

# Holistic Language Pedagogies Compendium of Resources



Prepared by the Participants in the Holistic Language  
Pedagogies Project at Childhood Education  
International's Center for Professional Learning

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**Center for  
Professional Learning**  
at Childhood Education International



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# Introduction

## The Project

Between January 2024 and October 2024 the Holistic Language Pedagogies (HLP) Project brought together language educators from Ukraine and the United States to learn about and apply holistic language pedagogies together in a virtual community of practice (VCoP). The collaboration between these educators, as well as the growth they demonstrated in their knowledge of the holistic pedagogies, can be evidenced in a number of areas, including daily lesson plans and syllabi, cross-national activities and classroom relationships, virtual webinars prepared for the public, and this compendium, published digitally as an open educational resource (OER) for access and use by teachers worldwide.

## The Compendium

This compendium was developed during the virtual exchange portion of the HLP project in July 2024. Project participants were invited to make their contributions to the document and to comment and revise each others' entries. The entries are organized by the respective holistic pedagogy (or other category) of best fit. The categories are: Social and Emotional Learning, Play-based Learning, Asset-based Pedagogies, Drama-based Pedagogies, and Ice Breakers and Other Activities. It is important to note that many of the entries fit more than one category and overlap in areas. For example, an activity listed under play-based pedagogies may also feature components of social and emotional learning or asset-based pedagogies. The Other category is reserved for activities and resources that might not fit well under any of the other categories.

To get the most out of this guide, it is recommended that the educator read the description of a resource thoroughly before using it in the classroom. These descriptions provide information on the resource, how it can be used, which age group/grade/English proficiency level is the most appropriate, as well as other relevant details. With a total of 58 entries, this compendium is sure to offer something for all teachers! We encourage experimenting with the activities and using them to enhance existing lessons and activities with holistic pedagogies. Recognizing the diversity of learners and learning contexts can help to ensure that these materials are relevant, meaningful, and impactful in the practice of individual educators. With this in mind, the resources in this compendium should be seen as adaptable tools, meant to be contextualized to fit the unique cultural, social, and educational needs of specific teaching environments.

# Acknowledgements

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# Social and Emotional Learning

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which students develop essential skills for managing emotions, setting and achieving goals, showing empathy for others, maintaining positive relationships, and making responsible decisions. In the classroom, SEL is crucial because it helps create a supportive environment where students feel safe, respected, and ready to learn. By fostering self-awareness and emotional regulation, SEL enhances students' ability to focus on their academic tasks and collaborate with peers. This is particularly important for language learners, who may feel anxious or overwhelmed in a new linguistic environment. SEL helps students to feel calmer and more confident, allowing them to better focus on learning and actively participate in classroom activities.



## I. 4-7-8 Breathing Technique

This activity helps to regulate the nervous system. It originated from “pranayama,” an ancient yogic practice focused on the breath. This technique improves mindfulness, sleeping and response to stress and anxiety. “When our body has a stress response, it’s responding to what it believes to be a danger,” says Billy Roberts, a licensed independent social worker and founder and clinical director of Focused Mind ADHD Counseling in Columbus, Ohio. “However, the intensity of the reaction doesn’t always fit the intensity of the situation, and our bodies can shut down rational thought. Breathing techniques help us manage anxiety by facilitating a sense of calm in the body, getting our thinking brains more in control”.<sup>1</sup> This technique is an excellent tool particularly for those struggling with anxiety, stress, or panic attacks. Educators may find it helpful to use it with students before important tests or exams. It can not only help them relax but also can also allow them to concentrate more effectively.

The necessary steps to conduct this activity are presented first, with a more profound explanation in the link below:

The 4-7-8 breathing method is as simple as its name: inhale your breath on a four-count, hold your breath on a seven-count, then exhale on an eight-count.

Specifically, Dr. Weil, the developer of the method, explains the technique as such:

1. Place the tip of the tongue just behind the upper front teeth and hold it there during the inhale and let it rest where it feels most comfortable during the exhale.
2. Exhale through the mouth, making a “whoosh” sound.
3. Closing the mouth, inhale through the mouth on a count of four.
4. Hold the breath for a count of seven.
5. Open the mouth and exhale to a count of eight, again making a “whooshing” sound.

This is considered one cycle. For effectiveness, one should aim to do four cycles in one sitting.

**Contributor:** Valeriia Sichka

**Origin:** Andrew Weil, M.D., the founder and director of the Andrew Weil Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona

[Link to activity](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Cho, W. (2024). *4-7-8 breathing: How it works, how to do it and more*. Forbes.

## II. Circle of Control

This activity is extremely important for those who are teaching in emergencies. It is helpful for both students and teachers and is easy to implement offline or online. The activity helps support the mental health and well-being of the participants of the educational process, manage feelings and emotions, and overcome traumatic or stressful situations. It helps both learners and teachers identify their feelings by distinguishing between controllable and uncontrollable factors.

In this activity the teacher asks students to take out a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Then, the students draw a big circle. The students write down or draw pictures of things they cannot control outside of the circle. After that, they do the same procedure with the things they can control on the inside of the circle. As students do this, the teacher should encourage them to focus on the things they cannot control and imagine that they are putting them in a big suitcase and then are closing the suitcase and kicking it under the bed or throwing it out the window. Students should realize that they cannot control those things and it is useless to waste their time or energy on them. In the end, the teacher asks students to take a deep breath in and blow it out (twice).

**Contributor:** Iryna Ponomarets

**Origin:** Teaching English in Emergencies (OPEN) and EWU Global Academic Programs

[Link to activity](#)





### III. Empathy Mapping

Empathy Mapping can enhance students' understanding and empathy towards characters in literature, historical figures, or peers. This activity involves creating an empathy map that explores what a person says, thinks, does, and feels. Researching these perspectives, students can develop a deeper emotional and cognitive connection with the subject matter.

The teacher introduces the concept of empathy mapping and its purpose. Students select a character from a book, a historical figure, or a peer they want to understand better. The teacher may choose to provide a list of possible people to choose from depending on the subject that the class is studying at the given moment. The teacher then provides students with an empathy map template divided into four quadrants: *Says*, *Thinks*, *Does*, *Feels* (each verb represents that respective action in the chosen character or person). The students complete the map, share and discuss their empathy maps in small groups or as a class. Then they reflect on if and how this activity has changed their perception of the character or person.

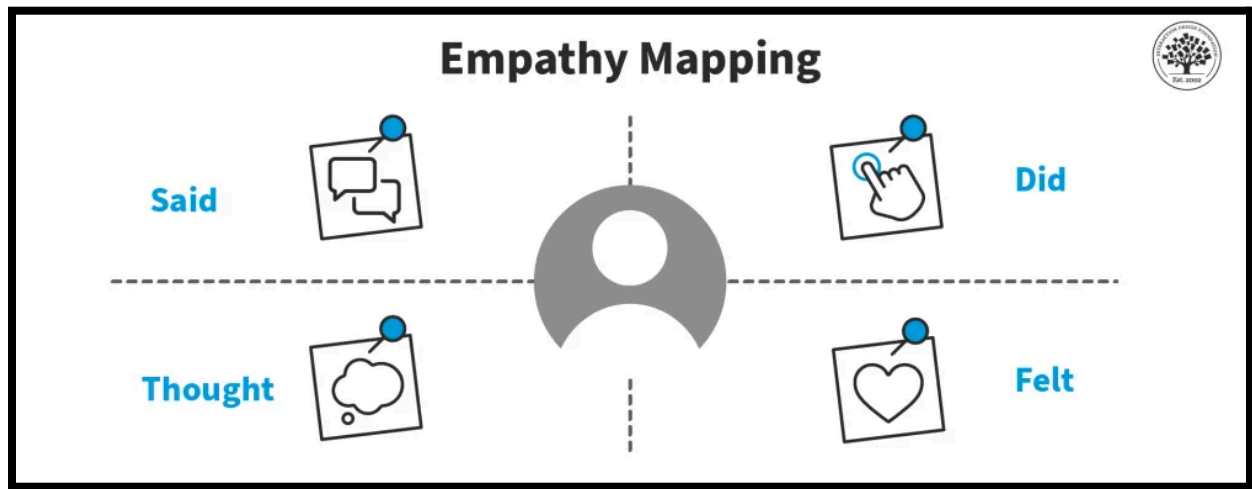


Image from: <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/empathy-map-why-and-how-to-use-it>

This activity can be adapted for various age groups and subjects. It promotes critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and a humanistic approach to learning. It also brings in the asset-based component of asking students to provide their own examples from their diverse cultures for discussion.

**Contributor:** Olha Datskiv

**Origin:** Dave Gray refined the Empathy Map released in the celebrated 2010 facilitation playbook "Gamestorming," co-authored by Sunni Brown and James Macanufo.

[Link to activity](#)

## IV. Glass of my Emotions

Through this activity, students are encouraged to identify and share their attitudes and emotions related to different lesson activities or general events, and develop self-awareness as part of their emotional intelligence.

Young learners can expand their vocabulary with words related to colors and emotions, while advanced students can describe their emotional state by linking it to a chosen color, enhancing their speaking skills.

Students can paint a glass template with the color that matches their emotions or place a colored pencil in their glass, commenting, for example: "I have an orange glass today. I am happy!"

The activity can also be arranged for groups, where the collective glass is filled with balls or sheets of paper in relevant colors.

Finally, the activity can be modified to "a glass half full and half empty" activity that would allow students to reflect on their mixed emotions, discuss the positive and negative sides of any issue/situation, and try to find solutions.

**Contributor:** Tetiana Korol

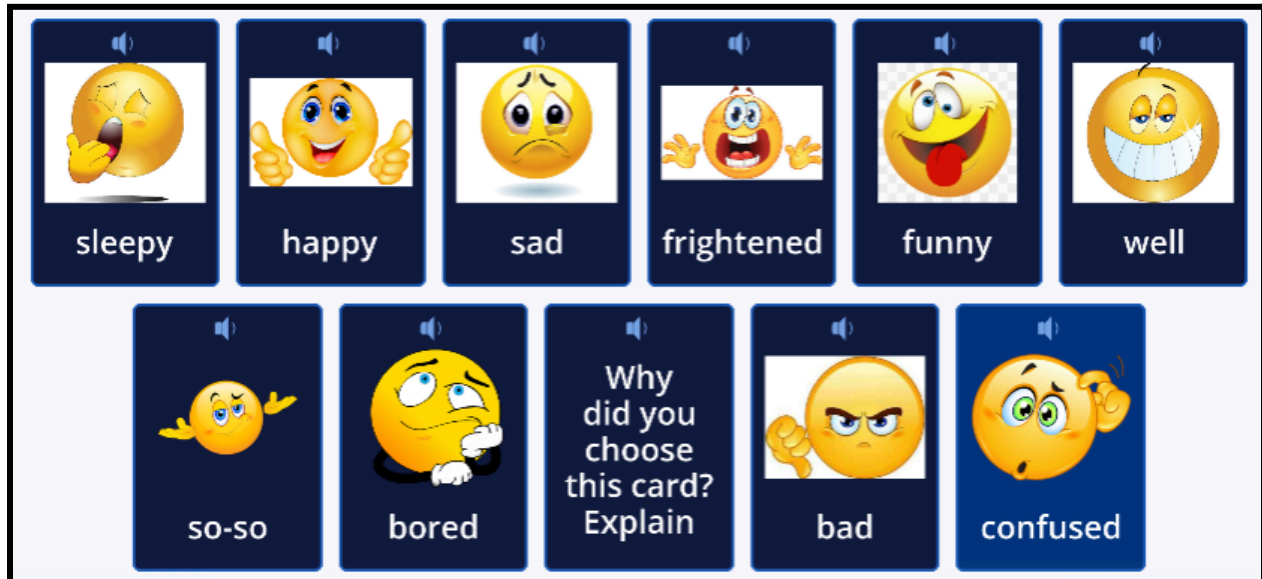
**Origin:** The idea was adapted and extended from the handout series on the Facebook Group page [‘Цікавинки для чомусиків’](#)



## V. How are you? Mood Board

The teacher can use this mood board at the beginning of the lesson. Using the images below (or a similar equivalent), it is possible to learn about students' mood(s) and whether any kind of intervention or help is needed. The activity can also be used to build up language and communication skills.

Ask students how they are feeling and then encourage them to explain why.



**Contributor:** Oksana Khomenko

**Origin:** Wordwall created by contributor, Oksana Khomenko

[Link to activity](#)

## VI. A Mindful Gratitude Exercise

A Mindful Gratitude Exercise is an activity for the English classroom which can have a positive influence on students' well-being. Students have the opportunity to practice their mindfulness, identify their emotional state, focus on the positive aspects of their lives and learn the lexicon to express gratitude and emotions in English.

### Part I: Identifying Emotions (10 to 15 minutes)

Firstly, the teacher asks students the following question: *How have you been feeling?* The question can be shown on a screen, written on the board, or on a poster. Then some adjectives can be provided (as in the picture below), or emojis or pictures can be prepared.

For example:

good	confused	frustrated
happy	anxious	sad
great	worried	emotional
wonderful	annoyed	down
curious	overwhelmed	irritated
positive		heartbroken
fantastic		
grateful		
optimistic		
determined		

Then, the teacher ensures that everybody knows the meaning of "*grateful*."

### Part II: A Mindful Gratitude Exercise (5 to 10 minutes)

Next, the teacher explains to students that they will be hearing instructions and that the language will be in the imperative form, so they need to listen carefully and follow the instructions:

- Step 1: Sit comfortably in a chair but keep a good posture.
- Step 2: Put your feet on the floor.
- Step 3: Put your hands in your lap with your palms facing up.
- Step 4: Close your eyes.
- Step 5: Inhale and exhale three times.
- Step 6: Choose one thing, one person, or one experience you are grateful for. Focus on only that thing, person, or experience. Visualize, smell, touch, and sense how this thing, person, or experience made you feel or makes you feel now. (This will also be connected to the vocabulary they have just learned.)
- Step 7: Inhale and exhale three times.
- Step 8: Open your eyes whenever you are ready.

After the mindful gratitude exercise has been completed, the teacher asks students to share whether this brief exercise has in any way changed how they have been feeling.

**Part III: "I'm Grateful ... " (10 to 15 minutes)**

To wrap up this activity, the teacher writes "*I'm grateful to ...* " and "*I'm grateful for ...* " on the board, or shows it on a screen or a poster. It is also important to explain that the word "grateful" has two possible prepositional collocations: to and for. In doing this, the teacher can provide examples so that students can notice the differences in usage.

Next, the teacher asks students to complete either one of these statements with the one thing, person, or experience they chose during the gratitude practice. They can also ask students to expand their writing by explaining *why* they are grateful for (or to) that thing, person, or experience. For instance, a student might write, "I'm grateful for my dog because he always cheers me up when I'm down. I adopted him when I was volunteering in an animal shelter. His name is Axel, and he's the most beautiful dog in the world."

**Contributor:** Valeriia Sichka

**Origin:** Rojas, Monica. (2023). A Mindful Gratitude Exercise for the English Classroom. English Teaching Forum. [americanenglish.state.gov/forum](https://americanenglish.state.gov/forum)

## VII. New Year's Resolutions

This writing/speaking activity is based on various activities on the topic of making changes in the future via New Year's resolutions. This activity allows students to reflect on the positives and negatives in their lives, on what works well for them and what does not, what they would like to accomplish in the future, whether they can and wish to make changes happen, and what to improve and how. Depending on the curriculum, students can be asked to focus either on their personal and professional lives in general, or on any specific topic such as health habits, finances, career, etc. The number of resolutions to work on may vary depending on the time. This task is helpful for developing many skills including self-awareness, self-improvement, goal setting, and building confidence, among others.

Students can work individually on the task or in pairs/groups. In the latter case they can help one another and brainstorm solutions to the problems presented by their partners.

**Directions:** Students are asked to write down what they accomplished last year due to their work and habits and what they are not satisfied with and want to improve or change in the New Year. Next, they are asked to reflect on the reasons why they should or want to make changes. After that, they are asked to think what they can do to make each change happen. Finally, students can present their ideas in class or work on a written reflection.

Students may organize their ideas on a list or chart.

What works well	Why it does not need changes	What to change/improve	Why change/improve	How to change/improve
1.		1.		
2.		2.		
3.		3.		

**Contributor:** Małgorzata Durygin

**Origin:** Dominique. (n.d.). How to do the best and easiest New Year's resolution activities. The ESL Educator.

N.N. (2023). Making resolutions. ESL lesson handouts.

**Links to activities:**

- <https://theesleducator.com/new-years-resolutions-activities/>
- <https://www.eslessonhandouts.com/handout/making-resolutions/>

## VIII. On a Perfect Day

This activity is used to engage students in thinking about what makes a good day for them in terms of people, places, activities and things. Students are asked to imagine and describe their perfect day answering the questions:

- Who would you spend your perfect day with? Why?
- Where would you spend your perfect day?
- What activities would you do on your perfect day?
- What would you have with you on your perfect day?

These questions can help students visualize and articulate their idea of a perfect day, encouraging creativity and personal reflection.

As an extension for more advanced students, “Why?” can be added as well. This question makes students work on the justification of their choices. Students can also either move from imagining to planning their perfect day and provide their answers to the question “How?” or discuss their past experiences with the perfect day that already happened in their lives. Students can also use AI to create images (like the one below) that align with what a perfect day looks like to them.

**Creator and Contributor:** Olha Ponomarenko



## IX. Pass the Picture

This activity engages students in closely observing different emotions and considering multiple viewpoints. It promotes empathy, critical thinking, and questioning by examining a single issue or concept from various perspectives. The activity also fosters a sense of teamwork and collaboration because students learn to communicate their thoughts effectively, and respect diverse viewpoints.

### Procedure:

1. **Form Groups:** The teacher puts students into groups of 3-4.
2. **Select an Image:** Each group selects one image to start with.
3. **Discussion:** Each group discusses the following questions for 2 minutes:
  - What do you see in the picture?
  - What might the people be feeling?
  - In what situations have you experienced these feelings?
4. **Title the Picture:** After discussing their observations, the group chooses a title for the picture.
5. **Pass the Picture:** After 2 minutes, the instructor says "Pass the picture," prompting students to pass their image to the next group clockwise and receive a new image.
6. **Group Presentations:** Once every group has examined each image, the whole class comes together. Each group presents the titles and explains why they selected those titles.

### Examples of pictures to use:

- [https://unsplash.com/photos/girl-playing-beside-body-of-water-during-daytime-R\\_BLOGXpsOg](https://unsplash.com/photos/girl-playing-beside-body-of-water-during-daytime-R_BLOGXpsOg)
- <https://unsplash.com/photos/woman-sitting-near-the-osfa-4rWjKzxilGI>
- <https://unsplash.com/photos/man-covering-face-with-both-hands-while-sitting-on-bench-sxQz2VfoFBE>

**Contributor:** Liudmyla Herasymenko

**Origin:** Adapted from <https://dbp.theatredance.utexas.edu/teaching-strategies/pass-picture>



## X. Room with a View

In this activity, students are asked to choose and demonstrate a photo with their favorite view from any window. They are encouraged to describe in detail their choice explaining why the view is meaningful. The activity helps students not only practice their descriptive writing skills but also strengthens their ability to convey emotions and personal experiences through words, i.e. they learn to connect emotionally with their writing, making their descriptions vivid and meaningful.

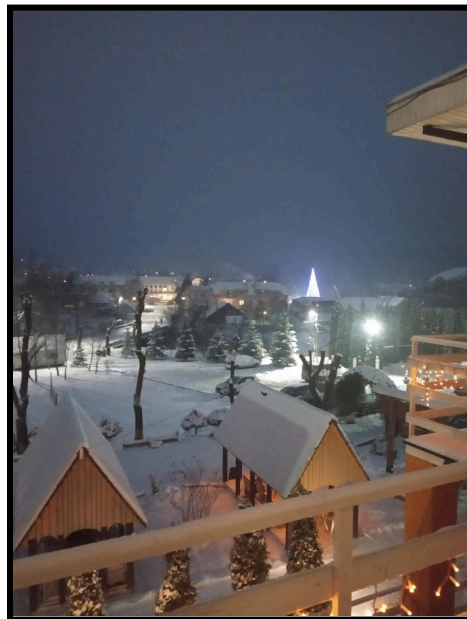
When it comes to language practice, students can work on the description of the actual details of the view, going beyond the presented view and adding specifics of the geographical place, and the justification of the choice of the visual.

Project participant Olena Kasatkina-Kubyshkina shares a comparable writing activity titled “My Comfort Zone,” in which students share photos of their favorite places in their homes along with personal stories related to them. This exercise allows students to express their thoughts and emotions in a meaningful way, adding a personal touch to their writing. As the students listen to and appreciate each other’s stories, the activity fosters a sense of community in the classroom and promotes emotional connections.

**Contributor:** Olha Ponomarenko

**Source:** Reinout Klamer, COIL Professional Development Ukraine Project, 2024.

**Example:** *The photo was taken on December 24, 2021, two months before the war broke out. I was enjoying a much-needed rest in the Carpathian Mountains, the most peaceful and tranquil place. At that time, I thought nothing could disrupt that peace and quiet...*



## XI. Rose, Thorn, Bud

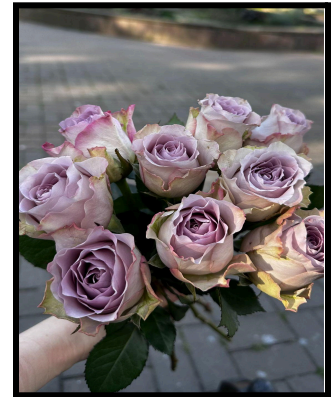
**Rose, Thorn, Bud** is a reflective practice that helps evaluate our experiences, our ups and downs, and identify areas for growth.

A **ROSE** describes something positive or a success that has happened this week.

- What has gone well this week?
- What have you enjoyed the most?
- What success or achievement have you been most proud of?

A **THORN** represents a challenge a person has experienced this week.

- What hasn't gone well this week?
- Have you experienced any challenges?
- What have been the obstacles?



A **BUD** describes a new idea or something a person looks forward to next week. Identifying a "Bud" is very important as students focus on opportunities for future development and improvement as well as see challenges as opportunities for learning.

- What are you looking forward to most next week?
- What skills would you like to improve next week?
- What habits or routines do you want to establish or improve next week?

Incorporating the **Rose, Thorn, Bud** reflective practice into our daily routine can help us cultivate a balanced view of life by celebrating achievements, recognizing opportunities, and embracing challenges.

**Contributor:** Uliana Tykha

**Origin:** Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University

[Link to activity](#)

## XII. Sharing Negative Feelings

It is important to give students the opportunity to share different emotions and feelings. In particular, it is essential to inform them that it is okay to share their unpleasant emotions and not keep them inside. A lot of students feel a sense of relief and safety when they are able to talk about their negative feelings with someone else (e.g. a teacher), because they will feel less frustrated, upset or lonely.

This activity teaches students valuable components of SEL such as self-awareness, social-awareness and self-management. The main point here is to conduct this activity when both the students and the teacher are already accustomed to each other, and have created a safe and welcoming environment where students feel comfortable to share their personal experiences.

For this activity, the teacher has some colorful cards on which students write their responses. The teacher presents the first question: "What negative feelings or emotions have you experienced recently?" Then, the teacher asks students to note them down on the cards (note, with very young learners, it is possible to have them draw emotions or write out single word responses).

After that, the next question is "Why did you feel that way?" Here students are asked to share some reasons. However, this is applicable only to those who would like to share their experience(s) with their class. If they do not, they can just listen to others. The teacher should not pressure students into sharing, as this can damage the trust in the relationship.

The final stage of the activity features questions directed to students' classmates who listened to their stories "How would you help in such situations?; How would you support your classmate?; What would you recommend them to do?" At this final stage of the activity, the learners are discussing ideas and advice.

**Creator and Contributor:** Valeriia Sichka

## XIII. Silent Role Play

Silent Role Play is an activity designed to help students develop non-verbal communication skills, empathy, and emotional awareness. By acting out scenarios without speaking, students learn to express and interpret emotions through body language, facial expressions, and other non-verbal cues.

This activity can be expanded by teaching, learning, and reflecting on the existence and diversity of nonverbal signs people of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and/or with various disabilities use to express themselves and show emotions. It works toward the development of student cross-cultural and interable awareness.

### 1. Preparation:

- The teacher creates a set of scenario cards. Each card should describe a situation that requires emotional interaction but does not specify the exact emotions.
- Examples might include:
  - A friend comforting another one after breaking up with a girl/boyfriend.
  - Friends having a disagreement over a film to see.
  - A group of students planning a surprise birthday celebration for a friend.
  - Someone receiving surprising news (good or bad).

### 2. Introduction:

- The teacher explains to students the importance of non-verbal communication in understanding and expressing emotions. The class discusses how body language, facial expressions, and gestures can convey feelings without words. The teacher introduces the activity and explains the rules: no talking is allowed; only non-verbal communication can be used.

### 3. Forming Groups (randomly or based on students' preferences):

- The teacher divides the class into small groups of 3-4 students. Each group draws a scenario card and has a few minutes to plan how they will act out the scenario non-verbally.

### 4. Role Play/Perform:

- One group at a time performs their scenario in front of the class.
- The audience watches carefully and tries to interpret the emotions and interactions being portrayed.

### 5. Discussion:

- After each performance, the teacher leads the class in discussing what they observed. Some questions to ask might be:

- What emotions did you observe during the performance?
  - How did you determine what the characters were feeling?
  - Which non-verbal signals most effectively communicated the emotions?
- Encourage the performing group to share their experience and whether the audience's interpretation matched their intended emotions.

6. Reflection:

- The teacher asks students to reflect on the exercise in a written format or group discussion. Prompts might include:
  - How did it feel to communicate without words?
  - What did you learn about non-verbal communication?
  - How can you apply these skills in real-life situations?

**Contributor:** Olena Kastkina-Kubyshkina

**Origin:** Centervention®. (2024). *95 free social emotional learning activities*. Retrieved from <https://www.centervention.com/social-emotional-learning-activities/>.

## XIV. Smell the Soup, Cool the Soup

This activity is useful for trauma-sensitive teaching and helps students to manage emotions, feelings and overcome traumatic and stressful situations. It can be easily implemented both offline and online and is good for young learners as well as for older students. Furthermore, it is an easy, no-prep activity that can be modified in a number of ways.

In the activity, the leader (teacher, facilitator) asks students to grab an imaginary bowl of their favorite kind of soup, smell it for three seconds, imagine it is hot and then blow on it to cool for three counts. Participants repeat the procedure three times.

Students can also smell and cool any hot food or drink. It would be great to provide students with a few options to choose from. For example, they can imagine their favorite flower, smell it and blow off the petals/seeds (as in a dandelion). Or, they can imagine a birthday cake that smells like chocolate, and then blow out the candles.

The most important thing is to give the students the opportunity to take some deep calming breaths before they begin to learn.

**Contributor:** Iryna Ponomarets

**Origin:** Teaching English in Emergencies (OPEN) and EWU Global Academic Programs

[Link to activity](#)



## XV. Surprising Cards

As the teacher sees appropriate (suggested every 3 months or so) they can use these “surprise” cards like a bonus or relaxing activity for students. It is recommended to choose activities that support the intended goal or fit with the theme and subject matter of the class (ex: in an English class, listening to music in English serves as a great reward and also helps learning). These cards can help students regain focus or motivate them to learn by providing a reset during class time.



**Contributor:** Oksana Khomenko

**Origin:** Wordwall created by contributor, Oksana Khomenko

[Link to activity](#)



## XVI. Thank You Cards

This activity equips students with the vocabulary for expressing gratitude and responding to it, fosters kindness, and builds strong relationships within the group. The "Thank You Cards" activity is aimed, first, to develop students' vocabulary, speaking and writing skills while expressing their gratitude and, second, to develop students' self-awareness, communication skills, empathy, critical thinking, and reflection. Role-playing different real-life situations encourages students to reflect on their behavior and manner of communication, understand the importance of being considerate, thoughtful and polite to keep friendly relations with people, and build the pattern of behavior which will help them to create a welcoming environment and make them more successful in life.

For many, it is not easy to thank others in a meaningful way. It requires one to open up, show some vulnerability, and communicate one's feelings and emotions. This activity allows students to learn and practice the skills and wording needed to express gratitude in an authentic way, to be specific and people-oriented.

### Procedure:

1. **Introduction:** The teacher introduces students to vocabulary related to expressing thanks and responding to gratitude.

 <p>Thank you. Thank you very much. Thanks. Many thanks. Thanks a lot. Thank you very much. Thank you for ...(ing) I'm so thankful for ... I appreciate your help. I'm grateful for... I would like to express my gratitude for.. You are my hero! That's very kind of you. I really appreciate it. I can't thank you enough. Words cannot express how grateful I am for...</p>	<h3>Responding</h3> <p>You are welcome. No worries. It was nothing. My pleasure. That's all right. You're very welcome. Don't mention it. Not at all. No problem. At your service. Glad to have helped. It's a pleasure.</p> 
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2. **Role-Playing:** Students role-play different situations where they need to say thank you and respond.

**Situations for Role-Playing (for pairs):**

You needed help with a project. Your colleague stayed late to assist you.	You were carrying a big box, and your colleague opened the door for you.
A stranger saved you from drowning in the river.	You were lost in the city, and a stranger helped you to find your way to the hotel.
A stranger gave you a compliment while you were walking on the street.	You had a stressful and difficult day at work. Your spouse offered to take care of dinner and clean up.
Your friend bought you a snack.	Your office gave you a birthday gift.

3. **Thank You Cards:** The teacher provides students with heart-shaped cards (the students can also cut these out themselves) featuring the names of their group mates. They should write thank-you messages on these cards. The teacher also participates. Alternatively, the teacher can use pre-made cards from [Canva](#).

**Creator and Contributor:** Liudmyla Herasymenko

For more vocabulary and situations, visit [Speak Confident English](#).

## XVII. The 5-4-3-2-1 Technique

The objective of the activity is to help students practice describing photos. Often students can be shy or lack confidence when describing pictures and do not know what to say. The activity can help them to develop their imagination and speaking and push the development of their speaking skills. The activity can also help students to lower their stress level by focusing on the here and now, connecting them with their 5 senses and a task that needs to be done in order.

### Instructions:

- The teacher provides each student (or group of students) with a picture.
- Students examine their picture closely and answer the following grounding questions:
  - Sight: What are 5 things you can see? (or imagine seeing outside of the picture)
  - Touch: What are 4 things you can imagine feeling?
  - Hearing: What are 3 things you can imagine hearing?
  - Smell: What are 2 things you can imagine smelling?
  - Taste: What is 1 thing you can imagine tasting?
- Students write down/think about their answers to each of the questions.
- Students take turns sharing their answers with the class. The teacher encourages them to describe the picture in detail based on their answers.
- After each student or group shares, the teacher invites the rest of the class to ask additional questions about the picture or the answers provided.
- The activity can be adjusted based on the time available and the number of students.

**Contributor:** Yuliia Fernos

**Link to activity:** [This activity is an adaptation of a technique used to relieve anxiety](#)

**Example:** Photo to use in such an activity



**Source:** University of Rochester Medical Center and TESOL Virtual Convention 2023 (image)

## XVIII. Well-Being Wheel

The Well-Being Wheel can be used to engage participants in thinking about all aspects of their life and wellness (the activity features the social, intellectual, physical, occupational, emotional spheres). In this activity, the facilitator reads statements about well-being out loud to participants. Participants then award themselves a point if they agree with the statement. For example:

*Most days I exercise/physically move for 30+ minutes.*

*I support others and acknowledge (with words/acts) their successes.*

*I can manage my emotions to stay on task or work when necessary.*

At the end of the activity, participants' scores in particular areas will determine which areas they are doing well in as well as the areas that need more care. As an extension, the activity leader/teacher can engage the participants in discussion about their self-assessments.

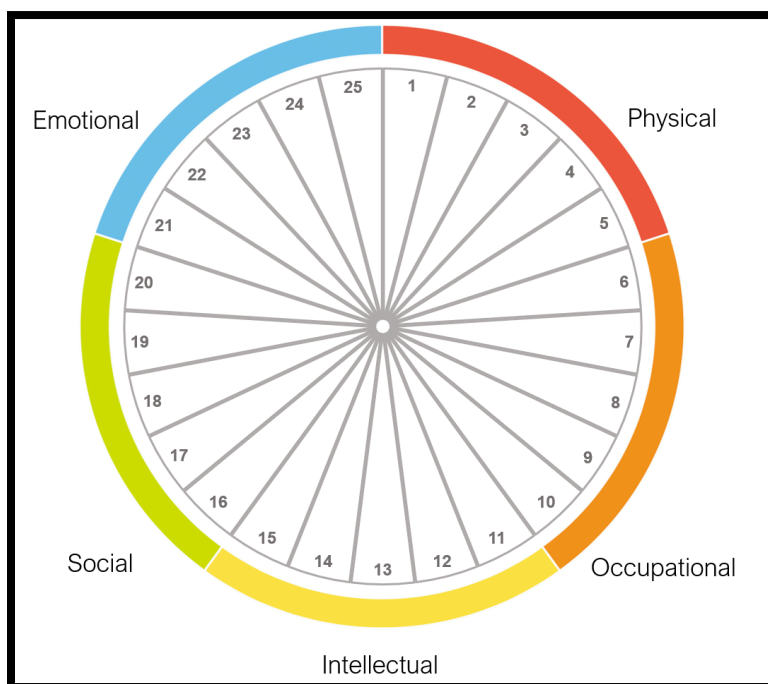
This activity can be used with students or with teachers to provoke thought about well-being and self-care. The statements will need to be revised slightly for younger learners because the ones in the linked document are written specifically for adults.

**Contributor:** Alisa Vereshchagin and the Holistic Language Pedagogies Project Team

**Source:** Originally from J. Bostic - WISE Teacher Well-Being Workbook

<https://www.heardalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/WISE-teacher-well-being-workbook-1.pdf>

[Link to activity](#)



## XIX. The Wheel of Emotions

Students in groups (for online classes - in breakout rooms) or individually are given sets of pictures/photos featuring advertised products. The images may also depict something else, such as current events, or anything else that may be relevant to the class subject matter. After looking at the images, students identify the emotions that they felt when looking at them (these can be one emotion on the wheel or several). The handout "Wheel of emotions" (linked below) can be used during this activity. Alternatively, for teaching media literacy, the teacher can use photos from different media sources. The activity teaches critical thinking to counteract manipulation.



**Contributor:** Irena Snikhovska

**Origin:** Willcox, G. (1982). The Feeling Wheel: A Tool for Expanding Awareness of Emotions and Increasing Spontaneity and Intimacy. *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 12(4), 274-276. <https://doi.org/10.1177/036215378201200411><https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/036215378201200411>

[Link to activity](#)

[Additional explanation](#)

# Play-Based Learning

Play-based learning is an educational approach that encourages students to explore, discover, and learn through play. In the classroom, this method is particularly important because it engages students in hands-on, meaningful activities that foster creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Play allows learners to experiment with ideas and concepts in a low-pressure environment, making the learning process more enjoyable and accessible. While often associated with early childhood education, play-based learning can be adapted for learners of all ages, as it taps into the natural curiosity and enjoyment that drives engagement. For language learners, play-based learning is especially valuable because it transforms language acquisition into a fun and interactive experience. Games, in particular, can make language learning enjoyable, helping students practice new vocabulary, grammar, and communication skills in a lively and supportive setting.



## I. “Crocodile” (Charades/Pictionary/Taboo)

“Crocodile” can be used when a class starts learning a new topic and needs to get acquainted with topical vocabulary. This game helps students to remember new words as well as their meanings. And, it helps them to just have fun in class!

The game is pretty simple: the teacher (if he/she starts the game) or the student comes up with a word and the rest of the group guesses it. The player can show this word using gestures, draw the meaning of it on the chalkboard, or explain it without naming it directly (these parameters/rules can be determined ahead of time by the teacher) . The student who guesses the word is the winner and then chooses another word for the game. The teacher can also divide the class into two or more teams before playing the game.

If the class is virtual, the teacher can use the game to engage students. In addition, the random word generator can be used to create a word list related to the lesson topic:

<https://randomwordgenerator.com/>

**Contributor:** Yuliya Davydyuk

**Origin:** This is the contributor’s own adaptation of the board game for children called “Crocodile”. A player from one team comes up with a word (which is sometimes called “The crocodile”) and chooses a "victim" (a player from the opposing team, who is secretly told this word). After that, the "victim" goes back to his/her team, where he/she tries to explain the word. The player is allowed to use gestures and facial expressions, dancing, jumping and grimacing, take any postures; show the word in parts, nod or shake the head "yes" and "no," BUT is not allowed to write, draw, and pronounce syllables and letters.

**[Link to activity:](#)** [There are different variations of this game, but basically it looks like this](#)

## II. Crosses and Noughts

This activity can be used to review vocabulary and grammar. First, the teacher draws a board with 9 squares (see image below) on the board or somewhere that students can see it. In each square the teacher puts a picture or writes words or phrases. These should come from the students' current vocabulary list so that they can practice new terms.

Students are then divided into two teams. Each team will mark the symbol with either an X or O. The teacher tells the teams that they will make sentences with the words or phrases in the spaces. A possible extension is to tell students that they must conjugate verbs in the tense(s) which they have just learned. The winner is the team that makes correct sentences and forms a line (horizontal, vertical or diagonal) on the board.

**Example:** The winning team created three sentences to practice the vocabulary on the board below in the past tense:

**Victoria brushed her hair. | We read messages. | I washed my face this morning.**

<u>wake up</u>	brush my teeth	<del>wash my face</del>
<u>have breakfast</u>	<del>read messages</del>	dress up
<del>brush my hair</del>	go to school	<u>come back home</u>

**Contributor:** Oksana Khomenko

**Origin:** Adapted from [onestopenglish.com](http://onestopenglish.com)

### III. Friendly Spy

Friendly Spy enhances social awareness and develops cooperative skills. In Friendly Spy one student per group is chosen randomly to visit another group to 'spy' on them, that is, to obtain ideas from the group they visit to improve their own group's work. The spies are friendly because they are not only taking ideas but also providing suggestions to the groups they are visiting. All the groups in the class want each other to do well, which corresponds with the [Cooperative Learning \(CL\) principle of Positive Interdependence](#). Thus, the groups being 'spied on' are glad other groups can learn from them. The steps below exemplify how Friendly Spy may be used.

**Step 1:** The class is divided into groups. The groups work on the same task or a related task. In this case, all the groups are preparing a poster.

**Step 2:** After the groups have had some time to work on their task, but before they have finished, one student per group is chosen randomly to be the Friendly Spy. Such random selection of the spies fits the CL principles of Individual Accountability (i.e., everyone does their fair share of work) and Equal Opportunity to Participate (i.e., everyone has a chance to be active in what the group is doing).

**Step 3:** The spies each visit a neighboring group. Only one spy at a time is permitted to enter a group. The groups tell the spy what they are doing, and the spy asks questions and provides suggestions.

**Step 4:** The spies return to their home group. Before the spies leave, they are thanked by the group they visited. Spies report to their original group. The group discusses whether they want to make changes based on what their spy has learned.

The class may wish to do multiple rounds of Friendly Spy, each time with a different spy. For online lessons, spying can be done in different ways. Spies can go to another group's breakout room. Also, groups can use email or direct messages to share what they are planning with other groups.

**Contributor:** Alla Lisnychenko

**Origin:** Lim, S., Reidak, J., Chau, M. H., Zhu, C., Guo, Q., Brooks, T. A., Roe, J. and Jacobs, G. M. (2023). Cooperative Learning and Sustainable Development Goals. PeachyPublications Ltd.

[Link to activity](#)



## IV. Hangman Modifications

The original Hangman is a well-known [guessing game](#) that can be played in person or online. In it, one player thinks of a [word](#) or [phrase](#) and writes a number of blanks to correspond with the number of letters in the word or phrase where others can see it (example: \_ \_ \_ \_ for “LOVE”). The other players then try to guess the word or phrase by suggesting different [letters](#) within a certain number of guesses. When playing this game online on Zoom, the teacher can use Word Wall or a dashboard on Zoom for drawing the “hangman”.

### Modifications:

- In the case of language learners, the teacher can encourage students to call out a word (or words) that start with the letter they are guessing. For example: “A as in apple.” This can help to reinforce and review vocabulary.
- The game can also be played as an unscramble. In this version, the teacher puts all of the letters of a word or phrase on the board so they are visible to learners at the start of the game. On the board, the letters are scrambled and repeat letters must appear the number of times that they appear in the actual word or phrase. The students’ objective is to put the letters in the correct order. A student guesses the first letter and so on and so forth. Because the frequency of error will be higher earlier on, the teacher can adjust counting penalties. For example, three wrong guesses can count as one marking/body part for a hangman.
- Teachers can challenge students to write their own hangman word and phrases that include/exclude certain letters.
- A longer extension of the game can involve several rounds in which students guess individual words. To end the activity, the students put the words together (unscramble them) to form a coherent sentence. This last part can be done in teams.
- Teachers who work with younger learners may choose to draw a snowman or another friendlier image.

**Contributor:** Yuliya Davydyuk

**Origin:** This is a well-known paper-and-pencil game that now has electronic versions.

**Link to activity:** A link to a Wordwall activity: <https://wordwall.net/about/template/hangman>

**Similar activity:** <https://www.tefflemon.com/alternatives-to-hangman>

## V. Mystery Game

The objective of the activity is to get to know each other better and have fun through a guessing game where students identify their classmates based on secret facts.

**For a Get-to-Know-You Activity:** Each student writes their name and a secret fact (hidden talent, where they were born, their favorite food, sport they play, etc.) about themselves on a slip of paper.

**For a Post-Holiday Activity:** Each student writes their name and one interesting fact or event from their summer holiday on a slip of paper.

- **Collection:** Teacher collects all the slips in a container.
- **Selection:** Teacher randomly chooses one slip from the container.
- **Presentation:** From here, the teacher chooses three students to come to the front of the class. It is important to ensure that one of these students is the author of the selected slip.
- **Reading the Fact:** Teacher reads the secret fact to the whole class without revealing the author's name. All three students at the front pretend to be the author of the secret fact.
- **Questioning:** The rest of the class asks WH questions (Who, What, Where, When, Why, How) to the three students to determine who is telling the truth.
  - For example:
    - "Who were you with when this happened?"
    - "What was the most memorable part of this event?"
    - "Where did this take place?"
    - "When did this happen during your holiday?"
    - "Why did you choose this activity?"
    - "How did you feel about it?"
- **Voting:** After a few minutes of questioning, students vote for the person they believe is not lying. Voting can happen openly or blindly (ex: heads down and lift hands or using a digital tool such as Socrative).
- **Scoring:** The teacher reveals the true author of the secret fact and awards one point to each student who guessed correctly.
- **Repeat:** Doing several rounds of the exercise allows different students to participate. The person or team with the most points at the end of the game wins.

**Contributor and Creator:** Yuliia Fernos

**Source:** Originally from [Teach This](#)

## VI. Question Ball (Music pause and answer game, hot potato)

This is a dynamic and fun game that can be played with students with an intermediate to advanced level of English language fluency (if used as a language learning game). However, it can be modified to fit any subject matter or topic.

This activity consists of two phases:

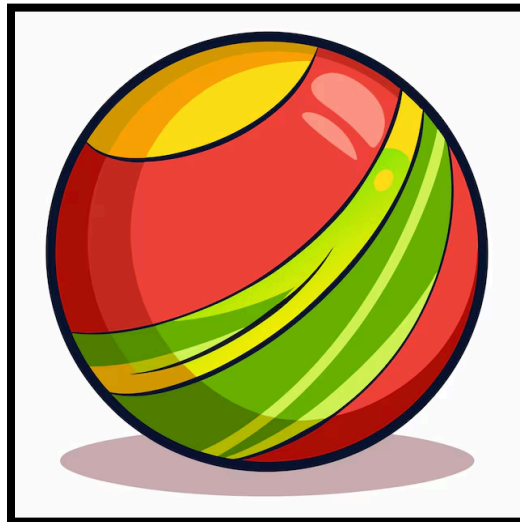
1. Students write questions on a piece of paper. These can be based on the topic of the lesson or just an interesting, provocative question. For this phase, it is advised to give students at least 4-5 minutes to think about and formulate their questions.

The teacher then collects the questions and squeezes the first sheet of paper to make a ball. The teacher then forms another of the student's sheets of paper around this ball to make the ball bigger. The teacher repeats this until all sheets of paper are included in the ball, so that each sheet of paper is one layer of the ball. The students can help with this part as well, although it can help to model it for them first.

2. The students stand in a circle that is wide enough. The facilitator/teacher plays music while students throw the ball to each other, randomly.

The facilitator pauses the music. Whoever has the ball at that time takes off one leaflet with a question, reads it out loud to the group, and answers it.

**Contributor and Creator:** Alla Fridrikh



## VII. Rapid Fire Questions

This is a speaking activity/game. Players take turns answering as many questions as they can in one minute. The player who answers the most questions correctly wins.

The teacher can prepare questions on the topic students are learning to check vocabulary and/or grammar. Alternatively, other questions can be asked and students can answer based on their experiences/feelings etc. When the teacher sees that the students know how to play the game, he/she can ask them to prepare 20-25 questions for the final test-prep lesson to cover vocabulary, grammar, reading, listening activities for the unit (see examples below).

Example: Vocabulary questions

Topic *Personality*

1. Opposite to *outgoing* (shy)
2. Opposite to *caring* (selfish)
3. Katie never lies. She is a very \_\_\_\_\_ person. (honest)
4. I was unhappy because I didn't pass my driving test. I told Tom and he laughed. Is he always so \_\_\_\_\_? (insensitive)

Grammar questions

*Gerund or Infinitive*

1. Allan wants to *work/working* as a fashion designer in the future.
2. Sandra refuses to *wear/wearing* her school uniform because it's ugly.
3. Jack can't stand to *shop/shopping* for clothes with his mum.
4. Lisa has decided to *spend/spending* £100 on a new dress.

Other questions

1. Which book have you always wanted to read but didn't get around to?
2. How do you like to celebrate your birthday?
3. What is one item you could never live without?
4. What is your favorite meal to cook?
5. If you could be in any movie, what would it be?
6. What are you most grateful for?
7. Could you live without WiFi?
8. Name a song that makes you happy.

**Contributor:** Natalia Sievierianova Kuts

**Origin:** The idea was adapted from a card game.

[Link to activity](#); [Similar card activity](#)

## VIII. Running Dictation

This is an in-person, offline activity that requires students to work together in teams. The main focus of the activity is a text dedicated to a special topic (topic of choice) that the teacher wrote on the wall or on a board far away.

Steps:

- 1) The teacher divides students into groups/teams.
- 2) One student runs downstairs/upstairs/end of the corridor and brings back sentences from the chosen text written on the distant board or wall.
- 3) The student returns to the team and dictates what they remember.
- 4) The team then writes the sentence down. This continues with students from the same team taking turns in a relay style. Each team works independently and the first team to correctly write the whole text wins.

A good alternative to this activity is called Whisper Relay Dictation. In the activity, instead of running to the text, students whisper the sentence they remember to the next team member in line, who then runs to the board and dictates it. This adds an extra challenge of memory and communication as the message is passed down the line.

**Contributor:** Outlined by Ukrainian participants in the holistic language pedagogies project

[Link to activity](#)



## IX. Spelling Bee

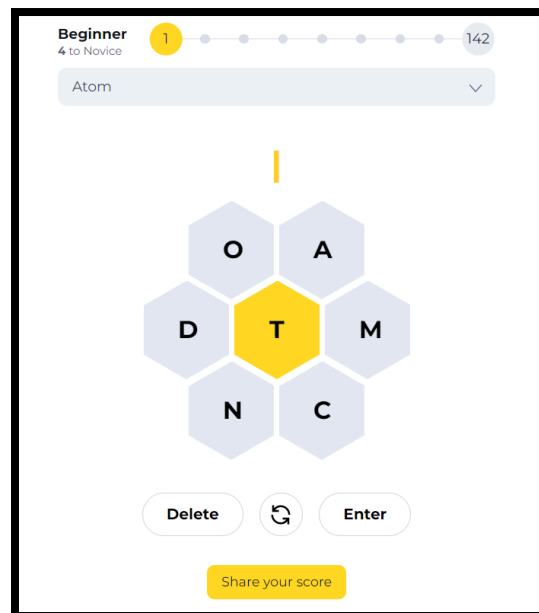
This activity helps students to enrich their vocabulary and practice English spelling. The game presents players with a grid of 7 letters arrayed in a honeycomb structure. Players must form four or more letter words using given letters and must always include the center letter. Each puzzle is guaranteed to have at least one pangram (a word that uses all of the letters) that, when found, gives the player the most points. To win the game a player needs to collect the maximum number of points for a given set of letters. Regular Spelling Bee games can improve memory, mental clarity and slow down the aging of brain cells.

**How to play:** The player creates words using letters from the hive and tries to get the maximum score. Words must have at least four letters. Words must include the center letter. Letters can be used more than once. Words with hyphens, proper nouns, vulgarities, and especially obscure words are not in the word list. 4-letter words are worth 1 point each. Longer words earn 1 point per letter. Each puzzle includes at least one “pangram” which uses every letter. These are worth 7 extra points!

**Contributor:** Yevheniia Nikiforova

**Origin:** *The New York Times* games collection

[Link to activity](#)



## X. Storytelling with Chain Reactions

This activity encourages students to develop creativity as well as speaking and storytelling skills through collaborative improvisation. This activity can be used with students of all ages and can be adapted to fit different learning objectives.

### In this activity:

- Students sit in a circle.
- The teacher starts the story with a sentence.
- Each student adds one sentence to the story, building upon the previous ones.
- There can be limitations or prompts to guide the story (e.g., the story must be set in a specific location or time period).
- The activity continues until a complete story emerges, or until time runs out.

**Contributor:** Zhanna Blazhivska

**Source:** This is a variation of the classic storytelling game "Popcorn Stories."

[Link to activity](#)



Image and other variations on this activity: <https://www.icebreakerspot.com/activities/team-story>

# Asset-Based Pedagogies

Asset-based pedagogies are a collection of instructional approaches that focus on recognizing and leveraging the strengths, talents, and cultural backgrounds students bring into the classroom. Rather than viewing differences as challenges, these pedagogies celebrate diversity as a valuable resource for learning. Asset-based pedagogies are especially important in diverse classrooms, because they affirm students' identities and experiences, creating an inclusive environment where all learners feel seen and respected. Teachers play a crucial role in this approach by getting to know their students deeply, understanding their unique individual assets, whether linguistic, cultural, or experiential, and using those to enhance the learning process. By recognizing and incorporating students' strengths, teachers not only validate their experiences but also create learning experiences that feel relevant and meaningful. This approach boosts student motivation because learners are more likely to engage when their personal knowledge and experience is recognized and valued.





# I. Building an Asset-based Profile

An asset-based profile can include the physical, social, and mental resources that a student has. These resources include but are not limited to things such as adults who care for them, community mentors who inspire them, their love of basketball or marching band, and their math skills (among many, many other areas). These are the assets that students can rely on as they take root in the classroom community.

Through building their asset-based profiles, students will be able to:

- identify their unique skills and capacities
- recognize multiple approaches to the same goal
- value their peers' differing contributions
- rely on these assets as they face challenging tasks

## Procedure

**1. Discussion:** The teacher asks students to quietly write or to draw what they are good at.

**2. Application:** Students work in small groups or with a peer to share their assets. They can use the *Questionnaire and Asset Bank* to facilitate this discussion.

**3. Creation:** To solidify the value of these assets to the classroom community, display them! As a final step, you can ask students to create a visual representation of three of their assets.

**Contributor:** Yuliia Klymowych

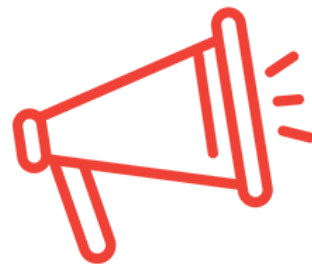
**Origin:** For more examples like this, see [Nouvelle ELA's](#) TpT page.

## II. Create a Public Service Announcement

In this activity students work together to create a short video or poster raising awareness about a social issue they care about (ex: environmental protection). This activity encourages critical thinking, communication, and social responsibility. It also provides a great opportunity for authentic, meaningful, purposeful language AND content teaching and learning. It gives students a chance to research important issues, share what they believe is important for them, and to connect their learning with the real world by going beyond the classroom with their end product if they want and are ready to take action and make a change.

### In this activity:

- Students brainstorm a list of social issues they find important.
- The class votes on specific issue(s) to focus on.
- Students brainstorm ideas for the message and creative approach for the PSA.
- Students divide into groups and work on scripting, filming (if creating a video), or designing a poster.
- Groups present their PSAs to the class.



**Contributor:** Zhanna Blazhivska

**Origin:** Adapted by contributor from

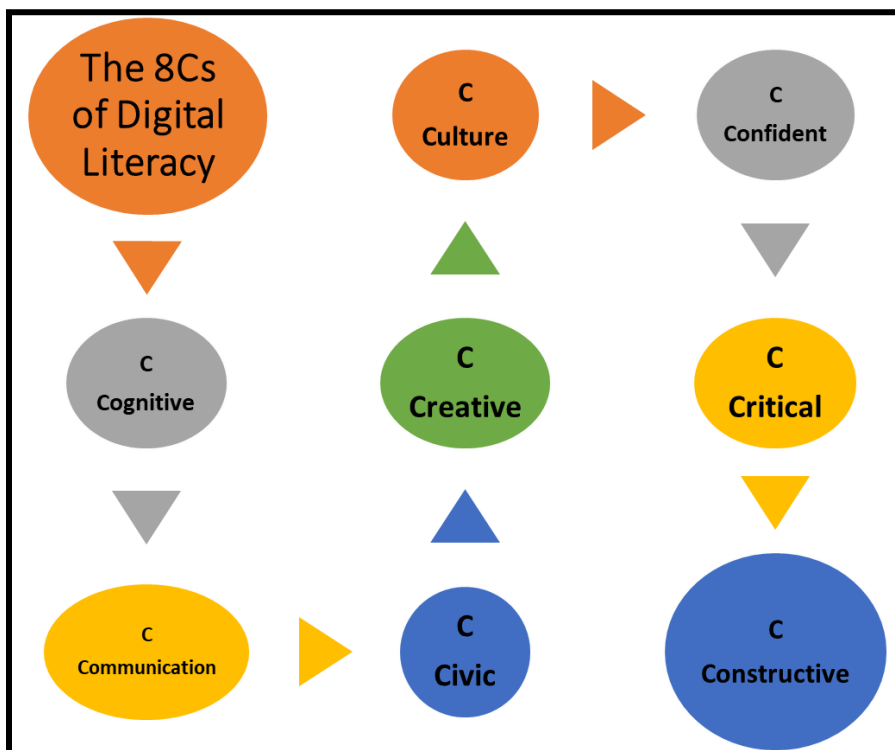
<https://edsitement.neh.gov/search?keywords=Create+a+Public+Service+Announcement>

[Link to activity: Ms Blazhivska's students' project - My Native Place](#)

### III. Digitally Literate

The ability to retrieve, evaluate, and use information effectively is essential for personal and professional growth. Digital literacy promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills. It helps individuals analyze digital content critically, recognize credible sources, and make informed decisions, which is essential for both personal and professional growth.

The following link includes descriptions of 8 components of digital literacy, or “The 8Cs”.: <http://surl.li/rmknsb>. If a teacher is working on developing digital literacy skills with their students, they can use the descriptions provided to facilitate students’ self-evaluation of their digital literacy skills as well as their growth in them over time. This [simple, free example](#) of a digital literacy self assessment tool can be adapted to meet your needs. [Another tool from Skillify](#) can be used to assess more specific areas (note that this tool is currently not adaptable).



**Contributor:** Iryna Shuliak

**Origin:** Adapted from Doug Belshaw’s handbook “The Essential Elements of Digital Literacies” <https://dougbelshaw.com/essential-elements-book.pdf>; Visit the website to explore more: <https://eavi.eu/research/>.

[Activities to develop digital literacy and its “ingredients”](#)

## IV. Fortune Cookies

This speaking/writing activity is based on various activities that inspire students to practice positive thinking and kindness. It allows students to practice expressing positive and negative emotions, helps them develop their self-awareness and emotional intelligence, encourages empathy and perspective-taking skills, and teaches conflict resolution skills. This is an asset-based activity that introduces and acknowledges that certain aspects of Asian and American cultures and traditions can be used to make cross-cultural connections by bringing examples of similar customs from students' own cultural backgrounds.

**Directions:** Students start the activity by discussing the idea of fortune cookies or reading about fortune cookies. Next, students are asked to write up to 10 positive messages they would like to get in their fortune cookies. After that, they share their ideas with the class. The class can vote for the best message and recognize its author.

In the alternative version students discuss common mistakes and ways to deal with them. Next, they brainstorm the expressions used for apologizing and accepting apologies. After that, students write their own messages of forgiveness to share with the class.

Optionally, students receive fortune cookies, eat the cookies, and read the messages they found inside. They may reflect on their meaning individually and/or discuss with the class. Then, students engage in writing their own messages.

**Contributor:** Małgorzata Durygin

**Origin:**

[Hines, M. \(2020\). Fortune cookies and forgiveness. ESL for one and all.](#)

**Links to activities:**

- <https://meghines.wordpress.com/2020/01/20/fortune-cookies-and-forgiveness/>
- <https://www.eslcafe.com/resources/lesson-plans/food/fortune-cookies-future-tense>  
<https://busyteacher.org/20678-fortune-cookies.html>
- <https://en.islcollective.com/english-esl-worksheets/reading-comprehension/reading-for-detail-deep-reading/articles/fortune-cookies-reading-comprehension/104035>

**Other:**

For information about fortune cookies:

- <https://www.loc.gov/everyday-mysteries/food-and-nutrition/item/how-do-fortunes-get-inside-fortune-cookies/>

## V. Growth Mindset

The concepts of "growth mindset" and "fixed mindset" were developed by psychologist Carol Dweck. Individuals with a growth mindset view abilities and skills as a result of hard work and determination. They embrace challenges, learn from mistakes, and appreciate feedback. On the contrary, individuals with a fixed mindset might not believe that they can grow or might be easily discouraged by challenges and give up on their goals. Developing a growth mindset takes time and effort. But there are effective strategies that help switch from fixed to growth mindset. Teachers can lead students to come up with alternatives to the statements in the table below to practice developing a growth mindset:

<b>1. Growth mindset</b> <i>A new outlook: write an alternative phrase</i>	
<b>Instead of</b>	<b>Say this</b>
This is too hard.	I am allowed to take my time as long as I keep trying.
I am no good at this!	
I cannot do this!	
I am so stupid, I cannot do anything right.	
I'm never going to be successful.	
I look terrible today.	
I am so lazy.	
I am a failure.	
I'll never achieve this.	

**Contributor:** Uliana Tykha

**Origin:** Adapted from: [www.mentalwellnesslibrary.com](http://www.mentalwellnesslibrary.com)

[Link to activity](#)

## VI. Group Holiday

This is a speaking activity to practice asking for and giving reasons, agreeing and disagreeing, making suggestions, and compromising. It is best suited for intermediate level English learners. This is a great activity for developing speaking and listening skills and practicing traveling vocabulary. It is also great for problem-solving.

### **Procedure:**

The teacher organizes students into groups of five to seven students.

Each student receives a handout containing eight suggestions for a two week holiday. Each group now has to find the one holiday that they would like to have together. A decision should be reached by discussion and engaging in good arguments instead of by a majority vote. If the group really cannot agree on a type of holiday they would all like to share, they may present their case to the whole class for further discussion. Groups may also suggest a kind of holiday not mentioned in the handout. Each group describes the holiday they have chosen and outlines the reason for this choice. The other groups may ask questions or comment.

As a followup exercise, students can be asked to rank a number of pictures taken from travel brochures. Criteria for ranking may be the interest stimulated by the photos or the degree of adventure inherent in them.

**Contributor:** Yuliia Fihura

**Origin:** Klippel Friederike, [Keep talking: Communicative fluency activities for language teaching](#). Cambridge handbooks for language teachers.

**[Link to activity:](#)** Activity #100, page 110-111; worksheet page - 179

## VII. Identity Wheel

Each of us has multiple identities, which enables us to experience multi-layered connections with others. This individual activity, which can be completed online or offline, allows us to think about our family, job(s), religion, political views, generational qualities, etc. In the activity, each student draws his/her wheel to discover and illustrate his/her numerous identities, the changes over time and the commonality with others across many of these identities.

At the beginning, it might be helpful for the teacher to have students divide their wheels into sections (3, 4, 5 sections). The teacher tells students that each of these sections represents an identity and students need to write a description (or alternatively draw) representations of their unique identities. The teacher can also print out a template (such as the images below) for each student. For advanced students, fewer instructions might encourage more creativity.

This activity also helps students to think about the most important roles they play and to reflect on what they find out about themselves. They may find out something surprising about themselves. This activity can be done in a group as well. It can facilitate getting to know each other and thus can be used as an ice breaker.

**Contributor:** Oksana Chorna

**Origin:** Peacebuilding in Divided Communities: Karuna Center's Approach to Training by Paula Green

[Link to activity](#); [Additional resource](#); [Template idea](#)



## VIII. A Poem About Yourself

This writing/speaking activity based on various popular activities is useful for bringing forward learners' assets and can also be used for icebreakers and introductions. The activity allows students to choose what they want to share, gives them a chance to reflect on their personal experiences and emphasizes the importance of names and culturally diverse ways of knowing/doing.

**Directions:** Students are asked to share information about themselves through poems. The information may include names, nicknames, places of origin, words that describe the author, author's favorite things, hobbies, interests, and goals, among others. Once the writing part is over, students can share their poems with their classmates and teacher either orally or in writing (by texting, posting on social media, etc.).

Optionally, they can organize a poetry slam where students perform their poems and then the class votes for the best poem and delivery.

Versions may vary and include:

### #1 A Poem About Yourself

**Directions:** Students are asked to write the information below and fill in the blanks in the brackets with missing words and expressions to create a poem about themselves.

**Example:**

(Your name) from (your place of origin)  
Loves (...),  
Enjoys (...)  
Dreams of (...)  
I am (state of mind) today.

This version may be extended depending on the time limit, students' age and level of language proficiency, and it may include additional personal details for sharing.

### #2 An Acrostic Poem with student's name

#### A. sentence-based

**Directions:** Students are asked to write a free-verse poem about themselves using the letters of their names written vertically to begin each line and write a word or a sentence to describe themselves.

**Example:**

Name: Aniela



Adventurous young lady  
Never tired of playing and joking  
Impossible to ignore  
Endlessly excited about meeting new friends  
Loves her family  
Always enjoys good food and sunny days

## **B. Word-based**

**Directions:** Students are asked to write a free-verse poem about themselves. They need to write their names vertically. Each letter of their name must spell out another word that describes the poem's author.

**Example:**

Name: Vasyl

Very

Anxious

Species

Yet

Lovable

Note: Praising oneself can be hard for many. If using the praising variant of this activity but also for introductory purposes, students can be asked to work in pairs and write poems about their partners. This option can also lower their anxiety by allowing them to write about someone else, share information about themselves, and practice reading the poem with a limited number of partners before performing it in front of the class.

**Contributor:** Małgorzata Durygin

**Origin:**

[Goularte, R. \(2024\). Read, write, think. NCTE website.](#)

[Robinson, A. \(July 19, 2022\). Acrostic poems. Teaching and Learning Together.](#)

**Links:**

- [Acrostic Poems 1](#)
- [Acrostic Poems 2](#)
- [Rhyme Resource](#)

## IX. A Role Model

This writing/speaking activity is based on various popular activities on a topic of positive role models and icons, and their importance in students' lives. This activity helps students learn from one another about famous public figures and/or pay tribute to their personal heroes and family members. It can be used to reflect on and discuss the importance of having positive role models in life and qualities/personal characteristics that can help students realize their potential, discover their own strength, inspire and motivate them to help make the world a better place, and encourage them to strive to achieve goals.

**Directions:** The teacher asks students to reflect (individually or in groups) on the characteristics of a role model and then present their ideas to the class. Next, each student is asked to think about their role models and introduce them and discuss the reasons they perceive them as such and what lessons can be learned from these individuals.

Students may organize their ideas on a list or chart. Then, they can introduce their role models to the class or work on a written reflection.

What are the qualities of a role model?	
What is your definition of a role model?	
Who is your role model?	
How can you describe your role model?	
What are your reasons for your choice of a role model?	
What can be learned from your role model?	

**Contributor:** Małgorzata Durygin

**Origin:** N.N. (2014). Role models and icons ESL activities. High and low level high school ESL lesson plans, activities and resources.

Warre, T. (2013). Role Models. Tim's free English lesson plans.

**Links to activities:**

- <https://highschoollessons.blogspot.com/2014/04/role-models-icons-esl-activities.html>
- <https://freeenglishlessonplans.com/2013/01/29/role-models/>

## X. Progress Made

This is an adaptation of writing/speaking activities useful for students' self-reflection and identification of their strong sides, that can help them develop a positive self-image, increase their self-esteem, and motivate them to continue their work. Depending on the curriculum, students can be asked to focus on their progress in their English language skills, any other specific skills, or skills they acquired in general and how they can use them in their daily lives. The number of identified skills to discuss may vary depending on the time restraints.

**Directions:** Students are asked to reflect on their achievements and accomplishments, and things they have learned so far. Next, they need to identify the situations in which their skills can be useful. After that, they are asked to present their ideas in class or work on a written reflection. Finally, during the classroom discussion students can help one another, brainstorm the ideas of how to apply the skills learned and presented by their peers, and get inspired by the experience.

Students may organize their ideas on a list or chart. They can also design and/or issue a certificate of achievement to recognize and celebrate their success(es).

What I learned	How and where I can use it
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

**Contributor:** Małgorzata Durygin

**Origin:**

N. N. (Aug 14, 2023). Teaching resource: My accomplishment worksheets. Teach Starter.

[Link to activity](#)

## XI. Something for Everybody

This activity develops speaking skills including making suggestions and expressing likes, dislikes and preferences. It works best with intermediate to advanced level language learners.

### **Procedure:**

Students form groups and the teacher describes the situation:

“Imagine that you, that is all of you together, have \$100 left over from a bargain sale you organized. You should now think of what you could do with the money so that everyone in the class is satisfied. First write down all the ideas you have without discussing or commenting on them, then rank them. When you have found one suggestion you all agree with, present it to the class.”

Each group presents its suggestion. The class then tries to agree on a common proposal by arguing and presenting reasons (a conclusion is reached via discussion, not by a majority vote!).

**Contributor:** Yuliia Fihura

**Origin:** Klippel Friederike, [Keep talking: Communicative fluency activities for language teaching](#). Cambridge handbooks for language teachers.

**[Link to activity:](#)** Activity #99, page 109 -110

## XII. What Makes a Successful Learner?

This speaking/writing activity deals with learning habits and motivation. It is useful for students' self-reflection and identification of their strengths, which can help them develop a positive self-image and increase self-esteem. It helps students recognize the value of positive thinking and hard work, develop goal setting skills, and boost their motivation. The number of characteristics to focus on may vary depending on the time limit and the area of expertise (e.g., a successful English language learner). It can be a good idea to do this activity at the beginning of the year to help students focus on what they do well, and how they can use their assets.

**Directions:** The teacher asks students to identify the characteristics of a successful learner (individually or in groups). Then, during a class discussion students present their ideas, justify their choices, choose up to 7 of the most important qualities, and write them down. Next, each student needs to reflect on which of those qualities they already possess, and which they do not. After that students decide on the qualities of a successful learner they wish to acquire in the future. Finally, students share their reflections orally in class or in writing and brainstorm the ways to develop the most desired qualities of a successful learner.

Optionally, students may want to design a survey using their list of qualities of a successful learner and ask their classmates if they possess those qualities or not and what qualities they would like to work on.

Students may organize their ideas on a list or chart.

Qualities of a successful learner	I do have	I do not have	I would like to develop and how

**Contributor:** Małgorzata Durygin

**Origin:** KS1 (n.d.). What makes a good learner?: Survey activity. Twinkl.  
Pixie Anne. (2015). Consensus activity. Adventures in Literacy Land.

**Links to activities:**

- <https://www.twinkl.com/resource/t-c-254869-ks1-what-makes-a-good-learner-survey-activity-english>
- <https://www.adventuresinliteracyland.com/2015/08/consensus-activity.html>

### XIII. Wheels of Formative Assessment

This is an online exercise that can be used at the beginning of the new topic and at the end of it. It can be used to assess what students know about the topic as well as what they want to learn. The teacher (or students) spin the wheel and use the listed question to guide conversation either with the whole class or in small groups.

**Questions:**

- What do you think the lesson will be about?
- What questions do you have related to the topic?
- What interests you about this topic?
- How would you explain the importance of this topic to someone else?
- What do you already know about this topic?
- Where can you find information about this topic?



**Contributor and Creator:** Oksana Khomenko

**Link to activity:**

- [Beginning](#)
- [Ending](#)

# Drama-Based Pedagogies

Drama-based pedagogies are teaching methods that use role-play, improvisation, and theatrical techniques to engage students in active learning. These approaches are particularly effective for language learning because they encourage learners to immerse themselves in real-life scenarios, which allows them to practice language in dynamic, authentic contexts. In drama-based learning, learners step into different roles, explore new vocabulary, expressions, and cultural nuances in a way that feels both natural and meaningful. Drama-based activities are fun and interactive, which helps reduce anxiety and encourages participation, making language learning an enjoyable experience. The use of drama in the classroom also fosters creativity and collaboration.



## I. Acting-Out Dictacomp

This activity wakes up a class and is particularly useful in beginner level language classes that enjoy [Total Physical Response \(TPR\)](#). It can also be used with writing passages or lessons that involve a procedure (waking up and getting ready, recipes/cooking, etc.).

### Procedure

1. The teacher chooses a passage from the students' text/textbook that involves a series of age-appropriate actions. (e.g. starting a car, getting on an airplane, getting up in the morning, taking a test, preparing a meal, finding an apartment).
2. With students' books closed, the teacher reads the passage aloud slowly.
3. Next, the teacher elicits key words from the class and puts these on the board.
4. The teacher rereads the passage at normal speed.
5. The teacher mimes (acts out without speaking) the passage as students write down each of the actions. Alternatively, a student from the class can act as the mime.
6. One volunteer at a time acts out the passage as other students call out the actions.
7. At the end of the activity, students check their written text against the original. The teacher can choose which mistakes or areas of improvement to highlight in the remaining time. Alternatively, the teacher can use that data to inform later lessons.
8. As an extension, students create their own short "action passages" and in small groups act these out while fellow students write out what is being enacted.

**Contributor:** Inna Kryvokhyzha

**Origin:** Adapted from Pollard, L., Hess, N., Marell, M. (2023). [Zero Prep Activities for All Levels - Ready-to-Go Activities for In-Person and Remote Language Teaching](#). Pro Lingua Learning.



## II. Exploding Atom

Exploding Atom is an out-of-your-seat strategy in which participants express their opinion(s) on their own continuum spoke that starts at the center and moves to the outermost point of the standing circle space. This strategy allows participants to see a range of opinions in the class while embodying their own opinion(s).

**Procedure:** Before the activity, the teacher creates a series of statements on a topic that will evoke a range of opinions from participants. For example: *It's easy to be famous.*

- For the activity, the full group stands in a large, open space in a circle.
- The teacher explains that a statement will be read.
- If a participant agrees with the statement they should come as close to the center of the circle as possible (it can be helpful to model this).
- If a participant disagrees with the statement, they should stand as far away from the center as possible within a set boundary (again, it can be helpful to model this). After the teacher reads the first statement, he/she then asks participants to vote with their bodies by moving to the place that best expresses their response between “yes, I agree” and “no, I disagree.”

After the first questions, the teacher shows/explains how each participant is on his/her own continuum between “agree” and “disagree” in their response to each statement and takes any questions from students.

When desired, it is possible to stop and unpack or process the participants’ responses to the statements: *Someone who is standing closer to “I agree,” please share why.* Then, *Someone who is standing closer to “I disagree,” please share why.* Or, *Please turn to the person next to you and share why you are standing where you are standing.* At the end, the teacher resets the group to a neutral circle between statements and prepares for the next prompt.

**Contributor:** Liudmyla Herasymenko

**Origin:** University of Texas. (2024). *Exploding Atom*. Exploding Atom | Drama-Based Pedagogy. <https://dbp.theatredance.utexas.edu/teaching-strategies/exploding-atom>

### III. Forum Theatre / Newspaper Theatre

In this activity, students in groups are asked to select an article from online or print media featuring a story on a relevant topic or issue related to a challenging situation such as stereotypes, discrimination, hate speech, oppression, (cyber)bullying, fake news, etc. Each group reads the article and prepares a short theatrical performance conveying its message (about 5 minutes or as decided by the teacher and students).

It is important that the teacher establishes some parameters regarding article selection (for instance, give a list of news sources or possible topics). Additionally, the teacher should review and approve all selections before students prepare their performances.

Among the goals of this activity is stimulation of critical thinking and critical consumption of media content to push engagement and interest towards issues raised through the performance (e. g. inclusion, fake news, stereotypes, etc).

The performance may be followed by further discussion and feedback from the invited audience to trigger deeper reflections and debates on various topics.

**Contributor:** Irena Snikhovska

**Origin:** "Act for What You Believe" project implemented by A.R.T. Fusion from Romania, <https://en.artfusion.ro/projects/>

[Link to activity](#)

## IV. Imaginarium

This activity is a fun way to quickly develop a scene through improvisation and creativity. Players stand in a circle and respond to a given theme by stepping forward and creating a freeze-frame pose of an object or character related to the theme. As more players join, they add to the scene, creating a dynamic and interconnected tableau.

### **Procedure:**

- The facilitator announces a theme for the scene (e.g. beach).
- One player steps forward, creates a freeze-frame pose of an object or character related to the theme, and announces what they are (e.g. "I am a deck chair" or "I am a starfish").
- Other players add themselves into the scene one at a time, each creating a freeze-frame pose and announcing their object or character. Everyone continues to hold their positions as new players join in.
- The game ends when all players have stepped in or enough ideas have been added. The facilitator says "Whoosh!" and the players step back to the edge of the circle.

This activity can be adapted for online or socially distanced environments. It is versatile for various themes and locations, promoting brainstorming and group creativity.

**Contributor:** Olha Datskiv

Original activity by David Farmer: <https://dramaresource.com/imaginarium-drama-game/>

# Ice Breakers and Other Activities

As the title of this section suggests, the following activities do not fit any of the previous holistic language pedagogy topics. Some of them may be a unique, eclectic mix of several pedagogies, while others are useful tools that can benefit classroom teachers of all ages. We suggest reading through these activities to find the ones that best fit a particular unit, lesson or activity!



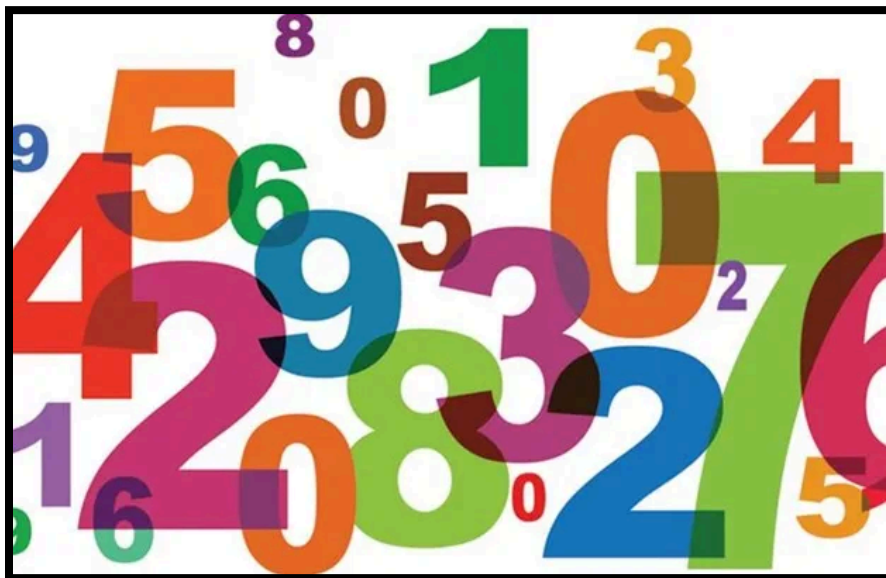
## I. A Life in Numbers

This activity can be used to engage students in thinking about important things in their lives through associations with numbers. It can be used as an ice-breaking or networking activity. In this activity, students are asked to make a list of five numbers that are connected to something important in their lives. Students work in pairs/groups trying to guess the meaning/significance of their partners' numbers (e.g. 2 - my two daily cups of coffee). One small modification could be to have students think of something important from their lives that is represented by the numbers 0-10.

This activity can be modified/extended by discussing the meaning of numbers in students' cultures, numbers and their meanings across the world, number words and counting systems, and ways of expressing quantities in the world's languages with their history and evolution.

**Contributor:** Olha Ponomarenko

**Source:** Calude, A. S. (2021). The history of number words in the world's languages—what have we learnt so far? *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* doi: 10.1098/rstb.2020.0206. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8059502/>.

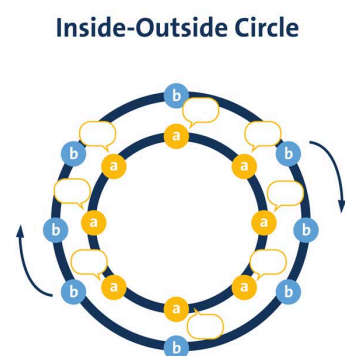


## II. Concentric Talk Circle

This activity pushes students to say more than they believed possible. It can be used at any level and is best suited to support speaking, listening, previewing / reviewing, and pre-writing.

### Procedure:

1. The teacher chooses a subject that they want students to talk about: a dream, future plans, most frightening experience, etc. They can also tailor the topic to the class content. Students complete the activity by standing in two concentric circles. Each inner-circle student is facing an outer-circle partner.
2. Students have one minute to plan what they will say when their turn comes.
3. The inner-circle students speak first. The teacher tells students: "You have three minutes to talk. There's only one rule: *Don't stop talking*. If you finish early, start over again. If you can't think of the right word, say it a different way. If you don't have ideas, say, 'Ba, ba, ba, ...' Sooner or later an idea will come to you. But *don't stop talking*."
4. The teacher then tells the listening partners in the outer circle: "Your job is very important. This is not a conversation, so don't ask questions or talk at all. Just lean forward, let your face show that you are very interested, and listen to your partner."
5. At the teacher's signal (clapping hands work well), all inner-circle students talk simultaneously while their partners listen.
6. At the end of three minutes, the teacher signals again for speakers to stop. (Invite listeners to thank their speakers after each phase of this activity.)
7. Speakers move one place to their right. Now they tell the same thing to their new partners in two minutes.
8. Students move one place to the right again and tell the same thing to a third partner in one minute. Speakers will have to edit and talk even faster this time!
9. Steps 5-9 are repeated with the outer circle as speakers. They will rotate to their right to find new partners.
10. In the plenary after the activity, the teacher asks students whether they enjoyed this activity and why. The teacher also invites volunteers to share about the experience and to also share something they heard from one of their speaking partners.



As a variation, the activity can start with one minute, then expand the time to two, then three minutes. This allows students to elaborate rather than condense and edit.

**Contributor:** Inna Kryvokhyzha

**Origin:** Adapted from Pollard, L., Hess, N., Marell, M. (2023). [Zero Prep Activities for All Levels - Ready-to-Go Activities for In-Person and Remote Language Teaching](#). Pro Lingua Learning.

### III. Conceptual Metaphors

A metaphor is a comparison between two things to get at a deeper meaning. Metaphors can be great for teaching complex concepts. Image metaphors take this idea further by using visual elements to represent abstract ideas. This gets learners engaged by having them interpret and understand an image's connection to the concept.

The teacher should:

1. Decide what concept/skill they want to get across (e.g., teamwork, strength, growth, health, etc.).
2. Take a look at each concept and think about what it means. Which qualities define each concept? (e.g., teamwork means working together).
3. Think about the literal meaning of the concept and show how it relates to other concepts you know about (e.g., teamwork in a classroom, playing soccer, within a family, etc.).
4. Find images that represent these concepts. Look for images that show what these literal terms mean.
5. Discuss the image with your students as a brainstorming activity.

#### Example:

As a warm-up activity, the teacher can use contextualized metaphors by asking students or teachers to describe the image. Let's try it!

***What do you associate with this picture? What do its elements represent or identify, in your opinion?***

This image was generated by AI (Copilot Designer). The teacher can use Mentimeter, Slido or Whiteboard, where the teacher and/or students brainstorm and write their associations.

**Examples for discussion:** The roads express professional development opportunities, growth, etc.

**Contributor:** Serhii Petrenko

**Origin:** Some theoretical material about metaphors in the classroom

[https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource\\_files/51\\_1\\_4\\_lowery.pdf](https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/51_1_4_lowery.pdf) and

<https://www.iseazy.com/blog/images-as-metaphors-how-to-convey-abstract-concepts-with-images/>



## IV. Digital Storytelling Using Stop Motion Studio App

[Stop Motion Studio](#) is a powerful tool for educators, providing a fun and interactive way for students to learn and express their creativity.

Using Stop Motion Studio in Education:

- Engages Students: Interactive and hands-on, stop motion animation captures students' interest and encourages active participation.
- Enhances Learning: Helps students grasp complex concepts by visualizing and animating them.
- Encourages Creativity: Fosters creative thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Supports STEAM Education: Integrates seamlessly into Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) programs.

### **Digital Storytelling:**

1. Create a **Story**: The teacher encourages students to write a short story or script and then use the *Stop Motion Studio App* (linked below) to create an animated version of their story.
2. Make a **Storyboard**: From here, the teacher encourages students to plan their animations with storyboards. This helps organize their thoughts and ensures a smoother animation process.
3. Encourage **Collaboration**: The teacher can promote teamwork by having students work in groups. This not only makes the animation process more manageable, but also fosters collaborative skills.
4. Share the Stories!

**Contributor:** Yuliia Klymowych

**Origin:** [Stop Motion Studio in Education](#)

[Link to activity](#)

**Activity Tools:** [Storyboard Template](#); [Stop Motion Studio Manual](#)

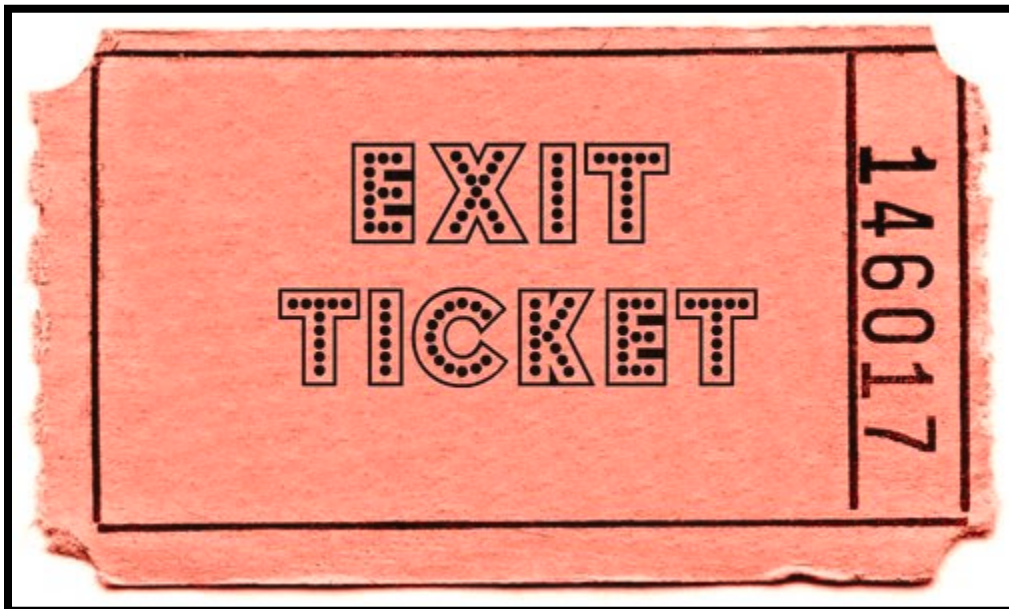


## V. Exit Tickets

This activity aims to facilitate students' reflection on lesson material, its review and evaluation, and to gather their feedback. At the end of the lesson, they answer questions based on the material covered or their impressions. These questions can be on paper or in a digital format, like Mentimeter or Google Docs. Exit cards, varying in content, can be given at the lesson's start to guide students' learning, turning learning into exciting information mining.

**Contributor:** Tetiana Korol

[Link to activity](#) and examples of reflective exit tickets and templates



## VI. Four Corners

This is an activity that helps to create interpersonal connections between students. It can be adapted to fit any grade level as well as any English proficiency level, beginner through advanced.

Required materials: a classroom space with four corners; number signs (1, 2, 3, 4) that are hung in the corners of the classroom; a prepared list of questions with four possible responses and additional discussion prompts.

Before class begins, the teacher creates a list of questions with four possible answers. As an extension, the teacher can ask students to write these questions and answers, either in class or for homework, and later read through them and pick those that fit best. These questions should be about students' daily lives and their preferences. The list below has ideas of possible questions:

- Which sport do you prefer to play? Football/soccer, basketball, volleyball, tennis
- Where would you rather live? In the mountains, by the ocean, in a city, on a lake
- Which animal do you prefer? Dog, cat, horse, monkey
- If you could travel in time, where would you go? 1000 years ago; 100 years ago; 100 years in the future; 1000 years in the future
- Which instrument do you prefer to listen to? Flute, piano, guitar, drums

The teacher should write questions that do not emphasize differences between the conflicting groups and that avoid sensitive topics (e.g., clothing items that differ between the groups).

Steps to playing the game:

1. The teacher tells the students that they will hear a question with four possible answers. Each answer will have a number (1, 2, 3 or 4). Once they hear the question and the possible answers, students should immediately choose the number corner of the answer that they prefer. Then, students move to the corner of the room that matches the number they chose.

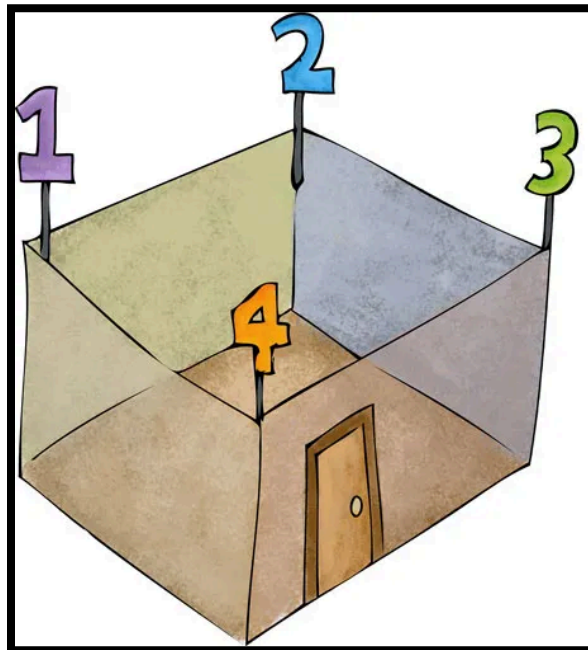
For example, the teacher reads the question, "Which instrument do you prefer?" the teacher would read, "One: Flute; Two: Piano; Three: Guitar; Four: Drums." Students immediately move to the corner of the room that matches the answer they prefer.

3. The teacher then gives students a prompt to discuss with others who are in the same corner of the room. The prompt can be very simple ("Do you play this instrument?") or more complex ("Why do you like this instrument the best?"). The prompt can be the same for each question ("Why did you choose this answer?") or can vary for each question ("Would you like to learn to play this instrument? Why or why not?"). These questions can be adjusted for students' language ability.

4. The teacher gives students a short amount of time to talk in their corners such as 1-3 minutes.
5. The teacher calls all the students back to the center of the classroom.
6. The activity is then repeated with the second question.
7. After all the prepared four corners questions have been read and answered, the teacher can lead a class discussion about what students noticed about similarities in the group. The teacher can also ask students to share what they learned about their classmates

**Contributor:** Valeriia Sichka

**Origin:** 2023 by Eastern Washington University. Teaching in Emergencies: Building Resilient Practices as Language-Learning Teachers for the Online Professional English Network (OPEN). This work is an adaptation of [Making Connections: Language Activities for Creating Interpersonal Tolerance in the Classroom](#), by Susan Renaud and Elizabeth Tannenbaum.



## VII. Interrupt My Story!

This activity helps students with fluency and asking questions. It can also be used for practicing tenses, pronouns, interrogative words, as well as the meaning of “elaboration.” In the activity, students try to interrupt the speaker by asking for more details about the speaker’s statements.

### **Directions:**

The teacher plans a simple story to tell students. It can be factual or made up.

### **Procedure:**

1. The teacher tells students that he/she will tell them a story. The students’ goal is to interrupt as much as possible to ask questions about what was said, and to get more information.
2. The teacher begins telling the story. The first time around, it may be necessary to prompt students to ask questions or demonstrate with just one student.
3. Students will interrupt frequently and ask questions about the details in the story. After each question, the teacher takes a moment to answer the question (see model below). The teacher should proceed until a good stopping place is reached, usually after five or so minutes.

### **Variations:**

1. Students are divided into teams. The students who ask the most questions win. (Note: The questions must be logical and related to what was just said, not silly or random questions.)
2. Students can work in pairs or small groups. One student tells the story while the partner or teammate(s) ask questions.
3. Instead of asking questions, a student can contribute an object verbally, so that the storyteller must incorporate the object into his/her story.

### **Example:**

*Teacher: Yesterday,*

*Student: What time was it?*

*Teacher: 8:00. Yesterday, at 8:00, I was riding the subway to work when*

*Student: Which subway line?*

*Teacher: The red line. I was riding the red line to work when the train suddenly stopped and everyone crashed into each other.*

*Student: Did anyone get hurt?*

**Contributor:** Natalia Sievierianova Kuts

**Origin:** *The Monster Book* p. 59 [Contributor: Elizabeth Crockett Hixon, English teacher, Florence RE-2, Florence, Colorado; English Language Fellow, Brazil, 2011]

[Link to activity](#)

## VIII. Sponge Activities

Teachers address a common issue involving group work in cooperative learning (CL) lessons. In a group, one or more members sometimes finish a task before others; as a class, some groups finish before others. The most widely known solution is to use ‘sponge activities.’ In kitchens, sponges soak up extra water on counters and tables. During CL classes, sponge activities soak up extra time when individual group members or groups finish ahead of others. Sponge activities are invaluable in the classroom, especially when working with mixed-level groups. These activities not only ensure that no time is wasted when some students finish tasks earlier than others, but they also provide opportunities for deeper learning and peer support.

Sponge activities can be divided into two types: generic and activity-specific. A generic sponge activity can be used with almost any CL activity. However, before we move on, we should point out that just because students say they have finished does not mean they have fully completed their task. Sometimes, the individuals and groups that finish last complete the task the best. Much of CL’s magic happens in group members’ discussions, when they brainstorm, teach each other, debate, add perspectives, and provide feedback.

When students have thoroughly finished a task, perhaps the best *generic sponge* activity guides them to help peers still working on the task, whether the peers they help are groupmates or members of other groups. Such peer-based assistance flows from the CL principle of Positive Interdependence. In other words, groupmates and classmates feel as though they sink or swim together. No one is finished until everyone in the group has achieved the learning objectives and can independently do the task the group has been attempting. Other generic sponge activities include working on homework, reading books (e.g., extensive reading programs), and doing puzzles (e.g., crossword or logic puzzles).

In addition to generic sponge activities, sponge activities can be *activity-specific*. These can also be called enrichment activities because they encourage students to go beyond the learning that they have just completed. Students can design their own sponges, or teachers can make suggestions. For lessons concerning the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a great activity-specific sponge involves students considering how they can use their learning to have a real-world impact related to the SDGs the class is studying.

**Contributor:** Alla Lisnychenko

**Origin:** Lim, S., Reidak, J., Chau, M. H., Zhu, C., Guo, Q., Brooks, T. A., Roe, J. and Jacobs, G. M. (2023). Cooperative Learning and the Sustainable Development Goals. Peachy Publications Ltd.

[Link to activity](#)

## IX. Story Dice

This activity helps students to develop their creativity and storytelling skills with the support of images. It is also good for boosting creativity and imagination, practicing teamwork, turn-taking, storytelling skills, and chronological order pattern of organization. The teacher can access the dice for free on the platform linked below.

### Directions:

- A 5 story dice or 9 story dice can be used
- Each dice has a random image on it.
- The teacher rolls the dice and calls on a student to turn the prompts into a story. Alternatively, the teacher can invent the story and then ask students comprehension questions.

**Note:** It is not necessary to take the image(s) literally. The dice can be used metaphorically or as representations of other concepts. For example, a slice of pizza can represent food in general, cutting a slice out of something, Italy, a chef or a heap of other things. The job of the dice is not necessarily to provide the learner with literal objects to work with, but with concepts to nudge thinking in fresh directions. Another modification to this activity is asking students to prepare (draw) their own dice/pictures to make this activity more meaningful to them.

**Contributor:** Yevheniia Nikiforova

[Link to activity](#)



## X. TED Talk: “How Virtual Reality Can Create the Ultimate Empathy Machine”

This activity is based on the TED Talk video linked below which provides food for thought for young adults and enables them to look at virtual reality from another perspective, as something that can teach us empathy. The activity requires that students have a B2 English level or higher.

### **Directions:**

#### ***Prewatching***

1) The teacher checks students’ understanding of new vocabulary if/as necessary:

- empathy
- to worship
- a compelling story
- to sue
- ultimate/ ultimately
- visceral
- to capture
- a rectangle
- a refugee camp
- to flee
- a headset
- to shoot a story
- to scratch the surface
- a profound way
- perception

2) The teacher asks students how they understand the following quotes from the video: "VR is a machine that makes us more human"; "Talking about VR is like dancing about architecture".

#### ***Watching***

Students watch the TED Talks video "How virtual reality can create the ultimate empathy machine" and make a list of the 8-10 most striking statements (insights) on the basis of what they see. The teacher instructs students to be ready to discuss these in small groups.

#### ***Post-watching***

Students discuss the insights in small groups and identify the 5 most striking ones and share them in a padlet (or other space). The teacher invites groups to share their findings with one another.

**Origin:** The video was produced by TEDTalks with filmmaker Chris Milk as the speaker.

**Contributor:** Svitlana Medynska

[Link to activity](#)

## XI. TED Talk: Why We Ignore Obvious Problems - and How to Act on Them”

This activity is based on the TED Talk video linked below which helps students to look at uncertainty and people’s inability to see obvious problems as a shared vulnerability. Another aspect considered in this video is a cultural perspective, which is a great tool to develop students’ intercultural competence and help them understand cultural diversity and cultural differences. The activity requires the students’ [English level to be B2](#) or higher.

### Pre-watching

1. The teacher checks students’ knowledge and understanding of new vocabulary if/as necessary:

- Sound alarm bells
- See the writing (handwriting) on the wall
- Foreclosure
- Blind spots
- Get trampled

2. From here, the teacher asks students to discuss in small groups (or as a large group in the case of a smaller class): Why do people tend to ignore highly obvious problems in front of their eyes?

### Watching

Students watch the TED Talk video “Why we ignore obvious problems - and how to act on them” and answer the following questions:

1. Why do people tend to ignore highly obvious problems in front of their eyes?
2. Why did the head of the Federal Reserve call the 2008 financial crisis a “black swan”? What did this metaphor mean?
3. What is the meaning of the “gray rhino”?
4. What is the presenter talking about saying that she had seen the writing on the wall? What did other people do in this case?
5. What is the connection between our control over things and our reaction to them?
6. How does China face questions of economic crisis?
7. How does individualist American culture lend itself to ignoring problems?
8. Which examples does the presenter give about different attitudes to potential risks (grandparents, automobile companies)? What does it depend on?
9. Who tends to take risks: people who see problems or who block them out? Why?
10. What does the presenter mean when speaking about “shared vulnerability of humanity”? Do you agree with this opinion?



## **Post-Watching**

The teacher leads the class in discussing the following questions (in a large group or in small groups).

1. How does the culture you live in affect how you face and handle problems?
2. What are some examples of “gray rhinos” either in your life or your community?

Students are then invited to do the following out loud or in writing:

3. Share your key ideas in a padlet.
4. Compare your ideas with those of the other groups. Share your reflections on this activity. Has it helped you to be realistic about your power to control everything?

**Contributor:** Svitlana Medynska

**Origin:** The video was produced by TEDTaks with policy strategist Michele Wucker as the speaker.

[Link to activity](#)

## XII. Tips for Improving Group Work

Many teachers and students are reluctant to do cooperative learning (CL), because they have had negative experiences with group activities. Here are 10 tips for helping groups function well, as explored in relation to working on the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), for example:

1. Give people a chance to stand and otherwise move their bodies in a variety of ways. Chair yoga, deep breathing, and stretch breaks can also be useful.
2. Spending time socializing is fine. Group activities do not need to be all business. Also, if schools allow it, food and drink can be part of meetings.
3. Express gratitude to fellow group members and others, including people being grateful to themselves as well. Gratitude messages should include reasons, such as “I appreciated that Carlos took the time to organize all our files, because that helps us think more clearly,” or “I’m proud of this group for trying to do our part to address the SDGs.”
4. Stop regularly to discuss how well the group is functioning. This can be an opportunity to express gratitude, and it can also be an opportunity to highlight problems. For example, maybe group members need to communicate more often and clearly, and groups also need to ensure that all members feel fully included.
5. Figure out how the group will communicate outside of class. Nowadays, many possibilities exist, including phone calls, emails, and social media-based groups. However, not everyone has access, and different people have different preferences.
6. Feel free to express sadness. When talking about the SDGs, sadness comes easily. People and nonhuman animals are suffering every minute of every day because we have not made enough progress on the 17 SDGs. Furthermore, the efforts of classroom groups can only do so much.
7. Books on CL talk about Identity Positive Interdependence. This means that sharing a common identity can motivate the group. Ideas for promoting this common identity include making a group name, motto, logo, handshake, cheer, clap, proverb, or mascot.
8. For the SDGs, groups can have a hero. This hero might be someone who has already done impressive work toward one or more SDGs. Similarly, groups can have a person to help. For example, the group could use a photo of a starving child. This provides a visual reminder of the importance of the group’s work.

9. Groups also want their activities to enhance the personal development of each group member. For example, perhaps one member wants to use the activity to improve their writing skill. In this case, the other members would give this person more opportunities to write, with the others acting as coaches.

10. Rotating roles get everyone involved and help all feel valuable. Some possible roles are: timekeeper, facilitator, reporter. Rotating roles allow everyone to equally develop their classroom skills.

**Contributor:** Alla Lisnychenko

**Origin:** Lim, S., Reidak, J., Chau, M. H., Zhu, C., Guo, Q., Brooks, T. A., Roe, J. and Jacobs, G. M. (2023). Cooperative Learning and the Sustainable Development Goals. Peachy Publications Ltd.

[Link to activity](#)

# Conclusion and Thank You

Dear educator,

Thank you for taking the time to explore and engage with this compendium. We truly hope that it has sparked your imagination and inspired you to incorporate aspects of holistic language pedagogies into your own classroom practice. The activities and resources provided here have been thoughtfully crafted and collaboratively developed to be adaptable across various teaching contexts, making them useful not only in your setting, but also in classrooms around the world.

As educators, we are constantly learning, evolving, and seeking new ways to connect with our students. We hope that the flexible and dynamic activities in this compendium will help you to enhance your current teaching practice while addressing the diverse needs of your learners. Whether you focus on social and emotional learning, play-based learning, or any of the other pedagogical approaches highlighted here, these tools are designed to be adjusted and tailored to meet the unique context(s) of your classroom(s).

We also encourage you to share this resource with your colleagues and peers. By doing so, you can create opportunities for collective growth and collaboration within your educator community. Sharing knowledge, ideas, and strategies strengthens not only individual practices but also the collective capacity to provide meaningful and engaging learning experiences for students.

For those who are eager to explore even more innovative teaching resources, we invite you to visit the Center for Professional Learning's extensive library of open educational resources (OERs), which are available for free. You can access the library here: <https://ceinternational1892.org/oers/>. This valuable collection offers a wealth of materials that can further enrich your teaching and provide new tools to support your professional growth.

Once again, thank you for your dedication to learning and for your interest in holistic language pedagogies. We hope that you and your colleagues will bring these ideas to life in your classrooms!

Sincerely,

The Holistic Language Pedagogies Project Team, October 2024