A Brand New Class! Activities for the first lessons with YL
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A Brand New Class!
Activities for the first lessons
with Young Learners
Part 2: Primary

Tried, tested and collected here

by

Funky Socks and Dragons

September 2020

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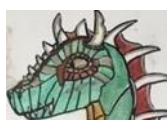
Introduction

Introduction

September is upon us. It is a joyful month, what with all the new books, freshly sharpened pencils, markers that have not lost 50% of the caps yet, storybooks and flashcards that are still as God intended (in order!) and all the new adventures because 'The kids are back!!!!'. At the same time, my favourite tune of the month is ...Green Day and when they sing 'Wake me up when September ends...' Every single year. And this year more than ever.

Until we have all survived yet another autumn rollercoaster, spiced-up by the pandemic-related uncertainty, here is a tiny little something: activities for the first lesson of the course, today something for teenagers: 5 'sandwich fillers' and 5 activities in their own right.

All of them are and have been my favourite start-of-the-course activities but they can be adapted to different topics and used throughout the year.

Most of them require only the basic resources and little preparation.

Some, although admittedly not all, will also work in our online classrooms.

None of them are how-did-you-spend-your-summer-themed because I never do it in my first lessons (and definitely won't do this year since a) we did spend the summer together studying English and b) other than that we were stuck at home or at the dacha, growing cucumbers and carrots and feeding birds...) but they can be made so, if needs be.

I hope you have fun using them. Looking forward to your feedback, too!

Happy New Academic Year!

Anka aka Funky Socks and Dragons

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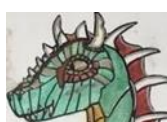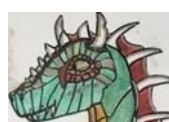
Primary

Sandwich fillers

1. Pairs

How

- T draws a 4 x 4 boxes on the board, marks each box with letters 1 – 16
- T prepares a similar grid and fills it up with numbers, see the samples below. The actual content can be adapted to the level of the group and since it is the first lesson – the vocabulary that they should have covered in the level below.
- T divides the group into teams, two or three and demonstrates that 'cat' and 'cat' is a match (thumbs up) and 'cat' and 'dog' is not a match (thumbs down).
- T asks team A to call out two numbers and after they do, T writes the words on the board, in the appropriate boxes, T asks the students to read the words out loud and asks them if it is a match or not (using gestures). If team A find a pair, T awards them a point. If not, T points to the words, signals 'remember' (my favourite gesture for that is touch the temple/ the head with the index finger) and erases the words from the board.
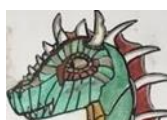- The game continues until students match all the pairs.

Why

- It is a simple game, easy to set up and easy to adapt.
- It works very well even in the first lessons with level one (T can use the students' names).

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- It is rather T-centred and not very productive. However, in my experience, this is something that might be necessary in the first lessons with primary and it helps the whole group to focus for a prolonged period of time. What is more, T can easily manage the class as the game itself will be the motivating factor to take turns, to sit quietly etc. Whenever the rules are not followed, T can pause the game and remind the students how they should behave. In the long run, I use this activity to help the students get used to the format and the rules and when they are ready, we switch to playing the same game in pairs or in teams, with flashcards or mini-flashcards. Overall, time well-spent and well-invested.
- To make it more productive, students can be asked to make sentences using the words in the grid, even if only a simple 'I like / I don't like'
- <u>Online classroom</u>: yes, it can be played with a grid on the zoom whiteboard, using a grid created on the Miro board or using a grid created on the power point (not in the presentation mode to easily cover and uncover the words)

1.	5.	9.	13.
2.	6.	10.	14.
3.	7.	11.	15.
4.	8.	12.	16.

1. cat	5. snake	9. dog	13. snake
2. hamster	6. cat	10. pony	14. lizard
3. mouse	7. bird	11. bird	15. mouse
4. pony	8. lizard	12. hamster	16. dog

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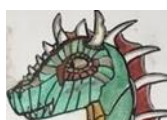@funkysocksanddragons

2. (Kind of) scrabble

How

- T divides the group into teams and gives out the colourful markers, one colour per team.
- T writes the first word, ideally a longer one, for example English, fantastic, football
- T demonstrates the rules: teams add one word to the grid, creating a crossword. They add any words they want, one at a time, the only need to attach it to one of the letters in the grid, down or across.
- After each round, T counts the letters in the word each team added and awards points, one point per letter. This will motivate the students to look for longer words.
- The game can be stopped at any time.
- T can award double points for words with rare letters such as x, z, y, q, etc.

Why

- It is a revision game; it is easy adaptable because it is student-generated.
- It can have a special focus for example: vocabulary words, verbs, colours, depending on the students' level
- <u>Online classroom</u>: I haven't tried it yet online. Probably can be played on the zoom whiteboard but writing using a mouse might be too tricky and not worth the effort, using the typewriter not really. Perhaps the team captains could spell the words for the teacher.
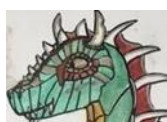
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3. Whispers

How

- T prepares a set of flashcards to revise, ideally a few vocabulary sets, mixed and goes over all of them, quickly, focusing only on the more challenging ones
- Students sit in a circle, the cards are on the floor, facing up
- T starts the chain by whispering one of the words to the student on her/his right, this student whispers it to the student on their right. The student at the end of the chain picks up the correct card from the pile on the floor. Afterwards, students change seats / the teacher moves around the circle to start the chain from a different student
- **Variations**: students write the word on the board or draw the picture
- With bigger groups, after the first two initial rounds, the circle can be cut in half creating two teams. T can sit further away from the circle, call two students to come up, give them the word and start the round when these students go back to their seats. In this case it is better to let the students write the words on the board and award points – 1 point for the correct word, 1 point for the correct spelling.

Why

- Another game that is easy to adapt and can be made more or less challenging.
- Online classroom: not in this format

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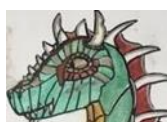www.funkysocksanddragons.com
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4. Get up if

How

- If possible, T and students sit on the chairs, in a circle, away from the desks.
- T says 'I like chocolate' and stands up, later on asks the students 'Do you like chocolate?' and motions them to get up if they confirm. The same might need to be repeated, slowly with other 'I like' sentences until the students understand that an affirmative answer means that they have to repeat T's movement/gesture, a negative means that they just continue sitting.
- The game continues, T makes different sentences, then the students take over
- I like, I don't like, I can, I've got, I am, etc.
- After a few rounds new gestures/movements are introduce: clapping hand, jumping up, stomping feet, waving arms, meowing like a cat, dancing, freezing

Why

- A game like that is another opportunity to get to know each other, revise and produce the language freely, even if the students are young and of a low level.
- It involves movement so it will be a nice pace-changer and a stirrer that will help the kids get rid of the energy they have accumulated during the earlier stages of the lesson.
- It is an activity which engages all the students and it gets them used to following T's instructions or the leader's instructions (one of the students). The verb 'freeze' is especially useful later on in the course as it might come in handy as a funny and light-hearted way of stopping any unwanted behaviour (before the T deals with the real reasons for this behaviour and before long-term solutions can be found)
- Online classroom: some elements of it, although, admittedly, it will be more effective in the real classroom
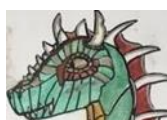
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5. Mime it!

How

- This game was inspired by the game 'charades' aka 'crocodile' (at least here, in Russia)
- T prepares two sets of cards: set A: adjectives (big, small, long, short, old, new, angry, happy, sad, funny, clever, scared, depending on the vocabulary that the students should have covered in the previous year), set B: nouns
- T models
- Student A comes to the centre, takes a seat, picks out two cards, an adjective and a noun.
- The class ask chorally: What's this?
- Student A: mimes the noun
- The class ask chorally: Tell us about it
- Student A: mimes the adjective
- Variation: T shows the cards above Student A head, student A asks 'What's this?' and the whole class mimes it for the student to guess, Student A asks 'Tell me about it' and the class mime the adjective.

Why

- It is an activity that helps to revise the vocabulary and it is fun as the combinations of words more likely than not will be ridiculous
- The cards can go back to the boxes after they have been used
- If is fun and funny because you are more than likely to end up with silly combinations such as 'happy bike' and 'scared banana'
- With the new groups that have not studied before, it might be better to have Student A guess, with the whole class miming because it is less scary to be looking at a whole group doing silly things rather than have to perform in front of everybody. Anyway, until the children feel comfortable in the group, it might be better to rely on volunteers, with the right to opt out of the game, instead of just inviting everyone to have a go.

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- <u>Online classroom</u>: I have not tried it yet online but the teacher could potentially send the phrases to certain students via chat which they would later mime for the group to guess.
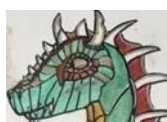
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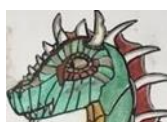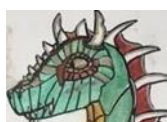
Activities

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1.   Storytelling 'Dear Zoo'

How

- T revises or introduces the names of the animals using flashcards
- It is good to include a good variety, a few pets, a few farm animals, jungle animals, ocean animals etc.
- Practice activity 1: miming: students come to the front, in turns, choose one of the cards and mime the animals to the rest of the group
- Practice activity 2: categories: T gives out sets of flashcards to teams or pairs and students put them into categories: I like / I don't like, big / small, jungle / farm, can fly / run / swim etc.
- Practice activity 3: riddles: depending on the level of the students, these can be very simple (it is green, it is big) or more complex (it is green, it is big, it likes meat, it can swim, it's got 4 legs, etc). It is best to write these key phrases on the board, to support production. The older students can play in pairs, the younger ones come out to the front and make the riddles for the whole class.
- Practice activity 4: animal sounds quiz, with or without the video:
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qd6wZHUDCUg
- T shows the book and a letter she wrote to the zoo (Dear Zoo, Please send me a pet. Thank you). T starts reading the story.
- Teacher introduces the line 'I wrote to the zoo to send me a pet', the kids recited it chorally when the teacher signals is (by pointing at the letter displayed on the board, for example).
- T reads the story and the students help out reciting the one line. T accompanies the storytelling by using gestures, especially the adjectives (fierce, jumpy etc).

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- Some follow-up activities can be found here:

  https://www.panmacmillan.com/blogs/books-for-children/dear-zoo-35th-anniversary

- https://www.teachingideas.co.uk/library/books/dear-zoo

- If T has no access to the real storybook, a video can be used instead:

  https://www.worldbookday.com/videos/dear-zoo/

- Follow up activities can include: a wordsearch

  (https://www.abcya.com/games/make_a_word_search), My favourite animal (a

  handout using the structures used in the lesson, the kids describe their favourite

  animal and draw it or finish for homework),

- Storytelling extension: each child chooses one animal from among the

  flashcards, T starts, Class: I wrote to the zoo to send me a pet. Student A: And

  they sent me a pig. But it was always hungry so I sent him away

- **Why**

- In case of this activity 'why' is a lot more important than 'how'. Using stories in

  lesson 1 is a good idea because they are relatable, the students have some

  previous knowledge of the topic (such as animals) and they will be able to

  participate either in the telling of the story or the animal riddles or both. The

  teacher will be able to use it to assess all the skills before starting the

  coursebook and it will be a good starting point to the course. Writing can be set

  as homework.

- This particular story, apart from the topic, has got the repetitive language so even

  the beginner students can take part in telling the story by saying 'I wrote to the
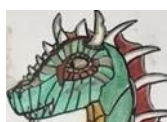
  zoo to send me a pet'

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2.   A song, please

How

- T asks the students to stand up and stand in a circle
- T introduces the gestures for the song. A good choice for the first lesson can be 'Hello Song by Super Simple Songs or If you're happy, happy, happy by Super Simple songs, too
- T practices the gestures and repeats them a few times and after that starts singing. If these are level 1 students, there might be no point in teaching the students the lyrics explicitly during the first lesson. With level 2 or level 3, the lyrics can be written on the board and read a few times, accompanied by gestures.
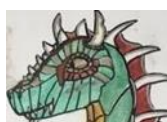- T plays the song (mp3) and sings, encouraging the students to participate

Why

- A song is a great activity to involve the whole class, even the level 1 students who have very little or no knowledge of English. They can participate if T includes gestures to go with the song. It is also something that all the students will do together, especially after the individual and lock-step activities such as taking register, homework checking etc.
- It is also the song that will become a part of the routine and it will be a good start of every lesson
- *If you're happy* can be sung it its basic version but as the course progresses, it can be extended by adding new emotions and action verbs and it can be personalised as students will be singing which verses to sing
- Online classroom: of course!

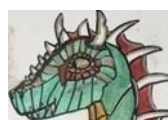A Brand New Class! Activities for the first lessons with YL
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3.   My book

How

- T watches one of the videos and decides which book to make

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiVqbQm6d20

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHa6kR2SZok

- T prepares own book before the lesson to model, A3 might be a better choice as it is bigger and easier to handle than a book made out of A4.

- T shows her book and gives out the books and pencils. T models, students number the pages in their books

- Step 1: T says: look at page 1, write your name, write the title of the book 'I like'

- Step 2: T says, open her book on page 2, T says 'Look, I like…' and students call out the colour, with the older kids, T can encourage them to ask the question 'Do you like…' and guess the colour by asking questions. Students draw something they like. T monitors and checks, asking the kids 'What colour do you like?' 'I like…'. T waits for everyone to finish.

- Step 3: same procedure for animals

- Step 4: same procedure for food

- Step 5: same procedure for drinks

- Step 6: same produced for numbers

- Step 7: same procedure for toys

- Step 8: last page: it can be another word, The end, or a smiley face, depending on the age and level.

- Step 9: pair work: with level 2: students work in pairs and tell each other about themselves, with level 3 or 4: students work in pairs and try to guess what their partner likes by asking questions 'Do you like?'

- With the new groups, it is better and safer to prepare the books before the lesson to avoid any safety issues with scissors and to focus on the productive aspect of the activity

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4.   Class portrait

How

- T prepares own model in advance.
- T prepares templates for all the students (see below for an example). I normally use the simple one, for all of the students as it is easy to draw any clothes over them and such templates are easier to manage and recycle with different groups (easier than counting how many copies for dolls in dresses etc). It might be a good idea to have some spare copies because sometimes the students like the activity so much that they might want to take it home. They can prepare one for the classroom and take another copy to work on at home.
- NB The template below was prepared for the beginners / false beginners on the assumption that they cannot write much and that I would rather focus on drawing. With older groups, i.e. the second or third year of primary, this can be turned into a writing activity by adding lines and sentence starters, depending on the level.
- T shows the students the doll and passes it around. Students look at it and talk about the teacher. It might be a good idea to write the key structures on the board i.e.: You are…You like…you can….
- T gives out the templates and dictates what the students should draw on and around their dolls:
- Name (I am….)
- Age (I am…years old)
- I like…
- I don't like…
- I have got…
- My favourite…
- T chooses one of the students to demonstrate with them, they exchange dolls and make sentences about each other
- The same procedure is repeated with students, working in pairs or teams, depending on the size of the group. T can regroup the students if there is time.

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- T puts up all the dolls on the wall, either on the noticeboard (it would be cool to have a caption there 'Class portrait) or on the wall. I had a spare A3 frame so we attached all our portraits there with blutack and it did look like a proper photograph))

Why

- It works on a few levels. For the teacher it is an opportunity to assess the students' speaking and writing and to get to know the students, if they are a new group (or if some new students join the group). It also works very well for big groups because the 'portrait' is displayed on the wall and it is easier to remember everyone's name, especially with multiple Alisas or Dashas in the same group.
- The students are at the same time represented as individuals and as a group so it makes it easier for everyone to bond and to work as a team. New students, if there are any joining later in the course, can be easily added to the portrait.
- It can be easily adapted to the level of the kids or to their age (for example they can only colour the doll using their favourite colours and write their name) as well as skills (drawing and speaking only or drawing, speaking and writing)
- Online classroom: using the Miro board, slightly adapted: students choose the symbol / character to represent them, the whole group guess what this student likes. However, if the group is big, it will take too much lesson.
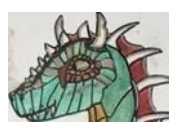
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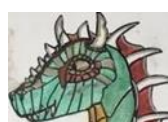www.funkysocksanddragons.com
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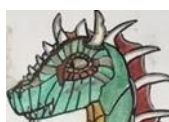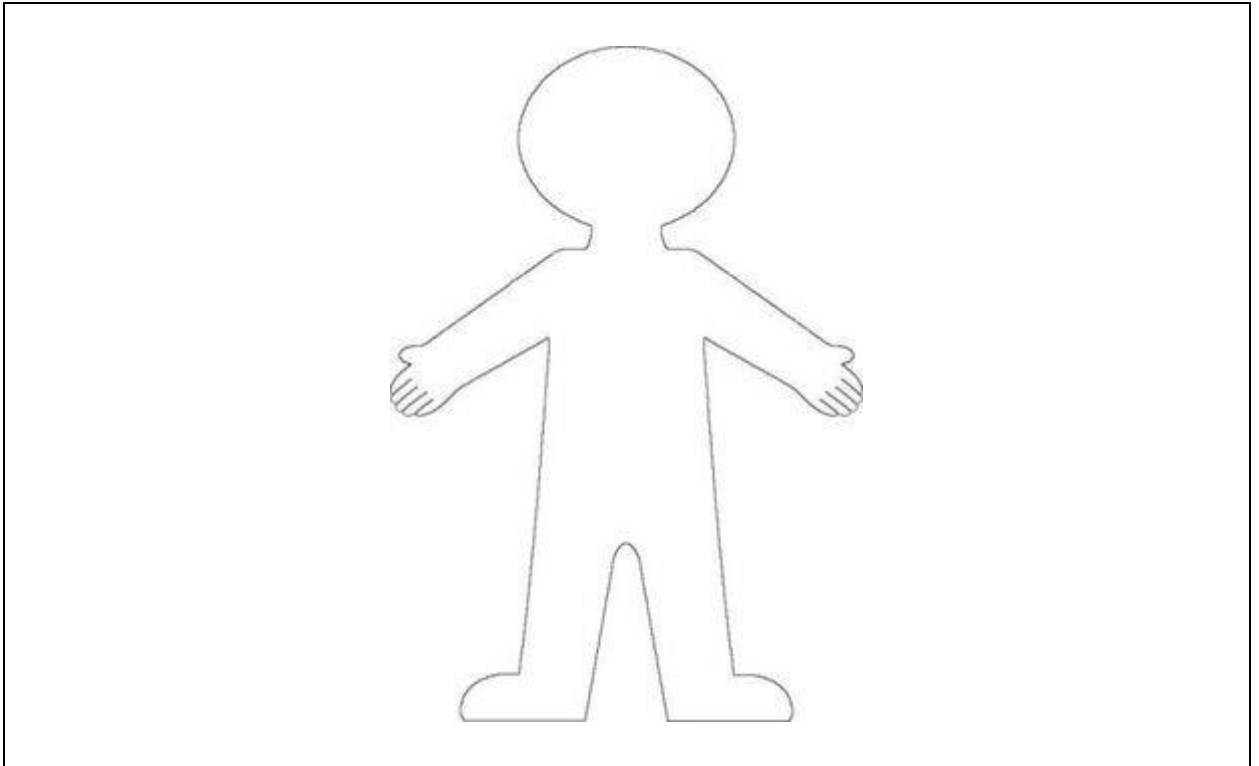
5.   Categories

How

- This game exists under a few different names: categories, stop, stop the bus.
- T prepares the grids and divides the group into teams.
- Depending on the students' level and age, T chooses the categories for the game to cover the material that students have covered or should have covered. With lower levels it might be better to choose broader categories for example: a place (a city, a country, a place in the city), food and drinks, animals, things in the house, things in the classroom or sentences to finish to revise structures, too for example: I can, I've got, I am, I like
- T prepares cards with the letters of the alphabet, choosing the more generative letters, without z, o, n, x, y, etc.
- T models on one of the letters, eliciting the words from the whole class
- One of the students picks out a letter card from the box.
- Students write one word in each category beginning with the letter.
- Normally each round lasts as long as one of the teams completes the grid but because the students are younger and less advanced, T can set the time limit for each round, for instance 3 minutes. T can also choose to keep the scoring system easier, for instance 0 points – no word, 10 points for an original word (no other team used the same word) and 5 points if two or more teams used the same word. It is also possible to make it more complex by adding 5 bonus points for the team to complete the grid, 5 points to complete the grid first or 15 minutes for the unique word (team A writes the word while team B and C have nothing in that category) but it might be too much especially in the first lesson.

Why

- It is easy to adapt.
- It is a competitive game but it also helps the teams to bond.

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- The game can be a warmer or the final game, it can be limited to a few rounds but it can also be played over a few lessons. T only needs to keep the students' notes and results.
- <u>Online classroom</u>: sadly, moving in and out of the breakout rooms would take too much of the lesson time and it would be counter-productive, on the whole.