

Please note that all the activities outlined below have one underlying purpose: they are to act as pace – changers and attention-reset moments to complement your main lesson sequence. They are NOT a complete lesson plan as they stand!

They are all meant to be **short**, no more than **5-6 minutes**. And, importantly, they are absolutely preparation-free! They are exclusively based on the section of a good coursebook, such as *Interface*, that you have crucially already covered with your students fairly recently, say within the last weeks. So they never introduce any new language material; rather, they revisit and reactivate familiar vocabulary and structures.

Wacky categories

Materials needed:

A fragment (c. 20 words) of any word list studied already earlier on in the year. No need to photocopy anything – just refer your Ss to the relevant page in their coursebook and tell them which section of the word list they should be looking at.

Procedure:

1. Before they start on the word list, ask them to come up with three examples of a category that you select. The category could be just about anything: famous people, exotic holiday destinations, colours, landmarks in your town etc. The stranger the category (and students' examples of it), the better for the purpose of this activity.

Example 1 → household objects (fridge, dustbin, suitcase)

Example 2 → strange jobs (leech collector, cat hair stylist, dog psychiatrist)

2. Once they have given their three examples (can be the same for the whole class or different for each group of Ss), ask them to look at the words in the word list and assign them to the three people, places, things or ideas that they have come up with. Get the stronger students to also think of the reason for their choice...

Important notice: this is not about the category being related in meaning to a particular word list! In fact, the less obvious the connection, the better.

Rationale:

Recent brain research and studies of memory suggest that it is highly beneficial for long-term retention of a group of items to classify them somehow – *anyhow*, in fact! The very act of classifying constitutes mental effort that helps memorize the items ☺



Express dictation

Materials needed:

A fragment of a *familiar* text that you studied in class. Required length: about 30-40 words. No need to photocopy anything or even prepare the activity in advance of the class – your coursebook is full of short texts which are waiting to be ‘recycled’ for the purpose of this activity.

Example 1 → ‘Can you survive in the wild’



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(1) **Hike / Look for** in the mountains during the day and at night (2) **sleep / find** outdoors under the stars! (3) **Cook / Camp** your own food! Learn how to (4) **fish / find** in lakes and rivers and (5) **camp / climb** trees. We teach you to (6) **hike / chop** wood and (7) **build / sleep** a fire.


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Example 2 → ‘The history of the potato’

The history of the potato

Europeans first *discovered* (discover) potatoes in Chile. Sailors (1) ... (take) the potatoes on their ships. They (2) ... (eat) them as they (3) ... (sail) across the ocean. They (4) ... (leave) the potatoes in Ireland. Then potatoes (5) ... (become) very popular in the rest of Europe.



Interface 2 Student's Book p.36



Procedure:

1. Ask Ss to close their books and get their notebooks ready.
2. Tell the Ss that they are going to hear a short text that they already know – remind them what it is and when they studied it with you. Their task is to listen and try to remember as much as they can. Absolutely no note taking is allowed!
3. Dictate the extract you have chosen once only. At normal speed. No mercy!
4. As soon as you finish reading out the extract, ask them to write it in their notebooks. Books must remain closed while they are doing this. They are working *on their own* – absolutely no looking over their neighbour's shoulder.
5. When they finish, either ask them to compare their notes with a partner or – if you want to make it quick, let them compare what they've written on their own with the original text in their course book.

Rationale:

This is a variation on the familiar dictogloss technique. It is crucial that students hear the extract only once at normal speed as this will inevitably produce gaps when they attempt to write it up from memory. And the best part is that each student will have a (slightly) different version of the text! Call it spontaneously produced, genuine information gaps 😊 Which is why dictogloss activities work equally well as pairwork, or even groupwork do. But then the (gradual) reconstruction will take considerably longer. In the version I suggest here, it is reasonable to use the activity as a short attention-resetter.

Lexical chunks chase

Materials needed:

Any previously studied vocabulary activity that features a small collection of words, in a box, column or otherwise. As before, absolutely no need for you to photocopy anything, just refer your Ss to the relevant page in their course book.

Example 1 → words to do with films

9 Complete the word sets using these words from the text.

fantastic ice cream modern popcorn
snacks special effects suspense

- 1 science fiction films: a) ... , b) ...
- 2 food: c) ... , d) ... , e) ...
- 3 adjectives: f) ... , g) ...

Interface 2 Student's Book p. 7, ex.9



Example 2 → Frequency expressions

10 Copy and complete the table with the time expressions in the box.

always at the moment every weekend
never now on Mondays once a week
this week today usually

present simple	present continuous
always	



Interface 2 Student's Book p.27, ex.10

Example 3 → Activity verbs

1 Read the verbs in the box. What do they mean in Polish?

arrive discover drive explore fly go
land leave ride sail take off travel

Interface 2 Student's Book p. 34, ex. 1

Procedure:

1. Ask your Ss to look at a given selection of words.
2. They need to work in pairs and come up with one phrase or collocation involving for each of the words.
3. Run it as a race, where the pair that finishes first, wins (and gets a plus or some other bonus).

Alternatively, give them a short amount of time, e.g. three minutes and ask them in pairs or groups of three to write as many different collocations or phrases for each of the items as they can. Stop after three minutes sharp, get them to count up their word combinations. The pair/group that claims they have got the most reads them out for the other Ss to check. Or if you want to save time, simply collect the phrases and check them yourself while they get on with another activity. You can announce the winner(s) at the end of the lesson.



Rationale:

This is quite a self-explanatory activity so let me just point out that its chief value is the fact that it is completely preparation-free on your part, is fun, competitive and with no completely predictable result. In sum, a 100% winner, even with a relatively passive class ☺

Dialogue de-construction

Materials needed:

Any dialogue that students studied fairly recently. Preferably, it should be nicely laid out, like all the core dialogues in *Interface 2 Student's Book*.

Procedure:

Students work in pairs, each one on one half of the dialogue.
Their task is simply to copy their half of the dialogue into their notebooks and ...

Variation 1: Remove ALL grammatical words in the process. Then they close their books, swap their 'degrammatized' dialogue halves, and try to reproduce the original dialogue *in speaking*, using the content words as scaffolding.

Variation 2: Scramble each of their lines in such a way that no two words remain in a grammatically possible sequence! Then they swap their halves (books closed of course) and the other student attempts to reproduce the original lines.

Variation 3: Remove every third word, leaving a gap. (With stronger students or when you repeat this activity on a different occasion, you can ask them NOT to mark the gaps – considerably more difficult!). Of course they need to swap their halves, keeping the books closed. And, as in variation 1, they attempt to reproduce the original lines *orally*.

Rationale:

A great excuse to revisit a piece of spoken text that they originally studied for a different purpose. And, needless to add, a fantastic, fun, suspense-based attention-resetter ☺

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