



Ken Lackman & Associates
Educational Consultants

Warmers & Icebreakers

Universal Activities for Opening Lessons

Ken Lackman

Methods and activities for more effective teaching with less preparation

Contents

2	Introduction
3	The Collection
3	Adverb Game – Brainstorm Relay Race
4	Broken Telephone – Circle within a Circle
5	Class Reaction – Different Uses of Objects
6	Don't Say Yes or No – Everybody Has Secrets
7	Family Feud – Fruit Salad
8	Gesture Response – Imperative Robot
9	Interrupt the Story – Label the Students
10	Line Up – Newspaper Treasure Hunt
11	Newspaper Scanning – Pairs Compare
12	Paper Strips GTKY – Questions to Myself
13	Read and Respond – Shouting Dictation
14	Silent Interview – Speaking of...
15	Stream of Consciousness Writing – That's Not Right
16	The Bus – What Am I?
17	What Have You Done Today? – Why Did You Write That?
18	Word Association – Wrong Collocations
19	Guide for Creating Icebreakers and Warmers

Copyright Ken Lackman 2010. This work is the intellectual property of the author. Permission is granted for this material to be shared for non-commercial, educational purposes, provided that this copyright statement appears on the reproduced materials and notice is given that the copying is by permission of the author. To disseminate otherwise or to republish requires written permission from the author.

Introduction

Icebreakers are normally used the first day of class and are designed to “break the ice” by introducing the students to each other and/or the teacher and reducing any stress students might have about starting a new class.

Warmers are similar to icebreakers in that they are meant to “warm students up” but they are for use in normal classes, where the aim is not to introduce students. They can serve some or all of these functions:

- allow for latecomers
- relax students
- energize students
- review from previous class
- introduce that class

A warmer to review the previous class would usually focus on the grammar or vocabulary taught in that class. A warmer used to introduce a class may focus on the main skill being worked on in that class, the topic of the lesson or the grammar or vocabulary that will be taught. The most effective warmers are those which combine more than one of these functions. For example, a class whose skill focus was speaking and whose topic was food and whose grammar point was frequency adverbs could start with a warmer where students interview each other about their eating habits, thus combining the skill, topic and grammar of the lesson. It is important to remember that warmers are meant to relax students and they should be free to use whatever language they wish. The teaching of the lesson’s grammar or vocabulary comes after the warmer (or in the class before when it is a review). The warmer could merely put the students in a situation where they COULD use the grammar or vocabulary they are about to be taught (or what was taught in the class before). For introducing grammar or vocabulary, you would normally not ask students to use it but putting them in a situation where they MAY use it will show you what they already know and make them more receptive to the grammar or vocabulary when you do teach it.

Teachers should usually not do any correction during a warmer as the warmer is meant to reduce students’ fears about using the language. Remember that one of the biggest obstacles to progressing in a language is the fear of trying something new because it might be wrong. Warmers should be fun and ideally should send the message that your classroom is a place where there is no such thing as making a fool of yourself. Keep in mind that a way to send this message to your students is to involve yourself in the warmer as well.

Using the Collection

All the activities are categorized. First decide on the aim(s) of your **Icebreaker** or **Warmer** and then look down the appropriate columns to see which activities fit the aim(s). These are the categories, with dark shading indicating a major focus and light shading a minor one: **Speaking**; **Listening**; **Reading**; **Writing**; **Grammar**; **Vocabulary** and activities that can be used to introduce a **Topic**.

The Collection

-  **Adverb Game**  Elicit or write a list of manner adverbs on board (slowly, sleepily, etc.) appropriate to level. Send one student out of the class. Others decide on ONE adverb for the whole group. The student comes back in and commands other students to do actions which they do according to the chosen adverb. The student is allowed one guess at the adverb after each completed action. Demo it first by going out yourself.
-  **As If...**  Give each student a card with a sentence telling them how they are going to be acting. The sentence will feature “as if”, e.g., act as if you are a king, a beggar, cold, hot, paranoid, crazy, etc. Students mingle and each student they talk to has to guess how their partner is acting. After students have had a chance to talk to most or all of the other students, elicit guesses about each student’s behaviour. Can be used for certain vocabulary, e.g. personality adjectives, professions, etc.
-  **Blind Chats**  Put students in pairs. Tell them to close their eyes. They introduce themselves and then ask GTKY (get to know you) questions. If using it as a warmer give them a topic to talk about. Good for clarification language (e.g., “I’m sorry, could you repeat that?” etc.) and gets students to listen carefully.
-  **Brainstorm Race 1**  Establish a brainstorm topic and give students a time limit. Put them in groups and start the brainstorm. At the end of the time, find out who got the most items on their brainstorm list, elicit them and get them up on the board. Then you can ask the other teams for some additional ones that the first group missed. Great for vocabulary (e.g., personality adjectives, musical instruments, sports, movie genres, phrasal verbs, etc.).
-  **Brainstorm Race 2**  Divide the board up in columns so there is a column for each team of students. Draw some horizontal lines on the board to approximate lined paper. Each group comes up to their column on the board and brainstorms, writing one item on each line. Tell them beforehand that if another group has written the same item earlier, they will end up losing a point at the end. Smart students will have one team member keeping an eye on what other students are writing so this doesn’t happen. They are allowed to erase and replace. At the end count up who got the most after eliminating any duplicates.
-  **Brainstorm Relay Race**  Establish what group of items you want students to write on the board. Could be lexical (e.g., professions, film genres, clothing, etc.) or grammatical (e.g., irregular verbs, modals, gerunds, etc.). Put students into two or more teams and get them in lines in front of the board (two teams for small classes) but make sure the first student in the line is a few metres back from the board. Give first student in the line a board marker. When you say go, the first student in each line runs to the board, writes an item on the board, gives the marker to the next person in line and then goes to the back of the line. Students in the line can confer. Stop the activity and see which group has added the most items. You can eliminate any erroneous ones first, if you like.

Warmers and Icebreakers

-  **Broken Telephone**  Arrange students in a circle. Whisper a phrase to one student. That student whispers it to the next one, and so on. No repeating allowed. After the phrase has gone around the circle, ask the last student what it is. Compare it to the original phrase and review language as necessary. Can be used to test the students' ability to reproduce relatively complex grammatical structures like conditionals or relative clauses.
-  **Chain Story**  Teacher starts a story. Example: "Last night x (famous person) had the strangest dream. In his/her dream ..." A student then continues the story, pausing at a certain point to pass on the story to the next student. You can give students a list of vocabulary you want them to use in their part of the story or certain grammar points like reported speech ("x said that he ..."), past simple (e.g., irregular verbs), gerunds (x liked eating so he...), past continuous (when...x was ---ing), relative clauses (x met a man who was...), third conditional (if x had..., he would have...), etc.
-  **Change Places if...**  Students sit on chairs in a circle. Tell students to stand up and change places if... (they are wearing blue socks; they drink tea, etc.) Variation: The same, but tell them precisely where to move e.g. 3 places to the left. Great ice-breaker, as it gets them sitting on others' laps. Can be used with vocabulary (Change places if you know the meaning of..., if you own an x, if you saw an x this morning, if you like x, etc.) or certain grammar points like future forms (Change places if you are going to go...), present perfect (Change places if you have...), past continuous (Change places if you were ---ing at 10 last night), etc.
-  **Circle Listen and Tell**  Decide on what information you want students to share. Examples: an accomplishment, a regret, a personal problem, a dilemma, an embarrassing incident, etc. (responses should be relatively brief). Arrange even number of students in circle (teacher participates for odd numbers). In pairs, students trade information. When the students have finished have them turn away from the person they were just talking to and relay what that person just told them to the person on other side (i.e. "Yuki told me about her greatest accomplishment. She..."). When they have finished, they repeat the procedure of turning and repeating what they were just told to the person on the other side. Continue until each person's story has gone full-circle. Can be used to practice certain grammar, like reported speech, present perfect (accomplishments), future forms (future plans), past tenses (embarrassing incident), third conditional (regrets), etc.
-  **Circle Within a Circle**  Arrange an even number of students in two equal concentric circles (for odd numbers, teacher can be included). Each student faces a partner and asks a question ([pre-determined by teacher]). They are allowed a certain amount of time to get a response from their partner and then teacher tells ONE circle to rotate so each student is now facing a new student. Students repeat the above with their new partner. Works well with grammar like asking for advice (personal problems), conditionals (regrets /advice), future forms (future plans), present perfect (experiences), past continuous (what were you doing at...), etc.

Warmers and Icebreakers

 **Class Reaction**  A student is in the 'Hot Seat' and talking about his/her favourite subject, hobby, last weekend or what they did during the holiday, etc. (teacher could choose the topic). That student has his/her back to the board and must not turn around. Teacher writes a word on the board indicating how the rest of the class is to react, e.g., happy; sad; bored; interested; energetic; emotional; etc. The speaker has to guess the word on the board from the class reaction to what he/she is saying.

 **Clues Game**  Choose one from a group of lexical items and provide a set of 3 - 5 clues, ordered and numbered according to difficulty (easiest is 1). Example if you were reviewing jungle animals: 5. Found in Africa, 4. Endangered species, 3. Large, 2. Has thick skin, 1. Has ivory tusks. Read clues, pausing after each one to let students guess. When a student guesses, give them the score for that answer. Students can work in pairs/teams and after you have done one or two, you can assign the rest of the lexical group to the students so they can write clues for the other teams.

 **Description Competition**  You need some pictures from magazines showing people, preferably with a variety of looks, clothing styles, etc. Put students in pairs or threes and give each team a different picture. Within a time limit, they think of as many different description sentences as possible (e.g., He is wearing..., She has..., He is..., He looks..., She looks like..., etc.). One student writes down the team's sentences. At the time limit, determine the winner and elicit some sample sentences. Can be used for grammar such as pres. continuous. You can also award points only for correct sentences.

 **Dictation Relay**  Choose a relatively short segment of text and tape it to a wall or door outside the classroom. Students work in teams, where one student runs outside, reads what they can remember of the text then returns and dictates the segment of the text to another team member who writes it down. You can have two or three "runners" and one writer. You can also get them to switch roles at some point so another student gets to be the writer. Award points for speed and accuracy. It can be used to test their ability to reproduce grammatical structures, if you plant them in the text. You can also plant vocabulary.

 **Dictionary Bluff**  Write a list of words on board that the students won't know (check to make sure). Choose a word and give each student a small piece of paper. Each student writes dictionary-style definition (e.g. brawl: tool used to pull teeth). You could also ask them to write a sample sentence. Teacher writes the actual definition on one of the papers (keep language simple). Collect all definitions including the correct one. Read them out one by one. Students vote for the one they think is correct. Give points for students who guess the correct definition and a point each to students for every person fooled by their fake definition.

 **Different Uses of Objects**  Use any objects, even those lying around, obscure or not. Students work in groups and come up with as many different uses as possible for each item (try paper clips!). Great for practicing modals (You could use it..., It might be used for...).

Warmers and Icebreakers



Don't Say Yes or No S L R W G V T

One student is on the hot seat. Others fire questions at them for one minute. The student on the hot seat cannot answer with 'Yes' or 'No' or repeat the same answer twice in a row. Go first on the hot seat so you can model some sample responses (e.g., of course, sometimes, never, always, only in the morning, etc.) Good for practicing grammar such as gerunds (Do you like ...ing), present perfect (Have you...), question tags (You....don't you?), future forms (Are you going to...), 2nd conditionals (If you..., would you...?), past continuous (Were you ----ing at ...?) etc.



Draw and Guess S L R W G V T

Students each draw a picture on a large post-it note. Collected them and stick one on each student's forehead or back. Students mingle and ask questions (answered only with Yes or No) to find out what picture they have. Could be used to review certain lexical groups that could be represented visually (e.g., fruits and vegetables, furniture, household objects, etc.)



Drawing Shapes S L R W G V T

Review/teach vocabulary for basic geometric shapes. Instruct students to draw certain shapes on specific parts of their page and with specific relation to each other (e.g., "In the top left corner draw a square. Directly under it draw an oval"). Students follow instructions and then compare drawings afterwards. Good for practicing prepositional phrases.



Error Correction Relay Race S L R W G V T

Collect 10 – 20 sentences with errors from students writing or speaking. Write them on the board well-spaced out. Put students in two or three teams and give each team a different coloured board marker. Indicate a line on the floor a couple of metres from the board. Students line up behind it in teams. First person in the line has the marker. Start them off and first student from each team/line goes to the board and makes a correction anywhere, not erasing anything but just writing above or below. They pass the marker to the next person in line, go to the back, and it continues like a relay race. Tell students if they think another team corrected something wrong, they can add their correction (don't erase the other one). End activity, correct what the students didn't correct and count the corrections by each team (in their colour) to declare a winner.



Escalating Argument S L R W G V T

Give students a topic to argue about. Put students in pairs and have them line up against opposite walls, facing their partners. Turn on a radio or play a CD and students start arguing across the room. Gradually increase volume of music. Great for getting students to speak up.



Everybody Has Secrets S L R W G V T

Each student has 2 or 3 small pieces of paper. They write a different aspect of their lives on each piece of paper (e.g., "I have a dog named Blue.") Students put completed papers in hat and then withdraw same number. Students find out who wrote each one asking in a polite fashion, starting with introductions, small talk and working around to getting information they are seeking. Finally call out each student's name and hear about them from one who chose their secret. Could be used to practice certain grammar points like present perfect (I have ...), gerunds (I like ---ing), future forms (I'm going to ...), etc.

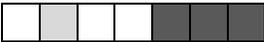
Warmers and Icebreakers

 **Family Feud** 
I W S L R W G V T

Based on popular game show. Choose a few lexical sets like fruit, vegetables, jungle animals, etc. List the sets on the board. Divide class into two teams. One team goes first and chooses a category. Then each member of the team names one item from that set. They continue until they make a mistake (or 3) and then the other team can take it over. You can award a point for each correct answer. Then the other team takes their turn and chooses another category. You could use it for a grammar category consisting of a few items like conditionals, past tenses, etc., where students would have to name all the conditionals, past tenses, etc.

 **Find Someone Who...** 
I W S L R W G V T

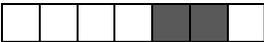
Decide on a list of things students have to find out about each other. Can be based on personal information (i.e. Find someone who likes dancing) or you can structure it to practice certain grammar points. Grammar examples: present perfect (Find someone who has...), past continuous (FSW was ----ing at...), future forms (FSW who is going to...), gerunds (FSW likes ---ing), etc. List the FSW sentences on the board or have them prepared on papers. Students mingle and try to find a different person for each FSW instruction. When they find someone, they write their name beside the appropriate statement, or if they are working from the board, they should make notes. Check some of their findings afterwards, particularly if using it as an icebreaker. Also, students could work in pairs to create their own FSW (good for practicing grammar).

 **Four Walls** 
I W S L R W G V T

Label 4 walls (or 3) with different lexical or grammatical categories (e.g. 0/1/2/3 conditionals, past/present/future, noun/verb/adjective/adverb, prepositions or prefixes/suffixes that go with certain words, etc.) Call out a word/phrase/sentence and students go to the appropriate wall. For example, if you were using parts of speech on the four walls, when you called out "education", students would have to move to the NOUN wall. If you were using suffixes, they would move to the "ion" wall.

 **Folded Paper** 
I W S L R W G V T

Each student has a sheet of paper. Students are instructed to write the name of a famous person at the top and fold it towards them so it cannot be seen. Papers are all passed to the right and the students are instructed to write something else and then fold it and pass it to the right. This continues until a sentence has been completed. Students unfold papers and read aloud to the class. Good for practicing grammatical structures (e.g., conditionals: Bill Clinton / said to Madonna / If I get a new car / I will eat a pizza) and sometimes vocabulary. For example, if practicing relative clauses, you could elicit professions when doing this structure: The plumber / who washed my car / is very cute.

 **Fruit Salad** 
I W S L R W G V T

Each student is assigned (or chooses) a kind of fruit. They sit in chairs but take one chair away so someone has to stand. Standing student calls out a fruit and students with that fruit must get up and change seats. Standing student also competes for a seat. The student left standing continues the game in the same way. Other lexical groups can be used like types of food, animals, genres of film/music, colours, clothing, etc. Great for reviewing vocabulary. Can be used for grammar points such as present perfect (I have/have never...), ability (I can...) and those students for whom the statements are true, change seats.

Warmers and Icebreakers



Gesture Response
S L R W G V T

Prepare a set of cards with responses that can be used during a conversation which can be demonstrated with gestures and/or facial expressions (e.g., I'm not interested in what you're saying, I'm really interested in what you're saying, I don't believe what you're saying, I don't understand what you're saying, etc.). Give the cards to half the students in the class. They find a student without a card and the student without the card begins to talk. You could establish a topic beforehand, or even vocabulary or grammar you want the speaker to use. The person with the card doesn't speak but reacts to the speaker in the way suggested on the card. The speaker tries to guess what is on the card and then the speaker is given the card and he/she finds a partner without a card and will be the "listener" in the next conversation. Continue.



Get to Know the Teacher
S L R W G V T

The teacher writes some keywords related to teacher's life, e.g: 39 / 1988 / Japan / Margaret, etc. on the board. The students sit in groups of 3 or 4 and discuss what the words/numbers on the board refer to. Teams in turn make their guesses, e.g., "You graduated in 1987". Teacher can award points for correct answers.



Get to Know the Students
S L R W G V T

Do as **Get to Know the Teacher** except put the students in groups and have each student in the group write their keywords or numbers on a sheet of paper. Each student in the group goes in turn and shows their words/numbers to the rest of the group who try to guess what they represent. Afterwards, you can have students reporting to the rest of the class what the keywords and numbers meant for each student. That way all students learn about all students.



Guess Who
S L R W G V T

Students are in pairs and the interview their partner following a list of prescribed questions provided by the teacher. They write the answers to those questions on a piece of paper without writing a name on it. Once all students have interviewed their partners, the teacher gathers up the papers and redistributes them to the students (it doesn't matter if they get their own or their partners but they should not reveal what they have). Then all students read the answers on the paper they have and the class tries to guess who it is. It can be used to practice certain grammar points. For example: present perfect (Have you ever...?), future forms (Are you going to...), gerunds (Do you like ----ing...) and especially reported speech (This person said that they had...).



Guess Whose Secret
S L R W G V T

Each student writes a secret about themselves on a small piece of paper. Collect papers in a hat. Each student draws one, reads it aloud and is given three chances to guess whose secret it is.



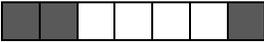
Imperative Robot
S L R W G V T

In pairs, one student gives his/her partner commands which they must do. Then they switch. Can be used for imperatives, modals of obligation (You must...), prepositions (put x under y) and generally vocabulary for instructions/directions (First, take the..., make a right turn at...). Can also be used for reported speech if students have to report to the class afterwards about what their partner had them do (i.e., She asked me to ...).

Warmers and Icebreakers

 **Interrupt the Story** 

Assign a topic for a whole class discussion and establish a signal for an acceptable interruption (i.e., thumbs up). Let students know some acceptable expressions for interrupting (e.g., “Excuse me for interrupting”) and make sure students know that they must wait for the speaker to finish an utterance and/or to pause. One student starts to speak. Another student attempts to interrupt. If they do it appropriately, give them the signal (i.e., thumbs up) and they can then start speaking. If they do not get the signal, the original student keeps talking. You could also give all students numbered cards, like they use in the Olympics, and they could rate the interruption with a score of, say, one to five, which would be indicated with the cards. The teacher could take a quick look at the cards and then decide to give the thumbs up or not. You could award students points for each successful interruption.

 **I’m Pulling Your Leg** 

Tell students a story about yourself which is true but has some fantasy mixed in. Students listen and decide in groups what is fact and what is fiction. You can also ask them to discuss why they believe or don’t believe certain things in the story. Get some feedback from the groups. Then have each student tell a story to their group in the same way.

 **In Detail** 

Assign a speaking topic. In pairs, one student must speak in excruciating detail, saying as much as possible about as little as possible. Set a time limit and then switch roles. Listeners can be taught to use communicative strategies to show interest.

 **I Know You** 

Ask students to think of an interesting question to ask others (e.g., Where would you go if you could travel anywhere? If you could have a super-power, what would it be? Who would you most like to have dinner with? etc.) Students mingle and ask each other their question and write down each classmate’s name and answer. The answer should be in note form (remind them beforehand about how to take notes). Meanwhile, the teacher writes each student’s name on a separate piece of paper. The mingling activity is stopped and each student gets a paper with another student’s name on it. They must collect information about that student by talking to other students but not the actual student whose paper they have (e.g. What do you know about Yuki?). They take notes about the student whose paper they have. When that phase ends, each student is called on to provide three or four interesting things about the student whose paper they have. You can allow the students to ask questions of the student who made the original statement.

 **Kim’s Game** 

Memory game with objects. Place objects on table and students study them. Hide them from students or ask them to turn away and then change or take away one/some. Students say what has changed. You can also get students to do this in small groups. Good for present perfect or passive practice. Also try it with things in the room. Send one or two students out and change things in room. Sample responses: The chair has been moved, The window has been opened.

 **Label the Students** 

Using sticky labels, group the students and have them label one person’s body parts, articles of clothing, etc. You can make it competitive to see who can label the most items correctly in a set time period.

Warmers and Icebreakers

- I W** **Line Up** **S L R W G V T** Have the students line up in alphabetical order by asking each other their names. Then you check it. Other variations: Age, last name, birthday, size of family, etc. Avoid obvious things like physical size, weight, hair color, etc.
- I W** **Listening for Mistakes** **S L R W G V T** Prepare a text with mistakes. Read it out and students write down the mistakes they hear. Can be used to review the grammar or vocabulary taught in a previous lesson. It can also be used to introduce a new grammar point. Make it competitive by seeing who finds the most.
- I W** **Listening and Acting** **S L R W G V T** One student tells a story, joke or anecdote while another mimes it. Try getting one student to whisper to the other one the actions to be mimed and then the rest of the class tries to guess what is happening. Could be used for present continuous or have students take notes and get them to report the actions with the past simple and/or past continuous.
- I W** **Maze Craze** **S L R W G V T** Put students into pairs. One student in each pair puts their pen/pencil on a specific point on a maze. Then that student's eyes are closed or covered and their partner must give them directions to get through the maze. You may need to review certain vocabulary before doing this. You can also use this activity with a map instead of a maze.
- I W** **Memory Introduction** **S L R W G V T** In small circle, students say not only their names, but also adjectives (e.g., Miserly Martin, Plucky Petra...). When it is their turn students have to say their name + adjective and all previous names + adjectives that came before theirs.
- I W** **Miming** **S L R W G V T** For revising vocabulary, give each student a card with one or more word/phrases on it. They mime it and the others try to guess. Can be used as team competition, each student with one or more cards and the first team to guess all wins. Especially good for phrasal verbs (put on, etc.) and present continuous (You areing).
- I W** **Music Images** **S L R W G V T** Select 3 – 5 different pieces of music. Play the pieces or portions for students. Students listen and write down descriptions of images that come to mind. For writing practice, specify how much you want students to write.
- I W** **News** **S L R W G V T** Students stand in a circle. A ball is thrown to a student who introduces a fictitious news story and then throws the ball to another who must provide some details. Continue in this manner, either continuing the original story or starting a new one.
- I W** **Newspaper Treasure Hunt** **S L R W G V T** Prepare a list of things you want students to find in newspaper (e.g., letter to editor, job ad, happy/sad story, adverb of manner, funny headline, etc.) Put students into pairs or small groups and give each one a sheet of poster paper, a pair of scissors and some paper glue. Give them a time limit to find all the things from the list in the newspaper and stick them on the poster paper. Get groups to check other team's work and count up their points. Great for dealing with writing genres.

Warmers and Icebreakers

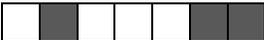
 **Newspaper Scanning**  Give each pair/group of students a newspaper or portion of a newspaper. Give the students a list of items to scan for in the paper (on the board or on handouts). Tell them it's a race to see who can find them all first. Make sure you clarify what scanning is and why we use it. Tell them to write down the items they find so you can check them afterwards. Start the activity and stop when the first team has finished. Get them to read their answers to check. You can have them scan for general information (find a statistic, a brand name, a job title, etc.) or topic related (find a verb for throwing a baseball, a noun for where baseball is played, etc.) or your list could be linguistic (find the past perfect, a personality adjective, a three-part phrasal verb, an adverb of manner, etc.). You can also combine the three categories in your list.

 **Noughts and Crosses**  Students are in two teams. A 3 x 3 grid is drawn on board and a grammatical or lexical category is written in each square (e.g., present tenses, weather words, irregular verbs, etc.). In turn, each team must answer a question from the teacher in the category in order to put a nought or cross in the square. Three in a row in any direction, wins the game.

 **Number Signs**  Pair up students. Give them each a piece of paper. Tell them to write three important numbers for them. They tell their partner the numbers and the partner has to ask questions to find out why those numbers are so special. They could change partners afterwards.

 **One-sided Conversation**  Prepare one half of a simple dialogue, such as one person on the telephone. Dictate the script to the students. Students write sentences to complete the other half of the dialogue. Elicit answers. Can be used to focus on particular grammar if it's planted in the script or the students are required to produce it in the sentences they write.

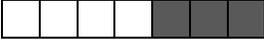
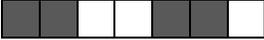
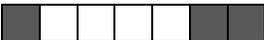
 **Opposites**  Students are in two rows. Teacher stands at front of the rows and calls out a word. Two students at the front of each row must say the opposite. First to say it gets a point for their team. They both go to the back of the row and the game continues.

 **Oral Cloze**  Read a story or prose passage. It could be something that has been done recently such as a passage from their text. Stop occasionally before a key word and get students to guess what it is going to be, either orally or in writing. Get feedback.

 **Pair Interview**  Decide on questions students will ask each other. Examples: Favourite things, fondest memories, regrets, greatest accomplishments, likes/dislikes, embarrassing incidents, etc. Students interview each other, take notes and report what their partners said. Can be done as mingling activity. Can be used to focus on certain grammar and the reporting stage is especially useful for practicing reported speech.

 **Pairs Compare**  Students are given a grid with categories written in each square. (Favourite colour, holiday destination, goals, type of pet, etc.) Students fill in their answers and then mill about the class trying to find who they have the most in common with.

Warmers and Icebreakers

- Paper Strips**  **GTKY**  Give students 4 or 5 strips of paper. They write one thing about themselves on each one (e.g., I have 3 sisters) and drop them in a hat/box. Students grab 4/5 each out of the box and try to find the person to match each strip. To make it more communicative, get students to work the question into the conversation (i.e., "Do you have siblings? How many...")
- Papers on Walls**   Post papers on wall with headings relating to grammatical or lexical categories (e.g., present perfect/past perfect/future perfect, or fruit/vegetables/grain/dairy/meat). Give each pair/group of students a different coloured marker. One student adds an item to the list, while his/her partner(s) is/are at another page waiting for the teammate to arrive with the marker. Students cannot write two in a row but may return to a sheet after a contribution from another pair. Stop activity, correct mistakes and students count up their correct contributions to determine winners. For other ideas on grammatical/lexical categories see "Four Walls".
- Party Quirks**   Students mingle as if at a party but each student has a pre-assigned linguistic quirk which dominates their speech (e.g., superlatives, weather vocabulary, types of food, past continuous, conditionals, etc.) Afterwards students try to guess what their classmates' quirks were. Good for general grammar review. You can also assign students' frequent errors to repeat as their quirk (e.g., You keep forgetting third person 's'.)
- Persuasion**   Students try to persuade each other that their favourite colour, animal, film (etc.) is more important, better, etc. Could be used for comparatives or superlatives.
- Picnic**   Teacher models, "My name is Bob and I am bringing butter." (the food has the same first letter as the name). Each student says what they are bringing to the picnic in the same way. Other lexical groups could be used besides food.
- Picture Description**   Distribute a picture or photo to each student, face down. In pairs, each student describes their picture to their partner for a preset length of time. They should not let their partner see their picture. Collect the pictures, place them on the floor in middle of room and students choose the one that was described to them. Pictures could feature certain vocabulary.
- Picture Dictation**   Describe a scene or person to your students and have them draw what you say. In groups they compare pictures with each other. As a class they dictate the picture back to you and you draw it on the board. Can be used to practice prepositional phrases and certain vocabulary, depending on the subject of your picture.
- Questions to Myself**   Students write prescribed number of questions (5-10) to themselves which will provide interesting answers. They change sheets with a partner and they ask their partner the questions they had written. Can be used to focus on certain vocabulary or grammar. Examples: present perfect (What cities have you visited?), future forms (What are you going to do next weekend?), conditionals (If you were ..., what would you do?), past continuous (What were you doing last weekend at ...?) etc.

Warmers and Icebreakers



Read and Respond



S L R W G V T

Prepare worksheets with numbered commands that can be done in the class. Distribute worksheets, face down. Call out a number, students turn over worksheet and read the command and perform the corresponding action as quickly as possible. Students turn over the sheets and the process is repeated. You can adjust the length and complexity of the commands according to the level. You can also award points for the student who does the action first, to encourage quicker reading.



Role Play Introduction



S L R W G V T

Students introduce themselves as if they are businessmen, royalty, rock stars, long-lost friends, etc. Can be used to get students speaking with different levels of formality. For example, get them to introduce themselves as long-lost friends, and afterwards as royalty.



Rub Out and Replace



S L R W G V T

Write a sentence of about 10 words on the board. Put students in teams of two or three. Each team in turn suggests words that can be rubbed out and what they can be replaced with, with the sentence still making grammatical sense. Award a point to each team that successfully replaces a word.



Seeing Pictures in Your Mind



S L R W G V T

Ask students to close their eyes and to sit in a relaxed way. Describe a picture such as a landscape to them which they are to imagine. Students open their eyes and describe what they saw to each other. Most often they will see the landscape differently. Can be used for certain vocab.



Shootout



S L R W G V T

On the first day of class get students to say their names and tell the rest of the class they will have to remember them. Repeat, if necessary. Students then stand up and mingle and use their index finger like a gun. They must look other student in the eye, point their finger like a gun and say the other student's name first, before the student can say their name. The student who is "shot" first, dies (leaves the game and sits down). Students continue to "shoot" each other until only one remains, who is the winner. It can also be used for vocabulary review where each student is assigned a different word from a previous class and they have to say the other student's word first, before that student can say theirs.



Shouting Dictation



S L R W G V T

Students are in two lines on opposite sides of class. Every student in one line has the same text which they dictate to a partner in line on the other side. The two lines have different texts, or different parts of the same text. When the members of one line start dictating their text, the teacher plays a radio/tape/CD to create a distraction. Students write down what they hear. Then have the other line dictate in the same way. Grammatical and/or lexical errors will occur. Put students from the same line in groups and have them compare texts to try to reproduce what was originally dictated. Then they can check with their original partner from the other line. You can use it for grammar practice by choosing texts which feature certain grammar or planting it in the text yourself. Likewise, you can do the same with vocabulary.

Warmers and Icebreakers



Silent Interview S L R W G V T

Supply students with a list of questions to ask each other. Put them in pairs. Student A asks Student B questions but B doesn't talk. Instead A writes down what they think B would say. Then A introduces B to class using the information they made up for the answers to the questions and B provides correct information for those that are untrue. Then you can have A and B switch roles. The questions can be designed to practice certain grammar such as present perfect (What have you...?), past simple (What did you do last night?), future forms, (What are you going to do...), past continuous (What were you doing at..), etc.



Spot the Error S L R W G V T

Prepare strips of paper with sentences containing errors. The errors could be ones the students made in the last class or those they make frequently. Students mingle and try to work in the sentence on the strip into the conversation. The student they are speaking to listens for the error and tries to correct it. Once they both do this, they move on to a new partner.



Students as Teacher S L R W G V T

Two students sit in chairs in front of the class. They both pretend they are the teacher. The class fires questions at them about teacher as if they were the teacher (Are you married? etc.). The two students take turns answering according to what they think are the right answers. Afterwards, teacher corrects the answers that were wrong and, if desired, gives the class the opportunity to ask some questions.



Sorting S L R W G V T

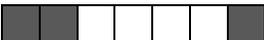
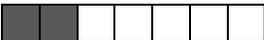
Decide how many teams of students you will have (2 - 4 per team). Choose a lexical or grammatical category for each team. Ideally the categories should be related (e.g., nouns/verbs/adjectives/adverbs, 0,1st, 2nd, 3rd conditionals, words that go with prefixes un/in/im/ir/il/non, fish/reptiles/mammals/birds, equipment for hockey/golf/tennis/baseball, etc.) Prepare strips of paper with 3 - 6 items in each related category (e.g., for parts of speech, 5 nouns, 5 verbs, etc.). Put students into groups and assign a category to each group. Then mix up the strips of paper and hand an equal number to each group. Students need to exchange papers with other groups until they collect all of the ones in their category. For extra fun, hide the slips around the classroom before students arrive. Tell them their category and then they have to find the strips first before they trade.



Speaking of... S L R W G V T

Give students a speaking topic. Put them in pairs and they have a conversation on the topic but they have to segue to another topic by using "Speaking of...". You can tell them the number of segues you want them to do and/or you could list the topics on the board which they have to segue to (i.e., sports, politics, my weekend, etc.). Could be designed to review certain vocabulary or grammar (e.g., future plans, the next election and global warming for future forms).

Warmers and Icebreakers

-  **Stream of Consciousness Writing**  Give students a topic and a time limit. Tell them they must write as much as possible on that topic within the time limit. Tell them that the writing should just flow and they should not be concerned at all about proper sentences, punctuation, etc. Stop the activity and find out who wrote the most. Then students can work alone or together and break the text up into proper sentences using conjunctions and other cohesive devices.
-  **Surveys**  Students are given a survey or they create one. They mingle, get responses and compile results. Can be used on people outside the classroom. Can be used to practice certain grammar: present perfect (Have you...), future forms (Are you going to...), 2nd conditionals (If you...would you...?), etc. After they've compiled the results they can get practice with reported speech (e.g., "Most of those interviewed said that they had..."). Good for practicing phrases for survey results (e.g. The majority of..., etc.)
-  **Swat the Word**  You'll need two flyswatters or rolled up newspapers for this activity. To review vocab, write the words on the board in various places. Then put students into two teams who line up in front of the board. Give the flyswatters to the first students in each line. Tell them when you say "go" they are to run to the board and try to swat the word first. Say the definition of the first word and then say "go". Award a point to the team who gets it first and then the play goes to the next two students in line and the first two go to the back
-  **Switching Papers**  Each student has a different question on a slip of paper. They mingle and ask each other the questions then switch papers and continue mingling but this time asking the new question. Continue like this. Can be used for all sorts of lexis and grammar as long as it can be used in question form.
-  **Taboo**  Divide students into two teams. Each team sends one person to front who sits with back to board. Teacher writes a word on board and other students give clues without using the word or part of it. First team to elicit the word from their team member in the hot seat gets a point. Switch person in "hot seat" and continue. Great for reviewing vocabulary.
-  **Talk to Me...this Way**  Write instructions on post-it papers telling students how they should interact with others, one for each student. Examples: Ask me questions, Laugh at me, Be angry at me, Disagree with me, Ignore me, etc. Stick papers to student's backs. Students mingle and talk to others (one at a time) according to what's written on their partner's back. (Teacher may assign speaking topics). At end of the mingling stage, ask students to guess what is on their back.
-  **That's Not Right**  Photocopy a picture or illustration and give it to students. Prepare list of statements about the picture, some true some false. Read the statements. Take pictures away from students and read statements again. In pairs students discuss whether they are true or false. Check their answers.

Warmers and Icebreakers



The Bus S L R W G V T

Place 2 strips of tape to the floor to simulate the inside of a bus. It should be long and wide enough for all the students to fit in snugly. Students stand inside and then tell them to go to an end of the bus if they fit a certain criteria. Examples: "Go to the front of the bus if you are a vegetarian", "Go to the back of the bus if your favourite colour is blue." etc. Good for finding out about students and getting them to practice polite expressions (e.g.: "Excuse me!" "Coming through!" etc.)



The Other You S L R W G V T

Students imagine the type of person they would like to be (rich, famous, creative, etc.) and assume those characteristics for a role play. Give students ideas of questions to ask their partners to find out about their new identity (e.g., about their job, problems, age, sex, goals, accomplishments, friends, etc.). At end, students tell the class about their partner's new identity.



Things in Common S L R W G V T

Students talk to a partner to find out as many things as they can that they have in common (other than obvious - blue eyes, etc.) Students share their lists with the rest of the class. Or you do it as a mingling activity where the students have to find 1 -3 things in common with each student in the class (you determine the number). Get some feedback after the mingling stage.



Travel S L R W G V T

Put students into pairs or small groups. Each group decides on a country to visit. Groups brainstorm objects that will fit into their luggage, beginning with the first letter of that country. If possible, get them to do the brainstorming at the board and write each item up there. Stop the activity and correct each group's list. Award points for number of items.



Two Truths and a Lie S L R W G V T

Tell students three interesting things about yourself, two true and one lie. Students have to pick out the lie. Allow them to question you about the three things. Then find out how many students chose each one of the three items as the lie. Each student writes their own three things, reads them to the class and others question them. The students then try to pick out the lie by asking questions and you can award a point for each student the writer fooled.



Vocabulary Guess Hot Seat S L R W G V T

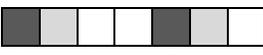
Put students into teams of 2-4 and get them in front of the class. One student faces board, while the others face the class with their back to the board. Write a list of words on the board. Each student facing the board tries to describe each word on the list for his/her teammates to guess. Each team gets one point for each item they guess within the time limit.



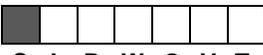
What am I? S L R W G V T

Think of some objects. Write 3 or 4 clues on the board for students to guess what it is (e.g., I am usually found in the kitchen. I am cold. You can put food in me. What am I?). Students discuss what it is in groups. Elicit from students what they think it is. Can be used for a variety of language (modals, quantifiers, intensifiers, have vs. be, past tense, etc.).

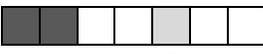
Warmers and Icebreakers

 **What Have You Done Today?** 

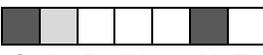
In pairs or small groups each student says a preset number (3, for example) of things they've done that day. Each student in the group takes a turn but cannot repeat anything that was said before. Good for present perfect but could be used for past tense (what you did yesterday) or future forms (what you're going to do tomorrow).

 **What's the Story Behind It?** 

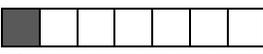
Show students an object of yours (e.g., pen, ring, etc.). In pairs or groups, they come up with the story behind it, which they tell the class after. You can award points for the best/most creative/funniest strangest etc. story. Students can also do this in groups with their own objects.

 **Weekend** 

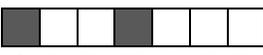
Each student writes down 5 key words for what they did on the weekend (e.g., movie, dinner, club, lost, late). They give it to another student who tells the class about it by adding details that they make up. The student who wrote the five words corrects the made-up details afterwards. Good for past tense practice.

 **Who or What Am I?** 

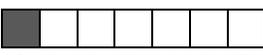
Prepare sticky labels with the names of famous people (e.g., Hilary Clinton, Madonna, The Pope, etc.). Stick one on the back of each student so they can't see it. Students circulate and ask others questions to find out who they are (e.g., "Am I male?"). Answers can only be "Yes" or "No". Can also be used with animals, objects, etc.

 **Who or What Am I Hot Seat** 

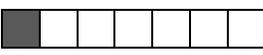
One student sits in "hot seat", a chair facing the class, with its back to the board. Teacher puts a picture of an object or a famous person, or just writes what it is on the board behind the student in the hot seat. Student in the hot seat asks Yes/No questions to find out who he/she is (e.g., Am I a person? Am I American? Am I older than 30? etc.).

 **Who Wrote What?** 

Every student has blank sheet of paper. The teacher asks a GTKY question (e.g., Where do you live? What do you like to do in your free time? etc.) Students write answer to the question on their paper and pass the paper to the next student on the right. The teacher asks another GTKY question, students write answers and the papers are passed again. When the teacher has asked one question for each student in the class, the papers are gathered up and redistributed. Students mingle to find who wrote each answer on their sheet and write the name next to it. For feedback, ask, "What do we know about ...?"

 **Why? Because?** 

In pairs, one student says a simple statement. The other asks, "Why?" to each statement. That person must always come up with a short yet coherent and logical response.

 **Why Did You Write That?** 

Prepare two different lists of about ten personal questions that can be answered with one or two words or a number. Put students in pairs and give each one a different list of questions. Each student writes one or two word answers to the questions on a blank sheet of paper. They keep the question sheet but hand their answers to their partner who must ask questions to determine why that word/number was written (e.g. "Is 24 your age?"). They can't directly ask why they wrote the word.

Warmers and Icebreakers

- Word Association** Give each student a word. Students mingle and tell another student their word. That student replies with a new word associated with it. The students then must use the new word supplied by their partner and they find a new partner and repeat the process with the new word. Good for vocabulary review. Also try *Word Disassociation*, where the new word must have no connection. You can also ask for antonyms.
- Word Change** Write an appropriately lengthy sentence on the board. Students come up and change one word at a time (write new word below) while still having the sentence make sense. Can be used as team competition
- Word Diarrhea** Students are given a topic and a time limit. In pairs, each student must speak for one minute on that topic (or longer depending on level). Partner notes how many times the speaker hesitates, repeats ideas or deviates from the topic.
- Word Thieves** Teacher assigns a topic then reads a passage on that topic and students must write down every word they hear which connects to the topic. Find out who got the most and get them to read their list. Elicit words they missed from other students.
- Work in Your Word** Each student is provided with a word on a piece of paper, either from teacher or another student (nouns work best). Students mill about and engage in small talk with others. They must work in their word. Afterwards ask the class if they knew what each person's word was. Good for reviewing vocabulary.
- Work in Your Line** Students write a sentence based on a grammar point (e.g., first conditional, present perfect, etc.) on a strip of paper. Assign a speaking topic. Students do a mingling activity and have to work their line into the conversation. Alternatively, have students put their strips in a box and then they have to choose one from the box. You can ask the listener to identify the line when it is spoken. You could also ask the students exchange strips after each conversation.
- Wrong Collocations** Give each student a strip of paper with a wrongly collocated word on it (i.e. "yellow day"). They have to work that collocation into a conversation with another student. Each student tries to spot his/her partner's incorrect collocation. After each conversation, they exchange their collocations and then change partners. Could be used as vocabulary review.

Guide for Creating Warmers & Icebreakers

Using the Guide

Choose one of the universal **Tasks** and then construct your warmer by choosing the desired **Interaction Pattern**, **Type of Information**, **Format**, **Medium** and method of **Reporting to Class**. Note that shaded boxes apply to other shaded ones on the same line. Otherwise, you can construct your activity by choosing any of the boxes in each category.

Guide for Creating Warmers & Icebreakers

Task	Description	Interaction Pattern	Type of Information	Format	Medium	Special Instructions or Suggestions	Reporting to Class
Information Gap	Students have to find out certain info from others.	mingling	opinion	survey	paper strips	With paper strips, they can be different and students can switch strips and partners.	random selection by teacher
		pairs	personal info	question(s)	paper sheets	Make it fast and/or competitive by making it a race to finish first. Tell first student finished to sit down.	All students report info.
		concentric circles	knowledge	test/quiz	memory	Circles need same number of participants (teacher can participate). Rotate ONE of the circles to get new match ups.	Teacher asks for best, funniest, most interesting, etc.

Task	Description	Interaction Pattern	Type of Information	Format	Medium	Special Instructions or Suggestions	Reporting to Class
Brainstorm	Students have to come up with lists of things.	pairs	grammatical items	one list	notebook or paper	Students could be asked to sort/rank their lists.	Choose students and ask for their list.
		groups	lexical items	several lists according to categories	papers on walls with categories	Give Ss different coloured markers for papers to determine who gets the most. They go around class adding to each paper.	Count up contributions to determine winner.
		individual?	general information		board	Divide the board into sections for each group. Can be done as a relay race.	Ask for biggest list. Ask for additional items from others.
							Ask randomly for individual items.

Task	Description	Interaction Pattern	Type of Information	Format	Medium	Special Instructions or Suggestions	Reporting to Class
Guess who wrote it	Ss write some info on a paper and then other students have to guess who wrote it.	mingling	personal info	one statement	paper strip	Strips can be placed "in hat". Ss take one at a time and find each person. Could be a race. T includes one also but only answers questions, so there is always one extra strip. Ss have to wait for certain strips to appear.	Ask for each student to report on their last partner or say name of each student and elicit their info.
		groups	opinion	group of statements	paper sheet		random selection by teacher
		whole class		responses to one or more questions			All students report guesses.

Note: Shaded squares refer to other shaded ones in the same line. Other squares can connect with any others.

Task	Description	Interaction Pattern	Type of Information	Format	Medium	Special Instructions or Suggestions	Reporting to Class
Chain response	The teacher (or a student) begins with a word, phrase or sentence and each student has to add to it in turn.	groups	narrative	single words	spoken	Within groups, students would take turns in order, e.g., clockwise	Ask for summaries from groups.
		whole class in order	opposites	phrases	written on papers	Give each student a paper to keep them all active, then they pass paper to left/right.	Ask for written results from all or select students.
		random students cued by teacher	same lexical group	sentences		Students can be cued randomly by raising cards with their names on them.	
		random Ss cued by Ss	same grammatical group	sentence beginnings		Each student chosen then chooses the next student to answer	
			other connection to previous response, e.g., first letter, same vowel sound...				

Task	Description	Interaction Pattern	Type of Information	Format	Medium	Special Instructions or Suggestions	Reporting to Class
Speaking or acting with quirks	Students interact with others and they have to guess what is unusual about how they are acting (e.g., they keep saying...) Instructions are supplied on cards/papers.	mingling	emotion	conversation with items buried in it or demonstrated (e.g., emotion)	speech	Can be used to review grammar or vocabulary by having students use a word or structure and have their partner try to notice it and point it out when it is used in their conversation.	Teacher randomly selects Ss to name another's quirk.
		groups	grammar structure				All Ss report their last partner's quirk.
			phrase or expression				
			lexical group				
			word				
	lexical or grammatical errors			Can be used to focus on recurring errors by having students commit them in a conversation and their partner find them.			

Note: Shaded squares refer to other shaded ones in the same line. Other squares can connect with any others.