

And although accomplishment and satisfaction first come in small packages, **success generates success.** "Hey, Ms. B, when we went to the States I was able to order [food] in English!" and "I met some kids on the beach and I understood them!" Comments like those make what ESL teachers do worth the effort. They urge us to push on and to keep it real. Motivation is catchy!

**The purpose of this handbook is to help ESL teachers at the elementary level structure and foster oral interaction in their classrooms.** In it you will find a variety of practical tools and visuals to support oral interaction in English, help on how to structure oral interaction for success, tips and tools for evaluating and of course, a wealth of ideas and ready-made activities. As well, six short video clips filmed in the ESL classroom are included. It's always a treat to watch real students in a real classroom setting in action!

Your feedback is always welcome. Please take a minute to complete and send in the short form at the end of the handbook. And if you have a new idea or activity to share, send it to me as well and I'll pass it on via the Internet.

Enjoy!

*Judith*





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### **Structure for success!**

(always!)

Think: functional language, models, strategies and resources.

### **Focus on functional language, not vocabulary.**

(An unknown word can be found in a dictionary. How can a student learn a structure?)

### **Aim for transfer**

(From one context to another until an expression or structure has been internalized and can be “pulled up” and “punched in” appropriately in a conversation)

### **Design activities that are pertinent and significant.**

(Spend precious class time on “stuff” students actually need and will use in “real” life.)

### **“It takes two to tango!”**

When the teacher is speaking, the students are not.

Favour activities that are student-centred and get them working together in small groups.

### **Oral Interaction is not the same as oral production.**

**Interaction is a two-way street.** (Oral production is more like a cul-de-sac: one student delivers... what are others doing?)

Oral interaction is dynamic because you cannot always predict what the other person will say. But at the same time, it builds on what was said previously. **It is not a series of random utterances strung together:**

- *Look! There's Joe!*
- *I play soccer after school.*
- *My dog's name is Sparkie.*

Huh? It must fit together and make sense!

The hardest part of teaching oral interaction is teaching students to keep the conversation going by building on what was said before. It must be modeled and taught. Again and again!

### **Remember to:**

Present functional language, give clear instructions, make your expectations known, model, suggest strategies, then... let it rip!



## Oral Interaction in the Program (Cycles Two and Three)

*“In fact, oral interaction is the cornerstone of this program, in which the students use English in all classroom situations.” (p. 352)*

*“To interact orally in English is at the heart of ESL learning and is present when developing the other two competencies.” (p. 353)*

The learning contexts for this competency require:

- Opportunities to interact with peers and the teacher, **in English only, from day one**;
- Numerous occasions to practise and experiment with **functional language**;
- Opportunities to develop compensatory and learning **strategies** through use;
- **Help** from the teacher and peers;
- Access to abundant **visual support** (posters, word and expression banks, checklists, etc.);
- Availability of linguistic **resources** (texts, visual and thematic dictionaries, Internet sites, etc.);
- **Opportunities to take risks** as a learner. (p. 354)



### **MELS Documents**

You can download these documents from the MELS website:

Cycle One Program and Cycles Two and Three Program

<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/programmeFormation/primaire/>

Progression of Learning

<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/progression/anglaisSec/index.asp>

Framework of Evaluation (updated version)

<https://www7.mels.gouv.qc.ca/dc/evaluation/index.php?page=anglais-langue-seconde-en-pri#a2>

## A Quick Look at Evaluation

The purpose of evaluation is twofold: to **support and regulate learning** (during the year/cycle) and to **recognize competencies** (at the end of the year/cycle).

Evaluation shows what students know and what they can do, as well as, what they need to work on. Evaluation of oral interaction must be based on **observable behaviours**.

The overall weighting of *C1 (To interact orally)* on the report card is:

<b>50%</b>	in Cycle Two
<b>45%</b>	in Cycle Three

Although the weighting of the competency differs slightly in Cycles Two and Three, **the evaluation criteria are the same in both cycles**. They are:

- *Use of functional language*
- *Use of strategies*
- *Participation in exchanges*
- *Pronunciation*

Of these, the two to focus on are:

- *Participation in exchanges*
- *Use of functional language.*

*In accordance with the Policy on the Evaluation of Learning, evaluation should focus on the acquisition of knowledge and the students' ability to use this knowledge effectively in contexts that draw upon their competencies.*

(“Progression of Learning”)

In the **Updated Framework of Evaluation**, published by the MELS in March 2011, the evaluation criteria for C1 are listed as follows:

- *Use of functional language*
- *Participation in exchanges*
- *Use of strategies*

**NOTE:**

For the latter, *Use of strategies*, it is stipulated, that “the student must be provided with feedback on this element, but the element must not be considered when determining the student’s mark in the report card.” (p. 5)

And, as you can see below, *pronunciation* is now included as part of the *Use of functional language*.

These criteria are clarified further in Appendix 3 of the updated framework:

***Use of functional language***

- Use of targeted useful expressions and vocabulary
- Combination of useful expressions and vocabulary to express personal messages
- Pronunciation of frequently used expressions and targeted vocabulary

***Participation in exchanges***

- Participation in classroom routines
- Perseverance in using English at all times
- Initiation and maintenance of oral exchanges
- Reaction to oral messages
- Support of peers during interaction
- Expression of personalized messages

***Use of strategies***

- Use of compensatory (communication) strategies to keep interaction going
- Use of learning strategies to communicate in English

# Tips for Evaluating Oral Interaction in Support of Learning

## 1. Plan ahead.

Evaluation is not a monster that surfaces at the end of a unit, month or marking period.

Evaluation is an ongoing process and an integral part of the teaching/learning sequence.

Plan evaluation at the same time you plan the rest of your class. **Know exactly what you are looking for when observing your students.** That may sound obvious, but it really makes the task so much easier!

As well, target specific individuals or groups to observe instead of trying to get around to everyone during a single activity. If you know ahead of time which students you will be focusing on, you will not find yourself without marks for some students at the end of the marking period. And, if you find that a student is “almost there,” make note of it and go back and observe him/her again when you get a chance. Remember, the idea is to mark students on what they know (and are able to do) and to catch them doing something good.

## 2. Keep informal evaluation simple!

Again, if you know what you are looking for and jot down your expectations, you can note if/how students meet them. Most often, these expectations will be the same as the instructions given to students.

## 3. Forget the grids for everyday informal assessment. Use B-A-C-K!

Start with the premise that all students will do what is asked and therefore get a “B.” Note only those who deserve a mark that is higher or lower.

- Those who do what is asked = B
- Those who do more = A
- Those who struggle = C
- Reserve the K for students who don't participate at all (or who speak **only** French)... (I like this because it sounds like “cas” in French and these students “*sont des cas-- des cas à surveiller de près, à aider, etc.*”)

### IMPORTANT

- The only way to evaluate oral interaction competency is **in action**.
- Always make sure **students know exactly what is being evaluated** and what you are looking for. A T-chart (see p. 23) can be a great tool to use for this.
- Mark students on what they **know** and not on what they don't know.
- Try to catch students doing something good.
- View errors as a starting point and not a final result. This will keep the “value” in evaluation.

#### 4. Or, if you can't live without a grid, always use the same one.

A grid for this, a grid for that... How can you analyze your data accurately if there is little or no uniformity in the information gathered? The task can be complicated, not to mention time-consuming...

Find a grid that works for you and stick to it. Gridmania is something you don't want to catch!

### Sample Grid for Evaluating Oral Interaction

This grid is not content-specific and can apply to any oral interactive activity or task. Use it to help **situate** your students and **explain** their marks, especially at the end of a marking period.

#### Oral Interaction Grid: Cycles Two and Three

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The message is complete, fluent, and goes beyond simple statements.</li><li>- Student maintains the conversation.</li><li>- There are virtually no or very few errors.</li><li>- Pronunciation is very good or native-like.</li></ul>	50 47	<b>A</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Student conveys a personal message.</li><li>- The message is complete and errors do not hinder understanding.</li><li>- Student uses functional language taught in class.</li><li>- Student makes simple comments or asks questions to maintain interaction.</li><li>- Pronunciation does not hinder understanding. In general, it is good.</li></ul>	44 40	<b>B</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- There is a personal message, but it is often incomplete.</li><li>- Student attempts to use functional language practised in class, especially when prompted.</li><li>- Interaction is limited.</li></ul>	37 33	<b>C</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The message is incomplete or very short.</li><li>- Interaction is difficult or almost nonexistent.</li></ul>	30	<b>D</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The student makes little or no effort to communicate.</li></ul>	20 0	<b>E</b>

**NOTE:** A [copy](#) is included on a separate sheet. Although it is not meant to be used as a checklist, you can highlight the elements that are pertinent for each student, add a comment and present to the parents.

## Let's Recapitulate!

### **To interact orally in English** is:

- the first competency of the ESL elementary program in Cycles Two and Three and
- the cornerstone of the program.

### **To interact orally in English** involves:

- a two-way communication between two or more people;
- using English in all classroom situations;
- actively listening to others;
- initiating, reacting, maintaining and ending a conversation;
- using the language in both structured and spontaneous situations;
- building on previous knowledge of English;
- persevering in getting a message across in English, despite errors.



To do this,

- Students must be encouraged to take risks with the language;
- They must be provided with clear models;
- They must have access to various resources such as functional language posters and [strategy posters](#), banks of expressions, vocabulary lists, etc.;
- The language taught must fit students' needs and interests.

### **What To interact orally in English** is NOT

- It is not something prepared or rehearsed at home.
- It is not an oral presentation in front of the class.
- It is not reciting a poem or singing song.
- It is not reading something out loud.



Now, keeping all this in mind...

## The Million-dollar Question

*“So, how do you get elementary students, who have so little baggage in English, to speak in English?”*

First and foremost, the teacher must be wholly committed to **speaking English in the classroom**. It sounds obvious, but really, it’s the key. After all, *how can students be expected to speak in English if the teacher doesn’t?*

Here are some other things you can do:

1. Make a big deal of creating an **English-friendly, English-only environment** in the classroom.

For example:

- Make a line across the threshold (using masking tape or duct tape) and write “English only, please” as a gentle reminder when entering the classroom.
- Post a sign on the door (or wall in the hallway next to the classroom) saying, “English spoken here!”
- Label [classroom objects](#)
- Put up [posters](#) and other [signs](#) all around the classroom. (If you lack bulletin boards, hang clotheslines!) Aim for functional language, strategies and fun expressions.
- Give stickers and small [certificates](#). They are always a big hit with students, even in Cycle Three. And while some teachers like to give prizes, I feel motivation should be intrinsic, except in very special circumstances; i.e. a contest. Please see p. 21 for more information.

The functional language posters by the MELS can be downloaded at:

<http://station05.qc.ca/css/cybersite/esl/kids/posters/index.htm>

2. Create a climate where students feel at ease. **If students are afraid of making mistakes, they will not take risks to speak in English.**
3. **Establish routines.** They will help beginning ESL students feel secure. A word of caution, however, be flexible! Favour spontaneity over monotony!
4. **Don’t translate!** If you do so sometimes, students come to expect it all the time. They automatically tune the English version out and wait for the translation. It’s a very bad habit and one that is hard to break...
5. It is, however, “very okay” to use an **occasional time out** to make sure students are on track, to settle a discipline problem, etc. Just, don’t overdo it!... Time outs should not be used as an easy way out.

*The competency To interact orally constitutes the foundation of the elementary ESL program. Teachers have a responsibility to ensure that their classes take place in English from day one.*

(“Using English in the ESL Classroom,” p. 4)

# The Two Most Important Keys to Success: Careful Planning and Structuring for Success

## A. Careful Planning



As stated in the introduction, for the most part, oral interaction in the elementary ESL classroom doesn't just happen. And, it cannot be improvised. It must be carefully structured, set up and taught.

The "**Progression of Learning**" is an official document produced by the MELS as a complement to the program. It outlines the "essential knowledge that students must acquire and be able to use in each year of elementary school." Refer to it as a framework to know which elements of knowledge to include in your activities and LESS.

### Questions to Ask Yourself When Planning Oral Interaction

- Is the activity pertinent and relative to students' needs and reality?
- What will students get out of this activity, that is, what will they be learning?
- What is the best way to present the material? Will the time invested be well spent?
- Does the activity focus on functional **language**, not just vocabulary words?
- Is the activity at least partially open-ended? That is, does it provide room for students to personalize the message?
- Are the students really speaking and actively engaged? It is student-centred?
- How is the activity structured for success?

## B Structuring for Success

In a nutshell, structuring for success means making sure students have everything they need to carry out the task at hand. This includes:

- The **vocabulary, grammar notions and functional language** targeted;
- Access to **resources**;
- Specific **strategies** to draw upon for help if communication breaks down;
- **Clear instructions** and **models**.

*As well, students must know exactly what is expected of them and how they will be evaluated.*

Here are some ways to structure for success:

- Keep **differentiation** in mind.
  - *Would students benefit from a different grouping (stronger students together, new partners...) for this activity?*
  - *What about differentiating the content?* (Not everyone has to have the exact same sheets or cards.)
- Prepare **“cheat sheets”** that students can consult if they get stuck.
- Note **one or two strategies** that will be useful for this particular activity.
  - Model them.
  - Remind students to use them.
  - Teach examples of functional language that go with the strategy. For example, for delay speaking, you could present expressions like: *Um... Give me a minute. Just a sec. I need a minute to think.*
- Provide access to multiple **resources** like [IRME](#) and [functional language posters](#).
- Encourage **equal participation** by using [response cards](#) or [talking chips](#).
- Before presenting an activity, **try it yourself** and do it out loud. Often this can prevent those nasty little glitches that cause a great game or activity to bomb.
  - *What language did you use?*
  - *What “filler language” could help students “flesh out” a bare-bone conversation?*

Make sure students know how to answer the questions, not just ask them...

- After an activity, **give feedback and ask students to reflect on how they did**. This is essential for improvement. The key is: “Keep it simple and keep it short.” Also, remember that reflection doesn’t always have to be written. Students can be asked a few questions orally and use a show of hands or use thumbs up, thumbs down.



### Modelling

Modelling goes beyond merely giving an example. It is demonstrating step-by-step how to do the activity. It is “letting students into your head” to see how you tackle various situations, what strategies you use, etc.

*Students do not need an enormous amount of language to begin interacting, but they do need “a bit of everything.”  
And they can accomplish a lot using a little.*

(“Using English in the ESL Classroom,” p. 4)

# Strategies and Resources

## Strategies\*

*Language learning strategies are steps taken by students to enhance their own learning.*

Rebecca Oxford

Strategies help students become aware of how they learn most effectively and the ways in which they can transfer this learning to new situations. Students develop a repertoire of strategies through teacher modeling, guided practice and independent use of these strategies.

In the Cycles Two and Three program, **communication and learning strategies** contribute to developing the competency *To interact orally in English*. Students can name several strategies, select and apply those appropriate for the task at hand and reflect on their effectiveness. As the cycles unfold, they broaden their repertoire of strategies and use them with increasing autonomy.

### Principal Strategies to Support Oral Interaction

COMPENSATORY STRATEGIES	LEARNING STRATEGIES
<p><b>Asking for clarification</b> Request speaker to repeat or explain</p> <p><b>Asking for help</b> Request assistance</p> <p><b>Delay speaking</b> Buy time to think out a response</p> <p><b>Gesture Circumlocution</b> Make up for the lack of a precise word or expression by substituting known words or expressions</p>	<p><b>Attention</b> Decide to concentrate on the right things and maintain attention during tasks</p> <p><b>Cooperation</b> Work and learn with others</p> <p><b>Physical response</b> Act out a response to show understanding and facilitate learning</p> <p><b>Perseverance</b> Accept not being able to understand everything without becoming overly anxious or giving up</p> <p><b>Practice</b> Repeat and rehearse, regroup, integrate and assimilate frequently used functional language</p> <p><b>Resourcing</b> Make use of human resources (<i>e.g. teacher and peers</i>) and material resources targeted for the task (<i>e.g. posters, dictionaries, information technology</i>)</p> <p><b>Risk-taking</b> Experiment with known language and attempt to integrate new language</p> <p><b>Use of prior knowledge</b> Draw on own background knowledge as a source of information</p> <p><b>Self-monitoring</b> Check and adjust ongoing performance</p> <p><b>Self-evaluation</b> Reflect on what has been learned and how</p>

#### The Road to Autonomy

I do; you watch.

I do; you help.

You do; I help.

Strategies must be taught explicitly and modelled. After that, especially at first, teachers will need to specify and suggest which strategies to use when. A T-chart can be an effective way to do this:

PROBLEM	WHAT TO TRY
Someone is speaking too fast. You are having trouble understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ask the person to repeat: <i>Can you repeat that please?</i></li> <li>- Ask them to slow down: <i>Would you slow down please?</i></li> </ul>
You still don't understand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ask for clarification: <i>Can you explain that please?</i> <i>What do you mean?</i></li> <li>- Ask the person to say it in a different way.</li> <li>- Ask the person to draw a picture or use gestures.</li> </ul>
You don't know how to say what you want to say.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use gestures.</li> <li>- Try to use different words (circumlocution).</li> <li>- Ask for help: <i>How do you say... in English?</i></li> </ul>
You need a time to think before answering.	<p>Stall for time: <i>Just a minute please.</i> <i>Um...</i> <i>Hold on a sec!</i></p>

*Strategies help students be autonomous.  
Knowing which strategy to select and how to use it correctly  
contributes to success and self-confidence.*

**NOTE:** Small strategy cards for students (prepared by the MELS), may be downloaded at:  
[http://www.speaq.qc.ca/tech/strategy/Elem/Elementary\\_Strategies.htm](http://www.speaq.qc.ca/tech/strategy/Elem/Elementary_Strategies.htm)

## Resourcing

Teachers are sometimes hesitant to provide “answer sheets” (I call them “cheat sheets”) that students can consult if they need help during an activity. However, if students “get stuck” and are unable to continue the task at hand, the results may be disastrous. Oral interaction will not take place, students will tune out and discipline problems will abound.

If a few “cheat sheets” are posted in the classroom or placed on an empty desk or counter, it’s easy for the teacher to see who is relying too heavily on them and these students can be encouraged to try other strategies instead. As well, the “cheat sheets” may be the little push shy students need to boost self-confidence and take risks. It’s a simple way to help structure for success.

## A Few Tips

(especially with regard to “managing” oral interaction)

It is really important for ESL specialists to have their own classroom. Unfortunately however, very often this does not happen and they are forced to become “trolley teachers,” peddling their knowledge from room to room (and school to school)... If this is your case, **organization means survival**.

- Invest in a few large sheets of foam core. They are lightweight, quite sturdy and come in a wide array of colours. Use them in lieu of bulletin boards. As well, try clothesline. They can be strung across the classroom rather quickly (provided the hooks are already in place) and used to display functional language posters, T-charts, etc.
- Remember, students can distribute and pick up material, hang posters on the clothesline, etc. **Delegate!**
- Use cardboard magazine holders, plastic bins and Ziploc bags to store cards, sheets, dictionaries and other materials. Separate by groups and number them. That way one student from each group can quickly fetch everything the group needs.
- Make a **plan for moving desks** into groups and **teach it to students**. With a bit of practice, it can be done with little or noise and in no time flat.

## Class Participation and Noise Levels

- **Structure all activities for success** (Where have we heard that?) and vary the pace. Respect the class’s attention span. An activity that lags opens the door to discipline problems. Try **“Squeezing” students in time**. If an activity normally takes 20 minutes, begin by telling students they have 15. If they are on task and genuinely need more time, you can always extend it.
- Decide on a way to **get students’ attention** during group work and use it. Two examples are:
  - 5-4-3-2-1-0 (from cooperative learning.) Hold up your hand and slowly count down from five. At zero, everyone should be silent and looking at you. Don’t allow students to count with you. The idea is that during these five “long seconds,” students to have time to wrap up what they were doing or saying and get ready to listen.
  - Raise your hand. Students who see you, do the same. They also stop what they are doing/saying and turn their attention to you. Soon everyone will have their hands raised and their eyes on you and the class will be ready to listen.
- Have a way to **monitor the noise level** (e.g. a homemade “noisometre,”) and use it! You can also use red, yellow and green cards.



## Class Rules

You don't need a lot of rules to make your class run smoothly. Keep them short and simple and make sure they are **observable**. If you like, have a specific set of rules for oral interaction. Here is an example:

### Class Rules

- **Try to speak in English all the time.**
- **Be respectful of others who try to speak English:**
  - **Don't laugh at their errors.**
  - **Don't use put-downs.**
  - **Don't interrupt.**
- **Be positive!**

## Motivation and Rewards

- Favour **intrinsic motivation** over a reward system, which takes a lot of time to manage, is difficult to sustain and often defeats the purpose because students will tend to work/compete for the reward rather than for the reason behind it.
- If you do want to give rewards, make sure they are for a **clearly identified (and desired) behaviour** and that all **students have equal and fair access** to them. For example, at the end of an activity, hand out stickers or small [certificates](#) to those who stayed on task, followed the class rules or made a real effort to speak only in English.
- Rewards based on ability or performance (except for a game) decrease overall motivation. If there is only one winner, the others are losers...

For more information, this is a good read:

<http://www.calstatela.edu/faculty/jshin>

Finally, be kind to yourself! Remember that you are dealing with human beings and that the situation will never be perfect. That's what makes the job both challenging and stimulating, and in my mind, one of the greatest professions in the world!

# Tools and Structures to Support Interaction

## 1. IRME (Cycle Three\*)

IRME is an acronym for the four steps involved in oral interaction: *initiate, react, maintain* and *end*. [IRME sheets](#) help students keep track of functional language that can be used for each step. Students should be encouraged to add to the sheets throughout the year and to refer to them as needed during oral interaction.

IRME can be used in conjunction with [response cards](#). Students refer to their IRME sheets for the specific functional language they need to “use up” a card. (e.g. Response card: *Disagree politely*; IRME (react or maintain): *I’m sorry, but I don’t think that’s okay... Personally, I wouldn’t do that...*)

IRME is also a great informal assessment tool. Use it to indicate students’ strengths and weaknesses and point out concrete ways on how they can vary what they say. (e.g. *To state your opinion, you can say... or...*)

Take a few minutes together as a class to brainstorm for functional language and idiomatic expressions needed to carry out an activity or task. Perhaps use a [think-pair-share-square](#) to do this.

Post large IRME charts in the classroom. Personalize them according to the activity or task at hand.

### What to include for each step:

<b>INITIATE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Begin an oral exchange with a greeting, exclamation, warning or request</li> <li>- Interrupt</li> <li>- Express a thought (e.g. <i>I wonder if...</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>REACT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (Nonverbally)</li> <li>- Exclaim or express a gut reaction</li> <li>- Comment upon what was said</li> <li>- Answer a question</li> <li>- Ask another question in response to a question</li> <li>- Apologize</li> </ul>
<b>MAINTAIN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Follow up or build on what was said</li> <li>- Ask for or provide more information or details</li> <li>- Bring others into the conversation</li> </ul>
<b>END</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Take leave</li> <li>- Thank</li> <li>- Make a final comment (e.g. <i>Stop talking!</i>)</li> </ul>

\* In Cycle Two, most exchanges will be very short and straightforward (Question/Answer or Question/Answer/Comment); the “maintain” will generally not happen. However, students can be encouraged to take first steps to keep interaction going by building specific elements into the activity itself (e.g. *I like dogs and hamsters. And you?*).



### IRME Posters

Laminate light-coloured, poster-size cardstock. Write on them with washable markers. Or, write the functional language on individual strips and use Velcro or “sticky-tack.”

Two 8.5 X 11 [IRME posters](#) are included with this handbook.



## 2. Response Cards

[Response cards](#) are a set of cards that dictate how to participate in a discussion. They are not content-specific, but focus on ways to maintain the conversation. Response cards are a great way to support oral interaction because they help students structure their exchanges without telling them exactly what to say. Used in conjunction with IRME, they become even more powerful.

### How they work

Students are placed in small groups and each student receives a set of the cards. They choose a card to “use” each time they speak, structuring what they say according to what is written on that card. The used cards are placed in a discard pile.

Students **do not** take turns speaking, but jump in as they wish. It may be decided that the first person to use up all his/her cards is the winner. This friendly competition encourages students to participate and to vary their exchanges.



### Materials

One identical set of cards for each student. Since these cards can be used frequently, and for a variety of activities, it is suggested they be printed on cardstock and laminated.

### Suggestion

Print the cards on four different colours of cardstock and give each student in a group a different colour. Not only will this make separating the cards into individual sets easier, but also, since each student in the group has a different colour, you can easily monitor students’ participation. This can be useful for informal assessment. Store the cards for each group in a separate Ziploc bag or envelope.

### Variations

- Some teachers prefer to give each student a sheet of cards. They cut the cards apart and keep them in an envelope in their binders. While this may seem simpler, you will have to deal with lost cards and students who forget them at home...
- Instead of distributing a set of cards to each student, you can have a single large deck per group and distribute them randomly. Each student is dealt a fixed number of cards (4–6) and the rest are placed in a pile in the centre. Each time a student uses a card, he/she takes a new card from the pile until there are no more cards left. The winner can be the person who uses the most cards.

### NOTE:

Of course, it is not necessary to include all the cards. The first time you use the response cards in class, or for Cycle Two, you may wish to use only the “ask a question” and “share your opinion” cards.



### **Keep Your Cards Organized!**

ESL teachers use lots of different cards! To avoid tearing out your hair:

- Get into the habit of **numbering cards on the back by the number of teams** (before laminating them). That way, if a card falls on the floor or gets separated from the others, you can easily find out where it belongs, without having to shuffle through all the sets.
- Place cards in small Ziploc bags (by teams if applicable) or envelopes. Then store all the cards for all the teams in one larger Ziploc bag.

### 3. Question Cards

Question cards help students vary the types of questions they ask each other during small-group exchanges and discussions. Students each receive a set of the cards. Each time they ask a question, they put the corresponding card in the centre. Since each set is different colour, it is easy to see who has asked the most questions and which question words have been used.

#### Materials

A set of cards for each student

#### Suggestion

Print the cards on cardstock, number them by team sets on the back and laminate for durability. Store the cards for each group in a separate Ziploc bag or envelope.



Most of these come from cooperative learning:

### 4. Think-Pair-Share

The teacher asks a question. It may be something very simple and matter of fact (*e.g. When is Halloween?*) or something more complicated and open-ended (*e.g. How do you...?*). Individually, students **think** about the answer. Then they **pair** up with another student and compare answers. Finally, students **share** with the class. This structure empowers students because it gives them the chance to validate and change or polish their response before everyone hears it. This is especially good for students who lack the self-confidence to take risks in English on their own. And since the answer is not theirs alone, they will not feel “stupid” if it is wrong.

The structure is easy to use, it requires no special materials or advanced preparation and, best of all, it works!

### 5. Think-Pair-Square/Think-Pair-Square-Share

The exact same thing as above, but with an added step. After students validate their response with a partner, the pair “square up” with two other students and share their responses. After that, everyone shares together as a class (facultative). This structure maximizes student participation.

### 6. Inside/Outside Circles

Students form two circles one inside the other. They stand or sit facing each other so that each person has a partner. They talk with their partner until time is called. Then those in the outer circle move clockwise so that everyone has a new partner to discuss with. Several rotations can be done. Each time the subject can change or be the same. This structure is a good way to give students the chance to speak with several different people in an organized manner.

#### Variation

Instead of one large inside/outside circle formation, form two or three. It takes less physical organization and space. (For example, tables or teams 1 and 2 could partner up, etc.)

## Structuring for Success

If the subject (or functional language) stays the same, students have a chance to “practise” with different partners. You will notice them gaining confidence and taking more risks the second or third time. After that, change subjects... before boredom sets in.

### 7. Numbered-heads Together

“Numbered-heads together” is another simple structure that requires no material. In their groups, students each choose a different number from 1–4. (For occasional groups of three or five students, there will be two number 1s.) The teacher asks a question. They talk about it and come up with a team answer, making sure everyone knows it. The teacher calls on a specific group and number to give the answer (Example: table 4, number 4).

### 8. Talking Chips

“Talking chips” help students take turns expressing themselves during a discussion. The idea is that everybody gets a turn so that participation is equal and stronger students do not monopolize the conversation.

Each student receives five bingo chips or other tokens. During the discussion, each time a student participates he/she places a chip in the centre of the table. The discussion ends when all students have used all their chips.

### 9. ECC (English Class Cash)

“ECC” is a way to encourage students to speak only in English during a mingling activity. Students each receive four ECC cards (or tokens).

Each time a student catches another student speaking in French, he/she takes an ECC card from that person. At the end of the activity, applaud those who were able to keep all their ECC or who earned extra cash.

**Important:** Make sure students understand that only one card may be forfeited at a time and only to the person with whom the person who spoke in French was speaking. As well, specify that “speaking in French” is saying more than a single word; it is “really **speaking** in French,” i.e. asking a question or making a full-fledged comment. Otherwise, every time a French word is uttered, there will be bedlam!

**NOTE:** Students who lose all their ECC have the chance to “earn” some if, in turn they catch others speaking in French. The teacher could also decide to hand out extra cash cards to those who really deserve them...



#### **Tokens**

**Plastic bread ties** make excellent tokens. They come in various colours, they are readily available and they are free! Ask students to save them for you.

Prepare a **small plastic container** of tokens for each group of four students. Include dice, game markers, rules, etc. Students can use the lid to roll the dice in during board games, etc.

## 10. Cooperative Roles and Role Cards

Roles are used to help students work together effectively in small groups. They empower students by putting them conjointly in charge of the dynamics of their group. Although the cards themselves are not absolutely necessary and roles can be assigned without them, using the cards has at least two advantages: First of all, the responsibility of each role is written in simple language on the card so students know what each job entails, and secondly, everyone (including you) knows who has which role. In short, role cards “officialise” the roles.

Not everyone needs to have a role each time and not all roles will be needed for every task. Roles may be assigned by the teacher, distributed randomly or left up to the students’ discretion. Roles may also be rotated or switched during long activities or tasks. This is especially easy if the cards are reused.

The [role cards](#) included with this handbook are those most often used: *materials person*, *captain*, *timekeeper*, *secretary*, *checker* and *spokesperson*. They are ready to print out on cardstock and laminate. You will need one set for each group of four students.



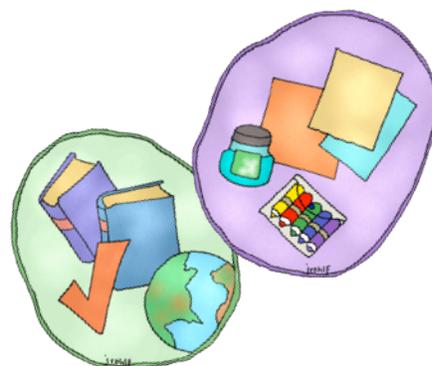
### Scoring

Not points, but paper...

Scoring involves using a knife (or scissors) and a ruler to make a clean, crisp fold line (like on greeting cards). It allows you to fold cardstock or heavy paper easily, without any crumples. The depression you make must be deep enough to fold the paper easily, without causing it to split apart.

Note that most photocopying services also have machines that will score your copies for you.

Whether or not you use roles, always have a **materials person** in each group. This facilitates the manipulation of materials and handouts. It is quick and efficient and you don’t have to do it.



## 11. T-charts

Use a T-chart to show students what interaction in English looks like and what it sounds like (*what we see* and *what we hear*). Draw a large “T” on the board. On the left side of the vertical bar, write: “what we see” and on the right side, write “what we hear”:

WHAT WE SEE	WHAT WE HEAR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students sitting close together or huddling</li> <li>- Students looking at the person who is speaking (paying attention)</li> <li>- Gestures like nodding, shaking your head, pointing, showing approval...</li> <li>- Students using resources as needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- English being spoken!</li> <li>- Social conventions like: <i>excuse me; please; thank you; I'm sorry; What did you say?; Could you repeat please? ...</i></li> <li>- Functional language specific to activity or task (<i>i.e. It's your turn.</i>)</li> </ul>

T-charts provide students with concrete examples of expected behaviour and show them what you will be looking for when evaluating.

# A Compendium of Interactive Activities

Find Someone Who...  
Circle Survey  
People Bingo  
Someone Who... with Pictures  
Exchange It!  
A New ID-entity  
Magic Circle  
Match It!  
Roll and Talk (Discussion "Cubes")  
Find the Differences  
Clowning Around (etc.)  
Describe and Draw  
Mystery Animal  
Animal Riddles  
Fortune Teller

## **Additional Activities**

Something in Common  
Something in Common, Take Two  
Line Up!  
On My Back  
At the Flea Market

Cooperative Acrostics/Crosswords  
Brainstorming  
Four Corners  
Compare and Contrast  
Picture This!  
Board Games  
Spot the Lies  
Going Grocery Shopping  
Toss a Question

## **Whole-class Games and Activities**

Tic-Tac-Toe  
Mystery Bag  
Yes/No – True/False  
Hot Seat  
The Price Is Right  
Jeopardy Game

## **Activities Geared More to Stronger Groups or Intensive English**

Tell Me a Story  
Figure It Out!  
Structured Role Play

## A Compendium of Interactive Activities

This section contains various types of activities that teach, provide practise and/or foster oral interaction.

In order for **life-long learning** to take place, what is taught must be **meaningful, authentic** and **adapted to the learner**.

Keeping this in mind, the majority of the activities included in this handbook revolve around students' immediate environment and involve exchanging personal information, talking about interests and friends, expressing likes and dislikes and sharing opinions. They were designed to help students practise and integrate a general knowledge of basic, "real" English as they develop oral competency and fluency. As students become more proficient and more mature, the scope of topics will broaden.

Although all of the activities can stand alone, they will be more meaningful if they are integrated into an LES or coupled with a writing task.

In addition to using the ready-made examples as is, you can use them as models for your own activities using the topics and functional language you wish to target. Thus, they will fit the needs, interests and levels of **your** students.

If you make up something that works especially well, please share it! Send it to me and I'll put it up under this project in a "special corner" of the website.

Send your activities to:  
[judith.rohlf@videotron.ca](mailto:judith.rohlf@videotron.ca)



## Find Someone Who...

### Description

Students each receive a sheet with a series of questions or statements. They walk around the classroom asking questions to find someone who answers “yes” to each one. They write that person’s name next to the question. A student’s name may only be written one time. Students can write their own name one time. The activity ends when everyone has found someone for every number.



### Materials

A sheet for each student

You may wish to use ECC to help students monitor their use of English during the activity (see p. 26).

### Structuring for Success

- Explain and practise asking questions and giving short answers (*Yes, I do/No, I don't*).
- Before playing, ask students to read their sheet and highlight anything they do not understand. Explain.
- If this is the first time, model the activity using students.
- The difficulty of the activity can be easily regulated. For an easy version, use questions that all have the same sentence structure (*e.g. What's your favourite...? or Do you have...?*) Take it up a notch by not writing the questions. (*e.g. Find someone who has five brothers. instead of Do you have five brothers?*) Students will have to supply the correct questions. This can be made even more difficult if various kinds of questions are required.

### Questions to Check Students' Comprehension of the Instructions

- *What if a person answers “yes” to your question?*
- *What if a person answers “no” to your question?*
- *Can you write your own name on the sheet?*
- *How do you win?*

### Note

One of the activities included uses the past tense. Students will have to make the transfer between the interrogative form of the past tense and the affirmative form (*e.g. Did you go?—I went.*)



### Duh...!

When making up questions for a “Find-Someone-Who” activity, avoid the obvious (*e.g. Find someone who is wearing a red T-shirt*). Students don't have to ask the question!

Also avoid questions students most likely already know the answers to (*e.g. for students who have been together since Grade One, What's your last name?*). Again, there will be no need to ask the question and the purpose of the activity is defeated.

## Circle Survey

### Description

A simple version of "Find Someone Who," suitable for Cycle Two

### Materials

A [survey sheet](#) for each student

### Structuring for Success

- Explain and practise asking questions and giving short answers (*Yes, it is/No, it isn't*).
- Before playing, look at the sheet together and answer any questions students have.
- Make sure students understand the task at hand and model the activity, especially if this is their first experience with this type of activity.
- As an incentive to get students to speak only in English, you can use ECC (see p. 26).

**NOTE:** This activity is structured for success in that it is shorter than a regular "FSW" activity and potential answers are given in the questions (e.g. *What's your favourite colour? Is it green?*). This makes it a good first mingling activity for beginning students.

### Questions to Check Students' Comprehension of the Instructions

- *What if a person answers "yes" to your question?*
- *What if a person answers "no" to your question?*

### Variations

- Make the survey using preferences and the structure, *Do you prefer X or X?* or *Which do you prefer, X or X?* Students can answer: *I like \_\_, but I prefer \_\_. I like \_\_, but I like \_\_ better. I don't like \_\_, but I like \_\_.*
- Write theme-related questions in other shapes (i.e. a house for questions about family members, a pumpkin or ghost for questions regarding Halloween, a present for gifts received or given at Christmas, Hanukkah or other special occasion...).

### Extension

- Ask students to tally and chart the results.
- In pairs ask students to make up their own survey questions using the one they just did as a model. They exchange sheets with another pair and use them to do a new survey of the class.

# People Bingo

## Description

Students each receive a bingo card. They circulate in the classroom, asking classmates the questions on their card. If the information asked for is true, that student signs the corresponding square on the card. The first person to get a “bingo” is the winner. Like in regular bingo, play can continue by asking students to complete three or more lines or a special combination, like the letter “N” for example.

## Materials

A bingo card for each student

**NOTE:** In the [ready-made activity](#), six different cards are provided for variety and to discourage “automatic” copying. Each card contains some of the same information in different squares. Hand them out randomly. Of course, if you prefer, all students may be given the same card.

## Structuring for Success

- Explain and practise asking questions and giving short answers (*Yes, I do/No, I don't*).
- If you write the questions on the cards, the activity will be a lot easier. This may be a good idea for weaker students or to build confidence.
- Before playing, ask students to highlight anything they do not understand. Explain.
- Make sure students understand the task at hand and model the activity.

## Questions to Ask to Check Students' Comprehension of the Instructions

- *What if a person answers “yes” to your question?*
- *What if a person answers “no” to your question?*
- *Can the same person sign your card more than once?*
- *Can you sign your own card? (yes)*
- *How do you win?*

If you don't want to create your own bingo cards from scratch, try a free online bingo card generator. Here are two:

<http://print-bingo.com/>

<http://www.eslactivities.com/bingo.php#>

## Variations

- Students may sign a card more than once, but not on the same line. This can be tricky though because several lines overlap.
- Students work in pairs and take turns asking each other questions. In this case, it is not necessary to sign the cards. They mark “okay” on the squares with affirmative answers.
- Make cards on specific subjects, like food, holidays, about me, etc.
- Limit the structures and language in order to make the activity accessible to Cycle-Two students (e.g. *bingo cards about “favourites”*).
- Use a grid with fewer squares (4 x 4).
- Require students to continue the conversation (beyond the “yes/no” question) before signing a card and moving on to another person. This will require modelling beforehand.
- Students can be given blank bingo cards to fill in individually, in pairs, small groups or as a class.
- Like above, but once the cards are made, they are exchanged so that students don't use their own to play.

## Someone Who... with Pictures

### Description

This activity is exactly like "People Bingo" except that questions are replaced by pictures and all the sheets are identical. It is more challenging because students must come up with their own questions related to the pictures.

### Materials

A sheet for each student

**NOTE:** Print the sheet in colour on cardstock and laminate or slip into protective sleeves. Students use **washable** markers and write their answers on the cards or sleeves. Afterwards, they wipe them clean. (Students could also write their answers on a separate sheet. The fact that the squares are numbered facilitates this.)

As an alternative, use black and white photocopies instead of colour copies.

### Structuring for Success

- Explain and practise asking questions and giving short answers (*Yes, I do/No, I don't*).
- Make sure students understand the task at hand and model the activity.

### Questions to Check Students' Comprehension of the Instructions

- *What if a person answers "yes" to your question?*
- *What if a person answers "no" to your question?*
- *How do you win?*

### Variations

- Since the pictures are numbered, students could be given a set of squares to get in order to win (instead of asking them to complete lines as in bingo). Example: 2-4-7-8-11 or 1-5-6-10-16.

**Suggestion:** Give each group of four students a different set of numbers to find. They collaborate to get "yes" answers from students in other groups. Make sure to tell students that they are not allowed to write the names of their own team members. This way of doing the activity will be quicker. It is a good way to see how students get organized and pull together as a team. There will be team winners instead of individual winners.

- Instead of doing this activity as a "roaming" bingo activity, students can work in pairs and ask each other the questions.
- Students work in pairs. They take turn choosing two pictures and make a logical link between them (*e.g. # 7-8: My parents went out to eat, but I stayed home because I was sick*). Each number may be used only one time.



### Picture Cards

This handbook comes with many activities that use picture cards. All the cards have all been formatted the exact same size so that they are interchangeable.

## Exchange It!

### Description

Students receive a card with a question on it. They pair up and ask each other their questions. Then they exchange cards. They find a new person and do it again. Play continues until most, or all, of the students have had the chance to answer all the questions... or until the activity lags.

### Materials

A [question card](#) for each student

### Structuring for Success

- Make sure students understand the task at hand and model the activity.
- If using subject cards, instead of question cards, students will probably benefit from a quick review of questions words beforehand.
- You can limit the difficulty of the activity by limiting the types of questions, the structures used and/or the topic. This is particularly good for Cycle-Two students (see [favourites](#)).
- As an alternative, make two sets of cards and differentiate the content (one set simpler than the other; one with the questions, the other with the just the subjects, etc.). Photocopy on different colours. Students only pair up with those who have the same colour cards.

### Questions to Check Students' Comprehension of the Instructions

- *What happens after you have asked your question?*
- *What happens after you have both asked your questions?*
- *What if someone cannot answer your question?*

### Variations

- You can increase the difficulty by providing only the subject, not the complete question. Students will have to come up with their own questions. This will also make the activity more interesting because the questions can vary.
- Use hypothetical questions like: *"If you could have any super power, which one would you choose?"* This is a good way to practise "could" and "would" and makes for fun discussions afterwards.

### Suggestion

Have extra question cards on hand. If a card becomes "over-used," students can exchange it for a new one.

### Extension

- After the game, do a quick class review. Read a question and ask: *How did X answer?* (This can be done using "numbered-heads together" and points tallied.)
- With subject cards, distribute a card to each student in their small groups. They take turns showing their card. The others speculate about the person will answer. This will practise functional language like: *I think that... It seems to me that... I don't have a clue. Give me a hint. \_\_\_, what do you think?*, etc.

## A New ID-entity

### Description

In this speaking game, students receive an ID card with a new identity. They go around the classroom asking and answering questions in order to complete an answer sheet. They must speak only in English and not show their ID cards to anyone.

Upon completion of the activity, correct it together, by reading each of the statements aloud and asking the student(s) who assumed this ID to hand in their card(s).

### Materials

An [ID card and sheet](#) for each student

**NOTE:** There are 15 identity cards in all. Since most classes have at least 24 students, you will certainly need two sets in order to accommodate everyone in your classroom. Print each set out on a **different colour**. The reason for this is twofold:

- By passing out all the cards in one colour, you automatically ensure that all the statements on the answer sheet will find takers.
- You don't have to keep track of how many students you have in each group. First take all 15 cards of one colour and complete with cards of the second colour.

### Structuring for Success (and Special Instructions)

- Explain that students must answer the questions based solely on the **information on their cards**. (If someone asks them a question for which the information is not specifically stated, they should answer something like: *I don't know. No. Not really. No way! ...*).
- Specify that each new ID will fit only **one** of the statements.
- The first names of the new identities are written in alphabetical order by sex at the lower right of the sheet. When students find the person that goes with a statement, they write the name next to that statement and cross it off the list (process of elimination). As well, a list of useful questions may be included on the sheet.
- Make sure students understand that some of them will find another person with exactly the same ID as they have; they are clones! (If you wish, you can make sure "doubles" are passed out to weaker students.)
- Make sure students understand the task at hand and model the activity.

### Questions to Check Students' Comprehension of the Instructions

- *What is the purpose of the sheet?*
- *How do you know if the persons are boys or girls?*
- *What if what the person asks you is not listed on your card?*
- *Can a person's name be used twice?*
- *Why are there two different coloured cards?*

# Magic Circle

## Description

A quick, whole-class activity that requires **active listening**. Each student receives a card containing an answer and a question. Someone begins the activity by asking the question on their card. This can be the teacher. The person who has the answer on their card answers and then asks their question. Play continues until the activity comes full circle with the person who began the activity answering the last question.



## Materials

A card with an answer and a question on it for each student

These cards must be designed so that the answer to on card B answers the question on card A (see [activity](#)).

**NOTE:** For the activity to work, **all the cards must be distributed**. If there are more cards than students, give some students two.

## Structuring for Success

- Make sure students understand the task at hand and model the activity.
- Since everyone must pay attention for this activity to work, allow students to share their card with the person next to them. This will help keep students on their toes.

## Variations

- Don't write the complete question on the card, just keywords. Students have to formulate the question on their own.
- Instead of written answers, put small images. This is good for "favourites."
- Reverse the activity. Give the answer first and follow with the correct question.
- Personalize the activity by asking students first to give the answer on the card and then follow with their personal answer. Show them a picture of someone and tell them they will give this person's answer first, followed by their own (e.g. *She lives in Ottawa. I live in Rimouski.*).
- To make the previous version even more challenging, switch pictures (both male and female) **during** the activity. (For added difficulty, show pictures of a family, two boys, etc.) This version provides practice distinguishing and using pronouns and possessive adjectives.

## Suggestions

- Divide the class in two or three groups and have them do the activity simultaneously. It will go more quickly and students will have less of a chance to tune out once their turn has passed. If you have different sets of cards, they can be rotated among the groups.
- Build more **active listening** into this activity by asking students to recall what the others have said. After completing the "magic circle," use the "numbered-heads-together" structure, ask the questions on the cards and for fun, tally points.
- Try it as a "beat-the-clock" activity. Time how long it takes the class the first time. Collect and redistribute the cards and do it again. Can they beat the time? How quickly can students do it? The fast pace will keep everyone on their toes and foster collaboration.

## Match It!

### Description

In this activity, students each receive a card with pictures of several items on it. They go around the classroom trying to find someone else who has the exact same card they have. They may not show their cards to anyone. When students think they have found a match, they go to the teacher for validation. If the cards are, in fact, a perfect match, the teacher takes their cards and gives them each a new card. They try to find a match for the new cards. Play continues until all the cards have been distributed and matched. (Technically, it can continue *ad eternum* because the teacher can keep on redistributing the cards at will!)

### Materials

A set of 20 different cards with pictures of a series of items on each one  
Photocopy the set of 20 cards twice so that each one has an exact match. Laminate and cut apart. You will have 40 cards total.

### Structuring for Success

- Explain and practise asking “yes/no” questions and giving short answers (*Yes, I do./No, I don't.*), as well as *Is there/are there?* and *there is/there are*.
- If necessary, provide “cheat sheets” for the vocabulary.
- Make sure students understand the task at hand and model the activity.
- Make sure students understand that while not everyone will find a match at the beginning, they will as the activity unfolds because eventually all the cards will have been distributed.
- You could photocopy each set of 20 cards on a different colour. (However, this may make the activity too easy since students will only find a match with someone who has a different colour card.)

### Questions to Check Students’ Comprehension of the Instructions

- *Is it okay to show your card to another person?*
- *What do you do when you think you have found a match?*
- *What happens if you really cannot find a match?*

### Note

Two different sets of cards are included: one on [classroom objects](#) (Cycle Two) and one on [Canadian coins](#) (Cycle Three).



### Match-It Cards

Prepare 20 cards and photocopy, for a total of 40 cards.

Since classes do not have 40 students, not all the cards will be used first time around. This is okay because students who finish more quickly can keep on playing with a new card. It also eliminates the problem of trying to make sure all the cards distributed have a match. (At a glance, they are hard to distinguish!) As well, it doesn't matter if there is an odd number of students in the group.

## Roll and Talk (Discussion "Cubes")

### Description

Students roll a cube (die). They talk about the picture/subject rolled.

### Materials

A [discussion cube](#) for each group of 4 students

**NOTE:** Two templates of a blank cube are included (one colour, the other black and white) to make your own cubes.

You can also use foam blocks from the dollar store. Print your information on cardstock, cut out and stick onto the sides of the dice (with glue or Velcro).

Use regular dice. For each number write a subject/question on the board. Quick, but boring...

### Structuring for Success

- Make sure students understand the task at hand and model the activity.
- Use IRME and the response cards with this activity.
- Distribute and use cooperative roles to help the game run smoothly.
- Use "talking chips" to ensure equal participation.

### Questions to Check Students' Comprehension of the Instructions

- *What happens after one person rolls the cube?*
- *What happens if the same person rolls the same side of the cube again?*
- *What happens if someone else rolls the same side of the cube?*

### Variations

- Use an [eight-sided "cube"](#) instead. In addition to offering two more possibilities, the unusual shape is a novelty.
- Write two possibilities on each side of the cube. The first person to roll each side gets to choose; the second one must take the other one.
- Use with "question word" cards. The person who rolls the dice answers questions by his/her teammates.
- Write general subjects on the cube (e.g. animals, vegetables, boring activities....). Play like 20 questions. The person who rolls the cube chooses something under the category listed. The others ask "yes/no" questions to find out what it is. This variation is also suitable for weaker students and Cycle Two.
- Play a bit like "Lie Detector." The student who rolls the cube says 1–3 things about the subject rolled as related to him/her. The others each get to ask one question, then they must decide if what the person said is the truth or a lie.

## Find the Differences

### Description

In this speaking game, students work with a partner in groups of four. Partners sit next to each other, facing the other pair. They describe their drawings and ask each other questions to find the differences between their drawings. They must not look at each other's drawing. They jot down the differences they find. (For additional information, please see [Halloween Differences.](#))

### Materials

Two pictures that are almost identical but which, in fact, have several differences.

**NOTE:** Teachers sometimes try the activities found in newspapers, but I strongly advise against doing this. The problem is that in general, the differences are meant to be spotted by looking at both drawings and they are usually very difficult to describe. As well, they usually contain only 8–10 differences.

### Structuring for Success

- Review prepositions of location and vocabulary specific to the drawings. Make these available for students to consult if they need help.
- Model the activity with four students.
- Doing the activity in groups of four is structuring for success because students have a partner to rely on and they help each other. There tends to be more interaction and less time "wasted" by inactivity. If you have an uneven number of students, ask a strong student to work alone. He/she will be able to keep the activity going with the help of a partner and have the chance to shine.
- When most of the students seem "stuck," call time and ask students to exchange drawings. Automatically, they will remember and spot some new differences, giving new momentum to the activity.
- At the end, allow students to compare the two drawings and complete their lists.
- Make sure the differences between the two drawings are "describable." Try it yourself first.

### Questions to Check Students' Comprehension of the Instructions

- *How do you go about finding the differences when you cannot see the other drawing?*
- *What do you do when you find a difference?*

### Variation

Students work in pairs, instead of groups of four. You will need twice as many copies.



### Differences Sheets

Since students must not show their picture, do the following:

Use two different colours of construction paper. Choose seasonal colours, where applicable (e.g. orange and black for Halloween). You will need a full sheet for each drawing. Fold the sheets in half. On the inside, on the bottom half, glue one drawing. Take care to glue **all the same drawings on the same colour paper**. Students can easily consult their drawing (by raising the flap) without the others seeing it. This also greatly facilitates distribution. The drawings are very hard to distinguish at a glance!

As an alternative, photocopy each drawing at the bottom of different coloured paper or light-coloured cardstock and fold in half.

## Clowning Around (etc.)

### Description

Students try to identify the clown being described by eliminating all the others. If they think they know it, they raise their hand. (See the [activity](#) for more details and instructions.)

### Materials

A sheet for each student; markers to cover the squares of the clowns that are eliminated

**SUGGESTION:** Print 30 copies on cardstock and laminate or slip into plastic sleeves for protection.

### Structuring for Success

- Together examine the sheet and make a list of all the characteristics of the clowns.
- Make sure students can distinguish between “is” and “have” (e.g. *My clown is happy. He has a melon hat.*).
- Practise numbers and names along with the characteristics (e.g. *Which clown is Bingo? Who is number 7? Name a clown that has two balloons.*).
- This activity is structured for success because it is done first as a whole class. The first time around, students may be confused because they have to “eliminate” all the clowns to which the statements apply. Make sure they understand this.
- If students think they know which clown it is, ask them to raise their hand. They should wait for at least two more clues in order to confirm their choice. This will keep students from trying to make “wild guesses” at the answer instead of waiting until they are sure. Often, you will see students’ hands go up and down as the clues are revealed one by one.

### Questions to Check Students’ Comprehension of the Instructions

- *What do you do if I (the teacher) say that my clown has a melon hat?*
- *What do you do if you think you know which clown it is?*

### Variations

- Students play amongst themselves in small groups. One person chooses and describes the clown; the others try to figure out which one it is.
- Students ask questions to determine the chosen clown (instead of listening to descriptions).
- Students work with a partner in groups of four. Each pair chooses a mystery clown at the same time. They go back and forth, taking turns in order to determine each other’s clown. The first pair to do this is the winner.

### Note

This activity, based on the commercial game, *Guess Who*, is always a real hit. It can be used over and over again in several different ways. “Clowning Around” was used in the Grade 5 videos and it is part of an original LES, “The World of Clowns,” which is available on the SPEAQ website at: [http://www.speaq.qc.ca/teach\\_les.html#MELS\\_](http://www.speaq.qc.ca/teach_les.html#MELS_)

As well, two other activities like this are included. “[Ready to Work](#)” is about school objects and is for Cycle Two, Year One, while “[Invasion](#)” has drawings of aliens and is better suited to older, more advanced students.

## Describe and Draw

### Description

In this activity, students work in pairs. Student A receives a simple drawing, which he/she describes to Student B, who tries to replicate it. He/she can ask questions to get additional information, but must not be shown the original drawing. At the end, the two drawings are compared and students switch roles.

This activity is particularly good for practising prepositions of location and getting students to use the strategy, "asking for clarification." It is easily adaptable to different language levels and subjects.

### Materials

Simple drawings or pictures (two minimum). In general, line drawings work best.

**NOTE:** Instead of giving everyone the same drawings, prepare different ones and rotate them among the pairs.

### Structuring for Success

- Review prepositions of location and make them available for consultation during the activity.
- Present any new vocabulary.
- Make sure the drawing or picture is "describable." Try it yourself to make sure!
- Remind students that emphasis is not on the quality of the drawing. They don't have to be artists to succeed!
- Students could "double up;" that is, two describe and two work on the same drawing. In addition to fostering cooperation, this provides support (good for weaker students).
- Make sure students understand the task at hand and model the activity.

### Questions to Check Students' Comprehension of the Instructions

- *What if you don't understand what the person says?*
- *Can you ask to see the picture?*
- *What do you do when the drawing is finished?*

### Variations

- Do this activity in small groups instead of pairs. One student describes the activity to the others, who try to replicate it. Students may ask each other questions, but must not show their drawing to the others. At the end, students reveal their work and compare their drawings. The student who has the one closest to the original is the winner and becomes the "describer" next time around. This variation provides more **active listening** since students gain information not only from the "describer," but also from the others. There may be more interaction. And since students have each other, weaker students may find it less difficult.
- Part of the drawing could be already done for the students; they complete it. This could make the task easier, depending on the topic.
- A finished drawing is not provided. Students each receive only the start of a drawing (for example, a "head," "table" or other object). They take turns specifying something to add to it. As well, you could give each student a different list of prepositions and objects that must be incorporated in the drawing.

## Mystery Animal

### Description

In groups of four, one student chooses an animal on the [animal cards sheets](#). The others take turns rolling a die and asking “yes/no” questions in order to discover the mystery animal.

The numbers on the die correspond to the following:

1 and 4 = question with “does (it) have”

2 and 5 = question with “is ”

3 and 6 = question with “can”

If a person gets a “yes” answer to his/her question, he/she rolls again. If not, it’s the next person’s turn. Three “yes” answers in a row give the person a chance to guess the animal. The person who guess the mystery animal gets to choose the next mystery animal.

To promote active listening, do not allow students to repeat a question already asked about the animal.

### Materials

One copy of the animals cards sheets and a die for each group

**NOTE:** Photocopy the animal cards sheets on cardstock and laminate or slip into a plastic sleeves.

### Structuring for Success

- Explain and practise asking questions and giving short answers (*Yes, I do./No, I don't.*)
- Review characteristic of animals (colour, size, capabilities...)
- Practise and make a list of questions using *to have, to be* and *can*.
- Make sure students understand the task at hand and model the activity.
- Use only one sheet of cards (instead of two). This will make the activity easier.

### Questions to Check Students’ Comprehension of the Instructions

- *What if a person answers “yes” to your question?*
- *What if a person answers “no” to your question?*
- *Can you repeat a question?*
- *When can you make a guess?*
- *What happens when someone guesses the animal?*

### Variations

- Play the same game using different cards.
- Cut the cards apart and use in games.

## Animal Riddles

### Description

Students work together in groups of four to make up simple riddles about specific animals. They must all agree before writing anything down. The riddles are pooled and used to solve a mystery word puzzle. This activity is suggested for Grade 4.

### Materials

Animal cards (one set per class), riddle sheets (two sheets per group of 4 students) and mystery word answer sheet (one per group)

**NOTE:** All necessary materials and **complete instructions** are included in the document: [animal riddles](#).

### Structuring for Success

- Make sure students understand the task at hand and model the activity.
- Provide examples of riddles using various verbs (e.g. *jump, swim, fly*) and vocabulary specific to describing animals (e.g. words and expressions related to size, colour, and body parts: *trunk, feathers, wings...*)

### Questions to Check Students' Comprehension of the Instructions

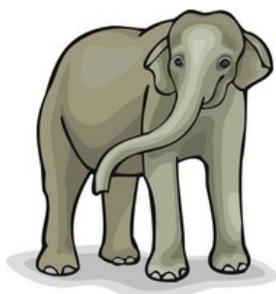
- *What do you do with the animal cards?*
- *Who writes the clues on the riddles sheet?*
- *Do you write the name of the animal on the riddle sheet?*

### Variation

Here is a non-co-operative way of using the mystery word puzzle for oral practice. The animal cards are cut apart and placed in an envelope. Students take turns picking one. The class asks "yes/no" questions to find out the name of the animal picked. The mystery word is completely individually or in pairs as way of consolidating the vocabulary and information.

#### Hint:

Write the name and the number of the animals guessed on the board.



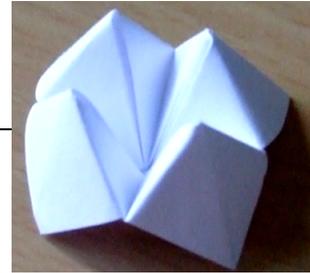
# Fortune Teller

## Description

This popular children's game provides practice with colours, numbers, spelling (letters of the alphabet) and actions. It is particularly good for kinaesthetic learners because students will be up and moving. It is designed for Cycle Two.

Once the fortune tellers have been made, students find a partner and take turns trying out their fortune tellers. Then they find a new partner and repeat the process. This can be done several times! End the activity by asking for a couple of volunteers to do it in front of the class.

This activity is a student-directed activity that doesn't require the intervention of the teacher once the fortune tellers have been made and folded, making it ideal for assessment.



## Materials

A [sheet](#) for each student, coloured pencils or markers

**NOTE:** A plain white sheet of paper may be used, but the prepared sheet indicates where students need to write their choices. As well, it simplifies the folding process.

## Structuring for Success

- Since the fortune teller is made using a square, the "unused" portion of the sheet can be used for examples of actions, instructions, etc.
- The lines on the template help delimit where students write. This makes it easier for them. As well, draw an example on the board and show students what to do in each section.
- Once the fortune tellers have been made, model how the activity works, using a fortune teller borrowed from a student. Then, ask two volunteers to try theirs in front of the class.

## Questions to Check Students' Comprehension of the Instructions

- *What are the circles used for?*
- *Where do you write the numbers? The category words? The actions?*
- *Can the action be just one word?*
- *What if someone does not wish to (or can't) do the action?*

## Variation

Use questions, instead of actions. See [example](#).

## Note

Make sure students understand what constitutes an acceptable action (e.g. Actions must be "doable" and respectful. They must be longer than one word: *Sing "Happy Birthday,"* not just *"Sing"*).

Allow students the chance to "opt out" of doing an action: *I'm sorry. I cannot do that. Give me another choice, please.*

Fortune tellers are also known as "cootie catchers." They have been popular on playgrounds in North America for about 50 years.

To learn how to fold one, see:

<http://www.momsmivan.com/article-cootie-catcher.html>  
or ask your students!

And here is a video that explains how to make one. You could show it to the students without the sound and together supply the actions. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKNzjoZlwQM>

# Additional Activities

## A. Mingling Activities

### 1. Something in Common

Students begin by filling in their answers to a [questionnaire](#), which may be on any topic. They do this individually. Then they go around the room asking questions in the attempt to find someone who shares each of their answers. When they find someone who has the same answer to a question, they write that person's name in the space provided. They must find a different person for each item and they must not show their sheet.

This activity is particularly good to use at the beginning of the year because it allows students to get to know each other better.

#### Suggestion

To make the activity easier, limit the structures and/or subjects exploited (e.g. "favourites" or preferences).

### 2. Something in Common, Take Two

Students go around the room and try to find one thing they have in common with each of the other students in the class. They must find something **different** for each student. When they find something, they write the person's name and the object in common.

After the activity, students share and compare their "commonalities" in their small groups.

This activity is similar to "Something in Common," but more difficult because it is less directed. (Students must find the things they have in common on their own.)

#### Suggestion

To encourage more conversation, ask students to go beyond generalities and to be as specific as possible. For example:

- *Do you have a pet?*
- *Good! So do I!*
- *Is your pet a dog?*
- *Yes!*
- *Is it a female?*
- *Yes!*
- *Is your dog black?*
- *No, she's brown.*

In common: both have female dogs.

Give various examples to make sure students understand.

#### Suggestion

Give students suggestion of things in common they may look for if they run out of ideas on their own.

#### Hint

Most students know their **class number** (alphabetical order). Ask students to write the names of the persons they find something in common with next to the person's class number. This will make the activity easier to manage because the names will all be in the same order.

### 3. Line Up!

Another activity to get students up out of their seats! It is quick and requires no material. First ask students to think of their favourite fruit (food, sport, ...) or ask another question about preferences (e.g. *What country would you most like to visit?*). Then they line up in alphabetical order according to their answer. Once everyone is in line, each person shares his/her answer. The others use thumbs up; thumbs down, thumbs to the side to show how they feel about each person's choice. A short discussion may follow.

#### Variations

- Students can be asked a "when" question and line up in chronological order (e.g. *When is your birthday? When is your mother's birthday?*).
- As an alternative, give students a card with a date on it and ask a question like: *When was the last time you (or someone else) ...?* Handing out a card with a date eliminates the "I-don't-remember" syndrome. As well, you can make it even more challenging by including cards with expressions like: *last night, two months ago, sometime in June, the day after your birthday, a week after Halloween, etc.*
- For practice with numbers, give students a card with numbers written out in letters.

### 4. On My Back!

Write the name of something on cards (or papers) and stick one on each student's back (using masking tape, not staples!). Students go around the classroom asking questions to try and find out what is on their back.

This activity is often done with the names of famous people; however, I strongly advise against this at the elementary level. The problem is that students rarely know enough about the people, so the activity flops. The names of animals, classroom objects, superheroes and Halloween dress-ups (witch, pirate, vampire...) usually work well. Questions can be open ended or limited to "yes/no" questions.

#### Suggestions

- Prepare pieces of masking tape in advance (stick them to the edge of your desk) and ask students to line up with their backs to you. This facilitates putting a card on everyone's back.
- Some teachers also make cards with yarn/string lanyards that students can slip over their head. You can make a set of these using clear plastic nametags and then simply insert the papers for the activity. The effort put into making these may be worth it if you do this activity often or if you have several groups.
- Have extra cards for those who finish very quickly.

#### Hint

Make mirrors and other objects that reflect off limit!

### 5. At the Flea Market

Students receive a sheet containing 20 names/pictures of items for the flea market. They begin by circling any seven (7) of these items. Then they cross out seven (7) others. The remaining items are left as is. The items circled represent items they wish to buy at the flea market and those crossed out, the items they wish to sell. After that, students go around the room trying to buy the items they want and get rid of those they do not wish to keep. When they sell something, they write the person's name next to the item. They do the same for the items they buy. The activity ends when someone has

bought and sold all their items. (Or it can continue until several or almost all students have done this.) A person's name may appear only once on the sheet, either as a buyer or seller.

As an alternative, allow students to write someone's name twice, once as a buyer and once as a seller. This will make the game easier and quicker.

#### Variation

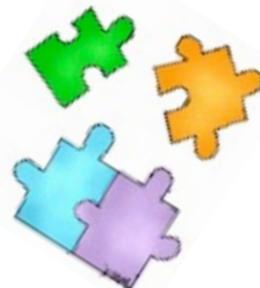
Make sheets on personal items to borrow and lend.

## **B. Small Group Activities (or Pair Work)**

### **6. Cooperative Acrostics/Crosswords**

Students work in pairs or in groups of four to solve a puzzle. Each person has only part of the clues and there is only one copy of the grid so they must speak and work together. Activities of this type are a good way for students to practise and consolidate new vocabulary.

Two examples of cooperative puzzles are included: [School Objects](#) and [At the Pet Shop](#). They are for Cycle Two. For crossword puzzles, students work in pairs, with one student receiving the horizontal clues and the other the vertical ones.



### **7. Brainstorming**

Brainstorming can be done in pairs, small groups or as a class. The idea is to come up with as many ideas as possible on a specific topic within a very short period of time. Brainstorming is a great way for students to activate prior knowledge and co-build vocabulary. It can be a great way to introduce or begin a new LES. For more advanced students, it is also a good way to introduce a debate.

One example of a brain-storming activity suitable to elementary ESL students is to have students brainstorm for vocabulary by categories. Students first take about two minutes to jot down, say, all the animals (deserts, green vegetables, team sports, things that begin with the letter "J"... ) they can think of. They share, compare and discuss their answers in their group. After that, the answers are shared as a class.

#### Suggestion

To add a little friendly competition, students take turns reading their group's answers. Groups who have the same answer, raise their hands. Five (5) points are scored for answers that only one group has found, three (3) points for answers only two groups have found and one (1) point for answers found only by three groups. At the end, the group with the most points is the winner. To be most effective, keep the time short and the pace quick. Students will have to use **active listening** and stay on the ball.

### **8. Four Corners**

Each student writes his/her name in the space in the centre of the sheet and provides the information asked for in the four corners. Then in pairs or small groups, they exchange and talk about the information. Two examples are included. The first one, on [like and don't like](#), is easier. It is a good activity to practise using various ways to express likes and dislikes (e. g. *I enjoy, I really like, I don't care for, I hate...* ). The other one is on [wishes](#).

## 9. Compare and Contrast

Students work with a partner and use a [Venn diagram](#) to compare and contrast. They talk about themselves and their interests.

Once students have finished, ask students to join up with another pair and compare answers. Then, they could be asked to look for things **all four** people have in common. This is especially good at the beginning of the year or when base groups change because it helps foster team unity.

### Structuring for Success

- Review functional language, especially verbs (*e.g. can, have, like*) and expressions that will be used when presenting their answers to another pair (*e.g. I like \_\_ and so does \_\_; neither of us...; both of us...*) as well as the comparison of adjectives.
- Together make a list of categories to compare: families, pets, hobbies and interests, qualities, pet peeves, fears, goals, wants... Ask students to take 2–3 minutes to list things about themselves for each category. This will make the speaking activity go more smoothly.
- Also provide ideas of things students might not think of: shoe size, telephone numbers, hand size...

### Variations

- Instead of using a Venn diagram, ask students to find a set number (5 or more) of the most unusual things they have in common. This encourages them to think outside the box. Share together.
- Place students in groups of three. They use the [3-2-1 diagram](#) to compare and contrast.
- Ask students to work on other subjects (not themselves). For example, they might be asked to compare and contrast clothing (what they are wearing today), a rocking horse and a real horse, a cat and a dog, etc. The list is endless.

## 10. Picture This!

A picture is cut into 16 squares and students work together in groups of four to assemble it.

### Preparation

Photocopy a picture on cardstock and divide it into 16 equal squares to make a puzzle. On each square, write a number from 1–4 (four squares with #1, four squares with #2, etc.). Do this randomly. Laminate for durability and cut apart.

Students number off from one to four. The 16 puzzle pieces are mixed up and placed face up on the table. Students work together to reconstruct the illustration. Careful! They may only touch the squares with their number.

This activity develops critical thinking and practises prepositions of location and structures (*e.g. I think that piece goes in the centre. Could you put your piece...?*).

### Variations

- Instead of using a single large illustration, use individual picture cards like those in this handbook. Students put them in order according to a given criterion (i.e. size, alphabetical order...) This version practises vocabulary, but it is less interesting and dynamic.
- The illustration could contain a riddle, a problem to solve, a clue (or the answer) to a question brought up beforehand. This adds an additional element of interest and creates an authentic reason for assembling the puzzle (significance and pertinence).

## 11. Board Games

Board games can provide an excellent opportunity for students to interact in an informal setting. They can be used to practise using new vocabulary and consolidate learning. They are also a great way to finish up a unit or LES by allowing students to reinvest what they have learned



Once again, it is important that the board game focus on language structures and expressions, not just on vocabulary. At first, this means limited structures and simple exchanges. Then, as students become more proficient in English in Cycle Three, they can enjoy games that involve short discussions.

To be a success, a board game must present a challenge, yet be accessible. Students must have seen the functional language required to play the game and have access to language resources, as needed.

### Talking Cards Board Game

This board game was designed to be semi-generic; that is, change the cards (and perhaps the rules) and voilà, you have a new game. You will need one copy of the [board](#) and one set of cards, as well as a die and markers, for each group of four students.



### When Using Dice...

Give each team a plastic or cardboard lid or container to roll the dice in. This is less noisy than rolling the dice on the desks or tables. And it keeps them off the floor!

The cards included here are on hypothetical situations. They are fun because they allow students to use their imaginations and break away from routines. As well, the conditional tense is easy for students to use because it is formed with “would + the verb.” There is no conjugating to remember.

### Suggestions

- For bigger games, print out the board on two sheets and glue them inside a legal-size folder. Glue a copy of the rules on the outside of the folder. Laminate and score for easy folding.
  - Type and print cards for your board games using Word’s labels for business cards. They are easy to modify and replace.
- Print two copies of the [blank board](#) (one for the draft copy and one for the final version) and ask students to make their own game in groups of four. They can play each others’ games.

## 12. Spot the Lies (Lie Detector)

Students do this activity in groups of four or five. Each person writes three statements about themselves – two that are not true and one that is. They take turns reading/showing their statements to the others, who ask them questions in order to try to find the true statement. Although this activity seems difficult, it will be easier if you specify the topic and/or time frame (*e.g. Last summer... For my birthday... A bad experience*).

The best examples can be shared with the class afterwards.

### Variation

Instead of doing this activity in small groups, you can use the structure “inside/outside circles” (p. 25). Allow only two minutes before students switch partners. The first time, those in the inside circle read their sentences and those on the outside try to guess which statement is true. The second time, the roles are reversed. Several rotations can be done.

### 13. Going Grocery Shopping

Students each receive a different shopping list and several picture cards (which represent items they are selling). They go around the classroom trying to buy all the items on their list and sell those they have on their cards. When students obtain an item from someone, they cross it off their grocery list and take the card from them. They turn the card in. (Students can also be asked to write the person's name next to the food.) The winner is the first person who both buys and sells all his/her items, but play can continue until most people have done so.

Grocery lists and a set of 60 food cards are included. To "satisfy" all the items on all the lists, you will need four sets of these cards. You can adjust numbers according to the number of students in your group.

#### Suggestion

Provide two or three containers where students deposit the cards of food items they have sold.



### 14. Toss a Question

This activity is played in small groups. One student asks a question and tosses a crumpled paper ball to someone in the group, who tries to answer it. Then, in turn this person asks a question, and so on. No repetition of questions is permitted. When the teacher calls time, students recapitulate what they remember. This activity fosters paying attention and **active listening** and is especially good for kinaesthetic learners.

To make the activity easier, limit the structure of the questions (*e.g. What's your favourite ...? What colour is ...? What number/letter comes before/after/between...?*) or use statements (*e.g. Name something blue. Spell "tiger"*).

To keep the pace quick, give each group a pile of tokens. Each time a question is answered correctly, the group "spends" a token. *Which team (group) has spent the most? Or, race against the clock. How many tosses can each group complete successfully in three minutes?*

#### Variations

- After a couple of minutes of play, one or two members of each group change groups and the activity resumes. This allows students to try their questions on other students. Several rotations can be done.
- The activity can be more teacher-centred: Instead of letting students ask their own questions, the teacher calls out the question word students must use.
- Instead of making up their own questions, students choose them from a list of questions the class came up with beforehand.
- Students score points for each question they answer correctly.

**NOTE:** Make sure students understand that they must be willing to answer the questions they ask. And that nothing disparaging will be tolerated.

## Whole-class Games and Activities

Sometimes activities and games will be done as a class, instead of in pairs or small groups. In order to keep everyone involved, it is a good idea to include some type of **active listening** .

Put simply, **active listening** requires students to listen to what is said, especially by other students, and then use the information they hear to carry out a task or activity. It helps keep students focused and on their toes.

Whole-class activities are also a great way to introduce students to a **variety of idiomatic expressions, interjections and fun phrases** you can “slip into” the activity as you present and moderate it. This makes the activity more interesting and exposes students to functional language in a natural setting. Include things like: *Wow! I can't believe it! You got to be kidding! I wonder...* You'll soon find students repeating and using these expressions. Catch them doing something good...



### During In Whole-class Games and Activities...

- Keep the pace quick.
- Use random participation.
- Try to beat a pre-set time limit or race against the clock.
- Teams and friendly competition also keep students on their toes. Relay activities are good for this.

**Remember, when the teacher is talking, the students are not...**

## 15. Tic-Tac-Toe

An informal way to liven up question/answer periods. The class is divided into two groups (the Xs and the Os). The teacher asks a question and chooses “an X” to answer. If the answer is correct, that person chooses a square on the tic-tac-toe board. Then it is the Os turn, and so on. A team that scores a tic-tac-toe earns a point.

The question can be on any topic. It is a simple way to check students' comprehension of a text they have read or listened to.

### Suggestions

- Make a large tic-tac-board and laminate. Use Vercro or magnetic strips to attach the Xs and Os. Keep it posted in the classroom for an impromptu game.
- Use special shapes instead of Xs and Os (e.g. ghosts and pumpkins for Halloween).

### Variation

Use a board that is 4X4 (students must get four in a row) or 5X5 (students must get five in a row). The game will last longer and be more challenging. Squares can be numbered to facilitate students' choices or choices can be indicated by rows (vertical) and lines (horizontal) (e.g. *row four, line three*).

### **FYI**

Tic-Tac-toe is known as “Noughts and Crosses” in the UK, Australia and New Zealand. In all, there are 255,168 games possible!

## Mystery Bag

An object is placed in a gift bag and in teams\*, students ask “yes/no” questions in order to try and guess what it is. If a team gets an affirmative answer to their question, they may continue with another question. If the answer is negative, it is the next team’s turn to ask a question.



If a team gets **four** affirmative answers in a row, they earn a chance to try and guess what is in the bag. If the guess is incorrect, it is the next team’s turn to ask a question. **The team that guesses what is in the bag, scores 10 points.** The game resumes with a new object in the bag.

\*Three (3) seems to be the ideal number of teams to keep the pace going and the students engaged.

### Hint

Build **active listening** into the game: if a team repeats a question that has already been asked (by either their team or another team), they lose a point.

### Suggestion

Prepare and number several bags of different sizes. The first team to play gets to choose the next bag. One person from the team may assume the role of leader in the front (instead of the teacher).

### Variations

- For even more interaction, this activity can also be played in small groups. Students can bring in their own objects. (You might want to check them first...)
- Pictures can be used instead of actual objects and placed in envelopes.
- To practise numbers, you could also include the price of the object. Either before or after guessing what the object is, students ask “yes/no” questions in order to determine how much it costs. (e.g. *Is it more/less (over/under) than...? Is it between ... and ...?*). The team that guesses the price scores five (5) points.
- Begin by saying something like: *Hmm, this mystery object is not very expensive. In fact, it costs under a dollar. What a bargain!* (Once again, it’s great way to introduce students to additional functional language...)

## 16. Yes/No – True/False

A lot like “Mystery Bag” without the bags... The class is divided into two or three teams. The teacher (or a student) picks a card with the name of an object or person on it. Teams take turns asking “yes/no questions” in order to try and guess what/who it is. If a team gets an affirmative answer to their question, they may continue with another question. If the answer is negative, it is the next team’s turn to ask a question. Each new object begins with 20 points and each time a question is answered in the affirmative, a point is dropped. Students must ask a question and get an affirmative answer to have a chance at guessing what the object/person is.

This game is good for reinforcing and consolidating learning and practising vocabulary. It requires very little advanced preparation and no special materials other than a set of cards each of which contain the name of an object or person.

## Hot Seat

Students are divided into three teams and there is a “hot seat” (chair) at the front of the class for each team. One student from each team sits in the hot seat. The teacher asks a question. If those in the hot seats think they know the answer, they raise their hand. The first person to do this gets a chance at the answer.

- If the answer is correct, **two (2) points** are scored for the team. No points are lost for an incorrect answer.
- If the answer is incorrect, the second team to ring in gets a chance to answer. This time a correct answer earns **three (3) points**, but the team **loses two (2) points** if the answer is incorrect.
- Finally, if the answer is incorrect, the third team gets a shot at the answer and wins **one (1) point** for a correct answer. They do not lose points for an incorrect answer.

It may seem strange to award more points to a second-chance winner, but it encourages **active listening** and monitoring.

To be successful, keep the pace quick and change participants in the hot seat after each question.

### Suggestion

If possible, provide a buzzer or bell for students to use to ring in with.

### Variation

Instead of asking questions, give the answer. Students must provide the questions.

## 17. The Price is Right!

Cut out several items from flyers or catalogs (e.g. bicycle, helmet, guitar), along with a brief description and glue them on index cards. Write the price on the back of the cards.

Students are informally divided into three teams. Show them the first item “up for bid.”

The teams take turns trying to guess the price by asking “yes/no” questions (*e.g. Is it over \$20? Is it under\_\_\_. Is it between X and X?*). If a team gets an affirmative answer to their question, they may continue with another question. If the answer is negative, it is the next team’s turn to ask a question. They must get two consecutive affirmative answers to guess the price.

Help student follow the prices by marking affirmative guesses on the board with arrows up or down (e.g. \$13.45 ↑)

## 18. Jeopardy Game

This game is based on the popular TV game show of the same name. In teams, students ask questions from selected categories to win "money." The winner is the team who ends up with the most money.

### Required Material

Multimedia projector, computer with PowerPoint installed, the game and three horns (bells, buzzers or other) for students to "ring in" with.

### Instructions

Students are divided into three teams. One person from each team takes a place in the "hot seats" in front of the class. One team begins by selecting a category and an amount of money (see template). The answer is revealed. The first person to ring in gets a chance to ask the corresponding question. If he/she is correct, the amount is added to the team's account. If the answer is incorrect, the amount is subtracted and the two remaining students have a chance to ask the question. If the second person is also incorrect, the third person can choose to try to ask the question or he/she can pass. As before, a correct question adds money to their account; an incorrect one subtracts it. Change players and repeat. The last team with a correct answer chooses the next category and amount.

### Other Notes About the Game

- Jeopardy is a great way to review asking questions.
- The higher the price on the board, the harder the question should be.
- A game can be designed on any topic. A few suggestions are: Canada, animals, around town, clothing for all occasions, general knowledge, questions about texts read in class...
- As well, the level of difficulty can be matched to your students' level (e.g. Question words can be replaced by Yes/No questions. Subject: Capabilities; Category: Domestic Animals - It can bark. - Is it a dog? - Yes).

### Variation

Students can make their own version of the game in pairs or small groups. This is particularly interesting for students in intensive English.



- A sampling of "Jeopardy" games prepared by students: <http://www.centennial.k12.mn.us/gle/Jeopardy/Games.htm>
- Template (bottom left): <http://www.elainefitzgerald.com/jeopardy.htm>
- Great site for "Jeopardy" and other templates: <http://www.pppst.com/templates.html>
- As an alternative to PowerPoint, this site allows you to create your "Jeopardy" game online: <http://jeopardylabs.com/build/>

## Activities Geared More to Stronger Groups or Intensive English

### 19. Tell Me a Story

In their small groups, students use [picture cards](#) to invent a story. They all collaborate and create the story together, incorporating as many of the images as possible.

**NOTE:** As an alternative, cut out several pictures from magazines and put them in envelopes. Each set can be different. That way, they can be rotated among the groups for new stories.

#### Variations

- Give each group some old magazines and ask them to find and cut out pictures for the story. They put them in an envelope and pass it to another group, who invents the story.
- Instead of working together to invent their story, this activity can be played a bit like “Go Fish.” Students each begin with four or five cards and the others are spread out face down in the centre. Each time a student adds a card to the story, he/she picks another one from the pile. Students do not take turns, but speak spontaneously.

### 20. Figure It Out!

Students work in groups of four. A picture or drawing is cut into squares (9–12 squares work well) and the pieces are distributed among the students. (It doesn’t matter if they have an equal number.) Together they try to construct the picture **without seeing** the other players’ pieces.

To make this activity easier, provide a **blank grid** that is the exact same size as the puzzle. Number the squares. When students agree on the position of a piece, it is placed on the grid in the corresponding square. If necessary, adjustments can be made as the pieces are revealed one by one.

Be sure to model this activity (It sounds more complicated than it is!) and present examples of functional language to use. These may include things like: *I think I have the piece that goes in square 12 (the bottom right square...) because... Do you all agree? I have part of a dog. Who has the other part? Our pieces go together. Oops! I think we need to change number 6.*

#### Variation

Once everyone agrees on the position of the piece, it is placed **face down** on the grid and may not be moved again. When all the pieces are in place, they are flipped over to see if the picture has been assembled correctly. This version is more difficult because students don’t have the chance to make changes. Their description of the individual pieces must be very detailed.

Both versions can be a good way to introduce an LES or a story. Once the picture has been constructed correctly, students can predict what the LES or story will be about.

## 21. Structured Role Play

Most students at the elementary level will not have the functional language necessary to role-play spontaneously, even in Cycle Three. However, if the activity is carefully set up and structured, they will be able to carry out “unrehearsed conversations” on a variety of topics.

Here is one way of going about structuring a role play:

1. Choose a general subject based on a **social skill** (example: apologizing)
2. With the class, make a list of situations where this skill could be used and the two people who are involved (e.g. mother and son; siblings)
3. Together build (or give students) a **bank of functional language**: *You’re grounded! I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to... You should know better! Go to your room!*
4. Make a series of **situation cards**. The subject will stay the same, but the situation and people will vary. Distribute one card to each pair of students. They complete it together (Or, for more directed practice, give them cards which have already been filled in by you.)



SUBJECT:	<b>Apologizing</b>
SITUATION:	<i>You broke something</i>
CONVERSATION BETWEEN:	<i>Mother and son</i>
OPENING LINE:	<i>“Mom there’s a problem...”</i>
SPECIFIC PROBLEM:	
HOW IT HAPPENED:	
CONSEQUENCE:	
CONCLUSION:	

5. Students use the card to guide their role play. Then they exchange cards and begin again.

The key is in the **bank of functional language**. And of course, practice!

As students manipulate the functional language, they will internalize those elements that are most useful to them and be able to transfer them to other situations.

### Other topics of interest:

- trying to convince
- asking for help
- getting out of a sticky situation
- getting caught telling a white lie
- wants vs. needs

**NOTE:** In the video clips with Olga Chashka, students are doing structured role plays. These are regular Cycle Three students (Grade 6) of mixed abilities. You can see that students have access to a list of functional language. Weaker students rely on them more often.

## The Video Clips

Accompanying this handbook are five very short video clips showing ESL elementary students in action, um... interaction! In order to contextualize what is going on and to draw your attention to certain elements from the program, the clips also contain comments by the teacher.

As a bonus, there is also a clip from Grade 2 (Cycle One, Year Two). It shows how in Cycle One, interaction takes place as a class with the teacher (paving the way to interaction among students in Cycles Two and Three). **You will notice that everything is done in English only.**

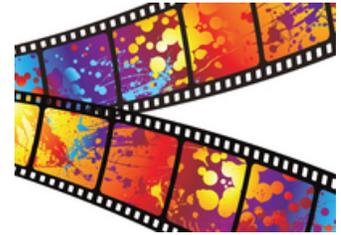
It is stimulating to see what students are able to accomplish with only two classes per nine-day cycle! Imagine what they are able to accomplish in intensive English!

A very special thank you to:

**Anne Paradis** and her Grade 5 students at l'école des Hauts-Clochers (CS des Découvreurs)

and

**Olga Chashka** and her Grade 6 and Grade 2 students at l'école Marguerite d'Youville (CS des Découvreurs).







Let's Begin Talking!	++	+	--	---
Contents of the Handbook				
Activities and other tools				
Quality and presentation				
Usefulness (Possibility of transfer into my teaching)				

General Comments:

What I like best:	Suggestions:
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Please send this completed sheet to:

Judith Rohlf

[judith.rohlf@videotron.ca](mailto:judith.rohlf@videotron.ca)

Thanks!

