

---

## Activities to Promote Interaction and Communication

Adult English language learners at all proficiency levels, including literacy- and beginning-level learners, need to speak and understand spoken English for a variety of reasons. Immigrant adults need English for daily life to communicate with the doctor, the school, the community, and the workplace. Learners at all proficiency levels *can* communicate, and they appreciate being encouraged and challenged to further their skills. They participate in interactive, communicative activities in all facets of the class—from ice-breaking activities, needs assessment, and goal-setting to life-skills, phonics, and spelling. This is especially true where there is a strong classroom community that supports natural language production.

### **What are Communicative Activities?**

Communicative activities include any activities that encourage and require a learner to speak with and listen to other learners, as well as with people in the program and community. Communicative activities have real purposes: to find information, break down barriers, talk about self, and learn about the culture. Even when a lesson is focused on developing reading or writing skills, communicative activities should be integrated into the lesson. Furthermore, research on second language acquisition (SLA) suggests that more learning takes place when students are engaged in relevant tasks within a dynamic learning environment rather than in traditional teacher-led classes (Moss & Ross-Feldman, 2003).

### **Benefits of Communicative Activities**

Some immigrants, such as parents, elders, or people who work in isolated environments (like housekeepers and babysitters) may feel lonely and experience depression or have low self-esteem. They may begin to feel that they will never learn English or never feel comfortable in the United States. Offering well-designed and well-executed communicative activities can help turn the English classroom into an active, safe, and enjoyable place where literacy- and beginning-level learners can learn what they need and want to learn.

### **Challenges**

Most English language learners have had access to some schooling in their native countries. Their school was probably very teacher-directed. Learners were expected to be quiet and listen to the teacher and then, when asked, to respond to the teacher in unison with the one correct answer. Because of this, some adult English language learners may be initially disconcerted when their English teacher begins asking them to get up and move around, work in pairs or groups, and talk to one another. It also may be difficult for learners to realize that there can be more than one correct response to a question and many ways to ask a question. However, many, if not most, learners adapt and prosper with increased interactivity and independence.

### Tips for Maximizing the Effectiveness of Activities

Communicative activities such as those described below can be used successfully with many class levels. They are especially crucial for literacy- and beginning-level classes as vehicles to move learners toward independent and confident learning. To make these activities as useful as possible there are a few things to remember:

- Keep teacher talk to a minimum. Explain as much as possible by demonstrating the process, explaining in different ways, and repeating. Don't worry if every learner doesn't understand every part of an activity. Move on when the majority of the learners get the idea, and then circulate and help as needed—unobtrusively. One way to gauge the success of a class for English language learners is to observe how much or how little the students are depending on the teacher. The more learners are working independently, in pairs, or in small groups, the more successful the class.
- Literacy- and beginning-level learners, as well as those at intermediate and advanced levels, are highly competent individuals. They may lack English and (for some) school skills, and it is the teacher's job to help them with that. These adults have successfully weathered many difficulties to get to class. Give them the credit they deserve.
- Have fun. Communicative activities are designed to be lively, interactive, and fun. When people are comfortable they are likely to learn more. An active, cooperative class is a class where a great deal of learning—social, cultural, and linguistic—is evident.

Communicative activities provide opportunities for learners to use the language with one another and with people in the community. The activities included on the following pages can be used with literacy- and beginning-level learners.

### Sample Activities

The following activities provide opportunities for interaction and communication:

*Activity II-1:* Class Survey

*Activity II-2:* Conversation Grid

*Activity II-3:* Line Dialogue

*Activity II-4:* Information Gap

*Activity II-5:* Language Experience Approach

*Activity II-6:* Games

### Reference

Moss, D., & Ross-Feldman, L. (2003). *Second-language acquisition in adults: From research to practice*. Retrieved December 14, 2004 from [http://www.cal.org/caela/esl\\_resources/digests/sla.html](http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/sla.html)

### *Activity II-1: Class Survey*

**Highlights:** Class surveys are fun and not overly challenging. They are very effective as ice-breaking activities, especially at the beginning of a course. They also let learners know that class will be more than sitting at a desk and copying the teacher's words. It is important to do something with the survey information. Otherwise, there is no intrinsic reason for gathering the information. Therefore, plan ways to process the information. **Note:** Make sure the survey questions are appropriate to the class. For example, if everyone in the group is from Mexico, then asking, "What country are you from?" will not be pertinent. Similarly, asking a group of elderly seniors, "How many of your children go to school?" may not be appropriate. Watch for American cultural taboos about age, money, religion, etc. Also, make sure not to inadvertently ask about an uncomfortable topic.

**Objective:** Learners gather information about a particular topic. They increase proficiency and confidence in asking one or more questions at the same time as they are increasing graphic literacy skills.

**Context:** This class survey activity is especially useful for beginning levels because not much information needs to be asked or recorded and only one or two questions and answers need to be learned. Surveys can be used with higher levels if more complex questions and answers are required. Surveys are suitable for general ESL classes, but can also be tailored to a workplace (see examples that follow).

**Estimated time:** Time varies according to how much information is gathered. In the literacy- or beginning-level class, a survey might consist of one question that simply requires students to ask and record the name of every person in class (either first or last, but probably not both at once). In a more advanced class, a survey might require students to ask and record the names of television shows watched and time spent watching these shows in the past week. In both of these cases, the time to do the survey will vary according to how many learners there are in the class, and how long it takes for the spelling and the recording to take place. **Note:** If information gathering takes more than 20-30 minutes, you might consider debriefing during the next class session.

**Materials:** The teacher needs to make a survey form so learners can easily ask the question or questions and record answers. If the information is going to be gathered into a simple bar graph or pie chart, or recorded on flip chart paper, this needs to be ready in advance.

**Procedure:**

1. Build on what learners already know (e.g., the common question, "Where are you from?"). Therefore, pre-teach and practice the questions and vocabulary needed to answer the questions. For example, in a class where learners are collecting information about native countries, record the names of those countries in advance so that students have the information available to them.
2. Hand out the survey forms and explain the task to learners. (They need to walk around the room asking everyone the question and recording the answers).
3. Model the procedures with one or two learner volunteers and check comprehension of instructions. For example, ask, "What are the questions on the survey form?" "How many people will you talk to today?"
4. Once learners begin to complete the survey, monitor the process and be ready to assist learners if they ask for help. **Note:** Don't be alarmed if you see someone copying from another's paper or someone writing information down right on the questioner's sheet. The main idea is to get

authentic communication going, and it is good for people to help each other. Do watch out for one person overpowering a quieter or less comfortable person; this would defeat the purpose of the exercise and be counter to the egalitarian structure of the class.

5. Discuss the information with the class. Using the information from the surveys (see *Sample Surveys*, page II–45), you can ask questions such as, “How many people are from El Salvador? Bosnia? China?” or: “How many people watched TV more than 10 hours last week? What shows were watched the most frequently?” You can have learners work in small groups to categorize information, create graphs, or write sentences summarizing the information.

**Evaluation:** Circulate and listen to the questions and answers. Collect the information sheets to look for writing issues.

**Note:** The sample survey on the next page would typically be used at the beginning of a class cycle. Not only is it important for every student to know all the other learners’ names (and at least an approximation of the pronunciation), but asking each other the question “What is your first name?” helps learners begin to navigate first name, family name issues, as a real life skill. Furthermore, in all facets of life learners must spell their names so they need to be familiar with the phrase “spell it, please.” As learners spell their names and hear others spell theirs, they may solidify their alphabetic knowledge. Particularly with native Spanish speakers, understanding and applying the changes in vowel sounds from Spanish to English may take some time, but this survey provides a good start.

After the learners have written down all the names (including their own names), there are several ways to process the information:

1. The teacher can pass out another blank list and ask learners to work in pairs or small groups to alphabetize the first names and then to transcribe them again in alphabetical order. As the teacher demonstrates the process using several examples, the learners are continuing to memorize their classmates’ names at the same time they are working on the basic skill of alphabetizing. Learners will be much more interested in this activity than if they were asked to alphabetize a list of words that had no meaning for them.
2. As an alternative, the teacher and the class can work through the alphabetizing as a group activity at the board or on an overhead or poster.

In the same class period or in the next class session, the teacher can demonstrate that she knows everyone’s first name (a teacher needs to know all of the learners’ names and be able to pronounce them by the end of the second or third class meeting). Then, teacher can ask for volunteers to see if they can say each classmate’s name. This can be challenging, but several learners usually do volunteer and successfully remember all the names. This is an important activity because it validates skills that many literacy-level learners employ—careful observation and good memory. Follow-up activities might include conducting the survey using the last names, often a slightly more difficult task or reviewing questions in a line dialogue (page II–48).

**Sample II-22: Class Survey (Beginning Level)**

Teacher Instructions: See page II-44, #5.

Name _____	
Date _____	
<b>Directions:</b> Please ask the question of <b>every</b> student in class. Write down the names.	
<b>What is your first name?</b> (Spell it, please)	<b>Where are you from?</b>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**Sample II-23: Class Survey (Intermediate to Advanced Levels)**

Teacher Instructions: See page II-44, #5.

Name _____	
Date _____	
<b>Directions:</b> Please ask the questions of <b>every</b> student in class. Write down the answers they give you.	
<b>What is your name?</b>	<b>How many hours did you watch TV last week?</b>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

## Activity II–2: Conversation Grid

**Highlights:** The power of using conversation grid activities is that learners are involved in authentic, independent, and cooperative conversation without direct teacher involvement. These grids can be used with any topic as teaching or assessment activities. Learners usually enjoy them greatly.

**Objective:** Learners practice and increase knowledge of language structures (such as what, when, where, and why questions and their typical answers), vocabulary (as related to a particular topic such as “on the job”), and cultural aspects related to a topic. They ask questions, listen to answers, and record information on the grid.

**Context:** This activity is suitable for general ESL classes as well as specific classes such as family literacy or workplace classes.

**Estimated time:** The time varies (see explanation for Activity II–1, page II–43: Class Survey), but usually ranges between 20 and 30 minutes.

**Materials:** Draw a large grid on the board or have an overhead transparency with a sample of the grid to explain the activity. Learners need conversation grids to record answers. (See examples that follow. Grids can have complete questions (e.g., What is your job now? What do you like to do in your free time?) or cue phrases (e.g., job in United States; hobbies).

### Procedure:

1. Review language structures and key vocabulary that have been previously taught and are needed to successfully complete this activity. The review should be verbal and written with plenty of input from the learners. For example, if one of the questions is going to be about native country, with learner input, get all the names of countries up on the board or on flip chart paper so it will be easily accessible when learners begin to work on their own grids.
2. Hand out the grids and explain the task: “Today you’re going to interview five classmates. You will write their answers to your questions on this form.”
3. Discuss conversation questions, e.g., “What is your job now?” “What do you like to do in your free time? What else do you like to do?”
4. Talk about possible answers such as *construction worker*, *play soccer*, *watch soccer on TV*.
5. Model the task with one or two learner volunteers. It’s important to model several answers and questions so that learners know that full sentence answers such as “I am a construction worker” or short answers such as “construction worker” are both acceptable. **Note:** As in all activities, modeling correct answers to issues such as “Her name” vs. “she name” is more effective than giving a big explanation about the correct grammar. This is especially true with formulaic phrases that use structures not yet discussed in class.
6. Check comprehension of instructions. For example, ask, “How many questions are you asking each classmate?” “How many people will you speak with today?”
7. Once learners begin the activity, monitor the process and be ready to assist learners if they ask for help. **Note:** Some will finish only one conversation while others may do several. That’s okay; people process, learn, and interact at different rates.
8. When the general buzz quiets down, it is time to stop the activity. Discuss the information with the class, for example, “Tell the class something you learned about one of your classmates.” You can tabulate information on a master grid or have learners work in small groups to do a tabulation of their grid information.

**Evaluation:** Evaluation is ongoing and informal. The teacher can participate or just observe the conversations to note communicative abilities (as well as observe writing abilities from the grid). It is particularly useful as you can watch individual learners progress from week to week.

Teacher Instructions: See page II-46 for instructions on using these grids.

**Sample II-24: Conversation Grid**  
**Personal Identification (All Levels)**

What is your first name? (Spell it please)	Where are you from?	What is your address?
Rosario	Mexico	701 N. Oak St.

**Sample II-25: Conversation Grid**  
**Work (Intermediate and Advanced Levels)**

What's your name?	What's your job now?	How long have you had this job?	What was your job in your home country?
Jose Gomez	construction worker	5 months	engineer

**Sample II-26: Conversation Grid**  
**Free Time (Intermediate and Advanced Levels)**

What's your name?	What do you like to do in your free time?	When do you have free time?	What did you do in your free time in your country?
Hajib Mansoor	play soccer	on Sunday afternoon	play soccer and go fishing

### Activity II-3: *Line Dialogue*

**Highlights:** This activity is good for a change of pace and gets learners out of their chairs interacting with everyone in the class. A great deal of peer teaching and friendly conversation can happen throughout this activity.

**Objectives:** Learners get intensive (repeated many times) practice using the targeted language in short dialogues. Learners may get to know one another in an atmosphere where peer teaching is naturally supported.

**Context:** This activity can be used in all levels or multilevel classes. It is suitable for general ESL classes as well as specific classes such as workplace or family literacy classes. This activity works best for classes with at least 10-12 learners.

**Estimated Time:** The first time this activity is used, the explanation may require several repetitions and demonstrations. Afterwards, line dialogues should take no more than 15 minutes. After 15 minutes, the activity may become a little tedious.

**Materials:** Learners in one line have **Cue Cards** that are used to elicit responses from learners in the other line. Cue cards can contain word or picture clues for responses to questions. Realia (authentic items) are also effective for beginning level classes. If learners are using familiar questions such as “What is your name?” or “How are you?” no cue card prompts may be necessary. For higher level students, cue cards will probably not be needed. Questions for higher level students come from the targeted language. “What would you do if you won one million dollars?” or “What would you like to be doing 10 years from now?” might be questions asked and answered in a line dialogue with intermediate or advanced learners.

**Procedure:**

1. Pre-teach dialogue.
2. Learners form two lines facing each other. Hand out cue cards to learners in LINE A. These cue cards are used to elicit responses from learners in LINE B.
3. LINE A remains stationary, repeating the same questions to every learner in Line B. Learners in LINE B listen to the question, look at the cue cards, respond to the question, and then move to the right and face another learner in Line A. All pairs talk at once. The last person in Line B moves to the beginning of the line. The activity continues until everyone in Line A has asked a question to everyone in Line B. **Example:** Task: Learners will identify body parts from visuals. Dialogue: A: What’s wrong? B: My back hurts.

**Note:** There are a variety of ways to set up a line dialogue. There may be only one line asking questions, or both lines can ask questions. As discussed above, cue cards may or may not be used. In classes where learners have some comfort and familiarity with everyday language, learners decide on their own what questions to ask. In all cases, one line remains stationary and the other moves.

**Evaluation:** This activity provides the teacher with an excellent opportunity to unobtrusively evaluate learners; once learners understand how to conduct a line dialogue, they usually have so much fun that they don’t pay attention to the teacher at all. During this activity, the teacher can observe learners’ speaking and listening skills, vocabulary knowledge, question formation or clarification skills, and even comfort level using English.

**Extension activities:** To give learners an opportunity to speak English with others, two small classes could participate in the line dialogue. These classes could be at approximately the same level or the less advanced class could comprise the stationary line and practice the questions in advance.

(Adapted from the *REEP Adult ESL Curriculum*. Available from [www.apsva.us/reep](http://www.apsva.us/reep). Adapted with permission.)

### Activity II–4: *Information Gap*

**Highlights:** In this activity two learners share information to complete a task. In one-way gap activities, one learner has all the information (e.g., one learner describes a picture and the other learner draws it). In two-way gap activities, both learners have some information and must share it with the other to complete the task. Because this activity usually combines speaking and listening with reading and writing, all the skills are practiced.

**Objective:** Learners find and share information by asking and answering questions in order to complete a task.

**Context:** This activity can be used in all levels or with multilevel groups. It is suitable for general ESL classes as well as specific classes such as family literacy or workplace classes.

**Estimated time:** The time varies, but usually ranges between 20 and 35 minutes.

**Materials:** The teacher prepares a master handout based on information, language structures, and vocabulary the students have been working on. Then, the teacher deletes pieces of information on two sets of handouts. For example, Handout “A” will have some information deleted that handout “B” will provide. Handout “B” will have other pieces of information deleted that handout “A” will provide. For example, in a workplace context the master could be a weekly schedule or list of work tasks. The teacher can make one side more challenging than the other, to meet the needs of learners at different levels.

**Procedure:**

1. Pre-teach and practice vocabulary and structures for the particular task. Learners should also be familiar with question and answer formulas (e.g., “What time is \_\_\_” and “It’s at \_\_\_”), and ways to ask for clarification (e.g., “Excuse me, can you repeat,” or “I’m sorry, I don’t understand”). These can be introduced in the beginning days of a class, and recycled, adapted, and extended over time.
2. Explain the information-gap procedures by modeling a sample gap activity with an able volunteer from the class.
3. Have learners work with a partner. One learner in each pair gets Handout “A” and the other gets Handout “B”. Ask two learners to model the asking and answering of questions in the gap activity before the whole class begins the activity.

**Notes:** For a multilevel class you can make the “A” form more difficult than the “B” form. Be sure to pass out the papers to the appropriate person. The first time you do this activity, some learners may be somewhat confused, but as you reuse this activity in other contexts, learners will feel comfortable. Ask learners not to show each other the forms, but don’t worry when that occurs.

4. Learners ask and answer questions and record answers until both form “A” and form “B” have been completed.
5. Ask learners to compare their papers with each other.
6. To complete the activity as a whole group, you can ask volunteers to come up to the board or overhead to fill in information they’ve gathered from their partner. This helps solidify the knowledge and gives some slower learners or pairs a chance to catch up and check their work without stress.

**Evaluation:** Walking around the room observing learners during the activity will let you know how well individual learners use and understand English in the activity.

**Variations:** The handouts may be menus, store ads, maps, pictures, or charts, as well as readings.

**Extension activities:** Let learners create their own information gap activities.

**Sample II-27: Two-Way Information Gap Activity (Intermediate Level)**

<p><b>Student A:</b></p> <p><b>Read the story to your partner. When you find a blank _____, ask your partner for help.</b></p> <p>The Pilgrims came from (1) _____. They came on the ship, the Mayflower, in the winter of (2) _____. Before these immigrants landed on shore at Plymouth Rock, they signed a document to form a simple government called the (3) _____.</p> <p><b>Listen to the story. Help your partner with words on the list.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Atlantic Ocean</li> <li>2. Squanto</li> <li>3. Massasoit</li> </ol> <p><b>Now, take turns reading the entire story.</b></p>	<p><b>Student B:</b></p> <p><b>Listen to the story. Help your partner with words on the list.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. England</li> <li>2. 1620</li> <li>3. The Mayflower Compact</li> </ol> <p><b>Read the story to your partner. When you find a blank _____, ask your partner for help.</b></p> <p>The Pilgrims had a difficult time because many were sick from crossing the (1) _____, the weather was very cold, and they had only a little food. Native Americans including (2) _____ and (3) _____ helped the immigrants by giving them food and advice.</p> <p><b>Now take turns reading the entire story.</b></p>
---	--

(Adapted from the *REEP Adult ESL Curriculum*. Available from [www.apsva.us/reep](http://www.apsva.us/reep). Adapted with permission.)

### **Activity II–5: Language Experience Approach**

**Highlights:** The language experience approach to instruction builds learners’ literacy skills as their personal experiences are transcribed and become reading material for them. In this type of activity, spoken language and written language are linked. A language experience story can be effective for class community building. It also provides reading material for beginning level learners whose English oral skills exceed their literacy skills. Follow-up activities can include using the class-generated text to teach explicit literacy skills through activities that require learners to select words from the story for vocabulary, spelling, or sound-symbol correspondence activities. The text can also be used to review a grammar point, such as sequence of tenses, word order, or pronoun referents (see Cloze Activity, page II–53).

**Objective:** To record learners’ own ideas and oral language and use the stories to increase literacy skills.

**Context:** This activity can be very effective in literacy- and beginning-level classes where most of the students have limited writing skills. It is suitable for general ESL classes as well as specific classes such as workplace or family literacy classes. It is not usually used in intermediate level or above classes.

**Estimated time:** The time varies widely depending on whether the shared activity the class writes about was a lengthy activity such as a class field trip or a shorter activity such as the shared viewing of a photograph in class. The core of the language experience approach—the group telling process while the teacher writes down the learners’ words—may take a short time, between 10-20 minutes. This document then can be used in multiple ways over time (e.g., for building sight vocabulary, spelling practice, listening to dictation, or learning basic grammar points, like personal pronouns or the verb “to be”).

**Materials:** You will need the shared experience of the learners, or the “prompt.” In addition, you will need a chalkboard or flip chart to record what students say. (See sample language experience activities below.)

#### **Procedure:**

1. First, learners need to share an experience, such as going to a museum exhibit, the local fair, or the grocery store. Sharing an evocative photograph or picture story or watching a video could also provide the prompt.
2. After the shared experience, elicit the story of the experience by asking learners questions and encouraging learners to contribute to the story. **Note:** Each member of the whole group can make a comment. In some groups it might be most effective to go around the room in order, assuming that all will respond. You can also ask for volunteers and in more multilevel groups, the more proficient or confident learners might share first, giving the other learners more time to think and to pattern their responses after the other students.
3. Write down what learners say. **Note:** There are opposing ideas about how a language experience approach activity should be conducted. Some teachers say that, to be authentic, the teacher must record exactly what each learner says, even if it is not correct. Other teachers say that a teacher should model a learner’s words correctly (e.g. changing incorrect number, pronoun reference, or verb form) because students want to use English correctly and that writing down mistakes reinforces the mistake. Writing the learners’ words correctly often better serves the learners’ needs and wishes.
4. After recording the story, read it aloud to the group and give the group an opportunity to edit or revise (adding or eliminating information).

5. Provide learners with an opportunity to read the story. They can read it in unison, or take turns reading it out loud.
6. Use the story to develop reading skill-building activities. For example, you can make sentence strips and have learners put the sentences in order. To build vocabulary sight words, you can create cloze activities in which learners fill in the blanks with key words. See sample language experience approach activities below.

**Evaluation:** The sharing of the experience and the language experience approach activity itself can give the teacher an idea about how comfortable learners are feeling with the class, other learners, and the topic. An individual's part of the group story can give a little bit of information about oral proficiency. Teachers can monitor reading and writing skills as learners complete follow-up activities.

**Extension activities:** Learners can write a letter to someone they know telling about the experience in their own words.

(Adapted from the *REEP Adult ESL Curriculum*. Available from [www.apsva.us/reep](http://www.apsva.us/reep). Adapted with permission.)

### **Sample II–28: Language Experience Story and Follow-up Activities (High Beginner Level)**

Yesterday our class went to the National Zoo in Washington, DC. At 9:00 AM we took the Metro and got off at the Woodley Park stop. We walked about three blocks from the Metro to the National Zoo. First, we saw the giraffes and elephants. Then we saw the seals. Finally we saw the pandas. The pandas were so cute! We stayed at the National Zoo for two hours. At 11:30 AM we took the Metro back to school.

#### **Sample II–28a: Strip Story**

**Directions to the teacher:** Cut the following sentences into strips. Give each pair or group of students a sentence. Suggest that the students read each of the strips aloud to start. Then, tell them to put the story back in order without looking at the original. Tell them to notice words that tell you when something happens, such as “first,” “then,” and “finally.” When the students are ready, they can read the story to you, each group or pair reading their sentence strips in order. Discuss with them why they put the sentences in the order they did.

We stayed at the National Zoo for two hours.

Then we saw the seals.

The pandas were so cute!

At 11:30 AM we took the Metro back to school.

Yesterday our class went to the National Zoo in Washington, DC.

At 9:00 AM we took the Metro and got off at the Woodley Park stop.

We walked about three blocks from the Metro to the National Zoo.

First, we saw the giraffes and elephants.

Finally we saw the pandas.

**Sample II–28b: Cloze Activity—Practicing Prepositions**

**Directions:** Read the paragraph about our trip to the National Zoo. Then use the words from the list below the paragraph to fill in the missing words. Use each word just one time.

Yesterday our class went to the National Zoo \_\_\_\_ Washington, DC. \_\_\_\_ 9:00 AM we took the Metro and got off at the Woodley Park stop. We walked three blocks \_\_\_\_ the Metro to the National Zoo. First we saw the giraffes and elephants. Then we saw the seals. Finally we saw the pandas. The pandas were so cute! We stayed at the National Zoo \_\_\_\_\_ two hours. At 11:30 AM we took the Metro back \_\_\_\_\_ school.

*at*                      *in*                      *to*                      *from*                      *for*

**Activity II–6: Games**

**Highlights:** There are several kinds of games that learners enjoy in the classroom. Games give learners opportunities to use the language they are learning in non-threatening, enjoyable contexts. Teachers can adapt standard games like *Bingo* or make up their own simplified versions of games based on TV game shows like *Jeopardy* or *The Price is Right*.

**Context:** Games like *Bingo*, *Concentration*, *The Price is Right*, or *Go Fish* are appropriate for literacy- and beginning-level classes including general ESL, family literacy, and workplace. Spelling bees may work with beginning or intermediate classes. Team competitions or more complicated games such as *Jeopardy* (where students are given answers and have to ask questions) can be appropriate at any level. However, as with any instructional activity, students need to be told why they are doing the activity (for example, to practice asking “what,” “when,” “where,” and “why” questions, or to practice the letters of the alphabet). Otherwise, they may think the activity is not serious and may be hesitant to participate.

**Estimated time:** At least initially, it may take some time for students to learn the rules of the game. After a few practices, however, the games should take less time. However, games should not be overused. For example, in an intensive class of 10-15 hours a week, learners might want to play *Bingo* or another game for an end of the week treat (that reinforces the week’s new vocabulary). In a non-intensive class of four hours a week, students might not want to give up their learning time to play a game.

**Materials:** Items vary according to the game, but many can be homemade. Some ESL specific games are sold by educational companies, and the rules of some standard games can be adapted for classroom use.

**Objectives:** Adult students learn to understand a variety of spoken (and written) instructions and how to make appropriate conversation in social groups, including asking for clarification and politely disagreeing. Specific goals such as learning numbers or new vocabulary are associated with particular games.

**Procedure:** Luckily, most students are familiar with game-playing and may know the same or similar games as the ones you introduce. The best way to introduce a game is hands-on. That is, demonstration is more effective than lengthy explanation.

**Practice:** Learners work in groups or pairs to play the game. There may be some confusion and game rules may evolve, but as long as learners are participating, the activity is useful.

**Evaluation:** If the adult English language learner can successfully and happily participate, the activity has been successful. For example, in bingo learners are able to identify letters and numbers correctly, and in *Jeopardy*, they are able to ask questions.

**Extension activities:** Games like *Concentration* can be played alone at home for practice. Other games like *Go Fish* can be played with friends or family.

### Sample II–29: Jeopardy Game (Intermediate and Advanced Levels)

**Directions to the teacher:** After you have written the grid below on the board, cover each box with a piece of paper that has a money designation (so that Cherries is covered with \$100, Apples, \$200, and so on until \$500). Covering the items makes it “real” when the student says: “I want fruit for \$300.” It also ensures that students do not know which food item they will need to use in the sentence before they make their selection.

Sample “Jeopardy” Game Board

Fruit	Vegetables	Meat	Dairy products	<i>Some or Any</i>
cherries	onion	fish	yogurt	pasta
apples	beans	hot dogs	milk	turkey
fruit	chili pepper	beef	butter	green beans
orange	potato	chicken	ice cream	rice
banana	squash	sausage	cheese	hamburgers

**Jeopardy style activity:** This activity will be similar to the TV program. The contestants can choose an answer word from the board, and then must respond using a question form correctly. (If you are not familiar with the TV show, it might be helpful to watch, although this activity is just a rough approximation of the show.)

The board shown above gives students practice informing appropriate questions related to “How many,” “how much,” “some,” “a little,” “too much,” and “a few,” and count and non-count nouns.

#### Examples:

##### 1. Correct question

**Host:** Choose a category, (Contestant A).

**Contestant A:** I’ll take fruit for \$100 (or may (or can) I have fruit for \$100?)

{fruit for \$100 box is uncovered by host; it’s cherries}

**Contestant A:** Do we need some cherries?

**Judges:** That’s correct!

**Host:** Good job; choose again, (Contestant A).

OR

**2. Incorrect question:**

**Contestant A:** Do we need much cherries? (should be “many cherries”)

**Judges:** Sorry, the question is not correct.

**Host:** Okay, Contestant B, your turn

**Process:**

- Before students come to class, write the categories and answers on the board (from the grid) and cover up the words with pieces of papers that say \$100, \$200, etc.
- Set up the room with a place for three contestants where they can see the board. Instead of a buzzer, each person could have a bell to signal when he or she knows the answer.
- Ask students whether they have watched *Jeopardy*. If someone says yes, ask that person to explain the show.
- Explain that the class is going to conduct a *Jeopardy* game based on food words, count and non-count things, and how much and how many. (Prizes are not necessary, or you could adapt by giving monopoly/play money for each correct response and give the high amount winner a gag gift or candy bar, etc.)
- Ask for three volunteers as contestants and one to play the host (Alex Trebek), and one to be a timekeeper using a stopwatch or a watch with a second hand. Also ask for three volunteers to be the judge’s panel—to tell who was first, and whether the answer is correct (you can override the judges if necessary).
- Rules: (Explain these a couple of times; it’s probably better to have the students understand orally—so they don’t start worrying about the written language.)
  - Contestant with the last name closest to “A” begins.
  - That person chooses a category and questions (e.g., I’ll take meat for \$100, Alex).
  - That person has 30 seconds to respond (adapt time as seems appropriate), if that person can’t answer correctly, another person can ring in for another 30 seconds (you can adapt these specific rules to your own situation).
  - Judges will decide whether the question is correctly formed and reasonable.
  - Audience (the rest of the class) is not allowed to call out the answers!