



duolingo
english test

25 Activities to Prepare Your students for the DET

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Preface

Preparing students to take a high-stakes test like the Duolingo English Test (DET) is no small feat. Students often have limited time but unlimited expectations—they want to focus solely on the test, even when what they truly need is to improve their overall English proficiency. As a teacher, you're expected to know everything about the test questions, teach effective strategies, and keep students motivated—all while juggling diverse learning needs. In short, it's an almost impossible job.

This book will help you overcome these challenges, with 25 ready-to-use activities designed to prepare your students for success. These activities not only familiarize students with the tasks they'll encounter on the test—such as describing photos, writing down what they hear, or giving opinions—but also develop the essential skills they need to excel, like speaking fluently, staying on topic, and using precise language. At the same time, they improve students' general English abilities through meaningful communication with you and their classmates.

Each activity comes with materials that allow you to start teaching engaging, effective lessons. Rather than relying on repetitive practice questions, these activities transform test preparation into something enjoyable and motivating. Many include competitive or game-like elements, such as Synonym Snap, where students race to get rid of their cards by using synonyms correctly, or Paraphrase Tennis, where pairs take turns "serving" statements and returning them with accurate paraphrases (with a third student acting as the umpire). Other activities are puzzle-based, requiring collaboration and problem-solving. For

example, in Picture Puzzle Exchange, students work together to describe and match photos, while in Crack the Code, learners use precise listening and pronunciation to send secret messages.

But these activities do more than add fun to your classes—they foster skill development. For instance:

- In Spot the Difference, if no differences are identified after describing a photo, it becomes immediately clear that the description lacked detail or precision.
- In Prompt Pursuit, if teammates fail to guess the question being answered, it signals that the speaker strayed off-topic or failed to communicate clearly.
- In Just a Minute, students try to speak for as long as possible on a topic without hesitating. If they get interrupted, this shows where they lack fluency.

This instant feedback is one of the most powerful aspects of these activities. Unlike practice questions, which often leave students unsure of their mistakes until later, games and puzzles provide real-time evaluation. Students don't just learn what went wrong—they understand why and can self-correct on the spot. This builds confidence and competence, bridging the gap between classroom practice and test-day performance.

In addition to being engaging and insightful, the activities are easy to adapt to different levels and class sizes. Each one is divided into clear sections:

- Timing: How long the activity takes, ranging from 5 minutes to 30 minutes.
- Class size: Whether it works for one-on-one lessons or larger groups (some require at least 10 students).
- Preparation: What you need to do beforehand.
- In class: Step-by-step instructions for running the activity.



- Alternatives: Tips for adapting the activity to different group sizes, levels, or skill sets.
- Outcomes: How the activity helps students, whether it targets specific language skills (e.g., fluency, grammar, pronunciation) or prepares them for multiple question types.
- Examples: Ready-to-use materials included with some activities, or templates to create your own.

By combining feedback, focused practice, and fun, these activities make sure that your students are not only prepared for the DET but also equipped with stronger English skills that will serve them beyond the test, making them better test takers and better English users.

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COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES



Turn the Page

When reading a book, we predict what word will come next when we turn the page. (This is how we notice when we turn to the wrong page!) This activity also encourages learners to integrate prediction into their reading habits.

LEVEL: ANY
TIMING: 5+ MINUTES
CLASS SIZE: 1+



Preparation

Find a book at an appropriate level for students. Use this to demonstrate the technique.



In class

1. Show students the book. Read to the end of the first page.
2. Ask students to guess the next word (on the next page). If students find this too difficult, ask them to guess what kind of word (e.g., a noun, a verb, an adjective, etc.) this might be.
3. Turn the page and reveal the answer.
4. Encourage students to do this whenever they read in English.



Outcomes

Students practice predicting using context and sentence structure every time that they read. Students can use the same skills to guess words in Fill in the Blanks, Read and Complete, and Complete the Sentences.



Vocabulary Fortuneteller

This activity asks students to use context to guess which words will appear later in the passage.

LEVEL: ANY
TIMING: 5+ MINUTES
CLASS SIZE: 1+



Preparation

Find a short passage at an appropriate level. Prepare to show students either the title or the first sentence of the passage. Prepare a short list of words from the passage to show students, as well as some distractors (wrong answers). These could be from a similar passage.



In class

1. Tell students that they are going to read a short passage.
2. Show students the title or the first sentence. Ask them to imagine what the rest of the passage will be about. Students can do this individually or with their classmates.
3. Show learners the list of words that might appear in the text. Ask students to guess which words will be in the passage and which won't. (To make this more engaging, students could be given a budget to either bet on specific words or buy words at an auction.)
4. Show the full passage. Let students check their answers. Ask learners to reflect on how and why they guessed correctly (or incorrectly).



Outcomes

Learners practice predicting from context. Students can use this skill to guess words in Read and Complete and Complete the Sentences.

 **Examples****First sentence**

Samantha sat nervously at her desk, staring at the clock as the minutes ticked by. In just a few moments, she would begin her final exam.

Possible vocabulary

answer, designer, distinctive, elegant, failed, interior, millions, movie, picture, proctor, professor, questions, results, studied, test

Full text

Samantha sat nervously at her desk, staring at the clock as the minutes ticked by. In just a few moments, she would begin her final exam. She had studied for weeks, taking practice tests until she felt quietly confident. As the proctor handed out the exam, Samantha took a deep breath and began to read the questions. To her surprise, she found that she knew every answer. She finished the exam in record time.

Feeling relieved, Samantha handed in her exam paper and waited for her results. Her professor returned her grade, looking at her with a puzzled expression. "I'm sorry. You failed the exam," he said. Samantha was stunned. How could she have failed? When her professor handed her the test paper, she realized, to her horror, that she had answered all of the questions on the front of the paper, but none of the questions on the back.

Correct vocabulary

answer, failed, proctor, professor, questions, results, studied, test



Unravelling Text

In **Complete the Passage**, test takers must choose a sentence which fits between two paragraphs. The following activity helps students practice by guessing the next sentence in a text.

LEVEL: ELEMENTARY-
ADVANCED

TIMING: 10+ MINUTES

CLASS SIZE: 1+



Preparation

Find a text at an appropriate level for your learners. You'll only need the first five or ten sentences of the text. Create a slideshow, with one sentence at the top of the first slide. Underneath this, show three options for the next sentence. One of these should be the next sentence in the original text. The other two (wrong answers) should be sentences from other parts of the same text. Students must guess which of these is the next sentence. On the next slide, show the first two sentences (including the correct answer from the previous slide) with three options for which sentence goes next. Repeat for five or six sentences.



In class

1. Tell students you're going to show them a sentence from a text. They need to guess which sentence comes next.
2. Show students the first sentence of a text and the three options for the next sentence. Students must choose what they think the next sentence will be and say why.
3. Continue through the whole text.

4. Afterwards, ask students to reflect on how they made their choices and what they learned from this experience.

Alternatives

- Show students the entire first paragraph, then ask them to predict the sentences starting with the second paragraph. This should make the activity easier, as learners should better understand the context.
- Hide the headline or title of the text. After students have predicted all the sentences, ask them to guess the title. This helps students practice for Title the Passage, which is also part of Interactive Reading.
- Give each group ten points. Ask students to bet on which sentence will come next. Correct bets get double the points. Losing bets lose points. Count the points at the end of the game to see which group won. This also lets you understand how confident students are about their answers.

Outcomes

Students practice choosing which sentence goes next, like Complete the Passage. This activity also raises students awareness of coherence. This is useful preparation for answering Interactive Writing and the Writing Sample.

Examples

1. A Nepalese mountain climber has set a new world record for ascending Mount Everest the most times.
 - A. Kami Rita, 52, has summited the peak a total of 26 times.
 - B. The previous record for climbing the mountain was 25 times.
 - C. The air is thin since the mountain is so high.



2. Nepalese mountain climber has set a new world record for ascending Mount Everest the most times. Kami Rita, 52, has summited the peak a total of 26 times.
 - A. May is the best time for climbing Everest, due to good weather.
 - B. Mount Everest is the highest mountain on Earth.
 - C. The air is thin since the mountain is so high.

3. Nepalese mountain climber has set a new world record for ascending Mount Everest the most times. Kami Rita, 52, has summited the peak a total of 26 times. Mount Everest is the highest mountain on Earth.
 - A. The mountain is over 8,848 meters high.
 - B. It's difficult to breathe and stay active when this happens.
 - C. Sherpas live in the Himalayan mountain range.

4. Nepalese mountain climber has set a new world record for ascending Mount Everest the most times. Kami Rita, 52, has summited the peak a total of 26 times. Mount Everest is the highest mountain on Earth. The mountain is over 8,848 meters high.
 - A. Kami Rita has been a mountain climber for over 35 years.
 - B. He has said that he will retire from climbing when he's sixty.
 - C. Many people have attempted to climb it, but over 300 have died trying.

Key

Nepalese mountain climber has set a new world record for ascending Mount Everest the most times. Kami Rita, 52, has summited the peak a total of 26 times. Mount Everest is the highest mountain on Earth. The mountain is over 8,848 meters high. Many people have attempted to climb it, but over 300 have died trying.

Dictation Bingo

This game is similar to traditional bingo or tombola but with two main differences. Firstly, students listen for sentences, like in Listen and Type. Secondly, students make their own bingo cards, choosing between pairs of sentences (or words).

LEVEL: BEGINNER-
ELEMENTARY

TIMING: 15 MINUTES

CLASS SIZE: 4+



Preparation

Make a list of short sentences (or words). Include minimal pairs, or words and sounds which students find it difficult to tell the difference between. This activity will help students to practice hearing the differences between sentences. For example if your students have trouble telling the difference between /ɜː/ and /ɔː/ use, "She's a worker" and "She's a walker". Or if your students have trouble telling the difference between /k/ and /g/ use, "Watch our backs" and "Watch our bags."



In class

1. Give every student a blank piece of paper. Ask students to draw a 4x4 grid, making each square as large as possible.
2. Starting with the top left square, give students a choice of what to write. For example, "In square one, write either 'I have a big mouth' or 'I have a big moth'."
3. Repeat with the next square. For example, "In square two, you can write either 'Listen, I think that's wrong' or 'Listen, I think that's Ron'."



4. After students have written sentences in all sixteen boxes, start the game. Tell students that they need to listen to the sentences you read. If they have the sentence you read, they should cross it off. When they have crossed off all the sentences in a row or column (and have four in a row), they should shout “bingo”.
5. Students can ask you to repeat a sentence if they don't hear clearly. You may want to teach them “Can you please repeat that?” or “Say that again please.”
6. Read the sentences in a random order (not line by line or column by column). This should make the activity last longer.
7. Read the sentences until one student shouts “bingo”. Get the student who shouts “bingo” to read their sentences aloud. The rest of the class can check if these match the sentences you read.



Alternatives

Put students into groups. Make one student per group the group leader. Give this student the full list of sentences. Ask them to lead the activity.



Outcomes

Students practice listening carefully with sounds that are difficult to distinguish, like in Listen and Type.

 Example

<p>"I have a big moth" or "I have a big mouth"</p>	<p>"There's a pain in my hand" or "There's a pen in my hand"</p>	<p>"She deserves a veil" or "She deserves a fail"</p>	<p>"I think they're actually clothing" or "I think they're actually closing"</p>
<p>"Listen, I think that's wrong" or "Listen, I think that's Ron"</p>	<p>"Look. Does that say 'H'?" or "Look. Does that say 'age'?"</p>	<p>"That goat looks very warm" or "That coat looks very warm"</p>	<p>"It's the best class I've ever had" or "It's the best glass I've ever had"</p>
<p>"Can we have the bill please?" or "Can we have the bell please?"</p>	<p>"Excuse me, are those my socks?" or "Excuse me, are those May's socks?"</p>	<p>"I usually work on Saturdays" or "I usually walk on Saturdays"</p>	<p>"Take a look at the waist" or "Take a look at the west"</p>
<p>"I think it's time for us to live" or "I think it's time for us to leave"</p>	<p>"No one I know likes spots" or "No one I know likes sports"</p>	<p>"Throw those pills away" or "Throw those peels away"</p>	<p>"There's something wrong with the air" or "There's something wrong with the hair"</p>



Crack the Code

In this activity, students read aloud to send a secret code while under time pressure. Their classmates must listen closely to their partner and decode the message. This helps to train students for Listen and Type.

LEVEL: BEGINNER-
ADVANCED
TIMING: 10 MINUTES
CLASS SIZE: 2+



Preparation

Write 13 pairs of sentences, 26 in total (one for each letter of the alphabet). The pairs should include similar sounding words which will be challenging for your learners to notice the difference between. For example, if students have trouble with dark /l/, include "Look at the sea" and "Look at the seal". Depending on the level of the students, the sentences can be made longer or shorter. Use single words for the lowest level students.



In class

1. Put students in groups of two or three.
2. Make one student a "spy". They must send a coded message to the other students in the group. The other students in the group will be decoders. They must decode the message from the spy.
3. Show the 26 sentences on the board. Each sentence should be next to one letter of the alphabet.
4. Give the spy a word (or short phrase). This should be no more than ten letters long. Tell them to send this to the decoders. Alternatively, let the spy choose a word or short phrase which they

want to send.

5. The spy starts by reading the sentence which matches the first letter of the message. The decoders listen and write the letter which goes with this sentence. They then move onto the second, then the third, then the fourth letter, until they have spelled the complete message. For example, using the code on the next page, the following sentences would spell "code": C: I'll take a look, thanks. O: It's by the truck. D: I'll take a look, thanks. E: I'm on a sheep.
6. The decoders to reveal the message they received and check if it is the same as the message the spy tried to send. Students note any letters that they mixed up.

Alternatives

- Give students a time limit. Challenge them to successfully send the message in shorter and shorter time.
- In one-to-one classes, the teacher and the student can send messages to each other.
- Give all students the same message. Challenge students to be the first group to successfully send the message.
- Make the dictation more challenging by placing similar sentences next to similar letters (e.g. "a" and "e", or "s" and "f"). This will make it harder for students to guess which sentences are being read aloud from the context.
- For online classes, share a document with the 26 sentences. One student reads a sentence aloud and the others race highlight the matching sentence.



Outcomes

Students practice listening closely to what they hear (like Listen and Type). They also need to scan the code to find the sentence they just heard. This is useful practice for Highlight the Answer.



Examples

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| a) It was a large meal. | o) It's by the truck. |
| b) It was a large male. | p) It's by the track. |
| c) I'll take a lock, thanks. | q) She's a worker. |
| d) I'll take a look, thanks. | r) She's a walker. |
| e) I'm on a sheep. | s) Watch our bags. |
| f) I'm on a ship. | t) Watch our backs. |
| g) Look at the seal. | u) Calm down now. |
| h) Look at the sea. | v) Come down now. |
| i) Mind the forks. | w) I think I'm shot. |
| j) Mind the fox. | x) I think I'm short. |
| k) She fought hard. | y) They were mad abroad. |
| l) She thought hard. | z) They were made abroad. |
| m) They travel by drain. | |
| n) They travel by train. | |

Dialogue Shuffle

In this low-prep activity, students must take a dialogue which is out of order and put it in the correct order. This helps practice for Listen and Respond.

LEVEL: BEGINNER-
INTERMEDIATE

TIMING: 5+ MINUTES

CLASS SIZE: 1+



Preparation

Take a dialogue and mix up the order. Prepare to show this to students. Alternatively, print the dialogue, then cut this up so that each line of the dialogue appears on a separate piece of paper.



In class

1. Show or give students the mixed-up dialogue.
2. Ask them to put the sentences in the right order.
3. Let students check their answers with their classmates.
4. Ask students to explain why they put the dialogue in this order.
5. Show students the original dialogue. Ask them to compare and reflect on any mistakes they made.



Outcomes

Students select the most appropriate response to each turn, as they do during Listen and Respond. They also become more aware of cohesion in a conversation, which is helpful for Interactive Speaking.



Examples

Dialogue 1

- 1. Student (A):** Hey! I've been thinking about studying abroad for a year. What do you think?
- 2. Student (A):** I'm looking into options in Europe, maybe Spain or Italy. I've always wanted to immerse myself in a different culture and learn a new language.
- 3. Student (A):** Thanks for the encouragement. I'm leaning towards going for it. It's a big decision, but I feel like it's the right time to step out of my comfort zone and experience something new.
- 4. Student (A):** Thanks! Your support means a lot to me. I'll let you know once I've made my final decision.
- 5. Student (A):** That's true! I'm nervous but also really excited about this opportunity. I'll keep you updated on my decision and plans.
- 6. Student (A):** Yes, I have. There are a few programs that align with my major and offer great academic opportunities. Plus, the chance to travel and explore different countries is so exciting!
- 7. Student (B):** I completely understand. It's a bold move, but I know you'll thrive wherever you go. Plus, you'll have amazing stories to share when you come back!
- 8. Student (B):** I'm so jealous! I wish I could study abroad too, but I have commitments here. You should definitely go for it! It will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

- 9. Student (B):** Oh, really? That sounds amazing! Where are you considering going?
- 10. Student (B):** Please do! I'll be here cheering you on every step of the way. Good luck with your decision!
- 11. Student (B):** Wow, that sounds like a fantastic opportunity! Have you researched the universities and programs there?

Solution: 1, 9, 2, 11, 6, 8, 3, 7, 5, 10, 4.

Dialogue 2

- 1. Student (A):** Yes, I've been trying to connect with a few people to get their feedback. It'll be helpful to hear about their experiences and get their advice on choosing the right program.
- 2. Student (A):** Yes, I have. I want to make sure I choose a program with strong faculty in my areas of interest.
- 3. Student (A):** Thank you, Professor! I appreciate your support. I'm really excited.
- 4. Student (A):** I'm really interested in development economics and international trade. I find the dynamics of developing countries and their interactions with the global economy fascinating.
- 5. Student (A):** Hi Professor! I've been thinking about pursuing a master's degree in economics next year, and I wanted to get your opinion on it.



- 6. Professor (B):** You're welcome! I'm glad to see your enthusiasm. Good luck with your decision!
- 7. Professor (B):** That's great to hear. If you have any specific questions about the programs you're considering, feel free to ask.
- 8. Professor (B):** That's a great choice! Development economics and international trade are important areas of study with real-world implications. Have you looked into the different master's programs available and their faculty?
- 9. Professor (B):** That's a good approach. It's important to find a program that aligns with your research interest. Have you spoken with any current students or alumni from those programs?
- 10. Professor (B):** That's great to hear. I'm glad you're considering furthering your studies in economics. What specific area are you interested in?

Solution: 5, 10, 4, 8, 2, 9, 1, 7, 3, 6.

Conversation Gaps

In this activity, students must use one half of a dialogue to predict the content of the other half. This is similar to how test takers must answer Listen and Respond.

LEVEL: ELEMENTARY –
ADVANCED

TIMING: 5 MINUTES

CLASS SIZE: 2+

Preparation

Prepare a scenario and conversation from Listen and Respond.

In class

1. Read the scenario. Ask 3-4 questions to check students understand (like Listen and Complete).
2. Read one line from Speaker A. Students write what they hear. Read these aloud up to three times (like Listen and Type).
3. Read the second line from Speaker A. Students write again.
4. Continue until you've dictated all of Speaker A's lines. Students should now have a written version of one half of the dialogue.
5. Students check spelling and meaning with a partner.
6. Now tell students they will write Speaker B's replies. Tell students to highlight words from Speaker A that help them guess what Speaker B said.
7. Put students in small groups. They compare replies, discuss which ones fit best, and fix any errors.
8. The teacher shows the class both sides of the full dialogue (both Speaker A and B). Students compare their side of the conversation



with the original and discuss the differences.

9. Discuss any misunderstandings with the class.



Outcomes

Students practice listening to one side of a conversation and thinking about how to respond. This helps students prepare to choose answers to Listen and Respond questions.



Alternatives

Ask students to exchange their imagined parts of the conversation with another group. Students mark each other's conversations, scoring each line (3 points for very similar, 2 points for a little similar, 1 point for different, 0 points for nothing written).



Examples

Example

Scenario: You are an English composition student working on an argumentative essay about social media's impact on communication. After drafting your essay, you visit your professor during office hours to ask for feedback on your thesis and supporting evidence.

Listen and Complete:

- 1) What kind of essay are you writing?

I'm writing an _____.

- 2) What is the essay about?

The essay is about _____ on communication.

- 3) When do you meet your professor?

I meet her during _____.

4) What feedback do you ask for?

I ask for feedback on _____.

Listen and Respond:

Professor: Let's talk about your thesis. Can you summarize it in one sentence.

You: I wrote "Social media harms real-life communication."

Professor: Too broad. Specify who, what part of communication, and how.

You: How about "Social media reduces university students' face-to-face talk because notifications split attention"?

Professor: Better. Add scope and a comparison point, for example pre-smartphone levels.

You: Then thesis "Social media use among university students decreases in-person conversation by promoting multitasking and shorter exchanges compared with pre-2010 levels."

Professor: Good. Now plan evidence types: time-use studies, a campus survey, expert commentary, and a counterargument to rebut.

You: I have a 2023 attention-switching study, a small survey, and chat logs. Is that enough?

Professor: Add one causal study, define your measures, and link each source to a topic sentence. Use APA or MLA.

You: Got it. I'll tighten the thesis, add the comparison, and strengthen evidence with a clear rebuttal and citations.

Professor: Great. Bring the revision and two key sources for a final check.



One-Sided Conversation

Students imagine they are listening to a phone conversation. They only hear what one person says and must imagine the other half of the conversation. This helps them prepare for Listen and Respond.

LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE –
ADVANCED

TIMING: 10+ MINUTES

CLASS SIZE: 1+



Preparation

Create half a dialogue, with utterances from one speaker only. This conversation should sound as if it is taking place over the phone.



In class

1. Put students in pairs.
2. Tell students to imagine that they are sitting next to someone making a phone call. They can only hear one side of the conversation.
3. Read aloud half of the dialogue. Students must write what they hear.
4. Ask students to imagine and write the other half of the conversation. Encourage students to be creative in imagining a scenario.
5. Students perform their dialogues for the rest of the class. When listening, the other students try to guess the scenario.



Outcomes

Students listen to short sentences read aloud and write these, like in Listen and Type. They must think about cohesion between speakers, which can help students choose the next line of dialogue in Listen and Respond.

 **Alternatives**

- Give students a list of possible scenarios to choose from for the dialogue.
- In one-to-one classes, the student and teacher can create the dialogue together.

 **Examples**

Dialogue 1

A: Hello?

B: _____

A: Yes, I'm ready. I can start whenever you like.

B: _____

A: Has everything been prepared on your end?

B: _____

A: Okay, I'll see you very soon then.

B: _____

Possible scenarios:

- HR calling a candidate to offer them a job.
- A student calling a teacher before meeting for a lesson.
- An actor calling a movie director from a different part of the set.
- Someone calling a friend just before the start of a surprise party.
- A hit man calling their client, just before carrying out a job.



Dialogue 2

A: Which one would you like?

B: _____

A: Would you like to try it first?

B: _____

A: Here you are.

B: _____

A: Please don't do that.

B: _____

Possible scenarios:

- Someone trying on clothes in a shop.
- Someone testing a gun before a hunt, pointing it at their friend.
- Someone playing a guitar too loudly.
- Someone trying a drink before buying the bottle.

Pair and Perform

In this activity, students must create a dialogue based on answers to Summarize the Conversation. They then listen to each other's dialogues and guess which summary these are based on.

LEVEL: ELEMENTARY –
ADVANCED

TIMING: 20 MINUTES

CLASS SIZE: 8+



Preparation

Prepare sample summaries to Listen and Respond. Write a number on each summary. You will need one summary for every two students.



In class

1. Put students in pairs. Give each pair a summary of one Interactive Listening conversation. These summaries should be similar to the summaries they are expected to write after Interactive Listening.
2. Ask each pair of students to write a dialogue based on the summary. Their dialogue must cover all of the points in the summary. Students can add extra information, but they must cover the key information.
3. Display all the summaries for the class, without indicating which pair was given which summary. Each summary should have a number next to it.
4. Ask students to perform their dialogue for the class. After each pair performs, students write the performers' names and the number of the summary they think it matched.



5. Reveal the correct answers of which dialogues matched which summaries. Ask what made it easy or difficult to match the summaries to the performances.



Alternatives

- For higher level students, underline some words in the summary. Tell students that these are taboo words that they can't use in their dialogues. This encourages paraphrasing and using a variety of lexis.
- After listening to each dialogue performance, the rest of the class must try to write a summary in 75 seconds. After all the pairs have performed, show the original conversation summaries. Discuss what was similar and what was different.



Outcomes

Students practice listening to a dialogue and matching this to a summary. Students must think of how to respond to another line of dialogue. They also get to read many 'good' conversation summaries, similar to those they need to write in Summarize the Conversation.



Materials

1. I asked my professor for help with improving my essay writing. They told me to focus on making my main idea clear in the introduction and organizing my points so that they are easy to follow. They also said I should ask a friend or classmate to read my essay and give feedback before I turn it in.
2. I met with my professor to talk about how to prepare for a group debate. They said each person in the group should pick a specific topic to research and practice presenting their ideas together.

They also suggested we think about questions the other team might ask and practice answering them. They reminded me to speak slowly and clearly during the debate.

3. I had a meeting with my academic advisor about choosing my classes for the next semester. They told me to look at what I need to graduate and choose electives that I enjoy but that won't give me too much work at once. They also said it's important to keep a balance between harder and easier courses.
4. I went to my professor to talk about the comments they gave on my lab report. They explained how I could write my results in a clearer way and how to use numbers and graphs to support my points. They also said I should keep my conclusion short and focused on the main findings.
5. I asked my professor for advice on how to deal with feeling nervous when I have to give a presentation in class. They suggested practicing in front of friends or family to get used to speaking. They also said recording myself could help me see what I need to improve. They reminded me to take deep breaths and focus on speaking slowly when I feel nervous.
6. A student met with their professor because they were struggling with a reading assignment. The professor told them to read it in small sections instead of all at once. The professor said they should highlight the main ideas and write down anything they didn't understand to ask about later. The professor also suggested talking about it with classmates to share ideas.
7. A student talked to their professor about how to speak more during class discussions. The professor said they should think of one or two questions before class and be ready to ask them. The



professor also said they could start by agreeing with someone else's idea and adding something small. This would help the student feel more comfortable speaking up.

8. A student met with their professor to ask how they could prepare for an oral exam. The professor told them to practise answering questions out loud and review the most important topics from the class. The professor also said they should work on speaking clearly and try to stay calm during the exam.
9. A student had a conversation with their professor about working better with their group on a team project. The professor said the group should decide who will do what, make a timeline for finishing the work, and have regular check-ins to see how things are going. The professor also suggested talking openly if any problems come up.
10. A student spoke with their professor because they were feeling unmotivated halfway through the semester. The professor said they should make a list of small goals to finish each week. The professor also said they could reward themselves when they finish something, like taking a break or doing something fun. The professor reminded them to find a study routine that works for them and stick to it.

PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES





Same or Different

Students work in pairs with different sets of photos. They can't see each other's photos, so they describe what they have and decide which photos match and which ones are different.

LEVEL: ELEMENTARY –
ADVANCED

TIMING: 5 MINUTES

CLASS SIZE: 2+



Preparation

Prepare two sets of photos. Some photos in each set should be the same, and some should be different. Print these sets of photos for students. You'll need one set for each student.



In class

1. Put students in pairs. Give each student a set of photos. Tell students they must not show their photos to their partner.
2. Ask students to describe the photos to their partner. The students should note which photos in the set are the same and which are different.
3. Ask students to repeat with another partner.
4. Check the answers. Ask students what they struggled to describe in the photos.



Alternatives

- In one-to-one lessons, the teacher can describe one set of photos. The student can describe theirs and guess which photos are the same and which are different.
- Start by grouping students with others who have the same sets of photos. They look at the photos together and discuss how to

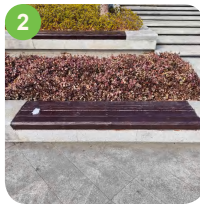
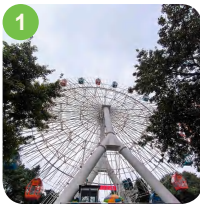
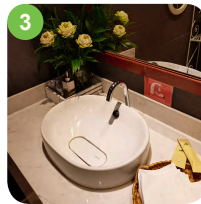
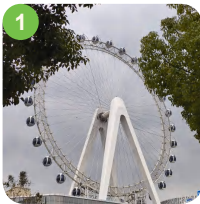
describe each photo. Then regroup them with new partners who have the different photo set and do the main task.

 **Outcomes**

This activity helps students prepare for Speak About the Photo. Students focus on content by aiming to complete the task. Students improve fluency through repetition.

 **Same or Different**

Example 1





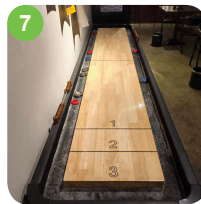
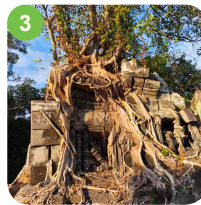
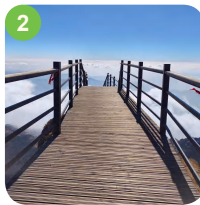
25 Activities to Prepare Your students for the DET

Solution

Same: 3, 5, 7

Different: 1, 2, 4, 6, 8

Example 2

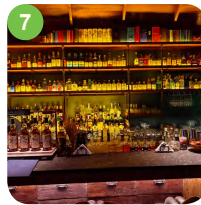
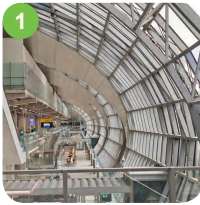
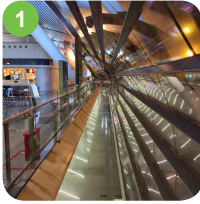


Solution

Same: 1, 2, 4, 8

Different: 3, 5, 6, 7

Example 3



Solution

Same: 2, 4, 6, 8

Different: 1, 3, 5, 7



Spot the Difference

In this activity, two students look at slightly different versions of the same image. Each student describes their photo to their partner, listening for any differences. This encourages learners to give precise descriptions, like they must do on Speak About the Photo.

LEVEL: BEGINNER –
ADVANCED

TIMING: 5–10 MINUTES

CLASS SIZE: 2+



Preparation

Find two photos that are similar but have 5 to 10 noticeable differences. These differences should be easily recognizable when comparing the two photos at first glance. If the differences are too subtle, learners may not be able to identify them.



In class

1. Put students into pairs facing each other (or back-to-back).
2. Give each student in a pair a different photo. Make sure students can't see each other's photos. Tell them not to show their photo to their partner.
3. Students describe their photos to each other. While listening and describing, students should note as many differences as possible.
4. Go through the differences in the photos with the whole class. Highlight any new words students used (or should have used). Correct any common errors from students. Then repeat the task.

 **Alternatives**

- For lower-level students, you may want to allow them to see a word bank with useful phrases for locating things in a photo (such as “top left”, “bottom right”, “foreground”, etc.)
- Set a time limit for the activity. You may want to make this around three minutes (double the time limit for Speak About the Photo).
- After students have finished the activity, ask them to write a list of differences between the two photos. This helps students to summarize and practice for Write About the Photo.
- In one-to-one classes, the teacher and the student can play together. Encourage the student to do more of the talking.
- Change the format to speed dating. Arrange the seats in two concentric circles facing each other. All students with photo A should sit on the outside and those with photo B on the inside. Start the timer. Students describe their photos and note differences. After one minute, half the students move seats and change partners. Repeat for 4–5 rounds. This lets students work with multiple partners and challenges them to summarize differences they have already found.

 **Outcomes**

This activity helps students prepare for Speak About the Photo by describing details. Students can also improve their scores for discourse by describing the picture in a logical way.



👁️ Examples







Description Duel

In this activity, students take turns describing a photo. When a student runs out of things to say, the other student is declared the winner. This prepares students to talk for longer during Speak About the Photo.

LEVEL: BEGINNER –
ELEMENTARY
TIMING: 10 MINUTES
CLASS SIZE: 3+



Preparation

Prepare a variety of photos which can be seen by students. Alternatively, ask students to find photos which they can ask each other to describe in class.



In class

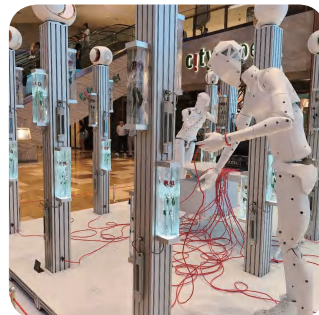
1. Put students in groups of three. Two students are players and one is the referee.
2. Each referee chooses a photo for their group to describe.
3. Give students (at least) 20 seconds to look at the image and think about how to describe it.
4. Start the game. Players take turns to say a sentence describing the photo. Each sentence must be true (really describe the image) and original (cannot repeat anything said previously).
5. Students continue to describe the photo until the referee notices either a repetition, a sentence which does not describe the image, or one of the players cannot think of anything to say.
6. The player who won the game swaps roles with the referee. Students choose a new photo and play the game again.

 **Outcomes**

Students practice fluency, by trying to think of something to say about the photo under time pressure. This helps them prepare for Write About the Photo.

 **Alternatives**

- This activity can also be played in bigger groups of four or five. The first player says a sentence, describing the photo. Then the player to their left speaks next. Students take turns (clockwise) until someone repeats what another classmate said or can't think of anything to say.
- For higher level students, add a rule that the sentences must also be grammatically correct. The referee will need to listen to the accuracy of three sentences and stop the game when they think a player has made a mistake. This encourages students to focus on lexical and grammatical accuracy.

 **Materials**



Half to Whole

Each student gets several halves of different photos. Their partner has the matching halves.

They can't see each other's images, so they describe what they have to work out which halves belong together and how each whole photo should be arranged.

LEVEL: ELEMENTARY –
ADVANCED

TIMING: 15 MINUTES

CLASS SIZE: 2+



Preparation

Find a set of similar images and cut each into two parts. Prepare to give one set of halves to one student and the other set of halves to the other.



In class

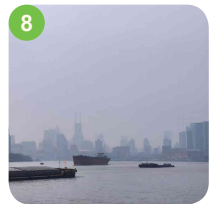
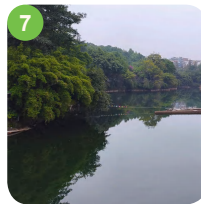
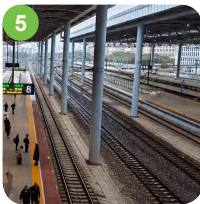
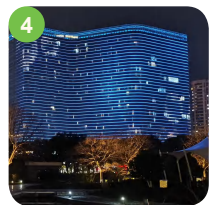
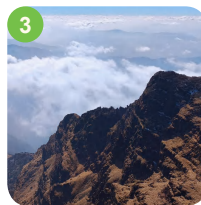
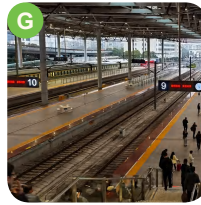
1. Put students in pairs. Give each student of one set of half photos. They must not show these to their partner.
2. Students describe their images to each other and try to match the halves.
3. After they have matched the halves, they should guess the orientation of each whole photo (which half is on the left, and which is on the right). Students can record this as, for example, 3A (photo 3 is on the left, photo A is on the right) or A3 (photo A is on the left, photo 3 is on the right).
4. Ask students to count how many photos they correctly matched. Optional scoring: Students get +2 points for every photo they correctly matched; +1 point if they got the order correct (e.g. A1 vs 1A); -1 point for every mistake.
5. Go over any concepts that the students wanted to say, but didn't know how to say.

Outcomes

Students practice describing photos in detail, listening closely to their partner's descriptions. This helps prepare students to answer Speak About the Photo and Write About the Photo.

Materials

Example 1

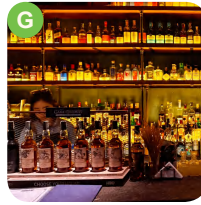
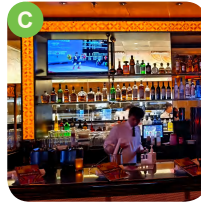


Solution: A3, 7C, D2, 6E, F1, G5, H4.



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Example 2



Solution: A2, B8, C6, D7, E3, 1F, G6.

Picture Partner

Two students get the same sets of photos, but in different orders. They need to match the photos by describing them to each other. This helps learners prepare for **Speak About the Photo**, by describing photos fluently and accurately.

LEVEL: ELEMENTARY – INTERMEDIATE
TIMING: 5–10 MINUTES
CLASS SIZE: 2+

Preparation

Find or take sets of similar but different photos. The more photos there are, the longer the activity will take. Print these on two sheets of paper with the photos in a different order. One set of photos should be numbered 1-8 and the other set A-H.

In class

1. Put students in pairs. Tell the students that they will both see the same photos but in a different order. They must describe their photos to their partner and match the photos (e.g. 1=B, 2=E, 3=A, etc.).
2. Hand out the photos to the students. Remind students not to show their photos to their partner.
3. Give students up to five minutes to describe their photos.
4. After students have described and matched the photos, get students to compare their answers with other learners in the class.
5. Show learners the correct answers and give feedback on how they could have better described the photos.



Alternatives

- To make this more challenging for your learners, include some “wild cards”, photos that are in one set but not in the other.
- Make the activity harder by choosing photos which are similar to each other (or easier by choosing photos which are less similar).
- In one-to-one classes, the teacher and the student can play together.
- Ask a follow up question for students to discuss after finishing the activity, like which bathroom (Example 1) was in the most expensive hotel (answer: #2), or which bridge is the longest (answer: #2).

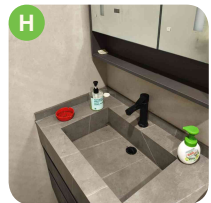
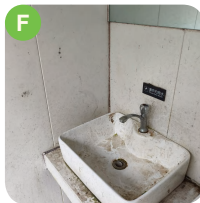
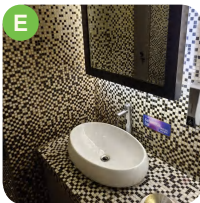
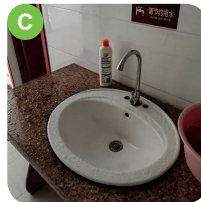
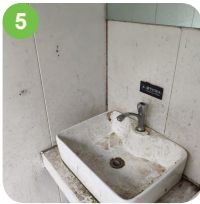


Outcomes

Learners practice describing several photos in a short space of time, which helps practice fluency, prepare practice describing photos like in Speak About the Photo, and prepare to answer Write About the Photo.

 Examples

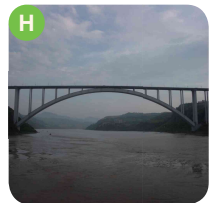
Example 1



Solution: A=3 ,B=4 ,C=8,D=6 ,E=2 ,F=5,G=1 ,H=7



Example 2



Solution: A=3, B=6, C=1, D=2, E=7, F=8, G=5, H=4

Say More Mingle

This activity helps students increase their oral fluency by encouraging them to say more.

LEVEL: BEGINNER–
ELEMENTARY

TIMING: 5 MINUTES

CLASS SIZE: 4+



Preparation

Create around five speaking prompts about everyday topics, like work, hobbies, sports, books, TV, food, weather, pets, etc. Prepare to read and show these to the class. The prompts can be similar to the Interactive Speaking and Read Then Speak prompts. Write some phrases on the board which students can use to ask for more information, such as “Oh, that’s interesting”, “Tell me more,” “What makes you say that?”, etc.



In class

1. Put students in pairs. One student in each pair will be an interviewer. The other will be an interviewee.
2. The interviewers need to ask their interviewee one of the questions. Each time their interviewee finishes speaking, they should prompt them to say more using one of the additional phrases to ask for more information.
3. Tell students to mingle and change partners after the interviewers have prompted the interviewees to say more three times.
4. Ask students to swap roles, then repeat.



Alternatives

In one-to-one classes, the student can choose a prompt and speak. When the student finishes, the teacher can say "Tell me more".



Outcomes

This activity encourages students to expand on their answers, which helps learners with their fluency scores on speaking questions such as Interactive Speaking, Read Then Speak, and the Speaking Sample.

Acknowledgement: This activity was inspired by Michael McCarthy.



Examples

Easy

- What is your favorite hobby?
- Who is in your family?
- What food do you like most?
- Who is your best friend?
- What clothes do you like to wear?
- What kind of books do you enjoy reading?
- What do you usually do to relax?
- What's your favorite way to stay fit?
- What skill or talent would you like to learn?
- What do you like to eat when you're feeling sad?

Medium

- Describe a memorable adventure or trip you took.
- Discuss a favorite childhood memory that still makes you happy.
- Tell me about a random act of kindness you've experienced.
- What's the most unusual food you've ever tried?

- Share a fact about yourself that surprises people.
- Tell me about somewhere that you've always wanted to visit.
- Share a dream or goal you are currently working towards.
- Tell me about a tradition you have with your friends or family.
- What's the best advice you've ever received?
- Tell me about a mentor or teacher who made a big impression on you.

Hard

- Share a story about a time when you received unexpected help from someone.
- Describe a time when you had to make a difficult decision.
- Talk about one of the hardest things you have done in your life.
- Tell me about an embarrassing moment from your past.
- If you could have any special skill, what would it be?
- Discuss a life-changing event in your life.
- If you could go back in time, what advice would you give your younger self?
- Talk about a song that holds special meaning for you and explain why.
- Talk to me about a place that always brings back fond memories.
- If you could live in any time period, which one would you choose and why?



Vocabulary Ninja

This activity encourages students to use advanced vocabulary naturally when speaking (or writing). Learners pick a word or phrase and try to use it when answering a question. Their classmates must guess what the word was.

LEVEL: ADVANCED
TIMING: 10+ MINUTES
CLASS SIZE: 2+



Preparation

Write some lower frequency words and phrases which your students have learned recently on slips of paper. You'll need at least one per student. These could be words for adding information (such as "additionally", "furthermore", "moreover"), words for introducing examples (such as "for instance"), words for summarizing (such as "in conclusion") or idioms (like "every cloud has a silver lining"). Write each word or phrase on a separate slip of paper.



In class

1. Put students in small groups of 3—6. Give each group several slips of paper. These should be placed face down on the center of the table the learners are working at.
2. Each student takes one slip of paper. They should keep their word or phrase hidden from their classmates. If the learners don't know the phrase, they can look it up in a dictionary, or swap it for another.
3. Show the class a Read Then Speak (or Speaking Sample) question. Give learners 30 seconds to plan how they will answer.
4. Students take turns speaking. While answering the question,

students must use the word or phrase on their slip of paper as naturally as possible.

5. After each student speaks, the other learners in the group guess which word or phrase the student used in their answer. Students whose words are discovered must pick two slips of paper in the next round of the activity.

Alternatives

- To make the activity easier, tell students the kind of word that they have. For example, idioms or discourse markers.
- This activity can also be done as a writing task. Prepare some Interactive Writing or for the Writing Sample questions. Give students five minutes to write their answers. At the end of the time limit, ask students to read each other's answers and guess which word or phrase was on their classmate's slip of paper.
- For writing tasks, students can be given a grammar point to include in their answer, such as "a relative clause" or "passive voice" or "reported speech".
- In one-to-one classes, the teacher and the student can play together.

Outcomes

To be successful, students should also use other low frequency words, making it challenging for the listener to guess the word or phrase on the slip of paper. This can help students use more advanced lexis during speaking questions such as Interactive Speaking, Read Then Speak and the Speaking Sample.

Example Questions

- What is one everyday challenge people face in your area, such as traffic or litter? Why does it happen, and how could people address



it? Give reasons and examples.

- What changes in weather have you noticed in recent years where you live? How are these changes affecting people, and how could communities reduce harm? Give reasons and examples.
- Recall a short trip or outing that did not go as planned. What went wrong at first, and how did you adjust? What did you learn from the experience? Use reasons to support your answer.
- People make many small choices each day. What is one way to improve your thinking when making everyday decisions? How could this skill help in study, work, or daily life? Use examples to support your answer.
- Describe a time you tried a new activity or hobby. What made you choose it, and how did you feel on your first day? How did your feelings change after some practice? Give examples to support your answer.

Example Words

- the allure of
- in conclusion
- a rising trend
- a powerful tool
- the key lies in
- having said that
- a critical aspect
- on the other hand
- regulate how much
- as society evolves
- an important element
- plays a pivotal role
- evaluate the evidence
- the first crucial step
- an indispensable skill
- by taking these actions
- the driving force behind
- the most important factor
- foster a deeper understanding
- make the world a better place
- this is gradually being replaced
- one of the most positive aspects
- there are a number of things that
- ultimately, the decision should be made

Paraphrase Tennis

In this activity, learners practice paraphrasing under time pressure. This can help them check they've been understood when speaking, or help them avoid repetition during speaking answers.

LEVEL: ELEMENTARY –
INTERMEDIATE

TIMING: 10 MINUTES

CLASS SIZE: 3+



Preparation

Prepare some topics for students to talk about that are at an appropriate level for the class.



In class

1. Put students in groups of three. One student will be the umpire (referee). The other two will be the players.
2. The Player 1 picks a topic. They must say something about the topic.
3. The Player 2 must paraphrase what the first player said. They cannot repeat any content words. If the umpire agrees that the Player 2 has successfully paraphrased without repeating too much, Player 2 gets a point. (The aim isn't perfect accuracy, but is to encourage flexibility in language use and quick thinking.) If Player 2 repeats too much of what Player 1 has said, then Player 1 gets a point.
4. The player who won the point in the previous round starts the next round (picking the next topic and saying something about this).



5. Continue the game until one player reaches four points. Then change the groups so that a different student becomes the umpire.
6. After the activity, correct any paraphrasing mistakes that you heard students make.

Examples

Topic: A recent holiday or trip

Player 1: I recently went on a trip for two weeks.

Player 2: In other words, I was away for 14 days.

Topic: My ideal weekend

Player 1: On the weekend, I like to go somewhere quiet.

Player 2: To put it another way, on Saturdays and Sundays, I like being alone.



Outcomes

Students gain confidence in expressing ideas without repetition by practicing how to rephrase sentences using varied vocabulary and structures. Acting as umpires helps them develop peer feedback skills by assessing paraphrases and deciding if they successfully avoid repetition. These skills are useful for question types like Interactive Speaking, Read Then Speak, and the Speaking Sample.



Alternatives

- This activity can be adapted to practice for Speak About the Photo. Instead of choosing a topic, students choose a photo. Player 1 says something about the photo and Player 2 tries to paraphrase this.
- Show students some phrases for paraphrasing, that they can

look at during the activity. For example, "in other words," "to put it another way", "what I mean is," "you could say that" etc.



Materials: Topics

1. My morning routine
2. A meal I like
3. My weekend plans
4. A recent holiday or trip
5. A hobby I enjoy
6. A place I want to visit
7. A sport I like
8. My last shopping trip
9. A book I have read
10. My dream job
11. A funny story from my life
12. A time I felt nervous
13. A famous person I admire
14. My favorite way to relax
15. My ideal weekend
16. A family member I look up to
17. A subject I enjoy studying
18. A type of weather I like
19. My favorite app or website
20. A festival or holiday I celebrate
21. A time I learned something new
22. My favorite childhood memory
23. A goal I want to achieve
24. My favorite place in my city
25. A piece of advice I would give
26. Something I bought recently



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27. My favorite time of the year
28. A pet I have or want to have
29. A sport I find difficult to play
30. A film I would recommend
31. A habit I want to change
32. A place I like to eat
33. A time I got lost
34. A technology I find useful
35. A fun event I attended
36. A skill I am learning
37. A time I helped someone
38. Something that makes me laugh

Sentence Pile On

This activity helps students focus on grammar by asking them to add words to a simple sentence, making it longer and longer, until it's too long to remember.

LEVEL: ELEMENTARY –
INTERMEDIATE

TIMING: 5 MINUTES

CLASS SIZE: 2+

Preparation

Prepare a list of simple sentences, such as “I like you” or “My foot hurts”.

In class

1. Put students in pairs or small groups.
2. Introduce the game: students take turns adding words to a starting sentence to make it longer. Each turn must maintain correct grammar and meaning.
3. Give an example, such as:
“I like cats.”
“I really like cats.”
“I really don’t like cats.”
“I really don’t like it when cats do that.”
4. Continue until someone cannot remember the sentence, makes a grammatical error, or pauses for too long.
5. Start the game with one of the prepared sentences.

Alternatives

- Turn this into a group writing challenge. Give each group a short



sentence. Challenge them to expand the sentence to include exactly ten words, using correct grammar. Groups write these as fast as they can, and run to present these to you at the front of the class. The fastest group to expand the sentence to exactly ten words with no grammatical errors wins the round.

- Reverse Pile On. Start from a long sentence and take turns removing one element while keeping it grammatical; encourage rephrasing to save meaning.
- Start with a photo. Show the learners an image, and give a short description (like “There is a man”). Students take it in turns to make the sentence longer, while keeping the description true to the photo.



Outcomes

Students practice fluency by expanding sentences under time pressure, improving their ability to produce longer and more complex spoken language without pausing. This is useful on all speaking questions, especially Interactive Speaking.



Examples

- I like it.
- She is nice.
- He runs fast.
- We are late.
- They went home.
- My dog is cute.
- I can swim.
- It is hot.
- This is mine.
- I saw her.

Just a Minute

This activity is based on a BBC radio program.

Students must try to speak for one minute without hesitation, deviation, or repetition.

This game can motivate students to speak at length and balance fluency with accuracy - skills which are vital for all speaking questions on the DET.

LEVEL: ELEMENTARY –
ADVANCED

TIMING: 10+ MINUTES

CLASS SIZE: 4+

Preparation

Write at least five topics for students. These should be similar to topics in the Read, Then Speak or Interactive Speaking questions.

In class

1. Put students into teams of 2-4 people. You need at least two teams.
2. Explain the rules. The aim is to speak for one minute on a topic without repeating any words (exception function words), deviating from the topic, or hesitating (pausing). If the speaker repeats, deviates, or hesitates, students from another team can challenge the speaker. If the teacher decides the challenge is successful (for example, a student challenges that the speaker hesitated and the teacher agrees), then the challenger must speak for the remaining time on the same topic. Students from another team can then challenge this student if they repeat, hesitate, or deviate. The student who is speaking at the end of the minute wins one point for their team.



3. Give the first team a topic. Time one minute. Encourage the other team to interrupt when they hear a repetition, deviation, or hesitation.
4. When the other team challenges, pause the timer. If the challenge is successful, the team that challenged has remaining time to talk about the topic. (If the first team spoke for 15 seconds before being interrupted, the second team should have 45 seconds to continue talking).
5. The team that is talking at the end of the minute wins a point.
6. Repeat the activity with other topics.



Alternatives

- If you want students to focus on grammar, add a rule that teams can challenge when they hear a grammar error.
- Once students are familiar with the rules, assign roles to different students. For example, one student can act as the referee, agreeing or disagreeing with challenges. Another student can act as the timekeeper, stopping the clock every time there is a challenge.
- Instead of a topic, give students a photo. They need to speak about the photo for one minute, without repeating any words (exception function words), deviating from the topic, or hesitating (pausing).



Outcomes

This activity encourages learners to balance fluency with accuracy. Learning to avoid hesitation improves fluency. Avoiding deviation (i.e., staying on topic) helps with content. Avoiding repetition can increase scores for lexis.

 **Topics**

- Being late
- Choosing a career
- Dealing with change
- Experiencing different cuisines
- Exploring new places
- Friendship
- How this generation does things differently
- Learning a new language
- Owning a pet
- Politeness in different societies
- Recycling
- Spending time with family
- Staying fit
- Successful people
- Technology in education
- The benefits of reading
- The best movie I've ever seen
- The impact of climate change
- The impact of technology on our lives
- The importance of teamwork
- The importance of time management
- The scariest thing I've ever done
- Things that are always in fashion
- Things that are always true
- Unwanted gifts



Essay Architect

This activity helps students practice structuring a short essay, similar to Interactive Writing and the Writing Sample.

LEVEL: BEGINNER –
ELEMENTARY

TIMING: 10 MINUTES

CLASS SIZE: 4+



Preparation

Prepare an answer to a Writing Sample question. Print each sentence on a separate slip of paper and mix up the order.



In class

1. Show students the question. Ask them to discuss how they might answer this.
2. Give students the sentences on slips of paper. Ask students to put these in the right order. Tell students to underline any words which helped them order the sentences.
3. Ask students to compare their order with their classmates'.
4. Show students the original order of the answer.
5. Ask students to identify the main sections of the answer.



Alternatives

- Put the essay cut-ups around the room. Ask students to walk around the room reading these and discussing with a partner what order they should be in.
- Encourage students to give alternative answers for how the essay could be structured.

- Hide the question while students order the answer. After ordering the answer, encourage the class to guess the question.



Outcomes

Students focus on the structure of an essay. They need to think about the order of arguments, sentences, pronouns and discourse markers. It helps students prepare to answer writing questions like Interactive Writing and the Writing Sample.



Examples

Question: Should parents be held responsible if their child commits a crime? Give reasons for your answer.

- A. In cases where the child has committed a crime, the legal system should hold the child accountable for their actions and provide appropriate consequences.
- B. Overall, while parents have an important role to play in shaping their children's behavior, they should not take legal responsibility for their children's criminal actions.
- C. Parents should not be held legally responsible for the actions of their children.
- D. It is unfair to hold the parents accountable, as they may have done everything in their power to prevent the child from engaging in criminal behavior.
- E. Parents are responsible for the upbringing of their children, including teaching them values and guiding them towards making responsible choices.
- F. However, children are individuals and are responsible for their own actions.

Answer: C, E, F, A, D, B



Question: Agree or disagree with the following statement: A cashless society has more benefits than drawbacks. Please explain your position.

- A. Firstly, it excludes individuals who may not have access to digital payment methods, widening the financial divide.
- B. I disagree with the statement that a cashless society has more benefits than drawbacks.
- C. Lastly, it eliminates the tangibility and the psychological value of physical currency.
- D. While a cashless society offers convenience and efficiency in transactions, it also comes with significant drawbacks.
- E. Additionally, a cashless society raises concerns about privacy and surveillance.
- F. Secondly, reliance on digital systems makes society vulnerable to cybercrimes and data breaches.
- G. Therefore, a balanced approach that combines digital transactions with the option of cash is preferable, ensuring inclusivity, security, and individual choice.

Answer: B, D, A, F, E, C, G

Lie Detector

This activity encourages lower-level learners to write about their opinions and experiences. This helps students prepare to answer personal experience questions, like Interactive Writing and the Writing Sample.

LEVEL: BEGINNER
TIMING: 10 MINUTES
CLASS SIZE: 4+

Preparation

Create some personal experience questions for students, similar to those in Interactive Writing and the Writing Sample.

In class

1. Show students a personal experience question from Interactive Writing or the Writing Sample.
2. Students write an answer to each question using four sentences. Three sentences should be true and one false. Each sentence must be about themselves.
3. Students read their sentences aloud.
4. Their classmates guess which sentence is not true.

Alternatives

- Let students write as many sentences as they like within a time limit. They must include at least one lie.
- This can be adapted as a speaking activity. Show students a question and give them twenty seconds to prepare an answer. Students take turns to answer the question, speaking for at least thirty seconds. After each student speaks, their classmates guess



which part of the answer was untrue.

- In one-to-one classes, the student can write and the teacher can try to find the lie.



Outcomes

Students practice answering Interactive Writing and Writing Sample questions about personal experience.



Examples

Questions

- Think about a recent day when you used your free time in a meaningful way. What did you choose to do, and what happened during that time?
- Talk about a visit to your favorite place in your hometown. What did you do there on that day, and who, if anyone, was with you? Why does this place feel special to you?
- Think about a time you planned a trip to a place you hoped to visit. Where did you decide to go, and what made that destination important to you?
- Describe one clear memory from your childhood. What happened, where were you, and who was involved? Why has this moment stayed with you over time?
- Discuss a time when you lost something important. What item was it, where did you misplace it, and what happened next? How did you try to find it, and who helped you?

Unveil and Identify

In this activity, learners must describe something famous (a movie, a book, a celebrity, a city, etc.) to the other learners in their group. Students can't include the name in the description. The other learners must listen and guess what is being described. This helps practice making ideas clear by using examples.

LEVEL: ELEMENTARY
TIMING: 10 MINUTES
CLASS SIZE: 2+

Preparation

Think of at least ten famous movies, books, TV shows, or songs which your students will be familiar with. Write each on one small slip of paper.

In class

1. Put students in groups of 4-6.
2. Each student takes a slip of paper. They must write a description of the movie, book, TV show, or song. They cannot include the name in their description.
3. After writing, students should read one another's descriptions and try to guess what is being described. The first student to guess correctly takes the slip of paper.
4. After students have finished guessing, they should count how many slips of paper they have won. The student with the most is the winner.



Alternatives

- This can be done as a speaking activity, to practice for Interactive Speaking, Read Then Speak, and the Speaking Sample.
- In one-to-one classes, the student can describe and the teacher can guess.
- After finishing the activity, ask students to turn their descriptions into answers to questions (like "What is one book that is popular in your country? Why do people like it, and what do you think of it? Describe its main idea and the kinds of readers it attracts, using examples from your experience.")



Outcomes

Students practice describing something in detail that they are familiar with. This helps learners prepare to write about similar topics to the Interactive Writing and Writing Sample questions.

Message Mosaic

In this activity, students create Writing Sample answer together by filling in missing pieces of another answer. This helps students focus on cohesion and coherence.

LEVEL: ELEMENTARY –
ADVANCED

TIMING: 15 MINUTES

CLASS SIZE: 4+

Preparation

Create a sample answer to a writing question like the Writing Sample. The sample answer should be divided into sections.

In class

1. Put students in groups. Give each group the same essay, but with a different part missing from each. For example, one group might be missing the first two sentences, another group the second two sentences, and so on.
2. Students write the missing section, basing this on the surrounding sections.
3. Then students put their sections together to create a new essay.
4. Together, the class edits this for cohesion and coherence.
5. Show the class the original essay. They compare their essay with the original. What differences are there? Which essay do they prefer? Why?

Alternatives

- Give students an answer to an Interactive Writing question, including both prompts and both answers.



- Include the question along with the essay. Hide the question from one group and ask them to write the this.



Outcomes

Students work on creating cohesion twice: once by writing their section of an essay, and once when combining their section with that of an essay with their classmates. This skill is useful for answering Interactive Writing and the Writing Sample.



Materials

Materials 1

Visiting new places can benefit both individuals and society in many ways. Traveling allows people to step outside their comfort zones and experience life in different ways. This exploration not only brings personal growth but also fosters a deeper understanding of our world.

First, when people travel, they learn about different cultures, traditions, and lifestyles. This helps them become more open-minded and understanding. For example, visiting another country can teach a person about local customs and ways of life that are different from their own.

Second, travel can strengthen community ties. When people explore new places, they often share their experiences with others. This can create interest in different cultures and encourage connections between people.

In conclusion, visiting new places is important. It not only helps individuals grow and learn but also brings people together, making society richer and more connected.

Materials 2

I believe that younger people have a better quality of life than older people at the same age. This is true for many reasons, including technology, education, and healthcare. Younger people have more chances to improve their lives with these tools.

First, younger generations use advanced technology that makes life easier. For example, smartphones and the internet help them connect with others, find information, and get services. This makes their daily lives more convenient.

Second, younger people often have better education and healthcare. They can access online classes and health information, which helps them live healthier lives. This focus on learning and health improves their quality of life.

In conclusion, younger generations usually have a better quality of life than older generations at the same age. Access to technology, education, and health helps younger people enjoy more opportunities and a higher standard of living.



Synonym Snap

In this activity, students compete to match words to synonyms. Knowing synonyms helps students use a wider variety of vocabulary. This helps increase their scores for Lexis and Discourse coherence in all the Speaking and Writing questions on the DET.

LEVEL: ELEMENTARY –
INTERMEDIATE

TIMING: 10 MINUTES

CLASS SIZE: 4+



Preparation

Write a list of linking words or phrases which are useful for answering Interactive Writing and Writing Sample questions. Put one linking word or phrase on each card. Cut up the cards so each card has a word on one side and is blank on the other.



In class

1. Put students in groups of 3-6 around a table.
2. Each student gets 10 cards with various linking words and phrases. Students should keep their cards hidden.
3. The first player plays a card by placing it face up on the center of the table.
4. The student on their left must put down a word which is a synonym for that word. If they can't, they must pick up one card. If the other players agree that the player's card is a synonym, the player can play a second card with a different meaning.
5. The game continues until the first player gets rid of all their cards.

6. After the game, ask students to list any new words they learned from playing the game.

Alternatives

- Challenge students to use any words they still have at the end of the game to answer a writing question.
- Give a “use it in a sentence” option: if a synonym is challenged, the player must prove it by using it in a sentence relevant to essay writing.

Outcomes

Students learn the meanings of words which they can use when answering Interactive Writing and the Writing Sample.

Materials

- A clear example of this is
- A useful approach could be
- Additionally
- Although
- Another point to consider is
- As a result
- As mentioned earlier
- As we have seen
- Because of this
- Consequently
- Due to
- Even though
- Finally
- First of all
- For example
- For instance
- For this reason
- From my perspective
- Furthermore
- However
- I am convinced that
- I believe that
- I suggest that
- I think that
- In addition
- In comparison



25 Activities to Prepare Your students for the DET

- In conclusion
- In contrast
- In my opinion
- In other words
- In recent years, there has been
- In summary
- In the same way
- In this essay, I will discuss
- It can be concluded that
- It is important to note that
- It is important to understand
- It is recommended that
- It is widely believed that
- It seems to me that
- It would be a good idea to
- Many people think that
- Moreover
- Not only that, but
- On the other hand
- On the whole
- One instance of this is
- One possible solution is
- Overall
- Secondly
- Similarly
- Some people argue that
- Specifically
- Such as
- Taking everything into account
- That is to say
- The aim of this essay is to
- Therefore
- This essay will explore
- Thus
- To begin with
- To conclude

Prompt Pursuit

In Prompt Pursuit, each student answers a writing prompt which only they can see. Afterwards, students read each other's answers and guess who answered a different prompt from everyone else.

LEVEL: ELEMENTARY –
ADVANCED

TIMING: 15 MINUTES

CLASS SIZE: 4+

Preparation

Create pairs of writing prompts. These need to be similar, but slightly different. For example, "Write about a fun experience you had" and "Write about a memorable experience."

Print these on slips of paper. Print more of one writing prompt than of the other.

In class

1. Put students into groups of around 4-6 people.
2. Give each student a writing prompt and tell them not to show this to their classmates. One or two students should have a different writing prompt from the rest of the group.
3. Students answer the writing prompt within the time limit. Vary the time limit depending on the ability of the learners.
4. At the end of the time limit, students read each other's writing. The learners guess which students in their group answered a different question to everyone else.
5. Students reveal which writing prompts they used.



Outcomes

This activity helps students prepare for Interactive Writing and the Writing Sample, by writing answers which closely match the prompt. This should help students improve their scores for Content.



Examples

Main Prompts	Secondary Prompts
Describe a memory from your childhood.	Describe something which happened to you when you were at school.
How do you like to relax?	What's your favorite hobby?
Which famous person would you most like to meet?	Who is your hero? Why?
Write about a time you've helped someone.	What question do other people ask you most often?
Where would you most like to go on vacation? Why?	What's your favorite country? Why?



Final Words: How to Use These Activities Effectively

These activities do more than prepare students for the Duolingo English Test. They help learners build confidence, develop lasting skills, and stay motivated throughout the process. But how you use the activities matters just as much as the activities themselves. Here are some principles to guide you as you put them into practice:

Focus on skills, not shortcuts. Use these activities to strengthen abilities like fluency, accuracy, and cohesion—skills that matter for the test and beyond—rather than relying on narrow test-taking tricks.

Keep motivation high. Ultimately, the most important factor in learning a language—or preparing for a test—is persistence. If students enjoy what they're doing, they'll keep going. If they don't, they'll stop. Choose and adapt activities that your students enjoy.

Build in preparation time. Give students time to think before they speak or write. Early on, allow plenty of time so they can organize their ideas and perform well. As the test gets closer, gradually shorten the preparation time to match the preparation times on the DET.

Always include feedback. After each activity, make space for a feedback stage. Correct common mistakes, highlight effective language, and ask students what they wanted to say but couldn't. This reflection turns practice into real progress.

Balance short-term and long-term goals. Aim for the sweet spot: help students prepare for the specific tasks they'll face on the DET, while also making sure the skills they practice will serve them in their future studies, work, or daily communication.



Make communication the goal. The strongest preparation comes when students use English to describe, persuade, clarify, and solve problems. This is what the DET rewards—and what matters most outside the test, too.



Additional Resources

The following resources are also available to both teachers and students preparing for the DET.

For Teachers:

DET Handbook – includes information on all test questions, strategies for each question type and suggestions for language learning.

DET Sample Questions (Volumes 1-3) – over 1000 paper-based practice questions for students.

DET Scoring Guide – detailed information on how all questions are scored, including scored sample answers.

Unlocking Success on the Duolingo English Test – a resource book for teachers with 70+ classroom activities to help students prepare for the test.

For Students:

Practice Hub – where students can practice question types and get feedback on answers.

Practice Test - where students can sample all the questions types in the test format and get a score estimate.

Question Guide – detailed information about every test question, including tips for how to prepare.



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