

GAMES AND ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHERS

Abstract Picture

Draw a big rectangle on the board. Draw in the rectangle a variety of squiggles (lines), doodles, shapes (and colors if you have them). Ask the class what they think the picture represents. Assure the students that there is no right or wrong answer and encourage them to use their imaginations.

Adjectives and nouns

Students suggest adjective-noun phrases, for example, 'a black cat', 'an expert doctor'. Contribute some yourself. As the phrases are suggested, write the adjectives in a column down the left-hand side of the board, and the nouns on the right-hand side. Then they volunteer ideas for different combinations, for example 'a black doctor' or 'an expert cat'. See how many the class can make it. If someone suggests a strange combination, he/she has to justify it.

Ambiguous Picture

Draw a small part of a picture. Ask the students what it's going to be. Encourage different opinions. Don't confirm or reject their ideas. Add a little more to the drawing and ask the question again. Build the picture up in about four stages.

Associations

Start by suggesting an evocative word: 'storm', for example. A student says what the word suggests to him or her. It might be 'dark'. The next student suggests an associ-

ation with the word 'dark', and so round on the class. Here are the other words you may start with: sea, fire, tired, holiday, morning, English, home, angry. Or use an item of vocabulary the class has recently learnt.

Blackboard Bingo

Write on the board 10 to 15 words which you'd like to review. Tell the students to choose any five of them and write them down. Read out the words, one by one and in any order. If the students have written down one of the words, you call out they cross it off. When they crossed off all their five words, they tell you, by shouting 'Bingo'. Keep a record of what you say in order to be able to check that the students really have heard all their words.

Brainstorm round a word

Take a word the class has recently learnt, and ask the students to suggest all the words they associate with it. Write each suggestion on the board with a line joining it to the original word, in a circle, so that you can get a 'sunray' effect. If the original was 'clothes' for example, you might get: dress, scarf, skirt, coat, shirt, hat, socks, jeans

Chain story

Begin telling a story. This can be the first few lines of a story from your course book, or improvised or you can invite a student to start. Then, going round the class, each student has to add another brief 'installment' to the story.

Changing sentences

Choose a simple sentence pattern, which can be based on a grammatical structure you've recently learnt. For example, if you have been studying indirect objects take a sentence like: 'She wrote a letter to her sister.' Then the students invent variations, either by changing one element at a time: 'She wrote a letter to her husband'

Comparing things

Present the class with two different (preferably concrete) nouns, such as: an elephant and a pencil; the Prime Minister and a flower; a car and a person (preferably using vocabulary the class has recently learnt). Students suggest ways of comparing them. Usually it is best to define in what way you want them to compare, for example, by using comparatives; 'A pencil is thinner than an elephant'. Or by finding differences; 'The Prime Minister is noisy and a flower is silent. Or similarities; 'Both a car and a person need fuel to keep them going'

Correcting mistakes

Write up a few sentences on the board that have deliberate mistakes in them. If you wish, tell the students in advance how many mistakes there are in each sentence. Here are some sample sentences; 'Yesterday I'm very ill', 'The flowers was in the garden', 'They will come, isn't it?'

Cutting down texts

Take a short text of up to about 30 words (it can be from your course book), and write it up on the board. Students suggest any section of one, two or three words that can be cut out, while still leaving a grammatically acceptable - though possibly ridiculous - text. Sections are eliminated for as long as it is possible to do so. For example: 'The princess was awakened by the kiss of a handsome prince'. 'The princess was awakened by the kiss of a prince'. 'The princess was awakened by a prince'. 'The princess was awakened'. 'The princess'. 'Princess'

Detectives

One volunteer is the detective and goes outside. You give a coin to one of the students in the class to hide on their person - he or she is the thief. The detective returns and accuses any member of the class: 'Did you take the money?' The accused, whether guilty or innocent, answers, 'No, I didn't take the money, X (names one of the others) took it'. The detective then accuses X, using the same formula as before, and so on, until one or fifteen people have been accused (it is up to the students to make sure that the real thief is named). The detective watches the accused people and has to try to detect by their behavior, which one is lying. Give him or her three guesses.

Diaries

Ask the students to keep a diary, and allow five minutes once or twice a week for this to be done. The diary can be about the students' experience of the lessons and what they feel they have achieved, or it can be about other matters of concern to them. The diary doesn't need to follow the convention of a day-by-day record. It can be kept private, or shared with another student or shared with you.

Dictate numbers

Dictate a random list of numbers in English. Both you and the students write down the corresponding figures as you say them. Then check, by writing the answers on the board, or asking them to reformulate their figures into words.

Discussing lessons

Five minutes before the end of a lesson ask the students how the lesson was divided and what basic activities were done. Write these on the board. Indicating one of the activities, ask what the students feel they got from it. You might ask if they felt it could have been improved as an activity. Ask if the learning point needs more work in future lessons. When a point has been made by one student, check with the class as a whole to find if the view is shared. You might conclude by summarizing what you were trying to achieve and what you feel you've learned from their feedback.



Don't say yes or no

One volunteer student stands in front of the class. The rest fire questions at him or her, with the aim of eliciting the answer 'yes' or 'no'. The volunteer has to try to answer the questions truthfully without these words. This will mostly be through the use of 'tag' answers such as 'I did' or 'She doesn't'. If the volunteer says the forbidden words, he or she is 'out' and another is chosen. Give a time limit of one minute; if within that time the volunteer hasn't said 'yes' or 'no', he or she has won.

Draw a word

Whisper to one student, or write down on a slip of paper, a word or phrase that the class has recently learnt. The student draws a representation of it on the board; this can be a drawing, a symbol, or a hint clarified through mime. The rest of the class has to guess the item.

English words in our language

In pairs or small groups the students think of as many words as they can in two minutes that they know were originally English but are commonly used in their own language. Write up all the words on the board. Alternatively, do the activity as a competition and see which group has the most words.

Erasing words

Write on the board about ten words, which are difficult to spell, and give the class a minute to 'photograph' them. Point to one word, then erase it; the students write it down from memory. And so on, until all the words have been erased. Check the spellings.

Evidence

Two students stand with their backs to the board: they are the 'detectives'. You write up a brief situation. The rest of the class are 'witnesses' and suggest, orally, concrete evidence (sounds, sights, smells, etc.) for the

existence of the situation, without mentioning the situation itself; the 'detectives' have to deduce it from the evidence. For example if the situation is 'The school must be on fire', the 'witnesses' might say: 'I can smell smoke, It's getting hotter in here, I can hear the alarm bell, People are jumping out of the window'.

Expanding headlines

From an English-language newspaper pick out an abbreviated headline, like 'Oil spill off the west coast', and write it on the board, or just read it out. The students write out the information in full sentence form, for example: 'A quantity of oil has been spilt into the sea off the west coast'.

Expanding texts

Write a single simple verb in the center of the board. Invite students to add one, two or three words to it. For example, if the word was 'go', they might suggest 'I go', or 'Go to bed!' They go on suggesting additions of a maximum of three consecutive words each time, making a longer and longer text, until you, or they, have had enough. The rule is that they can only add at the beginning or end of what is already written - otherwise you will end up with a rather untidy (and hard to read) series of additions. Add or change punctuation each time as appropriate. For example : (Go!, Go to bed!, Go to bed! said my mother, Go to bed! said my mother angrily, You must go to bed! said my mother angrily)

Express your view

Near the beginning of term, tell the students that you want each of them to be ready to talk exactly four minutes on a subject they care about. Each week select a name randomly (perhaps from names in hat). That student must prepare his or her talk for the following week. At the end of the talk the other students can ask questions and express how they feel about the ideas expressed.

Fact and fiction

Ask all the students to write a statement, which is either true or false. Choose ten students at random to take it in turns to read out their sentences. The rest of the class (including the nine students who are actually reading out their own sentences) note down their names, listen carefully and make a tick or cross according to whether or not they think each student's sentence is true or false. When the ten students have finished, compare responses and then ask the ten students to say whether their sentences were true or false.

Favorite words

Write on the board one of your favorite words. Tell the class it is one of your favorite words and explain why. It can be a favorite for any reason you like: it sounds nice to you; it looks nice; it's so useful; it reminds you of good friends, occasions, places, etc. If you feel the students need more examples of words and reasons for liking them, write one or two more on the board. The students should now write down some of their favorite words and then give their reasons for choosing them to their neighbor. Some students might volunteer to write their favorite words on the board and give their reasons for liking them to the class.

Feel the object

Collect various objects from students and from around the room. You can do this by asking the students to bring them to you. Put the objects in a bag. Hold the bag and ask students to feel the objects and to try to identify them.

Finding the page

Write up or dictate a series of words (possibly ones they have learnt recently). The students have to find each word in the dictionary and write down the number of the page where it appears. You, of course, have to do the same! How many of the words can they find the right pages for in three, four or five minutes?

Find someone who

The students have one minute to walk around the room and find at least one person in the class who was born in the same month as they were: they get one point for every person they find in the time. Then they have to find someone who was born on the same day of the month. Give further similar tasks for as much time as you have. (For example: Find someone who has the same numbers of brothers/sisters as you, Find someone who has the favorite color as you) At the end, see how many points each student has.

Five-minute writing storms

Tell the students that they have exactly five minutes to write about something. Set a subject which you feel will focus the students' minds but encourage personal rather than generalized responses.

Tell them that you will not mark any mistakes of language but will only be concerned with the ideas or experiences they describe. (You can note down general errors and give a language focus activity on these forms at another time.) For the next lesson, prepare general comments and select texts written by the students, to read out.

Flashing

You can flash any of the following for a brief moment: picture mounted on card or in a book; a text on a strip of card; a book cover; a newspaper headline; an object. The students then identify and/or describe what they saw. Encourage differences of opinion and don't confirm or reject any ideas. Flash several times to promote attempts at identification and discussion. In the end, show the text, picture or object.

General knowledge

Announce a general knowledge quiz and then ask different kinds of questions. The students can volunteer answers or you can ask them to write down what they think the answer might be.



Guessing

Choose an object, animal or person, and tell the students which of these categories it belongs to. They have to guess what it is. Encourage 'narrowing-down' questions, and give generous hints if the guessing slows down or seems not to be progressing towards the right answer. The student who guesses the answer chooses the next thing to be guessed.

Hearing mistakes

Tell or read a story that is well known to the students (it can be one they have recently worked on in class), introducing deliberate mistakes as you do so. When they hear a mistake, students put their hands up, call out the correction, or note down the mistake.

How do you feel?

Tell the students to close their eyes; they might like to place their heads on their arms. Ask them to think about how they feel; they might think about their day so far, or about their previous lesson with you and what they remember of it, what they learnt and what their problems might have been. After a few minutes, students who are willing to do so can say what their feelings are.

How many things can you think of that ...?

In groups, students try to think of and note down as many things as they can that fit a given definition and that they know in English. (For instance, you might tell them to think of as many items as they can that are small enough to fit into a matchbox or that work on electricity). After two or three minutes, pool all the ideas on the board, or have a competition to see which group can think of the most items.

If I had a million dollars

Tell the students to imagine that a million dollars (or an equally large sum in the local currency) is to be won by the person who can think of the most original (or worthwhile, or exciting) thing to do with the money. Listen to their ideas and decide who has 'won'.

If I weren't here

The students note down the answer to the question: 'If you weren't here, where would you be?' Share ideas. Then introduce a slight variation: 'If you weren't here, where would you like to be?' Other similar questions: 'If you weren't yourself, who would you like to be?' Or: 'If you weren't living now, when would you have liked to live?'

Imaginary classroom

Tell the students to imagine that the room is absolutely empty: no furniture, no people, nothing. They have to create their ideal classroom by suggesting how to 'refurnish' it. For example: There is a thick soft wall-to-wall carpet on the floor. There is a television in that corner, with a video.

Imaginative descriptions

Hold up two pictures chosen at random and ask the students to suggest a possible relationship between them. Encourage imaginative, even ridiculous ideas. For example, a picture of a car and a picture of a packet of cigarettes: 'They are both dangerous to other people, not only to the driver or the smoker. They both give a lot of taxes to the government. I don't like it when people smoke in a car.'

Imaginative identifications

Hold up a pen and start a conversation. You: What's this? Student: A pen. You: No, it isn't! (Pretend to fly the pen around as if it were a plane.) What is it? Student: It's a plane. Give the pen to a student and ask him or her to pretend that it is something else. Continue around the class for as long as imaginative ideas are forthcoming.

Important people

In small groups or pairs, students tell their neighbors which person has been an important influence in their lives and why.

Interrupting the story

Tell the students that you are going to begin a story and that they should try to stop you saying more than a few words by asking questions. For example: You: The other day... Student A: Which day was it? You: It was Tuesday. Student B: Was it in the morning or afternoon? You: Afternoon. Anyway, I was... Student C: What time was it?

Interview an interesting personality

Imagine that you are a person who is well known to the students: a famous national figure, a singer or actor, a local personality, or a character from the book. You are at a press conference; the students are the journalists. Tell the students who you are and invite them to ask you questions; you, of course, have to improvise answers, as convincingly as you can. After the first time, a student can take over the role of the interviewee, choosing his or her new identity.

Invisible elephant

Tell the students that you are going to draw a picture for them. Draw the outline of an elephant in the air with your finger. Ask them what you have drawn. Encourage different interpretations.

It was the way she said it

Take one word or a short sentence and ask the students to say it in as many different ways as possible. You might like to discuss with the students what difference the intonation makes to the meaning in each case, in what circumstances this intonation might be used (Ex: I love you, Hello, Good morning, Well, Come here, Please)

I would like to be a giraffe

Write down the following words on the board: lake, waterfall, river, and ocean. Each student decides which of these he or she would prefer to be and tells his or her neighbor. They ask each other follow-up questions for example: 'Is it a very high waterfall?' 'Is it a lake in the mountains or a lake in flat

country?' 'How do you think an ocean shows your personality and interests?'

Jumbled sentences

Pick a sentence out of your course book, and write it up on the board with the words in jumbled order: (Ex: early the I week to during have to go sleep)

The students work out and write down the original sentence: (I have to go to sleep early during the week). If there is time, give a series of similar sentences, and the students do as much as they can in the time. You can use this activity to review a grammatical point, taking the sentences from a grammar exercise.

Jumbled words

Write on the board words the students have recently learnt or ones they have difficulty spelling with the letters in jumbled order. It is best to have the words all associated with one given theme, otherwise the task of working them out can be too difficult and time-consuming. For example, you might give an elementary class a set of words like: (gdo, sumoe, owc, knymoe, tca, tnhpeel, ibdr) and tell them these are all animals. In the time given they work out as many as they can of the answers: (dog, mouse, cow, monkey, cat, elephant, bird)

Kim's game

Say that you are interested in seeing how observant the students are and what sort of memories they have. Collect about seven or eight objects belonging to the students (with their agreement!). Let the class see each object before you put it into a bag. If there is sufficient time, ask the students to write down from memory the names of all the objects, what they look like and who they belong to. If time is short, ask the students to call out the names of the objects, their appearance and who they belong to. (You can check these by looking in the bag.) Do not immediately confirm or reject descriptions. Encourage argument! Finally, show the objects and return them to their owners.



Listening to sounds

The students close their eyes and rest their heads on their arms. They should then listen and try to recognize all the sounds they hear. If some students deliberately contribute to the noises to be identified, that is useful, but don't let it get out of hand! After two minutes they open their eyes and describe and discuss what they heard, first with their neighbor and then with the class as a whole. Both the simple past tense and continuous past tense are naturally contextualized by this activity. Example: There was a car; it was going past. It was accelerating. Somebody dropped something. I think it was a lot of wood ... or some bricks. Somebody was whispering in the class. Somebody was laughing. Somebody closed a door. There was a bird; it was singing.

Martian

Draw a picture of a Martian on the board. Place your two forefingers on either side of your head and tell the class that you're a Martian. Pretend that you are unfamiliar with everyday objects, for example, cars, coffee, ships, music. Pretend also that you don't have a wide vocabulary in English. The students should try to help you understand what each object or idea is, but you must continually ask questions as if you don't understand. For example: (Martian: What's a car? Student A: People travel in cars Martian: What's travel in? Student B: Travel means you go from one place to another place Martian: But what does a car look like? Student C: It's like a box on the wheels Martian: What's a box?)

Match the adjectives

Write three adjectives on the board. For example: important, dangerous, heavy. Ask the students to suggest things which could be described by all three adjectives. For example : (Student A: A car Student B: A plane Student C: An army)

Miming

Write a list of vocabulary on the board which you feel should be reviewed. Students take it

in turns to mime one of the words so that the class can identify the word that he or she has chosen.

Miming adverbs

One student goes outside, and the others choose a manner adverb (for example: quickly or angrily). The student returns and orders one of the members of the class to do an action by saying, for example, 'Stand up!' or 'Write your name on the board' or 'Open the door! The person addressed has to carry out the command according to the manner adverb chosen: to stand up quickly, or write their name angrily, for example. The student has to guess what the manner adverb was.

Mistakes in reading

Select a text in the students' course book. Say that you're going to read the text aloud and they should follow in their own book. Add that you feel tired or you haven't got your glasses and might make a mistake: they must tell if you do. Read to the class, but substitute, add or omit words. The students should tell you immediately. Thank them, correct yourself and carry on making more mistakes.

Music

Play a cassette of music you like and you think your students will like. Play the music. Ask the students to write what the music inspires them.

My neighbor's cat

Introduce it as your neighbor's cat. Say, 'My neighbor's cat is an awful cat!' Write the word 'awful' on the board. Write all the letters of the alphabet under the a of awful. Say, 'What can you say about your neighbor's cat?' Tell the students that they can offer ideas in any order they like. As the ideas are suggested, write in the adjectives next to the appropriate letters. (Ex: You: My neighbor's cat is an awful cat. Student A: My neighbor's cat is a wonderful cat. Student B: My neighbor's cat is a quiet cat. Student C: My neighbor's cat is a beautiful cat. etc.)

Numbers and letters in my life

Each student thinks of a number and letters which are important in his or her life - a date, a telephone or house number, an age, name, city, or whatever. A volunteer writes his or her numbers and letters on the board, and the others try to guess what it is and why it is important.

Odd one out

Write six words on the board from one broad lexical set. For example: Chair, table, windows and cupboard. Ask the students which word does not 'belong' to the others. Challenge the students to argue why this word is the 'odd one out'. For example, a window is outside and inside a building and the other objects are all inside. Encourage students to argue that another word is the odd one out. One might say that chair is the odd one out because it is the only one that you normally sit on.

Opposites

Write on the board or dictate a series of six to ten words which have fairly clear opposites. In pairs or groups, the students help each other to think of and note down the opposites. Check, and supply any words the students did not know. In some cases, words may have two or more possible opposites, for example 'light': 'heavy' or 'dark'. Also, you should be open to original, imaginative suggestions from the students, provided these are accompanied by reasonable justification!

Oral cloze

Read a story or prose passage, which can be from your course book. Stop occasionally before a key word and get the students to guess what it is going to be: they can either volunteer the word orally, or write it down. If the passage is one they have worked on recently, this can function as a review exercise of key vocabulary.

Picture dictation

Describe a scene or person, giving the students time to draw what you say. Let them compare pictures with each other. If there is time, they can then dictate the picture back to you while you draw it on the board.

Piling up a sentence

Start by telling the students something you like, for example: I like pop music. Then ask a student to recall what you like, and add a 'like' of his or her own: (The teacher) likes pop music, I like watching television. Another student adds a further item: (The teacher) likes pop music, Jaime likes watching television, I like ice cream. . . . And so on, with each student adding something, until the chain becomes too long to remember.

Proverbs

Write a well-known English proverb on the board (Ex: Don't cry over spilt milk). Discuss its meaning, and compare it with similar or contrasting proverbs from the students' own culture.

Reasons for wanting an object

Tell the students you have an item to give away as a gift, and the person who can give the most convincing reason why he or she wants it will get it. The item can be something that is really desirable (a new car or a winter coat, for example); or something that is not (a baby crocodile or a stone) so that students really have to use their imaginations to devise reasons why it might be needed.

Recalling words

Write on the board between 15 and 20 words the students have recently learnt, or that you think they know. Make sure all the words are understood. Give a minute for everyone to look at them, then erase or conceal them. Individually or in pairs or groups, the students try to recall as many as they can and write them down. Find out who remembered the most (and spelt them correctly).

Say things about a picture

Do a drawing on the board or simply select a picture from their course book, or a magazine picture or poster of your own. The students look at the picture and say things about it; you can give directions that these must be in the form of complete, grammatical sentences, or simply acceptable shorter utterances. For each acceptable contribution write a tick on the board. How many can the class think of in two minutes? Or can they find at least 20 or 30 sentences?

Search through the book

Tell the students this is an exercise in quick scanning, a useful study skill. Open your course book at random, read out to the students a name, caption or sentence that is prominent on the open page: can they find the place and tell you the page number? You may need to limit the scope ('This is between pages 30 and 50', 'This is somewhere in chapter 5'). Give a little time after you have seen that the quickest student has found it in order to give the others a chance - then ask for the answer.

Seeing pictures in your mind

Ask the students to close their eyes and to sit in as relaxed a way as possible. Say that you are going to describe a picture for them to see in their minds. Describe the picture, slowly, for example: There are broad fields and in the distance there is a low hill. There are trees on the hill. Above is a great sky filled with clouds. Have a look at the picture for a few moments. Ask the students to open their eyes and to describe their landscape to their neighbour. Almost certainly they will discover that each saw the landscape differently. Prompt discussion by asking questions, for example: What could you see in the fields? Was it grass? Was it corn? Were there any animals? How did you feel about the picture?

Selling freezers to Eskimos

Give the picture of an object to a student. Challenge him or her to 'sell' it to the class by arguing why they really need it. This activity can be done seriously or humorously. For example: (Student: (holding up a picture of a home knitting machine) We are all tired at the end of the day. We can watch television or we can go to the pub with our friends. But if we go to the pub every night it costs a lot of money. Knitting is the answer! Knitting is relaxing. We can give the jerseys, etc. to our friends or we can sell them. So we can relax, express ourselves and make money! Who wants one?) The students then decide whether the sales talk was persuasive or not.

Simon says

Give the students a series of simple commands to perform: (Stand up! Open your books! Put your hands on your head!) Then tell them that only commands prefixed by the words 'Simon says' are to be carried out - anyone who makes a mistake and obeys other commands loses a 'life'. After three or four minutes, how many students have still lost no lives? Or only one?

Slow reveal

You will need a picture large enough for the class to see. Put the picture behind a piece of paper or in a large envelope. Reveal the picture in stages. At each stage, ask the class to identify what they can see and what the whole picture might be. Encourage differences of opinion and promote discussion.

The disappearing text

If you have written a text on the board and no longer need it, erase a small part of it, not more than one or two lines. Ask a student to read out the text on the board to the rest of the class and to include the missing words from memory. Erase one or two more words. Ask another student to read the text on the board and to include the missing words. Continue in this way until the whole text has been erased and remembered.

The most

Give or ask students to suggest, a group of six or seven items linked to a common subject area, for example, names of animals. The students try to define each as 'the most. . .' or 'the -est' of the group. If the items were horse, elephant, spider, cobra, parrot, dog, they might say: (The horse is the fastest. The dog is the friendliest. The cobra is the most dangerous, etc.) Other possible subject areas: food, clothes, famous people, furniture, household items.

The other you

Tell the students that you will ask some questions and that you want them to answer by pretending to be the sort of person they would like to be. Give the students a minute to imagine the kind of person they would like to be. They can do this seriously or humorously. You then ask the questions, but students should give their answers to their neighbor. (Ex: Are you a man or a woman? What job do you do? What makes you happy?)

Tongue twisters

Write a tongue twister on the board, and read it with the students slowly at first, then faster. Make sure the students' pronunciation is acceptable. Then individual volunteers try to say it quickly three times. Here are some examples of tongue twisters. (She sells sea shells on the sea shore. Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper.)

Unusual view

Draw a familiar object from an unusual point of view, for example, a rectangle representing the top of a table. Ask the students to identify it. Encourage different opinions.

Use the dictionary

Give a set of six to ten English words the students probably don't know yet. They find out the meanings of as many as they can from the dictionary within a given time: three minutes, for example. Check the meanings. This activity can be used to prepare the vocabulary they are going to meet in their next reading passage.

We both . . .

In pairs, students ask each other questions in order to find as many things as they can that they have in common. They are not allowed to use ideas that are immediately apparent through looking at each other, for example, 'We are both tall.' They must discover them through talking. After two or three minutes, invite pairs to tell the class some of their results. Sentences will tend to be of the form: 'We both ...' or 'Neither of us ...'

What did they say?

Towards the end of the lesson, challenge students to recall things that have been said by the teacher or students during the course of the lesson-but they must report them in indirect speech. For example: Andreas said he was sorry he was late. You asked us if we had found the homework difficult.

What has just happened?

Write a series of exclamations on the board - not more than about ten. In pairs or groups, students choose an exclamation, think of an event which might have caused someone to say it, and write down a brief description of the event, using the present perfect. For example they might choose 'What?', and write: Someone hasn't heard clearly what was just said. Then they choose another and do the same again. After two minutes, invite students to read out their sentences without identifying the exclamations that gave rise to them; the rest of the class guess what the exclamations were. Here are some exclamations: (I'm sorry, Never mind, Goodbye, Congratulations, Great, Thank goodness!)

What might you do with it?

One or two students stand with their backs to the board; they are the guessers. You write on the board the name of a well-known household object: for example, a pencil, a cup, or a box of matches. The rest of the class help the guessers to find out what the object is by suggesting things they might (or could) do with it. They should use their imaginations, and not give away the answer by suggesting the obvious use - at least, not immediately! For example, if the object is a pencil, they could say things like: I could pick it up. I might throw it to someone. I might point at something with it. I could scratch my head with it. Note that in this case might and could are used interchangeably.



What's the story behind it?

Show the students an object which belongs to you, for example, a penknife, a bracelet, your jacket. Tell the class about the object and encourage the students to ask you questions.

Ask individual students if they would mind telling you the story behind an object of their own.

Where did it come from?

Write the name of an artefact in the middle of the board. Ask the students to say what it is made of or other questions designed to establish what the object or material was like in its previous state. Each time they suggest something, write it on the board and then repeat the question. For example, starting with the word 'shoe': (You: Shoe. What's it made of? Student: Leather. You: Right...where does leather come from? Student: From a cow. You: And what does a cow live on? etc.

Who, where and what?

Describe an object in the classroom, and at the end of the description ask, 'What is it?' Follow this with a description of a person who is known to the students. They must try to identify what or who you have described. (You: It's got two doors, it's green and I keep books in it. Student: The cupboard. You: She's wearing a mauve jersey and she's sitting in the middle of the room. Student: Wendy.) Once the activity has become understood, individual students describe people, places or objects for the rest of the class to identify.

Why have you got a monkey in your bag?

Empty a bag -yours or one of the students'. Go up to one of the students, give him or her the bag and ask: Why have you got a mon-

key in your bag? The student has to think of a convincing or original reason why there is a monkey in his or her bag. After giving the reason and answering any questions from the rest of the class, he or she then takes the bag and goes up to another student with the same question, only this time using another object, for example: Why have you got an axe in your bag? And so on. This is a good activity for lighthearted relaxation: after exams, for example, or at the end of term.

Words beginning with

Give a letter, and ask the students to write down as many words as they can that begin with it in two minutes. They can do this individually, or in pairs or small groups. Then they tell you what their words are and you write them up on the board. Encourage students to ask for explanations of words that any of them did not know.

Words out of...

Write up a selection of about ten disconnected letters scattered on the board, and ask students to use them to make words. Each letter may be used only once in each word. Make sure there are two or three vowels among them! For example: r, a, n, s, e, j, l, b, d, w, y, g. Students might suggest words like: grain, beg, angry, yes, begin. They can suggest the words directly to you to be written up immediately, or spend two or three minutes thinking of suggestions (individually, or in pairs or small groups) before pooling.

You write next

Each student has a sheet of paper, at the top which he or she writes a sentence: it can be a simple statement of fact or opinion, or a question. For example: It's very cold today. This is passed to a neighbor, who adds an answer, comment or further question and passes it on someone else. The activity can, of course, be done in pairs rather than by