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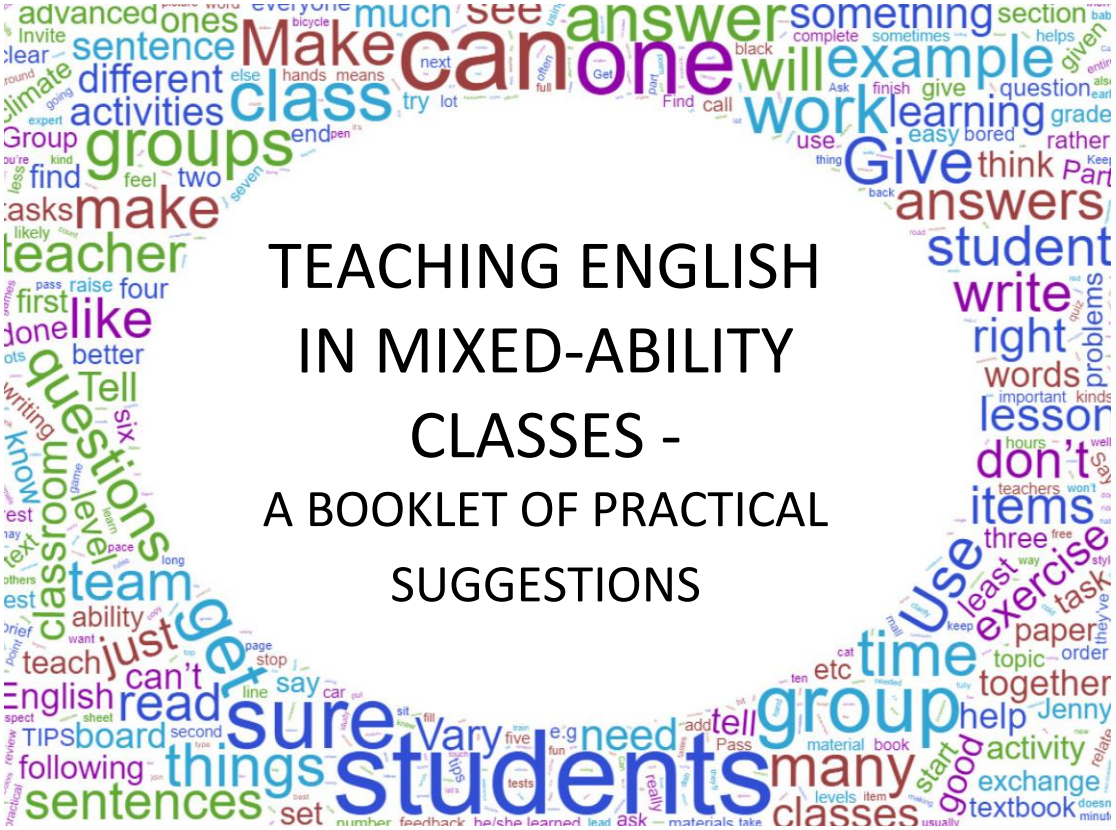

TEACHING ENGLISH IN MIXED-ABILITY CLASSES -

A BOOKLET OF PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

This booklet was written by a sub-committee of the English Advisory

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Dear Teacher,

This is a booklet of practical suggestions to help you cope with mixed-ability (heterogeneous) classes. It is composed of a brief Introduction to the topic, and then two parts:

Part I: Basic Guidelines is composed of six sections with some practical principles and tips.

1. Questioning and teacher-student interaction
2. Classroom climate
3. Discipline and classroom management
4. Activity design
5. Collaboration
6. Assessment

Each of these begins with a brief introductory 'Read this first', with some useful general guidelines, concepts, or background information on the section topic. This is followed by a series of practical tips.

Part II presents a range of ready-made activities and ideas for textbook adaptation suitable for mixed-ability classes: they provide opportunities for students at different levels and with different learning-styles to participate, without too much preparation or the addition of extra materials.

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INTRODUCTION

The so-called 'mixed ability' class is made up of students who are mixed in more than just ability: they may differ in all kinds of ways:

⇒ level of English;

⇒ learning style;

⇒ age/maturity;

⇒ attitudes and motivation;

⇒ interests;

⇒ expectations;

⇒ previous experiences of learning English;

⇒ cultural and linguistic background

⇒ socio-economic background

... and more.

So these groups are probably better defined by the adjective 'heterogeneous': of mixed kind or sort.

There comes a point where students are so different from one another that you simply can't teach them together and need to split them into 'הקבצות'. For example, you couldn't teach students at 7th grade who for some reason have missed out on English and cannot yet read the letters together with ones who have graduated from an elementary school in an English-speaking country. Having said that, if the range is such that the students **could** study together, then research shows that dividing them into ability groups appears to lead to damage: it does not help the high-fliers and does harm to the less advanced students. So, the bottom line is: if you possibly can teach them together, do so. It's more challenging for the teacher, but it is likely to lead to better long-term achievement.

The teaching of heterogeneous classes involves all sorts of challenges. At what pace should I teach, and at what level of language? How do I keep students interested and avoid the more advanced ones getting bored? How do I cater for the slower or learning disabled ones? How do I deal with discipline problems? How do I work with textbook texts and exercises that seem to be aimed at one 'level' as if all the students were the same? How do I give them grades?

There are some advantages, however: the students will probably, as mentioned above, progress better overall; you can foster a climate of mutual tolerance and respect for the 'other', cooperation and interaction. And there's some evidence that teachers who teach heterogeneous classes actually become better teachers!

PART I: BASIC GUIDELINES

1: QUESTIONING AND TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTION

READ THIS FIRST

Usually when teachers run a question-answer session in the classroom they do it like this:

1. The teacher reads out the question and asks students to raise their hands if they know the answer.
2. The teacher nominates one of the students who raised their hands to answer.
3. The teacher approves the answer if it is right.
4. If it is wrong, the teacher corrects it or calls on another student to answer.
5. Once the right answer has been established, the teacher repeats it.
6. The teacher reads out the next question…

This is probably the most common interaction pattern in any lesson in any subject. The problem is that it is rather ineffective in a heterogeneous class: the same students usually raise their hands, the less able or less confident ones don't, and therefore never participate. The whole process is rather boring. And we can't be sure that those who don't actively participate are attending.

Here are some tips which can help make the process more (mixed-level-) student friendly.

TIPS

⇒ CALL ON STUDENTS BY NAME, DON'T JUST POINT. (Obvious, perhaps, but it's important for students to feel they are seen as individuals, not just "learners".)

⇒ LEAVE PLENTY OF 'WAIT-TIME'. More students will be able to answer if they have time to think. You can explicitly encourage hand-raising by saying, for example: 'I'm only going to call on someone after I see at least five (seven?) hands raised!'

⇒ GIVE THEM A CHANCE TO READ THE QUESTIONS ON THEIR OWN, before you start eliciting answers. (With lower-level classes, it helps if you read the questions aloud while they are reading and following.)

⇒ INVITE STUDENTS TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN ANY ORDER THEY LIKE. They don't have to start with No.1.

⇒ GIVE THEM A MINUTE OR TWO TO GLANCE THROUGH THE EXERCISE, then say: Raise your hand if there are any of these questions you're sure you know the answer to. And then relate to the ones they volunteer answers to.

⇒ MAKE IT CLEAR THAT YOU DON'T EXPECT EVERYONE TO KNOW ALL THE ANSWERS. Say something like: you may not know all the answers, just go first for the ones you know. Then do as much of the rest as you can. You don't have to finish it all

⇒ GIVE THEM A FEW MINUTES TO TRY ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS ON THEIR OWN in writing before you start eliciting answers in the full class.

⇒ GIVE THEM THE OPTION of doing this on their own or with a partner.

⇒ VARY THE WAY YOU CHECK ANSWERS. Here are some alternatives to the 'ping-pong' checking described above.

✓ Write or display the answers on the board, students self-check

✓ Dictate answers, students self-check

✓ Get students to work together to compare answers, they call you over only if there's something they don't know or can't agree about

✓ Don't check at all! If you have been going around the class and can see that most students are doing it well, skip the checking. Just because two or three students need help is no reason to hold up the entire class with a general check. Find time to help those students separately.

2. CLASSROOM CLIMATE

READ THIS FIRST

We need to ensure that students in a heterogeneous group feel comfortable in the social setting of the class, that there is what we call a good 'classroom climate'. A good classroom climate means that students will feel that:

⇒ they will respect, and be respected by, the teacher and each other

⇒ they won't be laughed at if they get something wrong

⇒ the teacher will be fair and unbiased in the way he/she relates to them

⇒ they will be asked to do things that are within their ability

⇒ they feel they can succeed in learning English

⇒ they won't be stressed, threatened or humiliated

⇒ they will get help if they need it

... and so on (you can probably add to this list!).

TIPS

⇒ LESSON OPENINGS

⇒ Make sure the classroom is tidy and clean at the beginning of the lesson.

⇒ Smile at the students as we meet

⇒ Tell the students the agenda for the lesson

⇒ INFORMATION AND TRANSPARENCY

- ✓ Explain in advance the overall framework, goals, time-frame etc. of the course.
- ✓ Make sure instructions are mega-clear.
- ✓ Provide information to students outside the classroom where needed.
- ✓ Give advance notice of tests and what will be in them.
- ✓ Make sure students know how they'll be assessed (grades).

⇒ WARM 'SMILEY' ATMOSPHERE

- ✓ Smile fairly often.
- ✓ Use games or 'fun' activities regularly.
- ✓ Use music, songs, if you yourself like them!

⇒ SUCCESS-ORIENTATION

- ✓ Make sure the tasks are easily do-able by the students (or nearly all of them).
- ✓ Vary the kinds of tasks to allow for different learning tastes.

⇒ OPPORTUNITIES TO CLARIFY PROBLEMS

- ✓ Give students opportunities to ask questions or clarify problems if they need to.
- ✓ Relate to such questions patiently, and answer fully.

⇒ ERROR-CORRECTION

- ✓ Relate to mistakes as an important part of the learning process not as 'failures'.
- ✓ Correct mistakes tactfully and supportively.

⇒ A FEELING OF GROUP SOLIDARITY AND COOPERATION

- ✓ Try to emphasize 'we' rather than 'I' or 'he/she
- ✓ Sometimes do things deliberately to improve group solidarity (songs, group projects, performances to an external audience, etc.).
- ✓ Do quite a lot of collaborative work rather than competitive.
- ✓ Don't compare one student to another or use individuals as role models.
- ✓ Praise students who help each other.

⇒ TEACHER – INDIVIDUAL STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

- ✓ Learn all the students' names.
- ✓ Learn something about individual backgrounds, tastes etc. of as many students as you can.

⇒ RESPECT

- ✓ When a student speaks, listen attentively, don't interrupt
- ✓ Accept and respect a student's response even if it is not what you wanted / expected.
- ✓ Occasionally ask students for feedback on lessons.

3: ACTIVITY DESIGN

READ THIS FIRST

Designing and adapting activities for heterogeneous classes is basically a matter of 'tweaking' ready-made activities or improvising easily prepared new ones: it doesn't mean spending hours preparing different versions of a text or activity for different levels in the class. The tips in this section are listed under seven topic-headings, each representing a strategy or aspect of teaching technique that is useful in heterogeneous classes: Variation, Interest, Collaboration, Individualization, Personalization, Open-ending, Compulsory + Optional.

TIPS

VARIATION

Make sure you don't get into a 'rut' of doing the same kind of thing all the time; a mixed-level class needs variation!

VARY THE TOPIC.

Actually, the textbook will probably do this for you, most of our textbooks provide fairly varied topics. But you might find you need occasionally to introduce something different!

VARY THE DEMANDS.

Make sure that you don't stay at the same level. If you've just done quite a difficult text, follow it with a simple guessing activity; if you've spent a while doing something very easy, make sure that you give something more challenging next lesson. Same with pace: sometimes slower, sometimes faster

VARY THE CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION.

Some students really like group-work; others hate it. Some prefer to work individually. Some like to have teacher-led frontal sessions. So, make sure you use different kinds of interaction during a lesson and over a set of lessons.

VARY MATERIALS.

You'll probably use the textbook most of the time: that's fine. But get away from it sometimes and use other kinds of materials too: board-based activities, your own worksheets, computer exercises, pictures, games, teacher-talk ...

INTEREST

Students can get bored if the materials is clearly too difficult or too easy, or is routine stuff they've done lots of times before. When students are interested, you can see it immediately: they engage with the task voluntarily and actively, and clearly enjoy themselves doing so. Here are some ways of keeping them interested.

ACTIVATE THEM.

Students who are passive are less likely to be interested; they need to be actually doing things, not just looking on while other people are active.

USE 'OPEN-ENDED' QUESTIONS OR TASKS: ONES THAT HAVE MORE THAN ONE RIGHT ANSWER

'Brainstorming' tasks are a lot more interesting than 'get the right answer' ones – and activate a lot more students! (See 'open-ending' below.)

USE HIGHER-ORDER THINKING

Asking students just to identify or recall a word or fact or grammatical structure (lower-order thinking), as is done in gap-fill exercises, for example, is pretty boring. Asking them to do things like apply them to something in real life, or decide which is more important, or suggest what caused a situation, or think of connections between things (all of which involve higher order thinking skills) is much more interesting.

PERSONALIZE

Get the students to relate whatever it is to their own experience, opinions, preferences, and so on.

MAKE SURE THEY SUCCEED

Design or adapt the task so that it is clearly do-able (with a bit of an effort!) by the students.

MAKE INTO A GAME

Make a routine activity into a game by adding a game-like 'rule'. For example, a time-limit; or a team contest; or 'try to do this without peeping'. More examples in **Part II** below.

INDIVIDUALIZATION

Allow for individual variation in speed level, and learning style. We've looked at some techniques that allow you to do this earlier when discussing questioning. But these can apply to any classroom activity, so here's a brief recap:

⇒ LIMIT BY TIME NOT QUANTITY. Say 'Do as much as you can in ten minutes' rather than 'Do this exercise'.

⇒ TELL THEM IT'S OK IF THEY DON'T FINISH

⇒ ALLOW THEM TO START WHEREVER THEY LIKE / Tell them they can answer the items in whatever order they want.

⇒ ALLOW THEM TO CHOOSE if they do the task collaboratively or individually.

PERSONALIZATION

This means allowing for contributions that reflect personal taste, experience, opinion etc.. For example, inviting students to say what their favorite ... is, or whether they agree or disagree with something, or to share a childhood memory.

⇒ Invite them to relate the content of a text to their own experience. What does this remind you of? Can you recall anything similar from your own experience?

⇒ Invite them to express their opinions of characters, events in a story

⇒ Invite them to change sentences in a grammar or vocabulary exercise, so that they relate to themselves.

COLLABORATION

Collaboration means students working together to produce better results than they could on their own. We'll go into group work more below under section 5 below, but for the moment, just note that this is an aspect of activity design which can be very helpful in heterogeneous classes.

⇒ USE BRAINSTORMING.

Sharing ideas in the form of a brainstorm is a type of full-class collaboration, in that all the class together produces a far richer response than one person could have done. Feel free to participate yourself and add your own ideas. It's good to write up the responses in a 'scatter' on the board, to show how many items they've found!

⇒ USE THE 'PASS IT ON' TECHNIQUE

I can explain this best by an example. Each student has a piece of paper on which there is a set of words. They are asked to fill in four translations of any words they choose, then exchange with someone else. The student who got the paper fills in four more and exchanges again .. and so on, until most or all of the translations have been filled in. Then check in full class. This technique can be used in lots of ways: see **Part II** for some more suggestions.

⇒ USE GROUP-WORK

I won't go into this very deeply because it'll be covered in section 5 below. Just a brief warning: group work can sometimes result in loss of control, a 'sharing of ignorance' and time-wasting be very sure that you are using it in order to achieve a clear learning goal, not doing it for its own sake.

⇒ USE PAIR-WORK

Pair-work is often a good alternative to group work: easier to set up and control, and likely to lead to more participation.

OPEN-ENDING

This means giving tasks or questions that invite lots of acceptable responses, not just one right answer. That way, more students get to respond, and they can respond at different levels. So for example, if you're practicing the modal 'can' you might ask the 'closed-ended' question: Choose the right option: 'Jenny is a baby. Jenny *can / can't* ride a bicycle...' to which there is one right answer: too easy for some students, too difficult for others. But if you rephrase it: 'Jenny is a baby. Jenny can't ride a bicycle, but she can smile. What else can / can't Jenny do?' - then you'll get lots of right answers ranging from the very easy (e.g. 'Jenny can eat') to the more advanced (e.g. 'Jenny can't drive a car').

⇒ Make sure the basic question is easy enough to be done by everyone

⇒ 'Echo' responses as you get them to make sure everyone hears them and to serve as a model for further responses

COMPULSORY PLUS OPTIONAL

The basic task is easy enough to be done by everyone: but an additional task defined as 'optional' is added for those students who can cope with an additional challenge.

⇒ USE THE INSTRUCTION 'DO AT LEAST' OR 'DO... AND THEN DO ... IF YOU HAVE TIME'.

You can use this to adapt any textbook exercise for a heterogeneous class: for example, 'Do at least three items in this exercise, and then carry on and do as many more as you can.'

⇒ USE 'CORE PLUS OPTIONAL' IN TESTS TOO.

Add extra optional sections to tests, a bit more challenging than the rest of the test, for the faster or more advanced students to do. Give them bonus points for completing the optional sections (but only if they've done all the rest first!).

4: CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND DISCIPLINE

READ THIS FIRST

Why do discipline problems arise in general?

- ✓ Lack of motivation or interest
- ✓ Individual trouble-making students
- ✓ Trouble-makers whose behavior spreads to the entire group
- ✓ Conflicts between students who do not empathize with each other
- ✓ Difficult physical conditions: crowding, heat, cold, uncomfortable chairs
- ✓ A non-assertive teacher
- ✓ Lack of tradition of discipline in the school

Why are discipline problems more common in mixed-level classes?

- ✓ More advanced students get bored by too-easy tasks or input
- ✓ Less advanced students stop paying attention when the material is too difficult, and feel frustrated

- ✓ Any-level students may 'opt out' if the activity is not according to their learning style or doesn't interest them.

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

TIPS

1. PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE!

- ⇨ Foster a good classroom climate (see 2)
- ⇨ Have orderly lesson openings (particularly: opening routines such as five minutes reading, or a puzzle question on the board, or rituals such as writing up the date)
- ⇨ Clarify rules in advance (a class contract?), requirements, penalties for not keeping to the rules…
- ⇨ Then make sure you're consistent in observing them.
- ⇨ Keep up the pace: try to avoid pauses or gaps when they have nothing to do
- ⇨ Use activities that activate all the students (or most of them) simultaneously
- ⇨ Keep the lesson interesting (see 3)
- ⇨ Get quiet before you start talking
- ⇨ Make sure instructions are absolutely clear (including e.g. lesson agenda)
- ⇨ Make sure students have something to look at
- ⇨ With individuals you know in advance are likely to make problems:
  - ✓ Agree with them in advance what they'll do if they're bored
  - ✓ Provide an individual task each lesson from the beginning to keep them busy

2. CATCH PROBLEMS AS THEY START (DON'T LET THEM ESCALATE!)

- ⇨ Keep in touch with what is going on in the classroom ('eyes in the back of your head', constant scanning, moving around)
- ⇨ Respond quickly as soon as a problem starts arising
- ⇨ Respond quietly and locally (don't make it a full-class issue)
- ⇨ Don't make threats (unless you are prepared to carry them out!)

3. IF THERE'S AN ACUTE PROBLEM: DEAL WITH IT QUICKLY AND ASSERTIVELY! (DON'T HANG AROUND!)

Various possibilities:

- ⇨ Insist assertively on what you want
- ⇨ Give in (but quickly, giving your reasons, and not too often!)
- ⇨ Suggest a compromise
- ⇨ Postpone ('we'll discuss this next lesson and decide')

5: GROUP WORK

READ THIS FIRST

For many students, collaborative work in small groups helps them learn better. It also helps them develop speaking skills and enhances their ability to work in a team.
Some types of group work are:

- ⇨ Collaborative Writing Tasks
- ⇨ Task-Based/Group Projects
- ⇨ 'Jigsaw' tasks (see **Part II**)
- ⇨ STAD (see **Part II**)

TIPS

- ⇨ Do group work in the middle of the lesson.
- ⇨ Make it clear to students why they are doing this task collaboratively (rationale)
- ⇨ Allow sufficient time for group work. It can take longer than you think!
- ⇨ Plan carefully and decide in advance:
  - ✓ Group size and composition.
  - ✓ How you will divide the class into groups.
  - ✓ How students will be physically arranged in groups.
  - ✓ How to ensure participation of all group members.
- ⇨ Give clear instructions (**before** you put them into groups!)

- ⇨ Organize groups quickly.
- ⇨ Use pair work activities where you can as an alternative to small groups.
- ⇨ Insist on professional, civil conduct among students.
- ⇨ Optionally, set roles for group members (e.g. taking notes, ensuring participation, making sure they keep to English).
- ⇨ Use follow-up feedback and assessment procedures such as the following:
  - ✓ Overall, how effectively did your team work on this project? (Poorly, well, extremely well)
  - ✓ What percentage of your team was fully involved most of the time?
  - ✓ Write one thing you have learned from your team.
  - ✓ Write one thing you think the team has learned from you.
  - ✓ Suggest one idea to improve your team work in the future.

6: ASSESSMENT

READ THIS FIRST

Students need to be given the opportunity to demonstrate what they can do. Assessment is about evaluating what they can do rather than what they can't. So make sure they have a good chance of succeeding.

Assessment can be divided into a) **formative** assessment, which helps students progress and b) **summative** assessment, which simply sums up their level at the end of a program in the form of a grade, like Bagrut. We as teachers are mainly concerned with **formative.**

Formative assessment implies helping students find out:

- ⇨ where they are in the teaching/learning process;
- ⇨ where they need to go;
- ⇨ how to get there;

Feedback is an integral part of the instructional/assessment process and should be meaningful. (Teachers also need to get feedback from students!)

TIPS

- ⇨ Give students more than one chance to demonstrate learning. If they fail, let them try again.
- ⇨ When correcting, pick a specific aspect that needs improvement – don't correct everything.
- ⇨ Be constructive, positive and complimentary.
- ⇨ Use L1 if necessary to make sure your feedback is understood.
- ⇨ Allow time to review material before testing
- ⇨ Plan your test to accommodate different ability levels.

- ⇨ Make sure that the passing grade is attainable by everyone. Add a 'bonus' section for more advanced students.
- ⇨ Vary the types of item in your test.
- ⇨ Vary the topics, text types, and level of difficulty
- ⇨ Simplify texts or make them more challenging as needed.
- ⇨ Vary: the length of the text; the length and complexity of sentences; the vocabulary level; the amount of visual support (pictures); the amount of repetition of information; the topic (familiar and/or concrete, as opposed to unfamiliar and/or abstract); the amount of background information given;
- ⇨ Vary the question type in a test. For example: true/false, matching, gapfills, sentence completion, short or long answers, one right answer or several possible answers.
- ⇨ Vary the task level in a test. For example, whether you ask them just to recognize or actually produce the target item; locate information in a text, or produce it; give a limited or complex response.
- ⇨ Clarify to yourself and to students how you will give a grade for their report cards
  - ✓ Make sure you have recorded over the year all the information you need to give a grade
  - ✓ Decide how you will construct the grade: how much of it will be based on test grades? How much on your estimation of how hard they have worked? Or how much they have progressed? Will you take into account things like homework completion? Behavior? Participation? Bringing books to class?
- ⇨ Involve Students in the Assessment Process
  - ✓ Discuss with the students the criteria for assessing tasks
  - ✓ Take into account their own self-assessment

PART II: ACTIVITIES

This part is divided into two section: **Free-standing activities** for heterogeneous classes and **Adapting textbook exercises**.

1: Free-standing activities

1. VOCABULARY REVIEW: END A SENTENCE ABOUT ME

Invent beginnings of sentences that include words you've recently learned, and write them on the board. The sentences should be personal. So if you've just taught a word like *difficult*, then you could write up 'I find it difficult to...'.

Tell them to copy down and complete the sentences, and then share.

2. SAY THINGS ABOUT A PICTURE

In groups of three, choose one member of the group to be 'secretary' and write ticks (✓).

Tell them they have one minute exactly to say as many simple sentences about a picture as they can. All members of the group contribute, the 'secretary' writes a ✓ for every sentence said. Stress that they should not try to write out the sentences, only say them!

They can only start when you say 'go' and stop when you say 'stop'. Give them exactly one minute.

Ask them to count up their ticks.

Then tell them to do the same with another picture, trying to break their previous 'record'.

3. PASS IT ON (1): OPPOSITES

Give out a page with a number of items that have opposites: for example, *black, day, long, girl* etc. Leave a gap after each.

Tell students to fill in any four of the opposites they can, then they raise their paper above their heads. They exchange with another student who is raising his/her paper and fill in another four. And so on. At the end, display or read out the right answers.

Variation: Do the same with synonyms, or translations, or collocations (what other word might go with this one?).

4. PASS IT ON (2): FREE WRITING

Use the same technique to practice writing. Give them the first line of a story to copy down at the top of a blank page: 'Once upon a time there was'

They should complete the sentence, then raise their sheet as in the previous activity, and exchange. They write the next sentence of the story on the sheet they have received and pass it on as before. After you see they have had enough, or there are at least six or seven sentences, stop them and invite them to read out their stories (or read them out yourself).

With more advanced classes, you can do the same with poem writing (free verse, obviously!). Give them a topic (e.g. 'Spring' or 'The sea') and invite them to write an opening line for a poem. Then pass it on. The advantage of this one is that each contribution doesn't have to be a full sentence and can even be a single word.

5. PASS IT ON (3): CONDITIONALS

Tell students each to choose any number from one to seven. Then write or display on the board the following 'starter' sentences:

1. If I were not here
2. If everyone knew English
3. If I lived in China
4. If I had twenty children
5. If I knew Japanese
6. If the climate became very cold

... and tell them to write at the top of a sheet of paper the 'starter' sentence whose number they chose. They should then finish the sentence as they wish: for example, for #1 they might write 'I would be at the shopping center'. They then raise their paper and find someone to exchange with. They write a following sentence, using the second conditional form, based on what they read. So for example, if they read 'If I were not here I would be at the shopping center', then they would begin their new line 'If I were in the shopping center' and continue perhaps 'I would buy myself a new dress'. They then exchange as before. in the end, each paper has a 'chain' of conditions and results, which can be very funny when you read them out at the end.

6. RECALL AND SHARE

Write on the board a set of about ten words or phrases you want to practise. Tell the students to look at them and try to memorize them, without writing them down. After a few seconds, erase or hide the words and challenge them to remember and write down as many as they can, each on his or her own. When they've remembered as many as they can on their own, they can join a friend or two and see if they can together get all of them. Later, display the words again so they can check.

7. QUICK BINGO

Again, to review a set of vocabulary items you've written up on the board: tell the students each to choose four of the items and write them down. Call out the items, or their translations, one by one. Any you call out, a student who has the item written down crosses it out. The first to cross out all their items is the first winner. The last to cross out all the items is the second winner (there are usually several 'second' winners).

8. BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming can be used to practise almost any grammar or vocabulary, and it can be a lot of fun. Let students suggest as many responses as they can: perhaps add a challenge by saying 'let's see if we can get up to ten (twenty? thirty?) ideas', or 'let's see how many we can find in two minutes'.

Here are some examples:

PRACTICE OF CAN/COULD

How many ways can you think of to use an empty tin can? (A pen? A piece of plasticine?)

ADJECTIVE-BEFORE-NOUN, VOCABULARY

How many adjectives can you think of to describe the noun *road*? (story? *song*?)

How many nouns can you think of that could be described by the adjective *hard*? (*black*? *clear*?)

COMPARATIVE OF ADJECTIVES

How many ways can you think of to compare a train with a car? A computer with an egg?

COMPARATIVE OF ADJECTIVES

How many endings can you think of for the sentence: If I had a million dollars…?

BOTH..

Think of some ways in which a lesson is like a party.

INTERROGATIVES

Find six questions to which the answer is … twelve…(tomorrow …London ... yes)

WRITING

Suggest advantages of not having a cellphone (of having no car)

NEGATIVE SENTENCES

Name some things you have never done.

Name some things that you can't touch, and why.

Say some negative things about …a pen (a cat / English)

Say some NICE things about your friend, using negative sentences.

9. REVERSE GUESSING

Two students stand with their backs to the board. You write up / display six items around the same topic theme. The rest of the class say hints in English to get the students to guess the words, in any order. They cannot mime or point or translate into L1.

This can also be run as a team game. In this case, each team in turn sends two representatives to the board and only members of their team can call out hints to get them to guess. The teacher times how long it takes them to guess all the items. The winning team is the one which has taken least time after a few 'rounds'.

Here are some ideas for lists of words to guess.

Colors 1	**Animals 1**	**Parts of the body 1**
blue	dog	head
green	cow	finger
white	lion	foot
brown	bird	ears
pink	spider	nose
gold	fox	shoulders

Colors 2	**Animals 2**	**Parts of the body 2**
red	cat	hand
black	mouse	leg
yellow	sheep	mouth
orange	horse	eye
gray	rabbit	hair
silver	snake	back

Places 1	Feelings 1	Professions 1
hotel	happy	teacher
school	afraid	doctor
supermarket	worried	writer
hospital	excited	businessman
library	nervous	painter
shoe shop	shy	driver

Places 2	Feelings 2	Professions 2
airport	angry	singer
park	sad	student
train station	sure	gardener
bus stop	bored	salesperson
post office	tired	farmer
bank	surprised	hairdresser

Transport 1	Landscape 1	Qualities of people 1
car	tree	intelligent
train	river	kind
taxi	mountain	quiet
plane	valley	responsible
helicopter	forest	friendly
boat	moon	young

Transport 2	Landscape 2	Qualities of people 2
bicycle	sky	tall
bus	field	creative
motorbike	road	hard- working
truck	hill	fair
jeep	cloud	respectful
ship	sun	funny

10. THE HUMAN TREASURE HUNT

Students are instructed to discover facts about as many classmates as possible within a limited time (5-7 minutes? 15 minutes?)

Below are some ideas, but you might add some more yourself:

Find someone who……

Is good at cooking a special dish_____ What kind of dish? _____

Has recently helped someone_____ Who did he/she help? What did he/she do?

Is good at repairing things_____

Likes to read _____ What kind of books?

Has a hobby _____ Which hobby?

11. FIND A TWIN

Ask students to complete the following sentences on a piece of paper with **true** facts about themselves.

My favorite activity is ...

A chore I really like doing is ...

A place I'd love to visit is...

Something that really annoys me is ...

Then they get up and 'mingle', trying to find other people who share one or more of their items.

12. JIGSAW

Home Group: Heterogeneous groups with four- five students are set up.

Expert Group: Each group member is assigned some unique material to learn and then to teach to his group members. To help in the learning students across the class working on the same sub-section get together to decide what is important and how to teach it.

Home Group: After practice in these "expert" groups the original groups reform and students teach each other.

Tests or assessment follows.

GUIDELINES FOR JIGSAW ACTIVITY

Divide students into 5- or 6-person jigsaw groups. The groups should be diverse in terms of ability.

Appoint one student from each group as the leader.

Assign each student to learn one segment, making sure students have direct access only to their own segment.

Give students time to read over their segment at least twice and become familiar with it.

Form temporary "expert groups" by having one student from each jigsaw group join other students assigned to the same segment.

Give students in these expert groups time to discuss the main points of their segment and to rehearse the presentations they will make to their jigsaw group.

Bring the students back into their jigsaw groups.

Ask each student to present her or his segment to the group. Encourage others in the group to ask questions for clarification.

At the end of the session (or unit), give a quiz on the material so that students quickly come to realize that these sessions are not just fun and games but really count.

13. STAD (STUDENT TEAMS ACHIEVEMENT DIVISION)

In STAD, students study with 4-5 team members following a teacher presentation. Teams are made up of students with varying levels.

Students take quizes individually to demonstrate how much they have learned.

The individual quiz scores are summed to form a team score, and teams are rewarded for their performance.

The entire cycle of activities, from teacher presentation to team practice to quiz, usually takes three to five class periods.

It is most appropriate for teaching well-defined objectives with single right answers, such as knowledge of events in history, grammatical knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, etc.

Note: Activities presented in this section are based on Wheelan, S.A. (2005). *The Handbook of Group Research and Practice.* The Handbook of Group Research and Practice: Sage Publications Inc.

2: ADAPTING TEXTBOOK EXERCISES

1. DO AT LEAST

Invite students to do a set number of the exercise questions as compulsory, then complete as much as they can of the rest in the time given.

For example, when doing the following exercise:

a clock, a dog, a dress, a mother, black, a pen, bread, pants, bag, a husband, red, boots, a cat, rice, a frog, a baby, pink, a teenager, a hat, a banana, a book, a sheep, meat, kids, a desk, green, an elephant, salt, a t-shirt, white					
animals	colors	things	food	clothes	people

Instead of 'Put these words in the right column' tell them to 'find at least three things to put in each column, more if you can'.

Or with any grammar or vocabulary exercise of numbered questions, tell them to do the first four questions, more if they can.

2. DELETE THE 'BANK' OR GIVEN OPTIONS

Tell students to ignore the word(s) they are told to include in the answer and invent their own sentence-completions.

If, for example the given exercise is something like the following:

Write the correct past form

She _____ early. (leave)

He _____ the cake. (make)

I _____ there for six hours. (sit)

The man _____ the book. (read)

You might do it as it is first, and then the second time tell them to ignore the endings of the sentences and invent their own.

So: She _____ early. (leave)

He _____ the cake. (make)

I _____ there for six hours. (sit)

The man _____ the book. (read)

Then they could suggest things like 'She left the house' or 'He made a mistake' and so on. Or tell them to delete the verb.

So: She _____ early. (leave)

He _____ the cake. (make)

I _____ there for six hours. (sit)

The man _____ the book. (read)

3. PASS IT ON.

Using their workbooks, or a worksheet, tell them which page or exercise to work on. They do three items, then exchange with someone else in the class, do three more, exchange... and so on.

4. HELP A FRIEND

Tell students to do as much as they can of a given exercise, then find someone else to share with. Help each other finish it.