

Interactive Group Work with Teacher-Created Materials

Workshop by Janet Payne

ESL students, especially beginners, need lots of practice. The presenter will demonstrate how you and your students can make your own easy, customized, reinforcement materials to generate and organize practice opportunities in the classroom.

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 - B. Introductions
 - C. Schedule for Workshop
- II. Presentation: Creating Materials for Interactive Group Work
- III. Materials for Vocabulary Acquisition
 - A. Flashcards
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 - D. TPR
- IV. Materials for Practice
 - A. Find Your Partner
 - B. Sentence Bags
 - C. Information Gap
 - D. Memory Picture
 - E. Practice Worksheets
- V. Project Work
 - A. Groups of 3-4 to work on words and sentences.
 - B. Find 3-4 people, all from different groups.
 - C. New groups share work and design worksheets.
- VI. Conclusion: Computerize, Customize, and Organize

Lifeskills List

Classroom	Weather	Housing	Everyday Activ.	Clothing	Shopping
Schools	Gov.	Am. History	Holidays	Families	Childhood
Occupations	Office	Around Town	Getting a Job	On the Job	Emotions
Medical-Illness	Medical -Bodies	Medical-Doctors	Emergencies	Food (Cooking)	Descriptions
Transpo-Travel	Transpo-Traffic Signs and Laws	Transpo-Mass Transportation	Transpo-Cars and Repairs	Food - Eating Out	Food -Shopping

Group Structures

WG Whole Group	NP Neighboring Pairs	TP Tutoring Pairs
RP Random Pairs	SP Selective Pairs	CP Cycling Pairs
DP Double Pairs	3-4 Groups of 3 or 4	T Teams (groups or 1/2 class)
TG Table Groups	LG Level Groups	FG First-Language Groups
	(Ind. Individual Work)	

Examples of Group Activities

WG Presentations	NP TPR	TP Dictation
RP Charts and Graphs	SP Find Your Partner	CP Talking Lines
DP Pair-Pair-Share	3-4 Round-Robin	T Skits and Reader’s Theater
TG Sentence Bags	LG Skill-Building	FG Personal Sharing
SP Information Gap	Ind. Prep. and Processing	CP Expert Groups

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One of the challenges of a beginning ESL class is the amount of vocabulary in each subject area or lifeskill needed to engage the students in collaborative activities. Each text or workbook you use adds extra vocabulary, often with unfamiliar structures as well. However, you will increase practice and success if you use only one main text and develop introductory and reinforcement materials to complement that text. These materials can be developed as templates and saved for future use. Following is a list of materials and activities that can be used with any lesson. The examples follow a "classroom words" theme. They can be used the first few weeks of a beginning ESL/EFL class.

Material Preparation

Type a list of words. Type a list of sentences. Use a medium font and double spacing for both.

Make Flashcards

Enlarge the words to flashcard size. Try Helvetica 72 Bold. Using copies of the flashcard templates, cut and paste the words (literally) or write them out to make new subject-specific flashcard templates. Make matching flashcard templates with sentences or pictures. Copy onto card stock for a class set and keep the templates safe.

Make Student Flashcards

Use a student flashcard template for each student on regular paper. You can make the template on a computer with a 2x6 table with minimal margins and thick borders. Each card should be the size of one of the boxes below. You can also copy the boxes below for a twelve-card template. The list of words can be added by hand, by computer, or by the students themselves. (Check for accuracy and readability if the students write their own.) Keep your originals safe.

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Make Sentence Strips

Cut the sentences into strips and put each set into a paper bag. Prepare one bag per group. Print and cut new strips for each new lesson. Keep the templates safe. Make one bag for the class or enough bags for small groups.

Make Reinforcement Worksheets

You can make a worksheet to accompany almost any collaborative activity or to provide extra individual practice. See *Community Spirit* for ideas. Adapt the worksheets to the new subject areas by cutting and pasting the new words (on the computer) or retyping. Look for new pictures if applicable. See *Practical Vocabulary Builder* and *Look Again Pictures* for ideas.

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Make Labels and Room Posters

Make labels for classroom (and other) words. Post the current list of words and/or sentences on a classroom poster using a large font.

Store All Material in Notebooks

Try one-inch three-ring notebooks, one per subject. You will fill them little by little. Use plastic sheets for templates and originals. Include copies of word lists, worksheets, overheads (punch holes in them), any applicable reproducible sheets, and lists of activities.

Make a Flashcard Pocket Chart

Try 4 pockets by 6 pockets. You can make it out of cardboard and tag board, but Carson-Dellosa has a good vinyl one. Use this for the presentation of materials, matching & memory games, etc. Try Holcolm's, (800) 362-9907, for the Classroom Management Pocket Chart.

Classroom Words We will use this theme for demonstration purposes. It can be started with beginners in the first class. Abbreviations: WG Whole Group, SG Small Group, P Pairs, Ind. Individual, M Mixed

Vocabulary for "Classroom Words" Unit

board, book, chair, clock, closet, coat, door, floor, lights, name, paper, pen, pencil, table, wall, window, light switch, pencil sharpener, room, classroom, close, open, pick up, put, read, sharpen, sit, stand, say, turn off, turn on, walk, write, down, on, to, up, your, in, into, the, "to be" (Added later) he, she, it, they, his, her, front, back, student, teacher, look at, look for, next to, now, "Where is/are..." "I'm sorry!" "I forgot!" "I'm ready!" "Oh!" "OK."

Introductory Activities for Classroom Words¹

WG	1.	Introduce the nouns through realia and flashcards, or divide nouns into two sets and repeat #1–9 with the second set.
WG	2.	Introduce the sentences through realia, flashcards, and demonstration or divide and repeat as above.
WG	3.	Ask the students to follow the commands through demonstration and TPR. Involve a few individuals at first, then all.
WG	4.	Teach present progressive vs. command form (with pronouns in contracted form).
WG	5.	Reinforce with charades: "What am I doing?" "You're _____." (Use different "teachers".)
SG	6.	Choose a sentence strip from a bag, read it silently, then do what the strip "commands" you to do. As you do what it says, ask the class, "What am I doing?" The class replies, "You are _____." After demonstrating this with the whole class, ask individuals to model as well. Later, add the question and answer sequence, "Am I ___?" "Yes, you are," or "No, you're ___."
SG	7.	Use the sentence-strip bags at tables or in groups. Students take turns around the table, one at a time. They pick a sentence from the bag, read it to themselves, do what it commands, then ask their group, "What am I doing?" The group replies, "You are _____." The next student picks another from the bag and repeats the process.
SG	8.	When they are finished, the students can copy the sentence from the strips into their notebooks. They can write one down and pass it to their neighbor until all are finished.
Ind.	9.	Have students make flashcards for home practice. Use the template. Draw or glue on pictures if appropriate.

Reinforcement Ideas and Accompanying Materials

SG 1. **I'm Sorry Game** This is a variety of the above charades game. This time add "bad" sentences to the bag (taken from both lists of words). If students pick an impossible sentence from the bag, they shrug their shoulders and say, "I'm sorry!" Then they pick another sentence. Examples of impossible sentences are: Close the wall.

¹ WC= whole class, SG= small group (usually 3-4), M=mixed, can be small group or whole class, P=pairs, Ind.=individual seat work.

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Open the board. Put the closet on the table. Sharpen the book. Then there are some sentences they may or may not consider crazy or may not want to perform like: Sit on the floor. Stand on the chair. Sit on the table.

- Ind. **2. Writing Worksheets** These are for beginning writers. Create a worksheet by typing the individual words or sentences in a medium font with long blanks so the students can practice writing the words. I always have these on hand.
- M **3. Dictation** (Use this after the students have had a lot of practice with the sentences.) Write the following sentences on the board minus the underlined words. Ask students to copy them, leaving enough space at the blanks (what below are the underlined words). Then read the full sentences to them. They will have to fill in the missing words. Whether you use this activity will depend on whether they have been writing the words a lot and have practiced their spelling.
- Open your book to page 5. Write your name in the notebook with a pencil. Please walk to the door and turn off the lights. Stand on the floor. Sit in the chair. Walk to the window. Please open it.
- It may be more appropriate to take out the function words (to, the, up, on) instead of the content words (example follows). They can make flashcards of the function words first to practice. This can be followed by a **cloze worksheet** or **flashcard practice** (see #4). With this activity, you can use unfamiliar words in the dictation, just write them out for the students (see below*).
- Open your book to page 5. Write your name in the notebook with a pencil. Please walk to the door and turn off the lights. Stand on the floor. Sit in the chair. Walk to the window. Please open it. *Read the book.
- M **4. Flashcard Activities** Flashcards can be used for paired identification practice, the way flashcards are normally used, or for one of the following activities. Call out a word and have the students lay down that card. Do the above in pairs. Instead of word-level practice, questions can be asked and the answers set down (as in Classroom Drawing, #6 below), or cloze sentences can be read and the missing word set down (as in Dictation, #3). Again, this can be done in pairs. Pairs of students can use one set of flashcards with all the words. One student selects and places the appropriate cards to make a sentence. The second student writes that sentence down, then selects a new one for the other partner (an unscrambled version of Scrambled Sentences, #7). Here's another activity often called "**Find Your Partner**". Make a new set of flashcards with present-progressive sentences minus the noun. (Write your name on the ____.) Pass these out to half the students in random order. Pass out the matching noun flashcards to the other half of your class. Ask them to stand and "find your partner". They have to then find a student whose card makes a possible sentence combination with theirs. There are more than one way to put most of the sentences together, but it is possible that the last two students will not be able to match. Ask all the students to stand around the edge of the room with their partners as they finish. Then they can take turns reading their sentences to the class. Follow up with a matching page for oral practice.²
- SG **5. Chain of Command** Team students into groups of four. Each student needs paper and pencil. Each student writes a command (a possible one with classroom words—such as "Walk to the window."). Then they pass the paper to the right and receive one from the left. Ask the students to read the command on the paper to themselves, add another one, and pass it to the right. After the paper has gone around once or twice, the original "owners" take turns reading their paper and doing all the commands listed—in order.
- WG **6. Classroom Drawing** Students fold a piece of paper into eight squares and number their eight boxes. The teacher gives them instructions on what object to draw in each box, and the students draw it. Then the students work in pairs, asking and answering the questions. Put the questions on the board or give the students a copy. See Flashcard Activities, #4 for more ideas.

What are you sitting in? Draw it.	What are you picking up? Draw it.
What are you reading? Draw it.	What are you sharpening? Draw it.

² Oral practice works well with "talking lines." These are two long rows of students facing each other and performing a communicative task. At a given signal, they move to the right or turn the corner if they are at the end. They are now facing a new partner and continue. It is easier to do this sitting than standing, for they need to pass one person and stop in front of the next. This is best understood if demonstrated with a group of about eight people.

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What are you opening? Draw it.	What are you putting on the desk? Draw it.
What are you turning off? Draw it.	What are you writing with? Draw it.

- M** **7. Scrambled Sentences** This helps the students observe word order, but they need to be familiar with the sentences first. Choose flashcards that combine to form a sentence. Give the cards out to students and have them organize themselves into the appropriate word order. This can also be done with pairs using student flashcards. One partner can collect the appropriate words and scramble them, the other can unscramble them. Then they can both write the sentence. You can also give the students a worksheet of scrambled sentences and lines to write the correct version. See Flashcard Activities, #4 for more ideas.
- Ind.** **8. Worksheets with Pictures** Use pictures of objects or actions, such as is in Practical Vocabulary Builder, to make worksheets that match pictures to a list of words, sentences, cloze sentences (see #2), conversations, etc. You can also cut and paste (or have the students do it) pictures to make **Bingo** boards. Make sure they are in random order. (For regular Bingo, I find it easiest to have the students fold a piece of paper into squares to make their own board. As they do that, I can easily make a few for those with special needs. If the students use penny or paper markers instead of writing on the boards, they can trade with another student and play the game again. Vary the game by reading sentences or commands instead of just words.)
- M** **9. Descriptive Pictures** Find a very descriptive picture or set of pictures. Action is not necessary. Make copies for the students with some extra copies for a memory game. Make an overhead and/or enlarge the picture (maybe color-copy it). For **the memory game**, group the students into threes or fours. Give each group one picture, folded. Ask them not to look at it yet. Say "go" and let them look and remember all the items they see (no writing, but they can talk). Say "stop" and collect all the pictures. With one recorder (secretary) in each group, the students recall and write all the objects they saw. This can be timed and rewarded as a game. Ask the group with the most words to list them on the board (or dictate them to you). Other groups can add to the list until all the items have been listed. An overhead of the picture will provide help in identifying objects together. As a **follow up**, once the words are listed on the board, the nouns can be sorted into singular/plural columns. Prepositions and some example sentences can be added to the board. Then, using the overhead, the class can practice "Where's the ___?" and "Where are the _____?" Give the students a copy of the picture and ask them to write sentences about it. While the more advanced write their own, you can help beginning writers by having them dictate three sentences to you and writing them for the student to copy. Then, give them the task of copying sentences from other beginners. The most advanced in the class can create situations or dialogues as well. Finally, students can take their copy of the picture and practice "Where's the _?" "Where are the ___?", "What are they doing?", or a variety of other speaking tasks in talking lines. **Another activity with a descriptive picture** is for groups of three or four. Give the students a picture and have them take turns around the group listing words, making up sentences, and asking and answering questions from the person on the right. If the levels are diverse, the students can choose whether to utter a word, a sentence, or a question.
- P,Ind.** **10. Crossword Puzzle and Information-Gap** The cloze sentences above can be used to make a crossword puzzle. For variety, give the students a paper with half the crossword filled in and clues for the other half. They then finish the puzzle by making clues and filling in words as needed. For real beginners, each pair can be given half the clues and the words for the other clues. Then the pair can practice completing the sentences orally before filling in the puzzle. Then they can sit down together and fill in the information. This is especially good if students are not familiar with crossword puzzles. If they are familiar with crosswords, they can make their own with just a list of words and graph paper. Try a crossword with the following words: (across) clock, chair, light, floor, board, pen, paper (and down) pencil sharpener, door, table, (and) book.

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M 11. **Who-Is-Doing-What-Where Chart** Make a chart as follows on the board:

WHO	IS DOING	WHAT	WHERE
Helen	is sitting		in the chair.
Sun	is turning on	the light	in the classroom

Ask the students to perform a classroom task from the lesson. As a class (or in a small group) fill in the chart to form a new sentence. The students continue performing and writing out other activities to fill the chart.

You can prepare a worksheet with this grid for home study.

WG 12. **Jazz Chants** Carolyn Graham developed these chants to show the rhythm of language. Modify them to provide extra practice, or make your one. For example, there is one called "Warning" (Graham, 1978). "Watch out! Watch out! ... There's a hole in the floor! What? A hole. Where? In the floor. A hole in the floor...?" For classroom words, this can be modified to a crack in the window, a bee on the wall, etc.

WG 13. **Guessing Game** Play a guessing game based on the location of common classroom objects. Add colors if the students know them. Give hints such as, "It's on the table, on the notebook."

Resources

Bassano, Sharron & Christison, Mary Ann, (1994) *Community spirit: A practical guide to collaborative language learning*. Burlingame, CA: Alta Book Center. Easy-to-understand theory and practice. This is indispensable for new teachers.

Graham, Carolyn, (1978) *Jazz chants*. New York: Oxford University Press. This is the first of many jazz chant books.

Nunan, David, (1998) *Second language teaching and learning*. New York: Heinle and Heinle. He has written several books, but this is the best for the latest research and practice.

Liebowitz, Dorothy, (1988) *Practical vocabulary builder*. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook. One of many books with vocabulary pictures you can use for flashcards and reinforcement activities.

Payne, Janet, (1992) *Sound sentences*. Freeport, NY: Educational Activities, Inc. These are my software projects. The manuals contain samples of many of the reinforcement materials and activities I mention in this handout.

Payne, Janet, (2002) *Sound sentences II*. Educational Activities, Inc. a division of Siboney Learning, Ltd.