



Ken Lackman & Associates
Educational Consultants

Getting Students to Do Your Prep

Student Activities for Creating Materials



Ken Lackman

Methods and activities for more effective teaching with less preparation

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Introduction

Good language teachers will often spend many hours preparing classroom materials for their students. These teachers are trying to make their classes more interesting and involving for the students. They create material for activities and games which they think will be particularly useful for their students. They do this because they feel that the material found in coursebooks and activity books is generic and they know that they can tailor similar material to their students which will better serve their needs and interests. For example, many teachers start the first class with a “Find someone who” icebreaker from a book. The activity in the book will be generic and a teacher may see the value in changing it to make it more interesting and useful for the students. For instance, activity books have the ubiquitous “Find someone who has been to ...” instruction. The teacher may adapt it to his/her students by changing it to some location that is in the relative vicinity of the school or city that the students are living in.

But in some cases, it makes more sense to get the students to decide what is relevant to them rather than have the teacher make this decision for them. Whenever you, as a teacher, find yourself thinking up activities or material to use in the classroom, ask yourself this question: Would my students get more value out of creating this than I would? This is especially relevant when the material or activity has a linguistic focus. To go back to “Find Someone Who” again, many teachers use it for getting students to practice asking and answering questions with the present perfect. But do teachers benefit from sitting at their desks trying to think of different questions that feature the present perfect? On the other hand, students would get valuable practice not only composing the instructions for the questions, where they would have to pay attention to the correct form for the present perfect, but they would also have to pay attention to meaning when they think of situations and/or actions to which the present perfect would apply. And once you’ve made the decision to turn the creation of an activity over to the students, you can tailor it even more to make sure they get maximum benefit out of creating it. For example, to make sure students don’t write a group of “Find someone who has *been* to...”, you could specify that each FSW instruction must use a different verb (e.g., has eaten..., has learned..., has watched..., etc.).

In the affective realm, there are even more reasons to hand over the creation of class materials to the students. Students relish the opportunity to be creative with the language, especially with something that is going to be used in some way in the class. They will get a sense of ownership from it and will strive to make it as effective as possible. To have the other students use and enjoy the material they create is intrinsically motivating and students will get a sense of pride when their material is used successfully, if not enthusiastically, in the classroom. Finally, giving students input into creating material often allows them to utilize their sense of humour and it seems that students, regardless of their background, often recognize what their fellow students find amusing much more than the teacher can.

Activities

Find Someone Who



Speaking

Vocabulary



Listening

Grammar



Reading

Pronunciation



Writing

Warmer/Icebreaker

This is a standard warmer but it can actually be used to practice all kinds of grammar and vocabulary if it is “planted” in the “Find someone who” commands. Rather than compose the commands yourself, you can give students valuable practice by having them think about using the target language in a realistic context.

First you need to make sure students understand how the activity works. Let them know that they will get a list of “Find someone who” commands and they have to find a different person for each one and then write their name beside the command when they find them. You can make it competitive by telling them whoever finds the most people will win.

Once you’ve told the students what grammar or vocabulary you want them to practice, put them in pairs and have them compose the commands. You can have them write their own commands or you can make it more interesting by telling them to write them for other students in the class. Establish how many commands they need to have. Then give each student a paper and make sure both students in each pair write an identical list of commands. You can monitor to check for accuracy while they are writing. When all the students have finished writing, tell the pairs to label their two lists A and B. Then collect all the papers and redistribute them – it doesn’t matter if someone ends up with their own paper. Then tell A’s to get on one side of the class and B’s on the other. Divide the class in two with the A’s on one side and the B’s on the other. You can instruct them to both ask and answer their questions using the target language, if you wish.

When you stop the activity, get students to find the student on the other side of the class who has the same list of questions. They then compare lists to see how many they got in total. You can elicit their totals to determine a winner.

This activity can also be used as an icebreaker or warmer where no particular grammar or vocabulary is involved. Students merely have to think of general “find someone who” commands.

Find someone who...

has been to New York. *Hassan*

has eaten snails.

has been on a ship.

has seen a hockey game. *Jana*

Sample sheet for present perfect

Vocabulary or Grammar Hot Seat



Speaking
Vocabulary



Listening
Grammar



Reading
Pronunciation



Writing
Warmer/Icebreaker

This is a lively activity which gets students to enthusiastically review grammar or vocabulary that's already been taught, either in a previous lesson or earlier in that lesson. It is based on a popular game where someone gets a teammate to guess a word from clues but they are not allowed to say the actual word. In this version, students get their teammate to guess a whole sentence, albeit a short one. Normally, teachers would be supplying the sentences but in this case, it's the students.

To begin, establish what grammar or vocabulary you want students to practice. Then ask each student in the class to write a short sentence containing a target word, phrase or grammatical structure. As other students will have to guess the sentence word by word, you may want to establish a word limit to keep the activity from being too difficult. Below are some sample simple sentences for some grammar points and vocabulary. Note that contractions have been avoided. If you are dealing with vocabulary, write the list of words or phrases on the board and have students come up to the board and cross off the one they are going to use. If you have more students than words, you can allow students to choose one that has already been crossed off.

- I have seen Titanic. (present perfect)
- If I was home, I would be happy. (2nd conditional)
- I have put off my dentist appointment. (phrasal verb)
- He has a splitting headache (vocabulary/collocation)

When all students have finished writing their sentences, put them into two teams which assemble on the two sides of the class. Put two chairs in front of the board, facing the class. Each team sends a member to sit in the chair facing the class. Those students cannot look at the board. One student from one of the teams comes up and writes their sentence on the board. If there are errors in it, correct them on the board without saying anything. Then the members of each team try to get their teammate in the hot seat to say the sentence. They cannot use any of the words in the sentence but they can give clues like the part of speech and synonyms. The following illustrates the type of clues that could be provided for "I have seen Titanic".

- pronoun, first person singular
- auxiliary verb meaning to possess.
- what you do with your eyes – past participle
- a famous ship that sunk – made into a movie

The first student in the hot seat to get the whole sentence gets a point for their team. Then a member of the other team comes up and writes a sentence on the board and two new students sit in the hot seats. This activity is a great warmer but it can be used at any point in the class to practice or review grammar and/or vocabulary.

Guess Who



Speaking
Vocabulary



Listening
Grammar



Reading
Pronunciation



Writing
Warmer/Icebreaker

This activity can be used as a warmer/icebreaker or as practice or review with grammar or vocabulary. The way the activity works is students write down answers to certain questions about themselves and then their papers are collected and read out. The class has to guess who wrote what.

To set the activity up, assemble the class into two to four groups of three to ten students. Give each group a board marker and a section of the board to write on. Establish the type of questions you want students to write. For example, if you're using it as an icebreaker, you might get students to write "get to know you" questions e.g., "Where were you born?", "What kind of music do you like?" etc. If you're using this activity to practice or review a grammar point, establish what it is you want the students to practice, e.g., 2nd conditionals ("If you were rich, what would you do?", "If you were president of the US, what...?", etc.). The questions should not be answerable with just "yes" or "no". For vocabulary, refer students to the list of words or phrases you want them to use and specify that each question they come up with must use a new item from the list. If the list gets used up, they can repeat items used before. Finally, you can establish that it is a competition to see which group can come up with the most questions.

Start the activity by getting one student from each group to come to their section of the board and write a question that could be asked of another student. After they finish, they return to their group and give the marker to another member who then goes up and writes another question. While this is going on, keep an eye out for repeated questions, which must be erased. You can also ask the seated students to do this. Stop this process at any point after you have collected at least ten questions. Then you should go over the questions and correct any errors. If you made it a competition, announce the team that contributed the most questions as the winners. If you want to add another dimension to the activity, you could subtract incorrect questions from the total number a team gets. This way, students will be encouraged to peer correct as the activity is progressing.

Once the corrected questions are up on the board, hand out a piece of paper to each student. Tell students how many questions you want them to answer, e.g., six, and then each student chooses any six questions from the board and writes down their answers on their paper. Then collect the papers and redistribute them. Tell students not to worry or say anything if they get their own – it will make the activity more interesting. Then each student, in turn reads out the answers on the paper they have and the rest of the class tries to guess who wrote it. You can deal with any errors directly or by asking for peer correction. When you have two students left to read, have each one read before allowing the guesses. This will eliminate the situation where the author of the last one is obvious.

Assuming Identities



Speaking
Vocabulary



Listening
Grammar



Reading
Pronunciation



Writing
Warmer/Icebreaker

This activity is very similar to “Guess Who” but probably shouldn't be used as an icebreaker since the students need to know a little bit about their classmates. It can, however, be used as a warmer or to practice grammar or vocabulary. “Assuming Identities” begins in exactly the same way as “Guess Who” with the students writing questions for other students on the board. But after that, the students are given a piece of paper on which they write their name – at the very top – and then they fold over the top so their name is not visible. Then collect all the papers and place them on your desk. Students come up and take one and then they can unfold it and look at the name. Make sure if they get their own that they put it back and take another. Then the students choose questions from the board (establish how many) and answer the questions as if they were the person whose paper they have – in the first person, e.g., “If I were rich, I would...” When the students have finished writing the answers, each one, in turn, reads out their answers and other students try to guess whose paper it was originally. You can also add another element to this activity by getting the person whose paper it was to say how many answers were true of them and get the class to guess which ones they were. To add a competitive element, you could award the writer a point for each answer that is actually true.

Paper Strip Test



Speaking
Vocabulary



Listening
Grammar



Reading
Pronunciation



Writing
Warmer/Icebreaker

This is a great activity to get students to test each other on grammar or vocabulary. The activity could be used to review language from a previous class or it could be used for controlled practice right after the new vocabulary or grammar is explained. The fact that it is the students who write the test questions, leaves the teacher free during the entire testing/practice stage.

You can have students working in pairs to write the questions but you will need to supply each individual student with a strip of paper to write a question on. Then you have to establish what grammar or vocabulary you want them to test. If you are dealing with vocabulary, you will need to assign each individual student one word that they are to write a test question for. If you have more students than words, you can get some pairs to write two different questions featuring the same word, or a different form of it, e.g., “study”, “studying”, “studied”. The easiest way to assign the words is to write the list on the board and have each student come up to the board, choose one and then cross it off.

Once you've established what each student is supposed to test, then you need to establish what type of test question you want students to use. The type of question will depend somewhat on the target language as some types are better suited to vocabulary and others to grammar. Below is a list of different types with examples.

Question types

Basic Question

- What does *assemble* mean?
- What word means to make something from small parts?
- What are your plans for next Saturday? (future forms)

True/False

- The word *assemble* means to take something apart. T / F

Multiple Choice

- The water level has _____.
A. rised B. risen C. rose
- He takes _____ his father.
A. on B. over C. after

Gap Fill

- He _____ the furniture from IKEA.

Gap Fill with Key Word to Transform

- If I _____ (know), I wouldn't have gone there.
- Most parents think _____ (educate) is important.

Key Words

- If / I / know / Mary / there / I / not go / party / last night.

Note: Keep verbs in base form, use "not" for negatives and use only subject pronouns.

Sentence Transformation

- I regret not studying harder in school.
If only _____ in school.

Sentence Transformation with Key Word

- I regret not studying harder in school. WISH
I _____ in school

Note: Students must use the key word in the given form in their answer.

When each student has a strip of paper and knows what type of question they have to write for the target language, they can write their test question. You can monitor to help them if they need it and to check their work. When they have finished writing the question, they should show it to you and if it's acceptable, get them to write their name on the front or back of the strip of paper. If they are working in pairs, they should write both their names on it. Then they should place it on your desk. As the questions come in, you should number them. If you are going to end up with exactly one strip per student, you may want to compose your own question and add it to the collection as it's best to have an extra question or two.

After students have completed all the questions, put them in a pile on your desk. Tell students how many there are and tell them to write the numbers for each question in a column in their notebooks, from 1. to whatever. Then tell each student, or one student from each pair (if you're using pairs), to

come up and take a question strip. There are NOT to write on the strip itself, but they should write the answer in their notebooks beside the appropriate question number. In some cases, you may request that they write a whole sentence, in other cases, one or more words will do. When they have answered the question, they check their answers with the students who wrote the question and if they are correct, they put the strip back on your desk and take another one. The first student – or pair of students – to answer all the questions will win. You can ask them to write their names on the board in the order that they finish, if you'd like.

4.
<p>His idea might be good. POSSIBLE</p> <p>_____ his idea is good. Kenji</p>

Sample for modal verb practice using Key Word Sentence Transformation

Alternate version

Use this activity when you want to give the students an actual test. This version is similar to the one above except the students are not required to write their names on the question strips. Put students in pairs and tell them that they are going to write the test questions and the more questions they write, the easier the test will be (because they will have composed some of the questions). Then give each pair a pile of paper strips. As they complete a test question, they check it with you. After making any necessary corrections, take the question and number it. Stop the activity when you have received what you consider to be enough contributions. Then tell the students how many questions there are and they write those numbers on a sheet of paper. Then put the strips on your desk, each student (they are working individually now) comes up and takes a strip and writes the answer in the appropriate place on their sheet. Then they exchange it for another. Stop the activity whenever you want (not all students have to answer all questions) and collect their papers so you can mark them.

Find the Structure

<input type="checkbox"/> Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/> Listening	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reading	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Writing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/> Grammar	<input type="checkbox"/> Pronunciation	<input type="checkbox"/> Warmer/Icebreaker

Teacher-led version

This activity was adapted from a reading activity where the students have to find certain lexical structures, like collocations and expressions, from a reading text. It is normally used with a reading or listening text after the students have spent some time reading or listening to it for comprehension. In the teacher-created activity, a series of strips of paper are prepared with clues about the meaning and structure of a collocation or phrase in the reading. The teacher's copy is on one sheet and has the answers. Another copy is sliced up into strips and the answers are cut off (see sample). Then the students are told the number of strips there are and they write those numbers in a column in their notebooks. Then the strips are placed on the teacher's desk and the students are put in pairs. A student from each pair comes up and takes a strip. They bring it back to their partner and they look through the text for the structure described on the strip. They can use the

numbers on the strips to help them tell which part of the text it is in. When they think they have found it, they call the teacher over and if they have really found it, they write the structure in their notebooks beside the appropriate number and then take another strip. It is a race to see who can find them all first. Once a team or two has found them all, get the other students to check their answers with them instead of you.

Below is a sample text and five questions strips. Normally you would need at least one strip for each pair of students and at least one extra one.

Picasso, Pablo 1881 - 1973

Sample text

He was born in Málaga, Spain. He studied at Barcelona and Madrid, and in 1901 he set up a studio in Montmartre, Paris. His "blue period" (1902--4), was a series of paintings of the poor which showed attitudes of despair and gloom. Following that was his much happier "pink period" (1904--6), full of harlequins, acrobats, and other elements of circus life. He then started working in brown, and he also began to work in sculpture. His break with tradition came with "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon" (1906--7, New York), which is considered to be the first Cubist painting. He developed the Cubist movement with another artist, Georges Braque (1909--14). From 1917 he worked with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, designing costumes and sets. His major creation was "Guernica" (1937), expressing in Cubist style his horror of the bombing of this Basque town during the Spanish Civil War. During World War II he was mostly in Paris, and after the liberation he joined the communists. A great innovator, he also illustrated classical texts, and experimented in sculpture, ceramics, and lithography.

Sample question strips

1	Verb + Noun collocation which means to create a place to do art	set up a studio
2	Noun + Noun collocation to describe a group of pictures that were created by an artist	series of paintings
3	5-word expression to say that someone began a new type of work	He then started working in
4	Noun + Noun collocation to say that someone did something original and unusual in their work	break with tradition
5	5-word expression which means that people think something was done for the first time	is considered to be the first

Student-led version

In this version, the students are responsible for finding the structures and for writing the clues on the strip. Explain the activity to them including what type of structures they are to find. It's best if they've already done a teacher-led version of this activity. Also, you can model some sample ways of writing the definitions (e.g., a 3-word expression which means..., to describe...to say...used for, etc.). Then get students to work in pairs and go through the text underlining the structures. You may stipulate that they all must be topic related. For example, with the above strips, the expressions are all about art. Once students have done this, give each pair a few strips of paper and get them to choose one of their structures and write the clue for it. You'll need to monitor this activity to make sure they are choosing appropriate structures and writing appropriate clues. As they finish them,

get them to underline the structure their questions relate to on your copy of the text. This is to make sure you don't get two strips for the same structure. Tell students if they are working on one which someone has already done. If you want to make the searching easier, you can ask students to include the paragraph number beside the clue. Before students finish their strip, they have to write their names on it.

When you have gathered enough strips, stop the activity and number all the strips (they will not be in the order they appear in the text). Tell students how many there are and get them to write the numbers vertically in their notebooks. Then each pair takes a strip and tries to find the structure it refers to. When they think they have found it, they check with the pair that wrote it. Then they write the structure in their notebooks beside the appropriate number. They take another strip and continue like this.

**Reading
Comprehension
Race**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Speaking</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Listening</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Reading</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Writing</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Vocabulary</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Grammar</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Warmer/Icebreaker</i>

This activity is very similar to the previous one except this time the students write reading comprehension questions on strips. Establish beforehand what kind of comprehension questions you want them to write, keeping in mind that reading between the lines is best suited to higher level students.

Types of Reading Comprehension Questions

- Reading for details
- Reading for main points
- Reading between the lines

Students work in pairs and read the text. Then they write their questions on the strips and include the paragraph number that the answer occurs in (can be omitted for high-level students). Then they give the questions to you and you will need to check to see if that question has been written already. If so, throw it away and ask them to write another one. Students will also have to write their names on their finished strips. Once, you have enough strips (at least one more than the number of pairs in the class), number the strips and proceed in the same way as the previous activity. Following are some sample questions for the brief biography of Picasso in the previous activity.

1	What event horrified him? P1	Kenji & Marcel
2	Where was he born? P1	Anna & Fidel
3	What was he doing between 1902 and 1904? P1	Yuki & Elena
4	What was the first Cubist painting? P1	Sonja & Carlos
5	Where was he during WWI? P1	Marc & Iiona

Contextualize the Question



Speaking
Vocabulary



Listening
Grammar



Reading
Pronunciation



Writing
Warmer/Icebreaker

This activity was taken and adapted from *Learner-Based Teaching*, an activity book which features activities that students can prepare for each other to use. This particular activity focuses on reading and writing skills. To use this activity you'll need some strips of paper, a container (e.g., bag, box, hat) to put them in and also a way to stick them on the wall.

To begin, give each student 3 strips of paper. They each write three reading comprehension questions. The questions are not meant to refer to anything in particular and can be completely random but they should be written in the third person. Depending on the level of your students, you may want to review the three major types of reading comprehension questions. However, for lower level classes, you would probably just stick with "reading for details".

Types of Reading Comprehension Questions

- Reading for details
- Reading for main points
- Reading between the lines

When the students have finished writing the three questions, collect them and put them into the container. Then put students in pairs and get each pair to choose three questions from the container. Then each pair writes a short text on a piece of paper which contains the answers to the three questions. When all the texts are finished put them up on the wall of the classroom and number them in the top right corner. Then collect the question strips and put them back in the container.

For the reading comprehension stage, keep the students in pairs. Tell them that each pair will take each take one strip from the container and they each try to find the answer in one of the texts. The pair that finds the most answers will win. Explain that they will need to do this strategically. For example, one student might check all the texts with even numbers and the other with odd numbers. Make sure that every time a student thinks he/she has found one, they get their partner to read the text and check to see if they are right. Then they stick the strip on the wall under the correct text and they both sign their signatures to the strip. If they cannot find the answer, they put the strip back in the container. When all the strips have been taken out of the container and stuck on the wall, get each pair to count up how many they found to declare a winner.

Live Listening Comprehension



Speaking
Vocabulary



Listening
Grammar



Reading
Pronunciation



Writing
Warmer/Icebreaker

In this activity students will get practice writing listening comprehension questions and an outline for a spoken text which contains the answers. Before starting the activity, you should review the types of listening comprehension questions, both in terms of the listening skill practiced and the form of the question. Depending on the level of your students you should establish what skills you want students to practice and what question forms they should use. Lower level students would be using just main point and detail questions. Make sure that whatever questions the students use, the answers are relatively short, i.e., just a few words at most.

Listening Skills

- Listening for main points
- Listening for details
- Listening “between the lines”

Question Forms

- Multiple choice
- Basic question
- Gap Fill
- True/False

Put students in groups of around four. Each group has to decide what their listening is going to be about and three comprehension questions that go with it. Emphasize to them that they are not to write out the entire text but simply make an outline. It is important that their outline be comprehensible to someone not in the group, specifically you, as you will be expanding their notes into spoken form, to give them practice listening to native-like language. While they are writing their outline, circulate and make sure what they write is comprehensible. When they have finished, they should write their three comprehension questions on a section of the board.

To facilitate the listening, gather up the outlines. Then before you start with one, ask students to read the comprehension questions from the board that go with it. Then expand their notes into a “talk” or story while students listen and write down the answers. Make sure you include the answers to the questions in your talk. Elicit the answers from some students to check them and then proceed with the next outline.

Listening Comprehension with Scripts



Speaking
Vocabulary



Listening
Grammar



Reading
Pronunciation



Writing
Warmer/Icebreaker

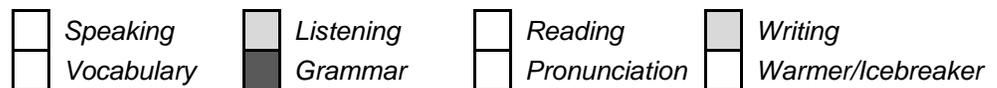
This activity was developed for using sitcoms in the classroom and is particularly well-suited to helping higher level learners develop their listening skills with this popular medium. However, the activity could be used with lower level learners provided that the chosen listening material has a tapescript, and it can be broken down into at least two sections.

To prepare for this activity you need to have a video of a half-hour television accompanied by a script. Scripts for most of the popular television shows can be obtained online through sites like [simplyscripts.com](http://www.scripts.com) and <http://www.script-o-rama.com>. Once you have

located a script, you'll need to print it out. If you're willing to put in a bit of work to save paper, you can usually reformat a half-hour script to around 10 pages. Otherwise, just print out the larger number. Keep in mind that the entire script will represent about 20 minutes of listening for students. Then put the students in pairs or small groups and give each one a roughly equal part of the script (pages need to be numbered). You are going to have each group compose comprehension questions for their section. You may want to review the three main types of listening comprehension questions before you do (see list in previous activity). Then let each group know how many comprehension questions that they are to write. A general guideline would be around one per minute of play time. So, if you have four groups splitting a 20-minute script, it would come to about 5 each. You should also ask them also to select a certain number of unknown words which they consider essential for comprehension and prepare an explanation for each. Again, if you go by the one-per-minute ratio, it would probably suffice. Once students have written their comprehension questions, get them to write them on a section of the board, an overhead transparency or a sheet of chart paper

When you are ready to start playing the video, get the group with the first part of the script to teach their essential words to the rest of the class. Then they should display or point to their questions and ask the class to read them before watching the video and listening for the answers. The group starts the video and plays it to the end of their portion of the script. They then try to elicit answers to their questions. If you want, you can have the rest of the class discuss the answers first in their groups before the presenting group takes them up. For any questions that the students can't answer, a student with the script could read the part which contains the answer to try eliciting it again. Continue in this way with the rest of the video.

Grammar Rule Quiz



This is a good activity to use whenever students are confronted with relatively lengthy explanations of grammar points. What they are required to do with this activity is to quiz another team on the rules of a certain grammar point. They will need to read the explanation in the book first. Actually, the question preparation is simply a way to make them read and think carefully about grammar explanations.

To begin the activity, divide the students up into teams. Two to four teams is best and there should be around four students on each team. Establish how many questions you want them to write, remembering that they will each have to write an equal number so if it is a relatively uncomplicated grammar explanation, you might want to only ask them for a couple each. Then give out strips of paper to each group to write their questions on. Students work together to compose questions on the grammar explanation. As soon as they have finished one, they are to bring it up to your desk. You need to check to make sure no other team has asked that question and, if not, place it on the desk. If a team has already written that question, tell the

students to write another one. Keep the strips of paper on your desk for each team separate. When each team has produced the required number of questions, give their questions back to them and the quiz can begin.

Each team takes a turn and they can choose whichever team's question they want to answer (obviously not necessary if there are only two teams). That team reads them a question and if they get it correct, they get a point. As they continue, a team may run out of questions to ask. This means the team whose turn it is to answer must accept a question from another team instead. When all questions have been answered, total up the points to determine a winner.

Samples Questions from Focus on Grammar 3: Unit 6

- What do we use when the present helps us make a prediction about the future? (going to)
- How do we talk about arrangements? (present progressive)
- What can we use to make predictions about the future? (will or going to)
- How do we make the negative with *going to*? (not going to)
- What comes after *going to*? (base form verb)
- What do we use when we decide something at the moment of speaking? (will)

Correcting Writing Errors



Speaking
Vocabulary



Listening
Grammar



Reading
Pronunciation



Writing
Warmer/Icebreaker

This is a good activity to get students to focus on common errors that they make. For example, students at all levels tend to slip into the present tense when writing a narrative. Students are required to locate the errors in their writing and collect them on sheets of paper, saving you, the teacher, from having to go over all their writing to collect errors to focus on in class.

To begin, assign a writing topic and get students to write about it on every second line of a sheet of paper and to number those lines. While students are writing, prepare sheets of error categories relative to their level. See below for a list of typical error categories. Write each error categories on the top of sheet of paper held horizontally, i.e., along the long side. You can also walk around the class and look at what they are writing and make note of the categories of errors they are making (e.g., verb tense, word order, etc.) When you have determined enough categories, say 6 – 10, post the error category sheets on the walls. This should be done while the students are still writing.

When students complete their writing assignments, take each one, write a number on it and stick it up on the classroom wall. Put students into pairs or threes and give each team a different coloured marker. Tell them that they are to look at the writing on the walls and try to find one of the types of

errors listed on the error category sheets on the walls. If they think they have, they are to underline the error on the student's writing and then write the error with a sufficient context (you can let them know an approximate number of words) on the appropriate error category sheet posted on the wall. They should precede the error with the paper number it came from and the line number. This is so you can check it later, if you want to. They should not correct the error either on the original sheet or on the error category sheet. You may need to explain some of the categories before they begin. Tell them it is a race to see who can find the most errors and get them started. Since they have only one pen per group, the writer should memorize the error and go to write it so the others can continue to look for others at their seats. They can switch to another piece of writing at any time but they cannot add an error that's already been written onto the sheets.

You can stop this activity at any time and then go over everything that they wrote on the papers and cross off any that do not fit the category or are not actually errors. Then discuss the errors with the students and try to elicit corrections for each one. You may find it easier to take down the students' writing when you do this and keep them with you as you go around to the category sheets – just in case you need to refer to one to check a possible error. Afterwards, get each team to count up its contributions to the error sheets to determine a winner. You can give the writing back to the students and have them correct them using the sheets on the walls as a guide.

Common writing errors

- Missing word
- Extra word(s)
- Word order
- Word form
- Word choice
- Verb form
- Verb tense
- Subject-verb agreement
- Pluralization
- Prepositions
- Articles

Recommended Books

Learner-based Teaching Colin Campbell and Hanna Kryszewska, OUP

The Minimax Tacher Jon Taylor, Delta Publishing