

## 1. A Break in the Action

This is a predictive activity. The teacher begins by reading the first half of a story or text. The students then have to speculate and predict how the story will end. This can be a simple “complete the story” activity, or the teacher can have the students propose multiple endings, making use of modals and conditionals. Once the students have created their possible endings, the teacher then finishes reading the text and the students must compare their predictions to the actual ending of the story. They can then compare what they thought would happen to what actually happened in a speaking or writing task. The amount of detail required by the teacher for this activity will be determined by the language proficiency of the students. Lower level students could give a brief description of what they think will happen, while more advanced students could write a multi-paragraph ending and a comparative essay relating their speculative ending to the real ending of the story.

## 2. Board Games

Making your own board game takes a little preparation and creativity, but it can be well worth the effort. The rules should be kept simple for an ESL class. One example of a simple board game is one in which students roll dice to move around the board, and when they land on a square, they must answer a question. There can be different types of questions for different squares on the game board. If students cannot answer the question correctly within a reasonable time limit, they go back two spaces. This can be played in teams, pairs, or individually, depending on what suits your particular class.

### Example Variations:

**Can you \_\_\_?** (Suitable for beginner students)

Students answer with “Yes, I can.” Or “No, I can’t.”

Example: Q – “Can you drive a car?”

A – “Yes, I can.” (Or, “Yes, I can drive a car.”)

**How often do you \_\_\_?** (Suitable for lower intermediate students)

Students are asked how often they do certain activities and answer using adverbs of frequency.

Example: Q – “How often do you eat out?”

A – “I rarely eat out.”

**Have you ever \_\_\_?** (Suitable for intermediate students)

Students ask and answer questions using the perfect tenses.

Example: Q – “Have you ever been to London?”

A – “Yes, I have been to London.” (Or, “Yes, I went there in 2002.”)

**What would you do if \_\_\_?** (Suitable for more advanced students)

Students answer open-ended questions using a variety of grammatical structures.

Example: Q – “What would you do if you won the lottery?”

A – “I would share the money with my English teacher!”

(NOTE: actual student responses may vary)

## 3. Busy Pictures

“Busy Pictures” are pictures that have a lot going on in them. Students could be shown two similar pictures and then asked to compare them, or they could be shown one picture for sixty seconds and then have to answer questions about it. Students could also be told that these scenes happened in the past, are happening now, or will happen in the future to tweak the activity for practicing the past, present, or future tenses.

## 4. Chain of Inquisition

In this activity, students create a question one word at a time. The first student (or the teacher) begins with a question word (i.e. who, what, when, where, why, how), the next student follows with an appropriate word, and so on. Once the question is finished, the last student must then ask the completed question to another student. If that student can create an answer in grammatically correct form, she can start the next question.

For example,

**Teacher:** What...

**Student 1:** did...

**Student 2:** you...

**Student 3:** do...

**Student 4:** yesterday...

**Student 5:** afternoon... What did you do yesterday afternoon?

**Student 6:** (answers): I played soccer with my brother. Who...  
[and so on]

This game can be made competitive by dividing the students into teams and assigning points for correctly formulated questions and answers by each team. The answering team could even be made to create an answer using the same system of one word per student in order to earn a point.

## 5. Complete the Story

“Complete the Story” activities place grammatical elements in context. The story can either be written by the teacher or taken from a book, magazine, or newspaper. It could be an anecdote, a fairy tale, a famous person’s biography, or any other longer text of general interest. The teacher chooses the story with an eye toward examples of a target grammar point that occurs repeatedly throughout the text. The teacher then removes certain words or examples of the target grammar and leaves blank spaces. Each student gets a copy of the story with the blank spaces and, according to the teacher’s instructions, attempts to fill in those blanks using the context, their imagination, or a randomized list of correct words. This can be used to teach adjectives, adverbs, irregular past tense verbs, phrasal verbs, infinitives, or almost any other element of grammar.

## 6. Concentration

Do you recall playing a memory card game? In one such classroom game, twenty cards are placed face down on a table. The player flips over one card, reads it to the class, and then chooses another, looking for a match. If there is no match, the player flips both cards back over and the next player tries. The same type of game can be used in ESL classrooms whenever you want to drill your students on pairs of words, matching halves of sentences, opposites, synonyms, etc. For example, you can give students a set of twenty cards to practice irregular verbs: ten of the cards with the present tense of some common irregular verbs written on them, and another ten with the past tense of the same verbs.

### **Example Variations:**

**Irregular plurals:** singular and plural forms.

**Comparatives:** regular adjectives and comparative forms.

**Phrasal verbs:** students match verbs with prepositions to form phrasal verbs.

**Questions and answers:** make sure only one answer matches each question.

**Pronouns:** using the subject and object forms (e.g. I/me, who/whom) or subject and possessive forms (e.g. I/my, who/whose).

## 7. Correct Me

After teaching a new structure or reviewing some target vocabulary or grammar, the teacher reads sentences containing the target language. However, the sentences also contain errors. The students must catch the errors and correct the sentence. The teacher can use this activity to focus on particular kinds of errors such as those commonly made by students or those that are associated with the target vocabulary or grammar. Error identification and correction is a great way to practice and reinforce language. Students must have a sufficient understanding of the language they have been taught in order to correctly identify and correct problems.

## 8. Dialogue Rewriting

Dialogue rewriting is a lot less challenging than dialogue writing. Students could be asked to rewrite a dialogue (perhaps one studied in a previous chapter) in order to incorporate a certain grammar point. For example, rewrite a dialogue about a bus trip to Chicago to one about a train ride through the Swiss Alps.

### Example Variation:

#### Giving advice

A dialogue with a lot of imperative sentences could be made more indirect and polite by adding phrases such as "Perhaps you should..." or "Could you please...".

#### Changing Tenses

A dialogue originally in the past tense could be rewritten in the present or future tense as if the events were happening now or had not yet occurred.

## 9. Finish the Thought

In this activity, the teacher begins a sentence about a picture or other familiar matter. The students then must finish the sentence. This can be done as a speaking or writing activity. Once students understand the mechanics of this activity, they can work in pairs starting and finishing each other's sentences. The teacher can specify that the sentences be in a certain tense, that they be conditional, or that they use any other grammatical structure that the teacher wishes the students to practice. To make this into more of a challenge, the teacher could set a target number of sentences as a goal or have the pairs compete to create the most sentences. Care must be taken that the students are finishing each other's thoughts rather than simply creating complete sentences, otherwise the intent of the activity is lost.

## 10. Flash Cards

Flash cards can be used for a variety of purposes. One possible use for flash cards is to practice comparatives. Students draw two cards from the deck and make comparisons between the things they see. The cards in the deck could contain pictures of things that fall under a certain topic ("sports" or "transportation", for example), or they could be unrelated items such as an elephant and a factory. In this case, a student might say, "A factory is worse for the environment than an elephant is," or "Elephants and factories are both grey." By modifying your expectations and the assigned task for the activity, you can adjust it to suit almost any level.

## 11. Follow It Up

One area that is often overlooked by ESL teachers is the ability to ask follow-up questions. In many classrooms, students only practice asking a question and giving an answer without any follow-up. It's important that teachers incorporate the concept of follow-up questions into their conversation lessons. To begin this activity, the students are divided into pairs and the teacher sets the scenario and then distributes some opening statements to the students who will speak first. In turn, the students read the opening statement and their partner asks a question. The first speaker answers the question and the partner asks a follow-up question. After this question is answered, the students switch roles and repeat the activity by asking and answering different questions. Once each student has asked and answered a question and follow-up question, the drill is finished and a new opening statement can be used. The teacher can create all of the opening statements to ensure that they readily lead to questions and follow-ups, or if the class is more advanced or has done this activity before, the teacher can simply set a scenario and the students can open the dialogue themselves.

## 12. Gone Fishing

This is a game of recognition and speed. As such, it is best played in small groups. The teacher prepares some cards or slips of paper, each containing a word, expression, picture, action, or piece of grammar from a text. The cards are spread out on a table in front of the students. As the teacher reads the story, the students must grab the corresponding card as they hear the word. It's a competitive game, so the students must be quick to grab the card before their opponents do. Once the teacher is done reading, the student with the most cards wins! Prizes and treats are very successful means of enhancing students' competitive instincts.

### **13. Head Case (Who/What Am I?)**

“Head Case” is a good game to practice questions and descriptive terms. Cut out some squares of paper, each with the name of something on it (e.g. a famous person or place, an animal, a form of transportation, etc.). Give one to each student and have them hold the slip of paper to their foreheads. They have to ask each other (or the teacher, which is sometimes preferable for lower level classes) questions to figure out who or what they are. The game can be a free-for-all with the whole class milling around asking questions, or it can be more structured with students being given a chance to ask a limited number of questions to determine their identity.

### **14. Hot Potato**

In this version of “Hot Potato”, the teacher says an adverb of frequency (never, rarely, sometimes, usually, always, etc.) and tosses the ball to a student who must (1) make a sentence using that adverb of frequency, (2) shout out a different adverb of frequency, and then (3) toss the ball to another student.

#### **Possible Variations:**

##### **Irregular Verbs**

The thrower shouts out the present tense of a verb; the catcher must answer with the past tense.

##### **Irregular Plurals**

The thrower shouts out the singular of an irregular noun (e.g. moose); the catcher must answer with the plural (e.g. meese...err, wait, um...mooses? Moose! Maybe don't pick that one).

##### **Adjectives and Nouns**

The thrower shouts out an adjective (e.g. beautiful); the catcher must answer with the same adjective and a noun that it describes (e.g. beautiful teacher).

##### **Conversational Exchange**

With more advanced students, you could start off a conversation and then have the students continue the exchange by throwing the ball to each subsequent speaker. This can be a free-flowing conversation, or a more structured transactional dialogue [10] (between a taxi driver and a fare, for example).

### **15. How Many?**

This listening activity can be modified a number of ways to get students concentrating on any particular grammatical element. The teacher plays a recording or reads a story or dialogue, and the students must listen for specific words, phrases, blended sounds, parts of speech, or whatever elements the teacher wants students to focus on. As the students listen, they are to write down or track the number of times they hear the word or sound they're listening for. This can be used to help them to identify phrasal verbs or differentiate difficult to distinguish words (walk/work, right/light, then/den), to give a couple of examples. The teacher can assign points depending on how close each student is to the correct number of instances of the target element, or it can simply be used as a listening exercise if the teacher doesn't feel that competition would be of any benefit.

### **16. Jeopardy!**

“Jeopardy” is a very popular game with students and teachers alike. It is a good way to practice questioning techniques as well as testing students' knowledge. In case you are unfamiliar with Alex Trebek's long-running television game show, here's how it works: there are six categories with five questions per category (of course, these numbers can be modified by the teacher, but this is how it works on TV). Contestants choose a category and a prize value. The host reads a statement and the contestant must formulate a question that would elicit this statement as the response. The process is repeated and continues until all questions have been answered or a preset time limit has elapsed. To modify this game to suit an ESL class, the question categories could be things like “Parts of Speech”, “Vocabulary”, or any other trivia category if the intent is simply to practice asking questions. It could be fun to gather some biographical data about the students in your class, and then create questions about them to see how well they know each other. The most important aspect of Jeopardy, and that which differentiates it from other quiz

shows, is that the response must be in the form of a question. Remember this and keep your students focused on the format of the game. To reinforce proper questioning rather than test the students' knowledge, the points can be modified so that one point is given for a question in the correct format and another point if the question accurately elicits the correct response. There are many variations of this game, so use your imagination and see what you can come up with.

## **17. Liar, Liar**

Unlike the Jim Carrey movie in which his character is unable to tell a lie, in this activity the teacher makes false statements about a picture, story, or article and the students correct the statements. You don't just want simple answers like, "No, he isn't," so it is important in this kind of activity to specify that the students not only identify the incorrect statements, but that they also rephrase them so that they are correct. For example, if the class has recently watched *The Empire Strikes Back*, the teacher could make a statement such as, "Darth Vader is Luke Skywalker's brother." The students would then have to correct this statement by saying, "No, he isn't. Darth Vader is Luke Skywalker's father." It's the second piece of information that is the focus of this activity. Having students take incorrect information and rephrase it so that it is correct is the skill they should be practicing, not simply acceptance or rejection of the fallacious statement. The teacher can have some fun by making totally outrageous statements about a picture or story, or she may decide to be tricky and make statements that are very close to the truth, but are off in some way. Obviously the students must be able to identify that the statement is untrue and must be familiar with the truth, otherwise they will be unable to correct the lie. It is best to choose something they have recently covered, discussed, or read in class.

## **18. Magic Words**

In this game, the teacher gives each student a "magic word" before beginning a speaking task. The student must then try to use the magic word as many times as possible. The other students don't know which word is the magic word for their classmates, so as they carry out the speaking task, they must listen carefully and try to identify the other students' magic words. It is best if only one conversation is going on at a time so the teacher can track how many times each student uses his or her magic word. A scoring structure could be set up that allots one point for each correct use of the magic word and five or ten points to any student who identifies another student's magic word. Like "Slips of Paper", this activity will have to be carefully monitored to ensure that the students are speaking correctly and using their word appropriately. To make this activity more challenging, you could assign a grammatical element rather than a word to each student. They would then have to try to use things like the past tense, numbers, or adverbs as their magic word. Due to their frequency of use, it might be wise to avoid assigning parts of speech as general as "nouns" or "verbs", but interjections, question words, prepositions (of time or space), adverbs, and adjectives are all good parts of speech for this activity.

## **19. Miming/Charades**

Miming may not seem to be a career choice for which language skills are particularly important, but it is a fun activity for refreshing your students' memories of adjectives and adverbs. One such miming activity involves students drawing cards from an activity pile and cards from an adverb pile. They must then mime the activity in the manner of the adverb. They may end up singing loudly or dancing slowly. Be warned: unless the teacher can loosen his necktie or let her hair down and look silly, the students are not going to do so either. You will always have to draw cards first to set the example, so let loose and have some fun!

## **20. Mind the Gap**

This "fill-in-the-blanks" activity is often used as writing practice, but it can be modified for speaking and listening lessons as well. In this activity, the teacher says a sentence with a word, or words, missing. The student must then say the entire sentence, filling in any blanks with the appropriate word. The teacher can use a hand motion or say the word "blank" to indicate where the omitted words are, or the student can be left to determine where there should be a word but isn't. The level of the students will determine which approach the teacher uses. The omitted words can be chosen due to specific student weaknesses or to practice tricky parts of speech such as articles and prepositions, etc.

## **21. Mix and Match Cutouts**

Mixing and matching cutouts is another way to practice sequencing and story-telling. The teacher takes a comic strip or a series of pictures and cuts them out. Then, the students arrange the pictures in order and proceed to tell the story. This activity can be used directly in a lesson on sequencing words, or can be used with higher-level students to construct a narrative or to link paragraphs in a longer piece of writing. As another alternative, the teacher could give the students some cut-out scenes from a story, and as the class reads, the students put the pictures in order. This helps the students to practice their listening comprehension as they must understand what is happening in the story in order to put the pictures in the correct order.

## 22. Negative Questioning

Questions that are answered in the negative often require some follow-up information to close the exchange. For example, if someone were to ask, "Are you studying history in school?" it would be odd for the question to be answered, "No, I'm not" and left at that. Generally, either the person answering the question would volunteer the relevant information, or the person who asked the question would follow-up with a request for the information. In this activity, students are to ask one another questions that will elicit a negative response. The teacher then gives the student a question word and the student follows up with a second question using that word.

For example,

**Student 1:** "Does he work in a bank?"

**Student 2:** "No, he doesn't."

**Teacher:** "Where."

**Student 1:** "Where does he work?"

**Student 2:** "He works in a factory."

This activity is good practice for maintaining conversational flow. Rarely does an exchange cease after a single question and answer, especially if the desired information is not conveyed. Once the students are comfortable with the activity and have practiced follow-up questions in sufficient detail, they can be left to come up with the secondary question on their own with no help from the teacher unless they are stuck.

## 23. Nods and Shakes

For this game, students are arranged in pairs or in teams that pair off and rotate through a line. The first student asks a question and the second student answers the question affirmatively or negatively depending on whether the teacher nods or shakes his head. After answering the question, the second student then asks a question which the first must answer affirmatively or negatively according to the teacher's nodding or shaking head. To add an additional element of fun, a third student could be responsible for determining whether the answer must be affirmative or negative. Although nodding and shaking of the head is readily understood in most English-speaking countries, this is not necessarily the case everywhere in the world, so it might be a good idea to review what the non-verbal cues mean. If the students are not familiar with these actions, the teacher may have to drill the students a few times on head nods and shakes before trying this activity.

## 24. Opposites Attract

"Opposites Attract" encompasses two activities: one is a simple mingling activity, the other is a speaking activity. First, students are given a word or phrase, and they must mingle and find the student who is their opposite. The opposites can be simple antonyms such as good/bad, black/white, or speaking/listening, or for advanced students, they can be more complex phrasal opposites such as start off/wrap up. For the second activity, the teacher says a sentence to a student and the student must change the sentence into its opposite without simply turning it into a negative statement. For example, they cannot change "She is very beautiful" into "She is not very beautiful." Instead, they must use an antonym or change the phrasing of the sentence in some way such as, "She is very ugly" or "I don't think she is very beautiful."

## 25. Role Playing

*"I've got a Dungeon Master's Guide,  
I've got a 12-sided die..."* [11]

Break out your 12-sided dice and your elf costume because it's time for some role playing! OK, maybe there's no need to brush up on your spells and roll for hit points, but role playing is a great way to help students practice a number of grammatical structures during communicative interaction. Students can take on the roles of a salesperson and a customer, a reporter and a movie star, or a police officer and a witness, to give just a few examples. The situation or information given to the participants can be tweaked so that they practice adjectives, past tense verbs, information questions, adverbs, or almost any other aspect of grammar.

## 26. Roll the Bones

This game is fairly simple and can be played anywhere you have access to dice. In fact, even if you don't have dice available, you can easily make your own with some paper, scissors, and tape. If you've never made dice from scratch, look online or in a crafts and activities book for instructions, or ask a fellow teacher to assist you. For this game, a certain task or communicative activity is assigned to each side of the die. The teacher or a student rolls the die and whatever number comes up indicates what the student must do. For example, the topic could be stories, and the students have to begin a story of a certain type depending on the die roll: a "one" could be a funny story, a "two" could be a scary story, etc. Or as another example, each face of the die could be linked to a question word (who, what, when, where, why, how, etc.). Students roll the die and have to formulate a question using that word. Points can be assigned for questions made in the correct format and for correctly formulated responses. There are a number of ways in which dice can be used to turn a simple task into a game.

Another modification to this game could be to assign a conjunction to each face of the die. Students must create a chain story, but after each student finishes his or her sentence, the teacher rolls the die and says the corresponding conjunction. The next student must continue the story but in such a way that it is consistent with the conjunction rolled.

**For example,**

**Student 1:** One day, Mark and Jenny went to the park.

Roll "3": - However

**Student 2:** However, it started to rain.

Roll "6": - But

**Student 3:** But Mark and Jenny didn't care.

Roll "4" - So

**Student 4:** So they stayed outside and played.

Roll "5" - And...

[and so on]

The element of chance and luck involved in any dice activity can be enough to get students excited to practice their grammar, so put on your thinking cap and roll the bones!

## 27. Same and Alike (Listening for Synonyms)

This is another listening activity (obviously). The teacher comes up with a list of synonyms to words in a story or other listening passage. As the students listen, they must match the words they hear with the synonyms on the list. The synonyms can be simple words or could be matching pairs of simple verbs and phrasal verbs, for example. This type of activity is good for beginners or for students with a limited vocabulary. The activity can also be modified to have students listen for antonyms or a combination of antonyms and synonyms.

## 28. Scramble

This activity can help students to practice standard word order and sentence structure. The teacher reads sentences with the words out of order. The students must then put the words in the correct order to create sensible, correct sentences. This can be a confusing activity for the teacher, so it is recommended that the teacher write down the sentences and the scrambled word order before reading. It is important that none of the words are missed and that there is only one correct way to arrange the words into a correct sentence. Because of this, teachers must be careful when selecting and creating the sentences they will read. A mix of statements and questions can be used to keep students on their toes regarding the correct word order.

## 29. Show Me a Sign!

Similar to “How Many?”, this activity has students listening for specific phrases, words, or grammatical elements. As the teacher reads a passage, the students must snap their fingers, tap the table, click their pen, or do some other action that indicates they’ve heard the target item. The teacher does not stop or pause after each instance; rather, he goes through the whole passage. As the students hear their classmates snapping their fingers or clicking their pens, they will listen more intently to avoid being left out when the target item is repeated. This is a simple activity that can be used as a warm-up or to reinforce a recently learned concept. It is quick and easy in that it doesn’t require the students to write or say anything; they can focus on listening for the target items and, of course, their classmates’ clicks!

## 30. Simon Says

Raise your hand if you remember “Simon Says”...

Aha! Only perform the action if the leader precedes it with the words “Simon says...!” In case you’re unsure of the mechanics of this ubiquitous game from childhood, that’s about it. Do what the leader says, but only if he or she first says “Simon says...”. If anyone performs the action but Simon *didn’t* say, then that person is out and must sit down, stand in the corner, turn around, or do whatever the teacher has decided is appropriate punishment for those who fail to heed Simon. Simon Says is a great activity for beginners as they often enjoy this not-so-challenging game. It can be used to teach simple actions, imperatives, and parts of the body (touch your nose, wave your hand, etc.). However, by the time they reach the intermediate level, Simon Says is probably a bit too simplistic to offer much of a challenge to your students. So, to add a bit of difficulty and increase interest, you can ask your students to mime more complex concepts using modifiers such as adverbs or adjectives (see Miming/Charades).

## 31. Sliding Door

This activity requires some flash cards or other pictures. In it, the teacher holds a piece of paper or other opaque item over a picture, comic sequence, or flash card and slowly slides away the blocking object. As the picture is revealed, the teacher or students can ask questions such as, “Where could they be?”, “What might this person be doing?”, “What do you think will happen next?”, or any other speculative questions. This is a good way to get students to practice modals as well as questioning techniques. Since it will not be known what is happening in the picture or what will happen next in a sequence of pictures, the students will have to use words like “could”, “might”, “may”, or “maybe” to express their uncertainty and guesswork. This activity also works well to practice sequencing words such as “next”, “then”, and “finally” if used with a comic strip or other sequence of pictures.

## 32. Slips of Paper

The teacher writes words, phrases, and expressions on slips of paper then deals out a number of these slips of paper to each student. The students are put in pairs and told to carry on a conversation. As students say a word, phrase, or expression that is on one of their slips of paper, they can put the paper down. The student who manages to put down the most slips of paper during the conversation is the winner. The teacher must ensure that both parties have equal opportunity to speak and that the conversations stay on-topic and are sensible. It doesn’t count if a student says something as rambling and nonsensical as “I love when it’s raining cats and dogs and my transport truck crashed and burned up on the farm last night. What’s your name?”

## 33. Sprouting Words

This activity involves building vocabulary from a picture, but it can also incorporate an element of competition. The students are shown a picture and, in teams, they are asked to list as many things as they can find in the picture. The team that names the most things, people, places, actions, feelings, or whatever else the teacher requests of them, wins! This activity can be extended by having the students then create sentences using the vocabulary they have established in the first part of the game. This is a good opportunity for the students to learn from each other as they build the list of things they see. Certainly, not all students will know the words for everything they see, so they can teach each other new words and the teacher can explain any unfamiliar vocabulary. The new vocabulary sprouts from the picture and grows into meaningful sentences as the students put the words to use.



### 34. Stop Me

This is another listening activity. As the teacher reads through a passage, the students are asked to listen for specific words, phrases, or grammatical elements such as modals or irregular verbs. When the teacher reads one of these words or phrases, the students must stop the teacher then repeat the word or phrase. The first student to stop the teacher gets to repeat the target item. If the student repeats the item correctly, he gets one point and the teacher continues reading the passage. This activity is best done with a relatively small class or with a larger class broken into smaller groups led by stronger students; otherwise, it can be very hard to distinguish who stopped the teacher/leader first. These kinds of activities are a good way to practice selective listening skills and to concentrate on specific lexical or grammatical items.

### 35. Surveys

Surveys can be prepared in advance by the teacher or created by the students with guidance from the teacher. Students interview each other and fill in the survey form with their partner's or classmates' answers. Questions on the survey should lead students to use targeted structures. For example, students could be asked questions starting with "How often do you ...?", "What time did you ...?", "What will you ...?", or "Can you...?" in order to practice adverbs of frequency, past tense verbs, future tenses, or modals used to express ability.

### 36. Word Clouds

"Word Clouds" are similar to "Mind Maps" (see Topic 3), but they are used to categorize vocabulary rather than structure a story or essay. For an introductory class, students could be asked to write their name in the middle of a page, and then surround their name with five things about themselves (e.g. jobs, hobbies, dreams, likes, dislikes, etc.). After doing this, they pass the "cloud" on to another student who uses the information to ask for further details.

Word Clouds can also be used to link phrases and expressions on similar themes. For example, the teacher could write the word "apology" on the board. The students then write this in the middle of a page and create a word/expression cloud around it by writing all of the different ways of expressing apology that they know. Another similar example would be to build a word cloud consisting of different ways to say or ask the same thing. One of the beauties of the English language is the variety of ways that the same thought or feeling can be expressed. Word Clouds are a good way to help students see the relationships between these phrases and expressions.

#### Use Your Imagination

There are many other fun ways to teach grammar covertly. Consider the learning objective for your lesson, and try to think of some ways to turn that into a game or other enjoyable activity. The possibilities are limitless; just use your imagination!

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A Month of Fundays: 30 games and activities to enliven your class

Password: Easy version: Use vocabulary pictures. Divide the class into two teams. One person on each team shows pictures to the rest of the team and they try to come up with the correct word. The team that correctly names the most pictures wins. Harder version: Give a list of words to groups. One person has to give synonyms or explanations to get team members to guess words on list.

Have a Seat: Can be adapted to different sized groups. Make clues for each person in the group. Arrange seats in rows or mark places on the floor. Put a red book under a pre-planned desk. Give each student a

strip of paper with a clue and have them negotiate where everyone should sit (or stand). see handout

Pictionary: Use the Pictionary Junior game, or make your own cards with vocabulary you've studied. Divide class in groups. Give a student a vocabulary card. S/he must draw pictures on the chalkboard to get his/her teammates to guess the word.

Charades: Body language Pictionary! One student acts out words, phrases, or sentences from cue cards for their teammates to guess.

Categories: Version I: One student names a category and everyone (in turn) must give an example (sports, white things, things in an office, etc.) If someone can't add to the list, they drop out. Continue until only one is left. Version II: Teacher gives a category and pairs or groups compete to see who can come up with the longest list. Version III: Require that the list be alphabetical (you can leave out "X") e. g. alligator, bear, chimpanzee, etc.

Throw the Ball: Use a "Nerf" ball. To keep everyone alert when practicing numbers, alphabet, categories of vocabulary or grammatical patterns. Teacher starts the game (e. g. says "A") throws the ball to anyone in the group. S/he must continue the sequence (say "B") and throw the ball to someone else.

Pix on Bax: Put a picture, a word, or a name on each person's back. Students must ask each other yes/no questions to find out who or what is on their back.

Imagination: What can you do with a common object (brick, eraser, paper clip)? How many new, unusual, or imaginary uses can each group think of?

Go Fish: Classic children's card game. Adjust to size of the group. Deal six cards to each player and place the remaining deck face down. Person to dealer's left can ask anyone "Do you have any . . . (sevens", for example, or anything s/he has in her/his hand). Person asked must give up one seven or if they don't have it, say "GO FISH" and the asker has to draw from the deck. If asker gets

a seven from the other person, he or she A gets another turn. When you have four of one kind, lay them down. First person to get rid of all his or her cards wins.

### Twenty Questions

A student thinks of an animal, a vegetable (any plant) or a mineral (anything else). Others have to guess what s/he is thinking of by asking questions - limit of twenty. If noone guesses, the originator wins. Keep it simple or allow anything of animal origin (my shoes, plant origin (the telephone book), or neither (my car). You can also play this game with more restricted categories e. g. famous people.

Association Pairs or groups have flash cards with words or pictures. Everyone in group has to say the first thing that comes into his/her mind

Decisions: Many versions. Students must choose a limited number (5-10) of items to pack for a camping trip, an elegant party, a desert island, a costume party, etc. Similar: students choose grocery items to buy for a special event, etc. Provide a list to choose, or from ask them to come up with the items.

Memory: Chain game with each student repeating the items of all the students before him and adding another. S1: I 'm going to Home Depot to buy a hammer. S2: I 'm going to Home Depot to buy a hammer and some nails. S3: I'm going to Home Depot to buy a hammer, some nails, and a lawnmower, etc.

Hot Seat: A volunteer sits in front of the class in the Hot Seat (if the teacher goes first, it's easier for someone else to volunteer later). Taking turns, everyone asks one question. Be sure to teach the class how to say, "I'd rather not say." Ground rules: anything goes, but you can always refuse to answer or you can lie if you want.

Jigsaw Sentences: Make up sentences that your students can understand

but that are challenging. Put sentences on cards, one word per card, and give cards to groups with the same number of members as words in the sentence. Students have to arrange themselves in correct word order. You can use this to reinforce a grammar point (use a question mark card to force group to make a question, for example).

Runaway Bunny": Pair activity named for the children's book in which the bunny wants to run away from home and the mother rabbit forestalls it imaginatively. Start with a silly threat (I'm going to steal your car.) Partner respond; If you steal my car, I'll come after you in a helicopter). (If you come after me in a helicopter, , ' I'll turn the car into a submarine drive into Town Lake), etc. as long as they can sustain it.

Find Someone Who...: Give everyone a list of descriptions (Find someone who has five brothers and sisters, likes cat better than dogs, has visited Disneyland, etc) Students circulate, ask questions (Have you ever visited Disneyland?) and write down the name of ONE person who answers yes to each question. You can reassemble the group and have the students report on what they learned.

Cocktail Party: Give each student a slip of paper with a general (with food?) question on it. Students circulate and ask each other questions to stimulate conversation. You can make it more challenging by using unusual or controversial questions (What is your opinion of the death penalty? What would you do if a UFO landed in front of you?).

Conversation Circle: Provide a list of topics that might be of general interest. Each student chooses a topic and (if you like) prepares questions in advance about the topic. Put the students in groups, and one student leads the conversation on his or her chosen topic. (Holidays, Music, Television, Drugs, Movies, Health and Sickness, Terrorism, Love, Ghosts, Modern life, etc.) see handout

Truth, Truth, Lie: Each student writes three statements about themselves. Two should be true and one a lie. Others ask any questions they want to try to guess which sentence is not true. After they finish questioning, everyone votes on which statement is not true, and the speaker tells which one is a lie. (It helps for the teacher to go first

with this. Try to think of unusual truths about yourself so the lie won't stand out.

Action Sequence: Get a volunteer to listen to your instructions and act them out. (Take out your key, unlock the door, get in and close the door, fasten your seatbelt, put the key in the ignition, etc. . . . all the way to "drive away") Have groups think of a sequence, and give the instructions to another volunteer. Can they guess what the action is? see handout

Information Gap: Lots of variations on this: Version 1: One student has a picture A which s/he describes to someone who can't see it. Second person must draw the picture. Version 2: Pairs of students have simple maps. One student draws a route on his map and then describes it to the other, who tries to duplicate it. Version 3: Pairs have pictures that are similar but not identical. They must try to discover the differences without looking at each other's picture. You can think of other ways to do this.

Jazz Chants: These are wonderful if you can get hold of one of Carolyn Graham's books. Teacher models the phrases, strong emphasis on the rhythm. Students repeat and then do the responses with groups across the room or men vs. women, etc. see handout

Small Talk: Teach students appropriate hesitation words and "I'm listening" expressions. (Uh, well, hmm, like, etc. and Oh?, Uh huh, yeah, really?, I know, etc.). Have them try to keep a conversation going as long as they can and insert these common items.

If I Were...: (More advanced) Give students a grid of possible topics, ask them to choose one and try to keep a conversation going for two minutes based on it. (S1: If I were a food, I would be a hamburger because people love hamburgers, and I could always get a job at McDonald's, and everyone could afford me. How about you? S2: If I were a food...) see handout

Strip Stories: Prepare a simple story of several short sentences in a logical sequence. Use a known story or make one up, as simple or difficult as you think they can handle. Cut into strips, one

sentence per strip. Give a strip to each student, have them memorize their sentences. Then take away the strips and the group has to try to reconstruct the story orally. When they have it, they can tell it to the class, each student reciting her own sentence.

Build a Story: Give the first student a sentence and then proceed around a circle, each student adding to the story. (S1: It was a dark and stormy night. S2: There was no electricity. S3: Angela was at home alone.

Picture Story: Each group gets a set of unrelated pictures from magazines, etc. A group of four gets four pictures, etc. Each group must come up with a story using all four pictures and tell it to the class (or another group).

Eavesdropping: For homework, students listen in to someone's conversation. In class, they should tell in a group what they think was going on. Group can elaborate on the situation if they wish.

Role Plays: An unlimited category of activities. Set up "real" situations in the classroom corresponding to a topic you're studying. For example, teach appropriate language to use in the post office, then set up a post office with play money, stamps, boxes, envelopes, etc. and give them tasks to do. One is the clerk, another has a package to send, etc. Home Depot/garage sale/Walmart/doctor's office, etc. Or give a group a role-playing situation (your daughter announced she wants to get married, your husband tells you he has lost his job, you win the lottery, etc.) and let them come up with a conversation and perform it for the class.

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grammar using cards

Let's say I want to teach the conditional, "If I had gone to the market yesterday, I would have bought some apples." I turn cards over on the table, right side down, and on those cards are vegetables and fruit. The game is rather like "memory." The student has to guess the cards. So the first student says, "If I had gone to the market yesterday, I would have bought some apples." He/she picks up a card. If it is the card with apples, he/she says, "And I went to the market and I bought some apples." If it isn't the card he/she says, "But I

didn't go to the market yesterday so I didn't buy any apples." and puts the card back on the table. The game continues until all the cards are picked up.

A simpler version for a beginning student is: "This is an apple" or "These are apples" Upon picking the card, he/she says: "Oh, this isn't an apple" or "These aren't apples" or "Yes, this is an apple" or "These are apples."

With my children, in Spanish, I give them different animals and tell them to put the animal on someone's head. Then I ask them if the animal is in the bag, in the box, or on his or her head. The more absurd the places are for the animals, the better.

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- land mines - students give directions to avoid the mines
- fly swatter - students compete to swat words on board

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Direct speech to reported speech

This is a board game for revising and practicing the reported speech (introductory verb is in simple past) with MUST, CAN, MAY, WILL, SHALL, MIGHT, OUGHT TO, COULD, SHOULD, and WOULD as the reported verb.

For 2 players or more.

Take turns in rolling a dice and changing the direct speech into reported speech.