

Activities for Advanced Speakers

This activity pack is a guide for coaching advanced-level speakers in upper-elementary grades and higher. Some activities are intended for middle school students and older, while others are geared toward high school students only. You can easily modify these lessons for younger students by omitting the more mature content.

Many of these topics will need to be taught over the course of several days or weeks. These activities are intended to give you a model of how to introduce content and engage your students.

Suggested Topics:

- ▶ Getting to Know Each Other
- ▶ Small Talk
- ▶ Diet & Cuisine
- ▶ Character & Zodiac Signs
- ▶ Idioms
- ▶ Giving Advice/Recommendations
- ▶ Movie Ratings
- ▶ Music
- ▶ Culture
- ▶ Climate Change
- ▶ Endangered Animals
- ▶ Extreme Weather
- ▶ Crime and Punishment
- ▶ The Supernatural
- ▶ Inventions
- ▶ Stereotypes
- ▶ Image
- ▶ Advertising
- ▶ News
- ▶ Values & Ethics
- ▶ Censorship
- ▶ Unsolved Mysteries
- ▶ Romance & Marriage

Getting to Know Each Other

Activity 1 Your Favorite Things

Give students a worksheet to complete in which they answer questions, such as “What is your favorite movie? Why?” Then go over each question so you can get to know your students. Share your answers to the questions also, so students can get to know you, as well.

Activity 2 Two Truths, One Lie

1. Ask students if they have ever played “two truths, one lie.” If not, explain the game and then tell students two truths and one lie about you (without revealing which one is a lie).
2. Elicit students to ask you questions to determine the validity of your statements and then to guess which statements are true and which is a lie. If students are stumped, reveal the answer.
3. Now ask students to do the same with you and this time you will ask them questions to ascertain which of their statements is a lie.

Activity 3 More About You

Ask students to show you pictures and/or anything that is special to them so that you can get to know them.

Activity 4 About Me

Make a poster/collage of random facts about yourself and elicit students to guess what each fact means (Ex: list your best friend’s name & ask students to guess who this person is in relation to you). Or show pictures of you with family and friends.



Small Talk

Activity 1 Question of the Day

What is your dream job? Why?

** You may want to start each lesson with a “Question of the Day” - this is one way to form a habit of speaking English immediately. Questions can be related to whatever theme you’re introducing.*

Activity 2 Small Talk

1. Make “small talk” with students. After a minute or so ask students if they know what “small talk” is.
2. Then pass out a “small talk” sheet and go over each term/expression with a visual (if possible).
3. Pass out sample “small talk” dialogues. Ask for volunteers to read them aloud.

Activity 3 Coming Up With Small Talk

1. Pass out a worksheet with pictures of various situations. Go over the first picture, asking students what’s happening in the photo and what “small talk” would be appropriate.
2. Then instruct students to work individually.
3. Go over the sheet together when all students have finished.

Activity 4 Make Small Talk

Produce a deck of “small talk” topic cards. Keeping them facedown, instruct students (one at a time) to pick up a card and engage in small talk about the topic on their card. The rest of the students (and you) should respond. Then, another student will go.

Diet & Cuisine

Activity 1 Question of the Day

What is your favorite meal to order at a restaurant? Describe it.

Activity 2 Vocabulary Overview

Introduce today's topic, pass out the vocabulary sheet, and go over each term with a visual.

Activity 3 Dish Descriptions

1. Show a picture of a dish that students would likely know and ask a volunteer to describe it in as much detail as possible. Then show a brief description of the dish.
2. If you have two or more students, pass out a sheet with descriptions of a couple different dishes (create different versions of the sheet so each student has different descriptions). One student will read one of their descriptions to the other students and the latter must guess the dish. Then, students will switch.

** If you have only one student, work with that student one-on-one*
3. Instruct students to individually write a description for a dish and then to read this description to the others for them to guess.

Activity 4 Organic vs. Non-Organic / Meat-Eater vs. Vegetarian vs. vegan

If you have two or more students, give each student handouts on specific diets (organic, non-organic, vegetarian, or vegan). So one student may get organic and vegan diet handouts, etc. Instruct students to read the handout and discuss the diet—do they think it's good or bad, and why?

- * If you only have one student, work with that student one-on-one, going over each diet together.*



Character & Zodiac Signs

Activity 1 Question of the Day

What is your best personality trait? Give an example of how you exhibit this trait.

Activity 2 Vocabulary Overview

1. Introduce today's topic and ask students if they know what a "horoscope" means.
2. Pass out a vocabulary sheet and go over each term with a visual (students can write definitions on their sheets as you go over the terms).
3. Ask students what their "sign" is, then show a brief description of your sign and state the adjectives you believe you possess and don't possess and give reasons.

Activity 3 Signs

1. Ask students their birthday and pass out the respective "sign" card with a brief description of attributes of that sign. Instruct students to read the card and ensure that they understand the adjectives and/or phrases.
2. Next, instruct students to write down three traits they agree they possess and two they disagree with and to provide a reason why and/or an example of the chosen traits (like you did in the intro to the lesson). Ask students to share what they wrote.

Activity 4 Zodiac Influence

Ask students to discuss the question: "Does zodiac sign determine your character?" Ask students to consider if all people born under the same sign have similar characteristics or if other things influence personality.

* *If you only have one student, discuss this question with him/her.*

Idioms

Activity 1 Introduction

Give students an idiom on a slip of paper and instruct them to discuss its meaning.

Activity 2 Vocabulary Overview

1. Reveal the meaning of the idiom if students haven't correctly guessed.
2. Pass out a vocabulary sheet and go over each one with a visual (if possible).

Activity 3 Idiom Gap Fill

1. Pass out a gap-fill worksheet with incomplete sentences and a list of idiom choices for students to pick. Go over the first one together, and then instruct students to work individually.
2. Go over the sheet together, asking each student to contribute.

Activity 4 Idiom Skit (or Charades)

1. If you have at least two students, give them an idiom and instruct them to create a short skit in which they use the idiom. Each student must say at least two lines.
 2. Have students perform their skit
- * *If you only have one student, play idiom charades, in which you each draw a card/slip of paper and mime the idiom on the card/slip.*

Giving Advice/Recommendations

Activity 1 Question of the Day

What is the worst (or best) advice you've ever received? Why was it the worst (or best)?

Activity 2 Vocabulary Overview

1. Pass out a vocabulary sheet and go over each term with a visual (students can write definitions/notes as you review each term).
2. Present a dilemma to students and show example advice.
3. Next, present a new dilemma and elicit students to give advice.

Activity 3 My Dilemma

If you have two or more students, give each one a "problem strip." Students must ask for and give advice. After they've finished asking for and giving advice for their current problem, have them pick another problem slip.

* *If you only have one student, perform this activity with him/her.*

Activity 4 Dear Abby

1. Give students a "Dear Abby" column (* can make it up - it doesn't have to be the real column)—just the part asking for advice. Instruct students to read it and discuss the advice they would give.
2. Next, pass out the advice from Abby (* can be made up) and instruct students to discuss if they think it is good or bad advice and to provide reasons to support their answer.

Movie Ratings

Activity 1 Question of the Day

What is the best film you've ever seen? Why was it the best?

Activity 2 Vocabulary Overview

1. Introduce the topic, pass out a vocabulary sheet, and go over each term with a visual (if possible).
2. Show an image of a movie poster and ask students to guess the content rating (G, PG, PG-13, R, NC-17). Then show a brief review from a critic; ask students to read it and determine whether it's a positive, negative, or mixed review. Ask students to highlight terms/phrases that indicate the type of review.

Activity 3 Film Critic Face-Off

1. Tell students that they are film critics. If you have two students, assign one to create a positive review of a film and the other to come with a negative review of the same film (so you need to pick a movie they have both seen). If you have three students, work with the third student or pair him/her up with another student (so it's two against one).
 2. Give students time to write their review and rating. Instruct students to include a synopsis in the beginning of their review.
 3. Then have students "face-off."
- * *If you only have one student, play a film critic and "face-off" with your student.*

Activity 4 Critical Review

Show a film that is appropriate for the age-level of your students. Instruct students to watch the film "critically." Encourage them to take notes, as you will discuss the film after they've finished watching it.



Music

Activity 1 Question of the Day

What is your favorite song? Why?

Activity 2 Introduction

1. Tell students that you are going to play half of a song and that they should listen carefully. Then, pass out the lyrics to the song with some words missing. Play the same clip again and tell students to fill in the blanks.
2. Go over the lyrics together so students can see how many they got right.

Activity 3 Vocabulary Overview

1. Pass out a vocabulary sheet and go over the terms (show a dialogue incorporating the terms).
2. Play a new song and ask students how it makes them feel and what the song is about.

Activity 4 Lyric Interpretation

1. Give students half the lyrics to a song (one that they probably haven't heard). Instruct students to read the lyrics and to come up with the rest.
2. If students aren't shy, have them sing the song (with the lyrics they were given and created). Then play the song so students can compare lyrics.



Culture

Activity 1 Question of the Day

If you could move to another country with a different culture than your own, which country would you travel to? Why?

Activity 2 Introduction & Vocabulary Overview

1. Instruct students to write down as many words as they can think of related to “culture.” Then ask them to share what they wrote.
2. Pass out a vocabulary sheet and go over each term with a visual (students can take notes/write definitions as you review the terms).

Activity 3 Culture – Similarities & Differences

1. Ask students to tell you one difference and one similarity between their culture and American culture. Then ask students to individually write as many differences and similarities as they can think of.
2. Instruct students to share what they wrote.
3. Ask students to define “culture shock” and if they’ve ever experienced it.

Activity 4 Cultural Norms & Taboos

1. Give students a list of statements. If you have two or more students, let them work together—discussing and deciding if each statement is polite, impolite/rude, acceptable, or taboo in their culture, and why.
2. Go over each statement, eliciting students to share what they discussed.
3. Ask if the items they deemed “taboo” are also taboo in the US and if those deemed “acceptable” are also acceptable in the US.



Climate Change

Activity 1 Introduction

1. Play a short clip of “An Inconvenient Truth” or find a YouTube clip on global warming. Elicit students to explain what they watched and to guess today’s topic.
2. Question of the Day: Do you think global warming is a serious problem? Why or why not?

Activity 2 Vocabulary Overview

1. Pass out the vocabulary sheet and go over each term/phrase with visuals (students can take notes/write definitions as you go over the terms).
2. Show pictures of environmental problems and ask students to tell you what is happening in the pictures. Explain the first one so students have an example.

Activity 3 Threats to the Environment

1. Pass out a synopsis of an environmental threat/problem (examples: oil spill, deforestation, nuclear waste, smog).
2. Instruct students to read the synopsis and to discuss the effects of such threats/problems.
3. After students have finished talking about the first synopsis, pass out another one.

* *If you only have one student, work with him/her.*

Endangered Animals

Activity 1 Introduction

1. Ask students what the terms “extinct” and “endangered” mean (give definitions if they are unsure).
2. Show a slideshow of animals (some extinct, some endangered, some that don’t fit into either category). Pause at each picture and ask students to tell you if the animal is extinct or endangered. Reveal the answers at the end.

Activity 2 Vocabulary Overview

1. Pass out a vocabulary sheet and go over each term (students can take notes/definitions as you go over each term).
2. Show photos of elephant and rhino poaching and other threats to animals. Ask students what’s going on in the photos.

Activity 3 Discuss It

1. Give students a brief summary on an endangered animal. Instruct students to discuss why it’s important to stop the threat to the animal and how to help.
2. Give students a new summary and instruct them to discuss the same topics they did for the first animal.

Activity 4 Hunters vs. Activists

1. Assign one student to be a “hunter” and the other to be an animal rights activist. Give them time to come up with an argument for their positions.
2. Have the hunter and activist “face-off”—debating their positions.

* *If you only have one student, take part in the exercise.*

Extreme Weather

Activity 1 Introduction

1. Show a video clip (or picture) of an extreme weather event and ask students to guess today's topic.
2. Question of the Day: What's the worst weather you've ever experienced?

Activity 2 Vocabulary Overview

1. Pass out a vocabulary sheet and go over each term with a visual (students can take notes/write definitions as you go over the terms).
2. Show a variety of new pictures and encourage students to identify the weather phenomena.
3. Show a photo of a real disaster and discuss one consequence from the event. Ask students to tell you about other likely consequences.

Activity 3 Extreme Weather Events

Give each student a photo of a natural or man-made disaster and instruct him/her to discuss with another student (or you, if there are no other students) what's going on in the picture. Ask students if they know where the event took place.



Crime and Punishment

Activity 1 Question of the Day

Is your city/town a safe place to live? Why?

Activity 2 Vocabulary Overview

1. Tell students the topic; pass out a vocabulary sheet, and go over each term/expression with a visual.
2. Write “legal” and “illegal” on a chalkboard or paper and ask students to name activities that fit each category in their country.

Activity 3 Does the Punishment Fit the Crime?

1. Give each student a brief summary of a crime. S/he should discuss it with another student (or you, if there are no other students) and decide the best punishment.
2. Pass out another summary of a different crime and instruct students to discuss it.

Activity 4 Four Corners

1. Label corners of the room “jail,” “death penalty,” “no punishment,” or “community service.” State a crime and instruct students to decide the type of punishment (or if none is warranted) by running to the respective corner.
2. Ask students to explain their answers.



The Supernatural

Activity 1 Question of the Day

What's the scariest thing that has ever happened to you?

Activity 2 Introduction

If you don't think students will get scared, show a short clip from the film "Poltergeist" or another film with a supernatural theme. Ask students what's going on and if they believe it's real. Alternatively, show pictures of ghosts, vampires, aliens, and witches and ask students to identify the entities.

Activity 3 Vocabulary Overview

Pass out a vocabulary sheet and go over each term with a visual.

Activity 4 The Supernatural

1. Tell about (or show) an alleged encounter with a supernatural being (can be made up or an account a witness claims is true). Ask students if they believe the encounter is real or fake and why.
2. Suggest an alternative explanation for the encounter and ask students who think it's fake to offer other alternatives.

Activity 5 Real or Fake?

Give each student a brief summary of a supernatural event/phenomenon. Students should discuss if it's real or fake and give reasons for their answers. If they decide it's "fake," they should come up with an alternative explanation.

* *If you only have one student, take part in the activity.*

Activity 6 Questions

Place several question slips (slips of paper) in a hat and have each student draw one slip at a time. The student should discuss his/her question with other students and then another student can select a question.

Inventions

Activity 1 Question of the Day

What is the best invention in the world? Why?

Activity 2 Inventions

1. Create a PowerPoint Presentation of widely used inventions and their inventors (example: light bulb/Thomas Edison).
2. Encourage students to name the invention and inventor (if they know) and to name other popular inventions not in the PPT.

Activity 3 Best & Worst

1. Give students a worksheet with a list of inventions and two columns in which they must categorize which inventions they think are “good” and which ones they deem “bad.”
2. Ask students to reveal their categories and reasoning.

Activity 4 Invent Something

1. Instruct students to come up with an idea for a new invention. They should think of a problem they wish to solve or a way to make something better.
2. Ask students to share what they came up with.



Stereotypes

Activity 1 Introduction

Write the word “stereotypes” on a board and ask students for the meaning (if students are unsure, give them the definition and then ask for an example).

Activity 2 Vocabulary Overview

1. Pass out a vocabulary sheet and go over each term with a visual (if possible). Students can take notes/write definitions as you go over each term.
2. Write (or show on a PPT) a stereotype and ask students to tell you why it’s a stereotype.

Activity 3 Stereotype?

Give students a list of statements and instruct them to discuss whether or not each one is a stereotype. If it is, they should discuss why.

Activity 4 Stereotypes in Film

1. Show film clips or an entire film that deals with stereotypes (example: The Breakfast Club).
2. Ask students to discuss the stereotypes they observed and the effects stereotypes had on the characters.

Activity 5 Combating Stereotypes

Ask students to discuss how to combat stereotypes.



Image

Activity 1 Introduction

1. Show Colbie Caillat's music video "Try" with the sound off. Ask students to tell you what it's about. Or show a short video clip of the photo-shopping process that magazines and advertisers often use.
2. Question of the Day: Is it good or bad for people to focus on their appearance? Why or why not?

Activity 2 Vocabulary Overview

1. Pass out a vocabulary sheet and go over each term/phrase with a visual (students can write definitions/take notes as you go over the terms).
2. Ask students what they do to "look good" or how they check their appearance before leaving home.

Activity 3 Image Case Studies

1. Give students a brief case study on Photoshop with pictures (before and after Photoshop). Instruct students to discuss the cases and whether or not Photoshop is bad.
2. Next, give students a brief case study on plastic surgery and instruct them to discuss the positives (if any) and negatives of such a procedure.

Advertising

Activity 1 Question of the Day

What is the best commercial you've ever seen? Why?

Activity 2 Introduction

Pass out discussion questions and inform students that they will watch two commercials. Afterward, they should discuss each question.

Activity 3 Vocabulary Overview

1. Pass out a vocabulary sheet and go over each term/phrase with a visual.
2. Show commercials or magazine ads to illustrate advertising strategies.

Activity 4 Slogans

Pass out a slogan worksheet. Students should work together to write the slogans for each company/brand and other slogans that they know.

Activity 5 Target Audiences

Give students a list of target audiences (teenage girls, moms, etc.). Instruct them to make a list/discuss what each audience is interested in and what products/services are usually advertised to them.



News

Activity 1 Question of the Day

What is the last news story you read or heard?

Activity 2 Introduction

Pass out a few newspaper headlines and instruct students to discuss what they think each article is about. Reveal the topics after students have discussed each one.

Activity 3 Vocabulary Overview

1. Pass out a vocabulary sheet and go over each term with a visual.
2. Pass out a factual news story and highlight what makes it factual and not an opinion piece.
3. Pass out an opinion article and ask students to identify the words and phrases that indicate it's an opinion piece.

Activity 4 Fact or Opinion?

1. Give students an article. They should read it and then discuss whether it's factual or not.
2. Give students another article to discuss.

Activity 5 News Topics

Instruct students to make a list of important news topics, as well as a list of topics they don't think should be considered news. Encourage them to provide reasons for their answers.

Values & Ethics

Activity 1 Introduction

Write the words “values” and “ethics” on a board and ask students to discuss the meaning of the terms.

Activity 2 Vocabulary Overview

1. Pass out a vocabulary sheet and go over each term/expression with a visual.
2. Ask students which values on the sheet are important to them and why.

Activity 3 Most Valuable

Give students a list of values and instruct them to discuss which ones they think are most valuable. If students disagree, they should note this.

Activity 4 Ethical Behavior

Give students a list of ethical questions. They should discuss each one in detail, providing reasons for their answers.



Censorship

Activity 1 Introduction

Write “censorship” on a board and ask students to discuss the meaning of the term.

Activity 2 Vocabulary Overview

1. Pass out a vocabulary sheet and go over each term/expression with a visual.
2. Give an example of censorship; elicit students to think of other examples.

Activity 3 Mini-Case Studies

1. Give students a mini-case study on an act of censorship to read (Example: the Chinese government censoring the Internet, the banning of specific books, regulating the time certain TV programs and videos are allowed to air, etc.)
2. Students should discuss whether or not they agree with the act of censorship.
3. Pass out a new case study and ask students to discuss the case.

Activity 4 Censorship Debate

1. Assign one student to be “for” censorship and one “against.” Give students time to come up with an argument for their side.
 2. Instruct students to debate.
- * *If you only have one student, debate against the student.*

Unsolved Mysteries

Activity 1 Introduction

Play a video clip of an unsolved mystery (example: Amelia Earhart) and ask students what they think happened.

Activity 2 Vocabulary Overview

1. Pass out a vocabulary sheet and go over each term/expression with a visual (students can write definitions/notes as you review each term).
2. Ask students to discuss unsolved mysteries they've heard about.

Activity 3 Cold Case Theories

1. Give students a brief summary of a "cold case" (example: the Black Dahlia Murder, Jack the Ripper, etc.).
2. After reading, students should discuss the case and come up with theories.
3. Give students more "cold cases" to discuss.



Romance & Marriage

Activity 1 Question of the Day

Would you like to get married in the future? Why or why not?

Activity 2 Vocabulary Overview

Pass out a vocabulary sheet and go over each term/expression with a visual (students can take notes/write definitions as you review each term).

Activity 3 Vows

1. Ask students what's important in a marriage.
2. Then instruct students to think of important "vows" to make when entering a marriage.

Activity 4 Romance + Marriage Discussion Questions

Give students a list of discussion questions about romance and marriage to discuss.

Activity 5 Weddings Across Cultures

If you can find a documentary on marriages in different cultures, show it to students and pause to discuss the film at various intervals. Or show an American film with a marriage theme (example: My Best Friend's Wedding, 27 Dresses, Bride Wars) and ask students to compare weddings in their culture to American weddings.