



Cheap Materials and Engaging Activities
for Teaching English as a Foreign Language

by

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Summary: In this document you will find a variety of simple teaching activities we have used successfully in English classes in our community and public schools. We have included suggestions on how to use the activities and materials in your classroom, but we encourage you to be creative and adapt them to your own needs and teaching styles. Though we invented some ourselves, many any of these ideas have been borrowed and adapted from other educators.

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Assemble The Story

A simple activity to practice listening skills and information recall

Skills: listening, reading, and speaking
Ages: 8 years to adult
Levels: beginner to advanced
Suggested time: 20 to 30 minutes
Materials: 2 copies of the same story: 1 whole and 1 cut up into as many parts as you have students

Procedure: Before reading the story to the class, show them the title and the cover (if it's a book) and ask them to predict what the story will be about or what words they might encounter. Now read the story to them 3 separate times.

Before the first reading, ask the students to listen carefully to get the gist of what the story is about. After the first reading, ask them what they heard. Ask basic questions such as, "What is this story about?" and "Who is this about?"

Before the second reading, ask students to listen for and remember specific events in the story. After reading the story the second time, ask specific relevant questions: "Who are the characters?" "Where does the story take place?" "What does the character do?"

Before the third reading, ask the students to listen for and remember the order in which events occur in the story. When you have finished reading the third time, pass out the cut-up story to the students. Instruct them to read their piece of the story and then line up from beginning to end.

When they are finished, have each student read their part aloud from beginning to end.

Management considerations:

- If you're reading a book with pictures, make sure you position yourself so that everyone can clearly see the pictures.
- You can hand out easier-to-remember sections (the beginning and the end, for example) to students who are not strong listeners. This way they can still be successful in finding their place within the line.
- If it appears that your students are having trouble following your story, try acting it out a bit.

Variations: This activity can be done with almost any sequential text: a children's story, someone's daily schedule, a story from the newspaper, instructions to build something, or a recipe.



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Ball Toss

A quick question and answer warm-up activity

Skills: speaking, listening
Ages: 6 years to adult
Levels: beginner to advanced
Suggested time: 3 to 5 minutes
Materials: one ball of any shape or size

Procedure: To reinforce a particular question and oral response with your students, gather the class in a circle. Toss the ball to one student and ask the question you have been working on. For example, "What is your name*?"* or *"*How are you?" or *"*What are you going to do over Christmas vacation?" The student who catches the ball should respond appropriately to your question, then toss the ball to someone else and ask the same question to him or her. This question-response-question-response pattern continues until everyone has asked and answered the question.

Management considerations:

- You may want to write the question and some possible answers on the board for your students to refer to if needed. This little cheat sheet can help them feel more confident.

Variations:

- For younger students, you can ask the question for the students to answer each time. For example, you can ask, "What is your name?" and pass the ball to a student. The student says, "My name is María," and passes the ball back to you. You repeat the question and toss the ball to another student. This pattern allows you to have more control on the activity and is easier for young children to understand.
- For more advanced students, make the question and response more complicated. One way to do this is by asking opinion questions.

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Disorderly Dialogues

A cooperative activity to practice the flow of a conversation

Skills: reading and speaking
Ages: 8 years to adult
Levels: beginner to advanced
Suggested time: 20 to 30 minutes
Materials: cardstock, pen, and scissors

Procedure: Create several unique dialogues between two people that contain any specific grammar point or vocabulary you have been working on. Write the dialogues on cardstock (which does not tear or crumple as easily and can be saved) and cut them into strips.

Example:
Good afternoon, sir. What would you like to drink?
I'd like some black coffee, please.
Okay, and what would you like to eat?
Do you have hamburgers?
Yes, we do.
Alright. I'd like a hamburger, please.
Would you like French fries or a salad with your hamburger?
French fries, please.
Okay. I'll be right back with your coffee and your food.
Thanks.

Give a cut-up dialogue to each pairs of students. Have them work to put the dialogue in logical order. Once the students have put the dialogue in order, they can glue it onto another piece of paper. Then they can practice reading the dialogue and/or act it out.

Management considerations:

- With beginning students it helps to have the color of the strips differ for each speaker.
- If you're creating your own dialogues, it's easy to make some of them more challenging than others (they can be longer or contain more advanced language). Having multi-leveled dialogues helps manage a class with diverse language skills.
- Be sure to plan in time for students to rehearse the dialogue before they present it to the class, especially if you want them to act. This will allow them to gain confidence and they will likely do a better job.
- To help keep the rest of the class engaged while students present their dialogues, you could ask comprehension questions afterward.

Variations: These dialogues are useful for studying many grammar points or topics:

- Restaurant vocabulary – dialogues between waiters/waitresses and customers
- Asking for and giving directions – dialogues between a local and a lost tourist
- Medical vocabulary – dialogues between doctors and patients
- Phone etiquette – dialogues between two friends on the phone
- Travel vocabulary – dialogues between bus ticket vendors and bus riders

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Find Someone Who…. Bingo

A fast-paced activity to practice giving and receiving information

Skills: writing, speaking, reading
Ages: 8 years to adult
Levels: beginner to advanced
Suggested time: 20 to 25 minutes
Materials: pen and bingo board (see Appendix A)

Procedure: To practice asking and answering questions, create a simple bingo card. In each box write something like "has 3 brothers" or "is 25 years old" or "has a child." Give each student an identical card and have them walk around the room asking people how many brothers they have, how old they are, and if they have children. The goal is to find people who fit the descriptions written in the boxes.

When students find someone who fits a description in one of the boxes, they should ask for that person's name and write it in the box corresponding to that question. You can put a limit on how many times they may use each person. Continue until someone has a "bingo" – five boxes filled in a row.

Management considerations:

- It is difficult to manage students' language use during this activity considering they are wandering around the classroom. Be sure to thoroughly review the way to ask questions before the activity begins. The more certain they are about what to ask, the more likely they will use only English.
- A fun way to have one-on-one interactions with your students is to participate yourself in this activity. You will not only model good English, but also get to know your students a little better.

Variations:

- To extend this activity, have each student share something they learned about a classmate.
- This activity can be done with more complicated grammatical structures as well.
- Some examples of characteristics to put in the boxes include:
    - "has been to Nicaragua"
    - "would like to learn French"
    - "is going to eat tamales in December"
    - "likes to listen to music"



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Fly Swatter

A fast-paced and energetic vocabulary recall activity

Skills: listening and reading
Ages: 6 years to adult
Levels: beginner to advanced
Suggested time: 5 to 10 minutes
Materials: pictures that represent vocabulary cards and masking tape (optional) and fly swatters

Procedure: To practice vocabulary recognition, tape pictures that represent vocabulary words to a wall or chalkboard and split class into two teams. Line the students up relay-style. Give the first person in each line a fly swatter. When you say aloud one of the vocabulary words on the board, the two people with fly swatters (one from each team) run to the board and try to swat the correct picture before their opponent.

Once they have completed their turn, students go to the end of their respective lines, passing the fly swatters off to the next people in line. Keep track of team points.

Management considerations:

- Make sure there is plenty of room for your students to quickly move to and from the chalkboard. Clear the path of any obstacles.
- For younger students, be sure to model the appropriate, and safe, way to approach the board and swat a picture – walking quickly, slapping appropriately, and no pushing or shoving, etc.
- Students often want to help their teammates by yelling (in their first language) where to find the correct picture or word. Remind them to only speak English. This may require you to give students vocabulary on giving directions.

Variations: Instead of pictures representing vocabulary words, you can put these things on the board:

- Numbers (you call out the number, they swat the numeral)
- Letters of the alphabet
- Synonyms (you write *huge* on the board and call out *big)*
- Antonyms (you write *happy* on the board and call out *sad)*
- Verbs in past tense (you write the past tense form on the board and call out the present tense form)



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Guess Who

A deductive reasoning activity to practice physical characteristics

Skills: speaking and listening
Ages: 8 years to adult
Level: beginner
Suggested time: 30 to 40 minutes
Materials: barriers and people cards

Procedure: Create or print out at least 15 faces of people on small cards. The faces should have a name written under them. Pair students up and have them sit face-to-face. Give an identical set of the cards to each partner and place a barrier between them so they can't see each other's cards. The students should spread out all of their cards in front of them. They select one person whose identity they will assume during the round and lean this person's picture up against the barrier so they can see it clearly.

Once both partners have selected a person, one student begins by asking a yes/no question to try to discover the other student's identity. For example, "Do you have brown hair?" "Are you a woman?" or "Do you have green eyes?" The other partner responds by saying yes or no, and the first student updates the bank of possible identities by turning over the faces that are definitely NOT the other person's identity. For example, if a student asks "Do you have green eyes?" and their partner responds "No," then he or she should turn over all of the faces with green eyes because they know those people are no longer possibilities.

When a student has eliminated all of his or her options and has only two faces left, he or she may guess, "Are you Peter?" and attempt to win the game. The game ends when one student guesses the other's identity.

Management considerations:

- The concept of turning over the faces that could not be their partner's identity is a difficult one, even in a student's first language. An easy way to model this is by playing an entire game against another student for your class to watch. Have them gather around you so they can see what is happening on both sides of the barrier.
- Deciding whether to ask a question "Are you _____?" or "Do you have ____?" is tricky. Before your students play the game, you might want to brainstorm lists of physical characteristics that use *to be* and those that use *to have.* Write these on the board for students to refer to throughout the game.
- Make sure your students have the vocabulary to ask their partner to repeat the question or clarify if they don't understand.

Variations:

- Students can work together in teams of two instead of playing one-on-one.
- For a faster game, use fewer Guess Who cards.

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Inside-Outside Circle

A communicative activity to get students talking

Skills: listening, reading and speaking
Ages: 6 years to adult
Levels: beginner to advanced
Suggested time: 15 to 20 minutes
Materials: prompt cards

Procedure: Split your class in half. Have half of your students form a small circle facing outward. Then have the other half of the class form a larger circle facing inward around those students. Each student in the center circle should now have a partner standing in front of him or her.

Hand out a prompt card to each student. The prompt can be a question, a picture, a word to spell, or something else. Instruct the people in the inside circle to begin by reading or showing their prompt card to their partner. The partner in the outside circle should respond, and then he or she should read or show their prompt card to their partner in the inside circle.

The partners should help one another respond to the prompt if necessary. You may need to coach them on how to help without just giving the answer. Once both partners have asked and answered, they should exchange prompt cards and wait for your signal.

On your signal, all students in the outside circle only should take one step to the right. This means that everyone will have a new partner. Again, the person in the inside circle should begin by reading or showing their new prompt to their new partner. Continue asking and responding to prompts, exchanging, and rotating until the outside circle has made a complete rotation or until you feel they have had sufficient practice.

Management considerations:

- This activity can be confusing for students the first time, so make sure you plan a few extra minutes for an explanation.
- Be sure to model the interaction for your students. Show them how the student on the inside circle reads/shows their prompt first and how the person in the outside circle should respond.
- Don't forget to remind the students to exchange prompt cards!
- Remember that only one of the circles should rotate. If both circles rotate, the students might end up with the same partners. It might be a good idea to quickly train them on how to rotate before handing out the prompts.
- You can walk around the outside circle to monitor the conversations, or step inside to the inside circle and assist someone one-on-one.
- This activity can get very noisy with so many students speaking at once (this is also what makes this activity so great!). Finding a noisemaker to get your students' attention when it is time to exchange cards and rotate will save your voice.

Variations:

- If your class is very small (under 12 students) or very young (under 8 years), try a "tea party" rather than an inside-outside circle. This involves simply lining your student up in two face-to-face lines rather than circles. The interactions work the same way, but when it comes time to rotate

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simply move the student from the far right end of the line to the far left end and have everyone else in that line take a step to the right to find a new partner.

- Some ideas for prompts include:
    - Personal questions: Where do you live? How old are you? How many children do you have?
    - Dilemmas: If you could rob a bank and get away with it, would you do it? Would you rather be a famous movie star or discover a cure for cancer?
    - Words: Students read the words to their partners, who must spell them aloud.
    - Clocks: Students show their partners a clock and their partners must tell them what time it is. (Write the correct answer on the back.)
    - Pictures: Students show their partners a picture for them to describe.





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It's All In The Dice

A highly structured activity to practice sentence formation

Skills: writing
Ages: 8 years to adult
Levels: beginner to intermediate
Suggested time: 20 to 30 minutes
Materials: regular dice, homemade dice with + and – signs on the sides (see Appendix B), verb cards, paper and pencils

Procedure: This activity works well to reinforce most any sentence structure. After teaching the sentence structure, write an example sentence on the board.

Example:
Positive statement: I am going to wash the dishes.
(Subject + be + going to + verb)

Negative statement: I am not going to wash the dishes.
(Subject + be + not going to + verb)

Next, show the students a regular die. Explain to them that in this activity, they are going to be forming sentences. The die will tell them who the subject of the sentence is going to be. Write the following on the board (illustrating the sides of the die rather than writing the numeral):

1 = I
2 = you
3 = he or she
4 = we
5 = you all (or you guys)
6 = they

Next, show them the second, homemade dice with + and – signs rather than dots. Explain that this die will show them whether to write a positive statement (+) or a negative statement (-).

Finally, show them a stack of verb cards. These can be simply words with verbs written on them or labeled pictures of verbs. The cards will show them which verb to use in their sentence.

Model how to formulate a sentence. Start with the regular die, then roll the +/- die, then draw a verb card. Have the students help you formulate the sentence on the board.

For example,
(3) (+) (eat) would create the sentence "She is going to eat pizza."
(6) (-) (run) would create the sentence "They are not going to run in the park."

Break the students into groups of 2 or 3 and give each group a regular die, a +/- die, a stack of verb cards, a pencil and a sheet of paper. Set a time limit and challenge the students to work together to create as many correct sentences as they can in that amount of time.

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Management considerations:

- To ensure that all group members get to practice, have them take turns writing the sentences. Alternatively, assign roles: one person is the dice roller while the other writes. Switch roles halfway through.

Variations:

- When time is up, students can each select a sentence to read aloud or they may write a short story including some of the sentences they created.
- This activity can be used to reinforce other sentence structures or tenses as well. For example, you can add in a third type of (homemade) die. These dice can have verb tenses written on the sides (simple present, simple past, simple future, present progressive, past perfect, and present perfect, etc.) and can dictate the tense in which the students write their sentence.



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Match Mine

A cooperative activity to practice giving and receiving information

Skills: speaking and listening
Ages: 8 years to adult
Levels: beginner to advanced
Suggested time: 20 to 30 minutes
Materials: bags of materials and barriers

Procedure: Have pairs of students sit face-to-face. Give each pair a plastic bag full of items. There should be two of each item in the bag, such as two pencils, two index cards, two cups, two pairs of scissors, etc. The students should evenly distribute the items between them so they have identical sets of items. Review the names of the items together to make sure they know all of the vocabulary.

Set up the barrier so that neither student can see the other's items. One student should begin by arranging the items in front of them, then describing each item's placement. The other student should listen and try to arrange his or her items according to their partner's description. When finished, the students remove the barrier and compare arrangement of the items. If they have communicated well, the arrangements will be identical. They should discuss any miscommunication problems and determine a plan to communicate better in the future. Switch roles and repeat.

Management considerations:

- The students will most likely need to use many prepositions to describe the position of their items. Review prepositions before you begin the activity.
- Be sure to model this activity from start to finish before the students begin. Have your students gather around you so they can see what is happening on both sides of the barrier.
- The communication assessment of the activity (after the barrier is removed) may be too difficult to do in English. Allowing your students to use their first language during this part may enable them to communicate in English more effectively in the future.

Variations:

- Another variation of this activity is to the give students blank maps of a town and envelopes containing small cutout images of places in a town (See Appendix C). Be sure each student has the same map and images. With the barrier between them, one student starts by arranging the places in their town on the map. He or she then describes the location of each place using prepositions: "The hotel is next to the park." "The police station is in front of the bank." The other student listens and arranges his or her own town to match. When they finish, they remove the barrier, compare city layouts, switch roles and repeat.
- This activity can also be done with drawing. The first student draws a simple picture and describes it to his or her partner, who attempts to draw an identical image.
- If you are studying shapes and/or colors, you can give students cutout construction paper shapes of different colors to arrange on a white piece of paper. This limits the vocabulary the students need to use and is easier than having the students draw.

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Number Line-Up

A fast-paced listening activity to practice numbers

Skills: listening
Ages: 8 years to adult
Levels: beginner
Suggested time: 10 to 15 minutes
Materials: cardstock and markers

Procedure: Review three-digit numbers as a class, then have students form groups of three. Position the groups around the room so they have a little space (or do the activity outside). Give each group a stack of 10 large cards with the numbers 0 through 9 written on them. The numbers should be big enough to see from a distance.

Call out a three-digit number (example: 165) and the groups all race to form the number by each person holding a number card in front of them in the correct order. Give points to the fastest teams. Say the number aloud as a group, and then try again with different numbers.

Management considerations:

- Try to reign in the students that like to yell out the answer in their first language during this activity. You might want to take away points for teams that use their first language.
- If you want to make larger groups (for space or materials reasons), students can take turns being the group "leader," helping their group members arrange their numbers.

Variations:

- This activity can also be used for two-digit numbers or numbers with more than three digits.
- This structure also works well as a type of spelling competition. Rather than number cards, give slightly larger groups stacks of letter cards. (You may need to have a few letters repeated, depending on the word list you want to use.) Call a vocabulary word and have the groups race to form the word with their letters. Practice pronunciation and spell the word aloud with the group.



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Numbered Ball Toss

A quick and easy question and answer game

Skills: reading and speaking
Ages: 8 years to adult
Levels: beginner to advanced
Suggested time: 5 to 10 minutes
Materials: a ball with quadrants (soccer or beach ball works well), permanent marker

Procedure: With a permanent marker, write a number (starting from one and working your way up) in each quadrant. Depending on the number of quadrants the ball is divided into, you may have anywhere between four and 30.

Write a list of questions that your students should be able to answer on the board and number them to match the numbers on your ball. For example, you could write:

1. What is your first name?
2. What is your last name?
3. Where do you live?
4. How old are you?
5. How many brothers do you have?

Gather your students in a circle and toss the ball to one of them. Instruct that student to read aloud the number under his or her right thumb. He or she should then read question that corresponds to that number and answer it aloud in a complete sentence. When she or he has finished, that person tosses the ball to another student, who will look under his or her right thumb and answer the corresponding question. Continue tossing the ball until everyone has had at least one opportunity to answer a question.

Management considerations:

- Make sure that the question list is clearly visible from where the students are standing.

Variations:

- Instead of questions, you could write the following on the numbered list:
  - Verbs in present tense for your students to put in past, future, or present progressive
  - Verbs for your students to use in a sentence
  - Names of animals for your students to describe
- If you don't want to create as many questions as you have quadrants on the ball, you can write the numbered list this way:

  1-5: What is your first name?
  6-10: What is your last name?
  11-15: Where do you live?



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People Posters

A cooperative activity to reinforce verbs

Skills: writing and speaking
Ages: 8 years to adult
Levels: beginner to advanced
Suggested time: 30 to 40 minutes
Materials: newsprint, magazine cutouts, glue, marker, lined paper, and pencils

Procedure: Create people posters with newsprint and magazine pictures of people doing a variety of things (example: a boy climbing a tree; a man talking on the phone; a couple dancing; a family rafting). Glue the pictures to newsprint and give the people fake names by writing it under the pictures (with groups of people, write something like "The Johnson family"). Make as many posters as you want so your students can work in groups of two or three.

Give a people poster and a sheet of lined paper to each small group of students. In groups, students write the numbers 1 through 10 on the sheet of paper, then work together to write 10 questions about people in the poster and the actions they're doing:

Who is eating a sandwich?
Who is walking in the park?
Who is doing their homework?
Who is watching a movie?

When teams finish writing their 10 questions (at least 10; they can write more if they want), have all the teams pass the people poster and list of questions to the group on their left. Give them time to answer the questions (in full sentences) by using the person's name written on the paper: "*Alejandro is eating a sandwich.*" If there is time at the end, students can present in front of the class and each person can read one or two statements aloud.

Management considerations:

- As in any group work situation, you may have students that try to take over, and others that do nothing. Remedy this by instructing the students to take turns writing sentences.

Variations: There are many other ways to use the people posters after you have created them. Here are some examples:

- Verb study: Lay people posters on tables along with a stack of cards with verbs in simple present tense. The verbs should match the actions that the people in the pictures are doing. Groups work to put verb cards on top of the pictures they describe as quickly as possible. Have groups rotate tables. One by one in their groups, students take a verb card off of a picture and make a sentence, like "Alice is sleeping." Continue until all of the cards have been used in a sentence.
- Comparatives game: Divide the class into groups. Each group should have one people poster and four index cards. Each student must select a person on their poster and write that mystery person's (fake) name on one side of the index card. On the other side, they must write at least three clues about that person by comparing him or her to others.

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Example: *She has longer hair than Julia.*
She is more beautiful than Erica.
She is shorter than Alice.

When students are finished writing their sentences, the index cards should be taped (clue side up) to a solid surface so that they can be flipped over to display the name. Once the groups have taped down their index cards, rotate groups to a new poster and have them read the clues aloud, guess the name of the person on the back, and check their answers. Rotate tables again until each group has gone through each of the posters.



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Puzzling It Out

A simple warm-up activity to practice vocabulary recognition

Skills: reading
Ages: 6 years to adult
Levels: beginner to advanced
Suggested time: 10 to 15 minutes
Materials: card stock, scissors, marker, and masking tape

Procedure: Cut the ends of two strips of cardstock so the two pieces fit together like a puzzle. Write a vocabulary word on one piece of cardstock, and then write a short definition, translation, synonym or antonym on the other piece. Create as many matching pieces as you'd like. The end shape for each match should be slightly different so only one match is possible.

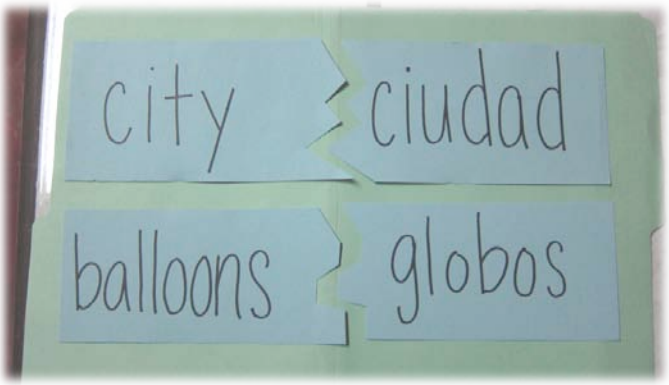
Tape vocabulary words on the board or wall, leaving space for their matches to be taped next to them. Hand one or more pieces out to each student and have them go to the board and tape their puzzle piece in next to its match. Encourage them to try to figure out the match using the English words rather than the end design. The design is there so that all of the students can be successful in a short amount of time.

After the students have fit all of the pieces together, read through them as a class to practice pronunciation and check for understanding.

Management considerations:

- Students will congregate around the board in order to match the puzzle pieces. If you have more than 10-15 students, or if you're working with young children, try handing pieces out to only 5-10 students at a time. This will prevent a stampede to the board.
- Make sure that your students have a clear path from their seats to the board and that there is plenty of room for them to stand in front of the board and ponder their options.
- Pre-roll pieces of masking tape and put them in an accessible place for students to grab them on their way to the board.

Variations: This is a great warm-up or motivation activity for any topic you're studying. Try it with animals and their physical descriptions, adjectives and synonyms or antonyms, typical foods and their ingredients, parts of the house and the furniture found in them, or environmental terms and definitions. Substitute definitions for pictures for beginning readers.



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Scrambled Sentences

A cooperative activity to reinforce sentence structure

Skills: reading and speaking
Ages: 8 years to adult
Levels: beginner to advanced
Suggested time: 15 to 20 minutes
Materials: card stock, pen, scissors and envelopes

Procedure: Write out 3 to 5 sentences with a similar structure on a strip of cardstock.

Example:
Her mom has green eyes.
His dad is tall.
Their sisters have long hair.
Our brothers are thin.
My uncle has a beard.

Cut up the sentences up into their individual words and mix them up in an envelope. Give envelopes to pairs of students and have them work to arrange sentences. There may be more than one correct way to arrange them. When students finish, have them read the sentences aloud to you. Help students correct any errors and have them put the words back in the envelope. They can exchange it for a different envelope and try again. This can be turned into a competition with teams competing to complete as many envelopes as they can within a certain time period.

Management considerations:

- Students will need at least a small amount of table space to do this activity.
- Using different colors of ink or paper to create the sentences will prevent them from getting mixed up while students spread them out on their tables.
- Students can work alone or in pairs, but groups of three are usually too big.
- Avoid doing this activity in a windy area because the words will blow away. Turn off the ceiling fan if you have one!
- Laminate if you want to use them again. Paperclip words together or put them in an envelope in order to keep them together.

Variations: This activity can be used to reinforce any grammatical structure, such as the use of the verb to be, simple present tense, the placement of adjectives and possessive pronouns.



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Self-Checking Puzzles

An individual vocabulary matching activity

Skills: reading
Ages: 8 years to adult
Levels: beginner to advanced
Suggested time: 10 to 15 minutes
Materials: magazine picture, cardstock, pen, glue, plastic bags, scissors and a ruler

Procedure: Cut an interesting picture out of a newspaper or magazine. It should be a perfect square We found that 16 cm by 16 cm works well). Reinforce the picture by gluing it to a piece of cardstock. Cut out another piece of cardstock of the same size. On both of the pieces of cardstock (the one with the picture on the back and the one without), draw a 4x4 grid. It should look similar to a Bingo card.

On the grid with the picture on the back, write a vocabulary word in each of the 16 squares. On the other grid, write synonyms for those same words. These should be written in reverse order. This means the vocabulary word in the top left-hand corner of the picture card, and the word in the top right-hand corner of the other card, should be a pair. Imagine you are going to make a sandwich with the two cards, placing the grids face-to-face so each word touches its match.

When you've finished writing the vocabulary words, cut the grid with the picture on the back into the 16 squares. Your puzzle is now ready! A student can now pick up one of the picture pieces, read the word on the back, and place it picture-side-up on its match on the other grid. The picture will start to form, and students can check their work by looking at the picture. If the picture is completed, they can be sure that all of their answers are correct.

Management considerations:

- Be sure to have a few extra puzzles on hand. When a student finishes a puzzle, he or she can put it back in the bag and exchange it for a new one.
- This is an individual activity, but if you have too few puzzles you could have pairs work together.

Variations: These self-checking puzzles can be used to review any vocabulary, verbs, grammar structures or tenses. Here are some possible uses:

- Match words and their definitions (*dengue fever* matches *a viral disease of the tropics transmitted by mosquitoes*)
- Match words and a description (*monkey* matches *a furry mammal that swings from trees by its long tail*).
- Match verbs and an appropriate sentence (*Ate* matches *Yesterday I _____ rice and chicken for lunch*).
- Match words with their antonyms (*angry* matches *happy*).
- Match words with their translations in Spanish (*abuelo* matches *grandfather*).
- Match numbers with their numerals or a depiction of the number (*three* matches 3 *or ***).*

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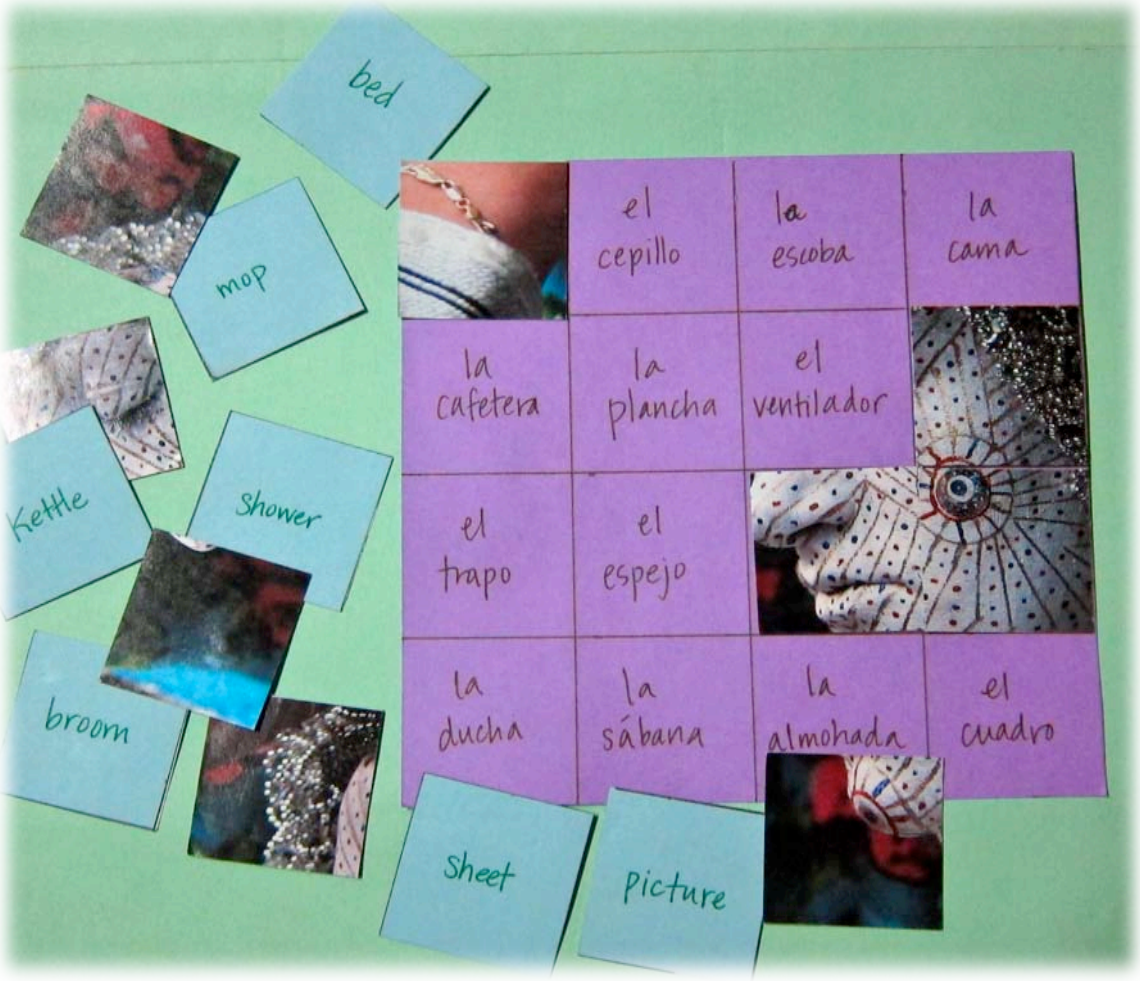

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Sentence Line-Up

A simple, cooperative grammar activity

Skills: reading and speaking
Ages: 8 years to adult
Levels: beginner to advanced
Suggested time: 5 to 10 minutes
Materials: paper and markers

Procedure: Make pre-made sentences with each word on separate half-sheets of paper. The specific grammar point you are focusing on can be written in a different color. For example, when studying adverbs of frequency, as in "I always brush my teeth in the morning," words "I brush my teeth in the morning" are in red, but "always" is in blue to help it stand out.

Pass the words out to students and have them put the sentence in order at the front of class by holding the words in front of them. Students who are still sitting down (without words) should direct their classmates to help them put the sentence in order. Once it's correct, have students read it aloud as a class. Repeat with different sentences.

Management considerations:

- You may have a student that wants to take charge and boss all of the other students around. This may be remedied by allowing only the students at their seats to speak, indicating to the students with words where they should stand.
- Change participants with every new sentence. This will help keep everyone engaged.

Variations:

- If your sentences have more words than you have students in your class, you can lay the words out on a long table and have students gather around to put the sentence in order on the table.
- This can be made into a competition by giving teams of students the same words and having them race to line the sentence up correctly.
- For easier line-ups, include punctuation on papers with the words. For more difficult line-ups, put punctuation on separate pieces of paper.



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Simultaneous Charades

A lively dramatic activity to practice vocabulary

Skills: speaking and reading
Ages: 8 years to adult
Levels: beginner
Suggested time: 10 to 15 minutes
Materials: paper, a pen, scissors and two small containers

Procedure: Write many vocabulary words on small pieces of paper. These words should be possible to act out, such as *cleaning, writing, watching TV,* and *sweeping the floor.* There should be at least as many words as you have students in your class. Re-write those same words on small pieces of paper to create a duplicate set of the original words. Fold all of the papers and put each set in its own small container.

Divide the class into two teams. Send each team to an opposite side of the room. Place two containers of charades papers in the middle of the room so it's situated between the two teams. One representative from each team runs simultaneously to their team's container and grabs a paper. He or she should unfold the paper and silently act out the word for their team to guess.

To guess correctly students must say, "She is eating," or "He is walking." (Alternatively, "You are eating.") After the word is guessed correctly, the student must put the used paper in a discard pile and run to tag the next member of their team. That member of the team must come up to act another word. Both teams should be acting out and guessing different words at the same time. The activity continues until one team runs out of papers.

Management considerations:

- This activity can get noisy, so it may be best to play outside.
- With younger children, decide a line order before the activity begins. That way when a student runs back to tag another team member, there is no confusion about whose turn is next.
- One team will inevitably finish acting out all of the words before the other team does. Keep this team on task while the other team finishes by saying the words and having the entire team silently act them out.

Variations:

- Rather than acting out verbs, try using animals.
- For beginning readers, use small pictures and with words written next to them as the prompts.

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Speed Sorting

A competitive, fast-paced vocabulary review activity

Skills: reading
Ages: 6 years to adult
Levels: beginner to advanced
Suggested time: 10 to 15 minutes
Materials: cardstock, marker, scissors, and masking tape

Procedure: Divide the chalkboard into several categories related to the vocabulary your class is studying. If you are studying animals, for example, you could write an animal name as the heading for each category. On strips of cardstock, create vocabulary cards by writing many different words that fit in those categories, such as *beak, feathers, fur, web, 6 legs, fins,* etc.

Put students into two or three groups. Line groups up relay-style, or perpendicular, to the chalkboard and place a stack of the vocabulary words on a chair in front of them. Each team's vocabulary cards should be a different color, and there shouldn't be any repeated words among the groups. Also, stick many pieces of rolled tape to the same chairs for the teams to use.

To begin, the student at the beginning of each line should take the top vocabulary word on their team's chair and stick a piece of tape to the back. They should run to the board and tape that word in the appropriate category (there could be more than one correct option). Then students run back to their team, tag the next person to go, and go to the end of the line. If a student doesn't know a vocabulary word or can't decide which column to put a word in, they may ask their teammates.

When all the teams finish, review the answers on the board. Take down any incorrectly placed vocabulary words, make sure everyone knows what they mean, and return them to their original teams. Have the teams try again to sort them correctly.

Management considerations:

- This activity takes up a considerable amount of room. You will need to use an entire chalkboard, whiteboard or wall, and plenty of space in front of it for students to line up.
- Make sure there is nothing standing in the path between the board and your students. This activity tends to get competitive and you don't want students tripping over things as they run.

Variations: Try this activity with these other categories:

- Sports and their associated equipment
- Holidays and associated words
- Rooms in the house and furniture found in each room
- Common illnesses and their symptoms
- Parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) and examples of each
- Vowel sounds and words that contain them
- Numbers and words that contain that many syllables

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If your students are beginning readers, use pictures instead of words. You could have students sort pictures according to their vowel sound or initial letter: a picture of an apple goes in the “a” category, and a tree goes in the “t” category.

If you have limited board space or no tape, you can also do this activity on the ground. Simply create circles on the ground using chalk, string, or hula-hoops and label each circle. Students sort their vocabulary cards by placing them in the appropriate circles.





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Team Memory

A cooperative vocabulary recall activity

Skills: reading and speaking
Ages: 6 years to adult
Levels: beginner to advanced
Suggested time: 15 to 20 minutes
Materials: Memory cards (paper and markers), masking tape

Procedure: The teacher splits the students into two equal teams and explains the rules. Written on the board are many important words and their synonyms. The words are written in a grid layout and each one is covered with a numbered piece of paper that is taped to the board.

The teams take turns guessing two numbers per turn to uncover the words in an attempt to find synonyms. Flip the numbered papers up to reveal the words below. If a match is made, the papers are removed, given to the team, and the team gets another turn. If a match is not made, it becomes the opposing team's turn. At the end of the game, the team with the most matches wins.

To reinforce this vocabulary one last time, have the teams re-teach the words to their classmates, or simply review as a class.

Management considerations:

- To ensure your students work together, make sure they take turns guessing or calling out the numbers. Remind the entire team to discuss which numbers they would like to select before making a guess.

Variations: Instead of synonyms, this activity can be done with:

- Pictures – a picture of a dog matches the word *dog*
- Antonyms – the word *hot* matches the word *cold*
- Translations – the word *casa* matches the word *house*
- Rhymes – the word *cat* matches the word *hat*

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What's Different?

A cooperative activity to reinforce vocabulary

Skills: speaking and listening
Ages: 8 years to adult
Levels: beginner to advanced
Suggested time: 20 to 30 minutes
Materials: pairs of similar images and barriers

Procedure: Have pairs of students sit face-to face with the barrier between them. Give the students two very similar pictures with several distinct differences. These can be labeled "A" and "B" to avoid confusion. Give one of the partners a sheet of paper with two columns labeled "Same" and "Different."

Partners should work together to orally determine the similarities and differences of their pictures and write them on the sheet. For example, if there is a dog on the floor in one picture and a ball on the floor in the other, they can simply write "ball" or "dog," or "There is a ball on the floor." After a given amount of time, have students take down their barrier to compare the pictures and complete their list.

Management considerations:

- One way to ensure that both partners work equally as hard is to take turns describing one thing in their picture. Their partner should respond by saying if their picture is the same or by saying how it is different.

Variations: This activity can be used to review many different topics. Some ideas for scenes include:

- Rooms in the house full of furniture and household items (See Appendix D)
- A place in a town full of people doing different activities
- People's wearing different outfits
- A classroom full of school items
- A farm scene with farm animals
- A natural scene with flora and fauna and geological features
- A city street with many buildings and businesses

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Who Am I?

A communicative guessing game

Skills: listening and speaking
Ages: 8 years to adult
Levels: beginner to advanced
Suggested time: 10 to 15 minutes
Materials: pictures, tape

Procedure: Tape a picture of an animal on each student's back. Do not let the students see which animal they have. Students walk around and give one another verbal clues in English to help them discover which animal they are. Instruct students to meet a person, give them one clue, receive a clue, and then move on to someone else. Animal noises or gestures should be discouraged.

After 5-10 minutes, have students form a circle and one by one guess their animal aloud. Reveal animals on the count of three.

Management considerations:

- An easy way to tape animals on everyone's back without students peeking is to have them form a circle facing inward before taping on the pictures.
- Be sure students are prepared to give helpful hints by reviewing vocabulary and sentence formation before the activity.

Variations: Instead of animals, try this activity with the following things taped to your students' backs:

- The name of a famous person to reinforce physical characteristics, personality traits or past tense
- The name of an illness to reinforce symptoms and medical terminology
- A picture of a fruit or vegetable to reinforce colors, textures, size or shape



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Write It Out!

A simple, multi-purpose writing activity

Skills: writing, listening
Ages: 6 years to adult
Levels: beginner to advanced
Suggested time: 10 to 15 minutes
Materials: homemade whiteboards, erasers, and whiteboard markers

Procedure: Practice numbers by giving students, or pairs of students, whiteboards. Say a number aloud and have them write the number (numerically) on the white board. On the count of three, each student should hold their boards up for the teacher to check.

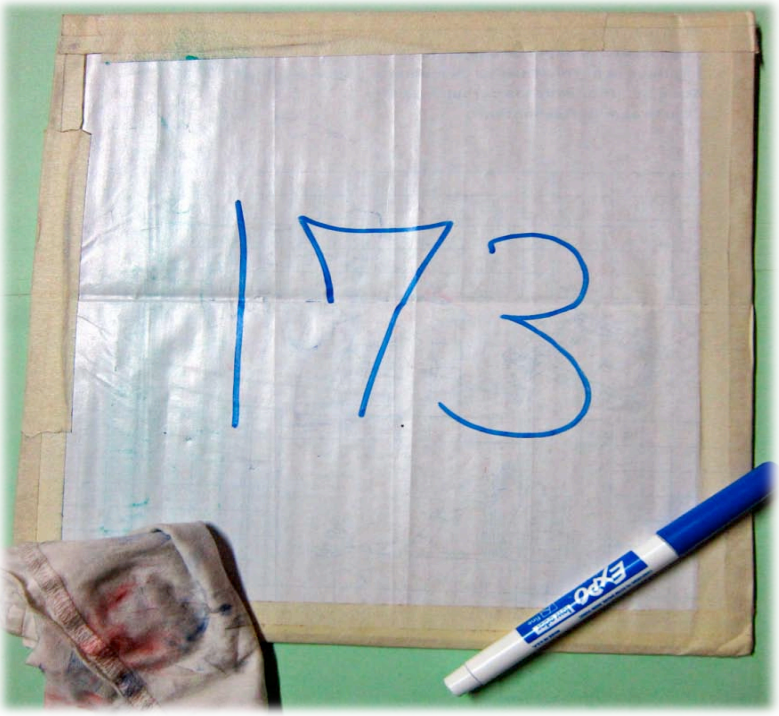
Reverse this activity by writing a number (numeral) on the board and having students write out the number (with letters) on their whiteboards.

Management considerations:

- If students are working in pairs, it's important to make sure they take turns writing the numbers and holding the whiteboard up (especially with younger children).

Variations: There are many ways to use whiteboards for quick writing practices. Here are some possibilities:

- Say a letter or word and have you students write it on their boards
- Say a verb and have students write it in a sentence
- Say a sentence in present tense and have the students write it in past or future tense
- Show pictures of two things and have students write a sentence comparing the two



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Appendix A

Find Someone Who... Bingo

	B	I	N	G	O
1					
2					
3			Free Space		
4					
5					

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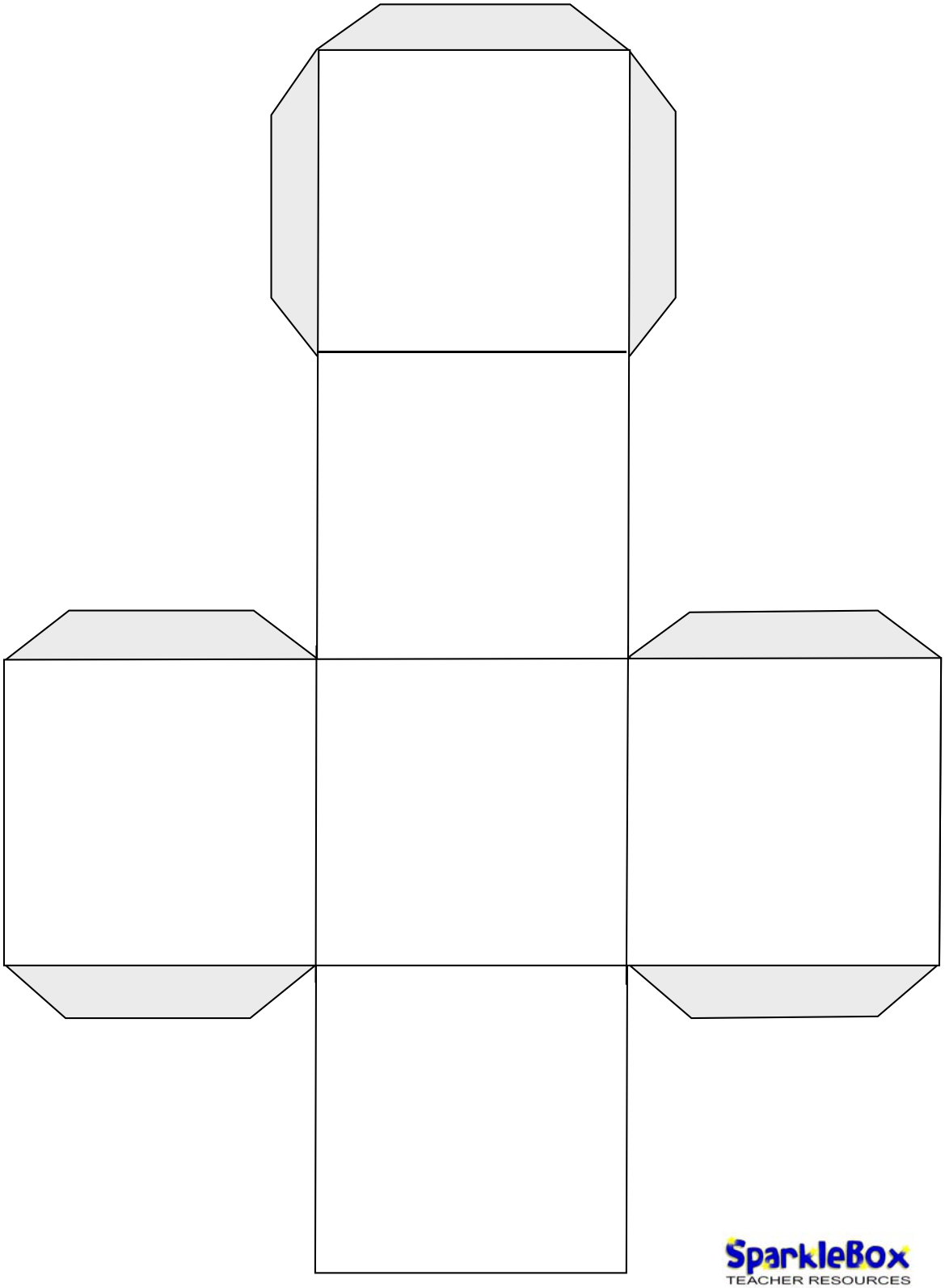
Appendix B

It's All In The Dice



SparkleBox
TEACHER RESOURCES

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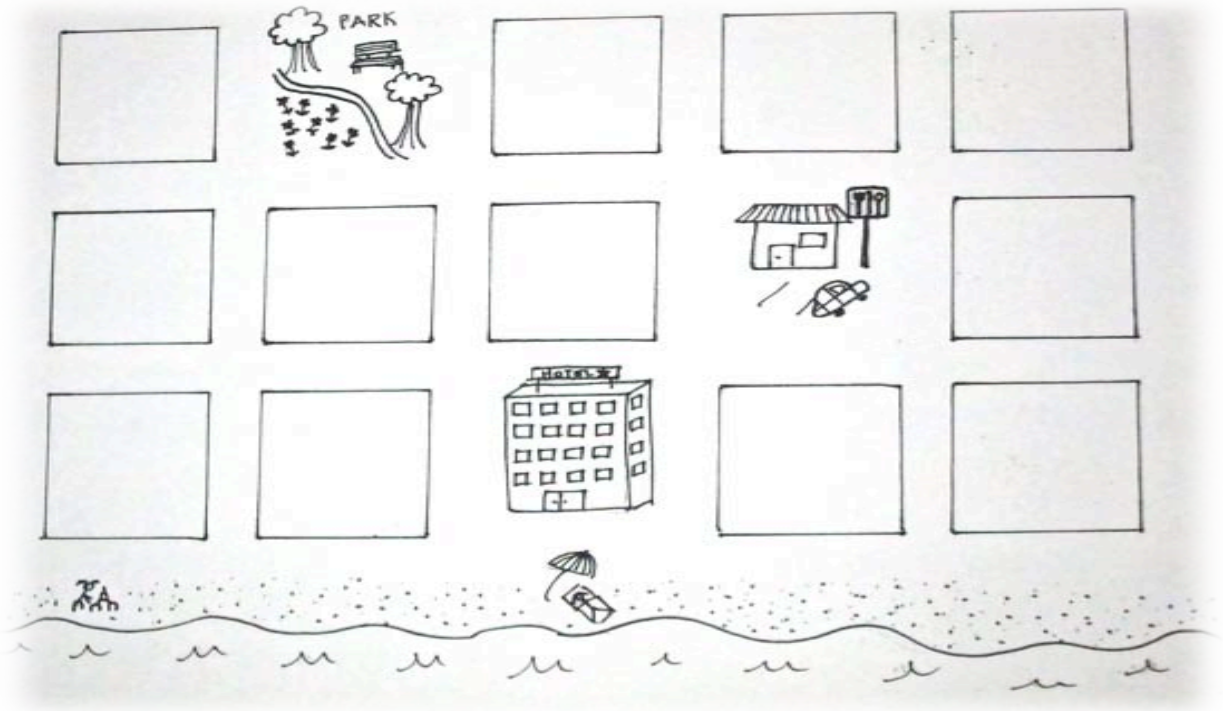
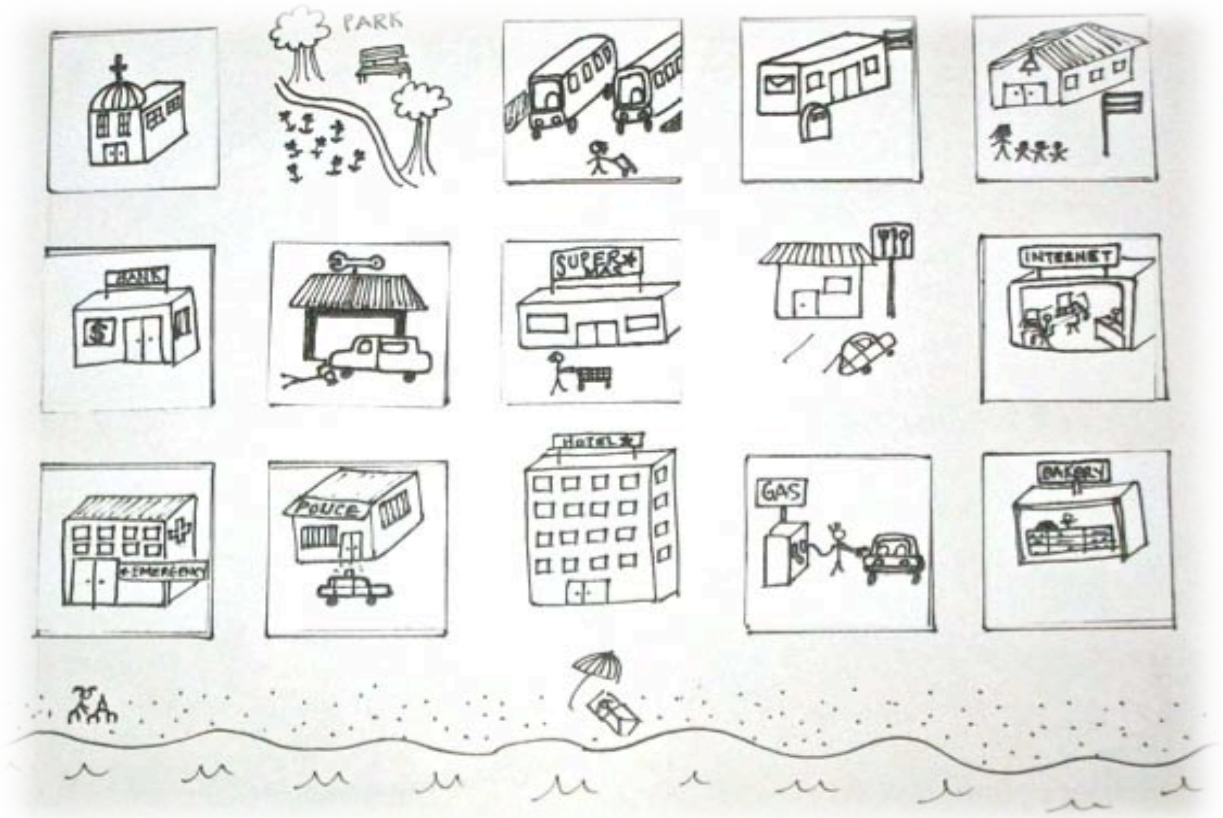
Appendix C

Match Mine





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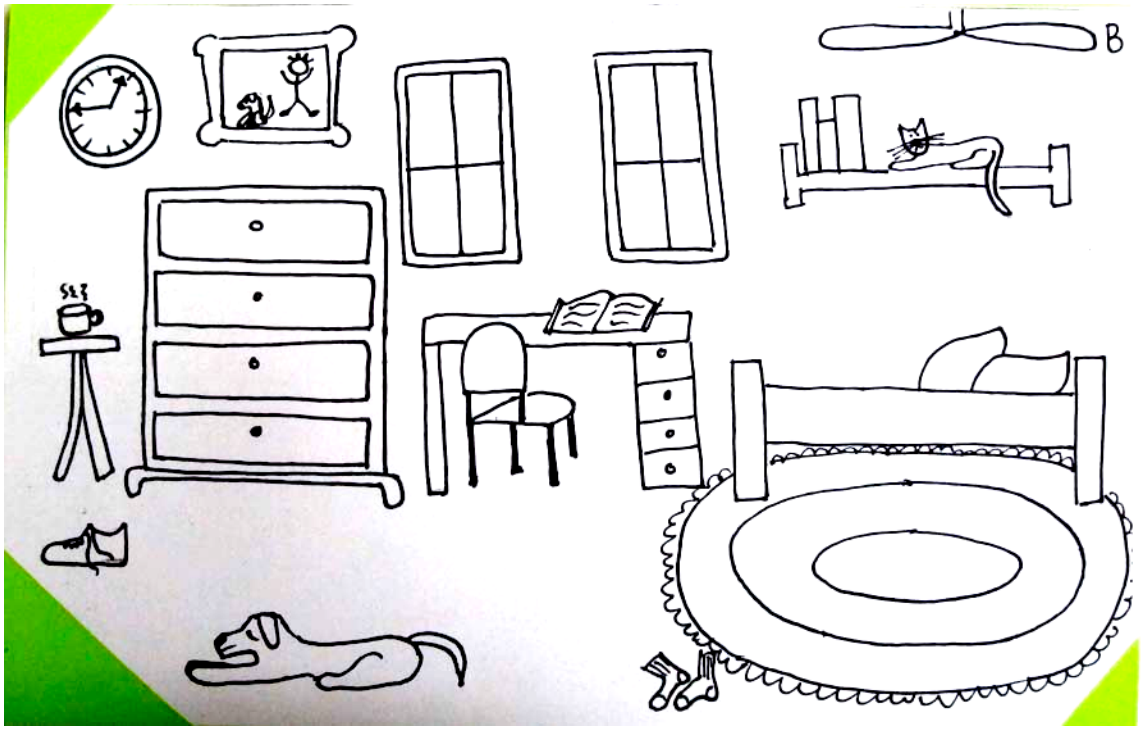
Appendix D

What's Different?





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