

# ACTIVITIES FOR LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS





GOBIERNO  
DE ESPAÑA

MINISTERIO  
DE EDUCACIÓN  
Y FORMACIÓN PROFESIONAL

# ADAPTABLE ACTIVITIES FOR DIFFERENT LEVELS AND LANGUAGES





## A UNIQUE WAY TO INTRODUCE OURSELVES: **IT'S A BOMB!**

- Ask the students to form a circle. Set up a timer for the game.
- Pass the ball to a student and say: It's a bomb! They have to say their name and the name of whoever passed the ball to them. They then pass the ball to someone else:  
Example: MY NAME IS JUAN, YOUR NAME IS MARÍA
- The student who has the ball (bomb) when the timer sounds is “out” and has to leave the circle.
- Those who stay change places and the game continues.

## EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE VARIATIONS:

- My name is Gema and I love to eat chocolate.
- My name is Gema and...if I were an animal, I would be a dolphin because they are intelligent/they are sociable/I love to swim...etc.
- My name is Pedro and I would like to be a.../travel to.../be able to...
- **Make up your own**

## BENEFITS OF THE GAME:

- Establishes a fun way to take turns
- Introduces new language content



## 1. SPELLING WORDS:

- Form a big circle with everyone standing.
- The teacher will say a word (example: potato) and throw a ball at the student who then says the first letter and passes the ball to a second student, etc.
- If a student gets the letter wrong, they have to sit on the ground and the teacher will start over.
- The last student standing wins.

## 2. BASKETBALL:

- Using a bin as a basket, have the students line up.
- We select a grammar subject that interests us. Example: simple past tense.
- We ask the first student a question.  
Example: Where were you last weekend?
- If the student uses the proper verb tense, they can shoot the ball. They get 10 points if they score and 5 points if they don't score but answer correctly.





### 3. PASS THE BALL:

Questions and Answers:

- The teacher asks the students to create questions using the sentence **“Have you ever?”**  
Example: “Have you ever been to Paris?”
- The students throw the ball to ask each other questions using the given structure. They can only throw the ball and ask another question if they respond correctly.
- The students that answer incorrectly have to leave the circle.

### 4. FREEZE!/STOP!

**(A good activity for smaller children)**

- Vocabulary practice with *flashcards*.
- Explain the word *Freeze!* (\*Depending on the language) which means “stop.”
- Have the students sit in a large circle with a set of flashcards in the middle.
- While the students pass the ball, tell them that they cannot hold it for more than a second.
- The teacher, who has their eyes covered while the students pass the ball, says: FREEZE!\*
- The student who has the ball stops and takes a card from the pile.
- Depending on the grade level, ask the student to say the word or to use it in a sentence.

## DRAW MY HAND:

- In pairs, each student has to draw his or her partner's hand on a piece of colored paper, using the partner's hand to make an outline with a pencil or marker.
- On each finger, they will write the answer to a question (5 questions)
- Choose the questions that you would most like to ask the students (example: get to know you questions for the first day of class). You may decide the questions together with the students.
- The students interview each other and write a short answer on each finger.
- Students use their partner's paper hands to introduce them to the group. (example: this is Clara's hand, she likes to go to the movies with her friends, she is afraid of the dark, etc.)
- This activity may be extended by letting each student write something extra in the palm of the hand (example: my best quality/my dream/my goal this year, etc.)
- You may hang these on the classroom walls.

THIS ACTIVITY ALLOWS FOR VARIATION

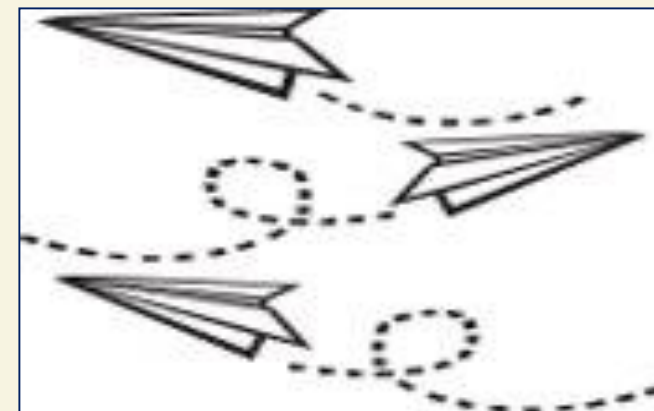


## PAPER PLANES:

Ask the students to make a paper plane. If someone doesn't know how, give basic instructions and a demonstration in the target language, or ask a student to demonstrate.

### VARIATION 1:

- Students write something inside the plane. All at once, each student throws their plane into the air at random. Another student picks it up and reads what is written:
  1. A question for the student to answer out loud (read the questions and their answers in front of the whole class or in groups.)
  2. A sentence with a blank to fill in as a grammar or vocabulary review, etc.
- Students may write their names on the planes.



### VARIATION 2:

The students take turns throwing their planes at a target that is drawn on the board:  
As a prize for having answered the questions correctly, they can receive extra points if they hit the target (if you choose to make this game competitive.)

### VARIATION 3:

Use one plane for the entire group of students in different kinds of activities to take turns (example: to switch readers while reading texts out loud as a group.)

## USING STRIPS OF PAPER:

- Give each student two strips of paper.
- On the first strip, the student writes a question that begins with the words **WHY...?**
- On the second strip, the student writes the answer to this question beginning with the word **BECAUSE...**  
Example: **Why** did the chicken cross the road?  
**Because** there was food on the other side.
- When they finish writing their sentences, collect them and make two piles: one with the questions and the other with the answers.
- Shuffle the papers from each pile separately.
- Read a random question from the **WHY?** pile. Then, read a random response from the BECAUSE pile.

**YOU CAN ALSO ASK DIFFERENT STUDENTS TO READ THE QUESTIONS OUT LOUD TO THE ENTIRE CLASS, OR IN SMALL GROUPS.**

**The combinations of questions and answers can be funny and give students the opportunity to practice the interrogative structure.**

It's important to supervise the students as they write.

THERE CAN BE MANY VARIATIONS (example: conditional sentences)



## 1. WHO AM I?

- Each student writes the name of a famous character or celebrity on a sticky note.
- He or she then sticks it to the forehead of a classmate who can't see the name.
- The students go around the classroom trying to find out who they are by asking closed-ended questions such as:
  - Am I male or female?
  - Am I an actor? Etc.
  - May be adapted to different vocabulary themes.  
Example: Fruits: Am I round? etc.



## 2. SYNTAX GAMES:

Rearrange words to form a phrase or sentence:  
The teacher writes each word or phrase on a sticky note and sticks it to the board, a large table, or the walls of the classroom and asks the student to put the words in order. (This activity may be performed in groups, pairs, or as a whole class)

## 3. DICTATION RACE:

The teacher writes short phrases or sentences on each sticky note, and the students have to read it, memorize it, and run back to their group where a scribe writes down what is being dictated. (4 skills: Reading, listening, writing, speaking)



## 4. MATCHING ACTIVITIES:

Use blocks of colored sticky notes if possible. Write words on the yellow sticky notes and their definitions on the pink sticky notes. Stick them on the board and ask the students to take turns connecting words with their definitions by drawing arrows.

## 5. PROVIDING CORRECTIONS:

- While students talk, write down corrections of their errors on a sticky note and stick it to their desk or notebook.
- At the end of the oral activity, ask the students to read the incorrect phrase and then the provided correction.
- Variation: Don't make the correction and instead, ask the whole group to try to correct the error.

## 8. FILL IN THE BLANK ON THE BOARD:

- Write sentences with blank spaces (vocabulary/grammar) on the board and write the missing words on sticky notes. Ask students to go up to the board to place the words in the appropriate spaces.
- This can be more fun if it is competitive. Example: The group that completes the task first and with the fewest errors earns points first.
- You can also ask them to write the answers themselves on the sticky notes.

## 6. USING THE BOARD FASTER AND MORE EFFECTIVELY:

When you want students to provide sentences or examples quickly, you can ask them to write them on sticky notes and then get up and stick it to the board (this saves writing time).

## 7. ORGANIZING VOCABULARY:

- Students can use sticky notes to make a list of vocabulary organized by intensity levels. For example, they could put adjectives in order from hottest to coldest (cold, cool, lukewarm, warm, hot, burning, etc.). Using sticky notes, the students can work together to organize them until they reach an agreement.
- You can also use sticky notes to make vocabulary trees and group the words by meaning.

## Yes, DICTATION!

### ADVANTAGES:

- For all levels.
- You can adjust the activity for different levels within the same group of students.
- Requires little preparation and avoids the expense of photocopies.
- Works on listening and writing skills.

### DISADVANTAGES:

- If used poorly, dictation can be boring.
- Some students find it very challenging.
- It may be difficult to ensure that the students are correctly writing what is dictated when it is performed in large groups...



## IDEAS FOR USING DICTATION IN CLASS:

- **DICTATING A STORY:**

Preferably a short and entertaining one. You may dictate the sentences out of order so that the students (in pairs or groups) can put them back in order. You may leave the end of the sentences open for them to complete using their imagination (selecting the number and difficulty of words/grammar depending on the students' level).

- **DICTATING QUESTIONS:**

Instead of using the ones in the book or providing written questions, you may dictate comprehension questions about a text or about an oral exercise that was performed in pairs.

- **DICTATE SENTENCES TO START DISCUSSIONS AND DEBATES:**

- At more advanced levels, you can dictate two or three questions to start a new topic and have the students answer them in pairs or groups.

Example: travel. Where did you go on vacation most recently? Where in the world would you like to visit? Where would you never want to go on vacation? Why?

- At lower levels, you can simplify the questions by using a recurring structure.

Example: Do you like to go to the movies? Do you like pasta? Etc.

- **SONGS AND TALKS/SPEECHES ON YOUTUBE:**

Before beginning an activity that has a song, you can dictate a few lines of it and ask student to read them out loud before listening to it. Or vice versa: have the students listen to the song and then read the lines out loud, imitating what they've heard.

- **DICTIONARY RACE (RUN AND DICTATE):**

Perform this activity competitively with texts that aren't too long. The first group to finish with the fewest errors is the winner.

- **STUDENTS DICTATE SENTENCES:**

Cut a text into strips of paper and pass them out to students. Have them read the strips to the rest of the class. Students should read slowly and pay attention to their pronunciation.

- **COMPLETING THE SENTENCE:**

Dictate phrases for students to complete with their own ideas. This works very well for grammatical structures that they have recently learned.

Examples: "I have never liked..."

"No one in my family has ever..."

- **FILL IN THE BLANK**

Explain to your students that while you dictate you will replace a word with a “beep” sound. They have to complete the dictation by choosing a word that makes sense in the context of the sentence that you're dictating. Example: “Yesterday I (beep) a wallet on the street.” (found)

- **ONLINE DICTATIONS**

- **Example: telephone numbers**

- <http://www.autoenglish.org/telephoneenglish/phonenumbers.htm>

- **Google Search...**



**Keep in mind** the level of understanding in the classroom during dictation activities.



## LET'S TELL SOME LIES:

### 1 TEACHING YOUR COUNTRY'S CULTURE:

Tell the students something about the customs of your country/region of origin, mixing in a few falsehoods. They have to guess which parts are lies or false information. Make it hard for them...

### 2 HOW MANY QUESTIONS?

- In pairs, student A has a minute to ask student B all the questions they can think of.
- Then, student B answers the questions that they can remember in whatever order they want, but must include a lie.
- Student A has to guess which response is the lie.
- They switch roles.

### 3. TALK ABOUT YOUR DAILY ROUTINE, TASTES, AND INTERESTS:

Using the same technique, you can tell them about your daily life, your life when you were in grade school, your tastes and hobbies, etc. depending on the grammar principle that you want to reinforce...and mix in a lie for them to guess.

## 1. WE ARE THE SENTENCE:

- Assign each student a word and have them form a sentence by standing in a line in the correct order.
- This assignment is based on the use and value of helping verbs as well as word order in the affirmative, interrogative, and negative forms.
- OTHER VARIATIONS ARE POSSIBLE.



## 2. MUSICAL CHAIRS:

- Identify 3 or 4 topics that students can talk about.  
Example: If they are learning to talk about preferences, you may ask them to think about what they would say about their tastes in fashion, food, music, etc.
- The students think of 2 or 3 things that they could say about themselves. (It's very important that students have time to think, because it allows them to mentally generate sentences in their second language before expressing them verbally.)
- In groups of 5-7, students put their chairs in circles with the backs towards the center of the circle. There should be one chair fewer than the total number of students in the group.
- They walk or dance in a circle around the chairs while the music plays. When the teacher stops the music, the students have to sit. The student who is left standing must say at least 2 sentences about their preferences.
- The game continues. No one is eliminated.



## 3. THE FLY SWATTER GAME:

- Excellent for reviewing vocabulary.
- Materials: two fly swatters and a PowerPoint projector and screen, or words written on a board if there is no projector.
- HOW TO PLAY:
  - Project the words onto the screen, spaced out and in a random order. Have a list of definitions ready to read.
  - To make it more fun, write the words inside the outline of some flies.
  - Divide the class into two groups. Each group chooses a team name.
  - Each team sends a person to the front of the class where they are handed the fly swatter.
  - Read the definition out loud and the first student to hit the correct word with the fly swatter wins a point for their team.



**\*Note** You may ask the same question or use the same word several times; repetition helps learning. You can set rules, for example: You can only hit one word per question (in order to avoid random swatting.)

## 4. TELEPHONE:

- Have students stand or sit in a row or in a circle.
- Make up a sentence and whisper it in the ear of the first student in the row, who in turn whispers it to the next student, until the sentence reaches the last student.
- If a student needs the sentence to be repeated, they must ask for it by using a code word. Example: “Operator!” However, each person may only do this once.
- The last student in the line or circle says the sentence that they heard out loud.
- You may ask students at random to repeat the sentence that they had understood.
- Tell the student the original sentence in order to compare it with those that circulated among the students.
- Telephone may be competitive by dividing the class into two groups: the one that produces a sentence most similar to the original wins.



## TALK TO YOUR NEIGHBOR ABOUT HOW THESE FACTORS WOULD AFFECT HOW YOU DESIGN THE CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

- Student's age
- Their language level/different levels within the same class.
- How far the students are into the day/school year and how tired they may be.
- Possible problems including some students in the group.
- Some students may feel nervous about using their second language.
- Requirements from the teacher responsible for the class; your own abilities and educational vision.
- Cultural and social factors that affect the student body.
- Possible disciplinary issues.
- Running out of ideas or resources.



**ARE THESE IMPORTANT FACTORS TO KEEP IN MIND? WHAT OTHER FACTORS ARE IMPORTANT?**

<http://busyteacher.org/13611-7-best-games-for-conversation-class.html>

<http://busyteacher.org/22210-7-no-prep-games-with-scrap-paper.html>

<https://globalgraduates.com/articles/lesson-plan-ideas-for-english-language-assistants>

**Manual for the Linguistic Assistant of the British Council:**

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/study-work-abroad/outside-uk/english-language-assistants>

**Thousands of free resources to print and use (English):**

<http://busyteacher.org/>

**Jobs, Worksheets, and Flashcards for the ESL and TEFL Teacher:**

<http://bogglesworldesl.com/>



## **More ideas for language assistant lessons:**

<https://globalgraduates.com/articles/lesson-plan-ideas-for-english-language-assistants>

## **Bingo Card Creator:**

[www.toolsforeducators.com/bingo/](http://www.toolsforeducators.com/bingo/)

## **Ideas and activities for English, French, and German:**

<https://auxiliaresconversacionasturias.wordpress.com/2015/04/07/algunas-ideas-las-clases/>

## **Ideas for fun pronunciation activities (English):**

<https://www.soundsofenglish.org/lessonsactivities>

## **Interesting blog with links to activities in English, French, and German:**

<https://morwennatakesoneurope.wordpress.com/2012/12/05/a-language-assistants-top-most-useful-websites-of-all-time/>

## **Ideas for teaching about your country's culture:**

<http://busyteacher.org/7080-top-10-ways-to-teach-culture.html>

[http://www.teaching-culture.de/en/products/lesson\\_plans/lesson\\_plans.htm](http://www.teaching-culture.de/en/products/lesson_plans/lesson_plans.htm)

<http://www.fluentu.com/blog/educator/teaching-culture-in-the-foreign-language-classroom/>

## **Board Game Maker:**

<http://www.toolsforeducators.com/boardgames/>

## **Flashcard maker (educational flashcards in various languages):**

<http://www.aulaplaneta.com/2016/02/29/recursos-tic/ocho-herramientas-tic-para-crear-flashcards-o-tarjetas-didacticas/>

## **Using sticky notes in a second language class:**

<http://minds-in-bloom.com/35-uses-for-post-it-notes-in-classroom/>

<http://busyteacher.org/13617-7-easy-ice-breakers-pos-it-notes.html>

## **Classroom dictation activities:**

<https://www.tefl.net/esl-activities/dictation.htm>

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/using-dictation>

<http://busyteacher.org/25011-8-great-ways-to-use-dictation-with-esl-students.html>

## **Short stories for classroom dictation activities (or other uses):**

<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/short-stories>

**Dictations organized by levels. Here are a few examples in English:**

<https://www.englishclub.com/listening/dictation.htm>

<https://www.rong-chang.com/esread/esread/dict/contents.htm>

<https://www.eslfast.com/begin4/dict/>

**A few examples of French dictations:**

<http://fondationpjl.ca/audio/>

<http://francesmaeserodrigo.blogspot.com.es/p/dictados.html>

**A few examples of German dictations:**

<http://www.aprendealeman.com/blog/12-nuevos-dictados-en-aleman/>

<https://www.gramatica-alemana.es/dictados-aleman/>

<http://www.aprendealeman.com/dictados/>



## ACTIVITIES USING PHYSICAL MOVEMENT:

<http://www.fluentu.com/blog/educator-english/esl-physical-activities/>

<http://www.fluentu.com/blog/educator-english/esl-games-for-students/>

<http://busyteacher.org/4246-tpr-tricks-5-fabulous-ways-to-use-total-physical.html>







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