

A Brand New Class! Activities for the first lessons with Young Learners
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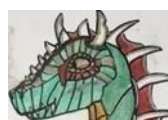
A Brand New Class Activities for the first lessons with Young Learners Part 1: Teenagers

Tried, tested and collected here

by

Funky Socks and Dragons

September 2020



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.

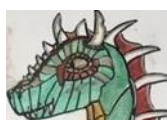
Some, although admittedly not all, will also work in our online classrooms.

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. Looking forward to your feedback, too!

Happy New Academic Year!

Anka aka Funky Socks and Dragons



Teenagers

Sandwich fillers

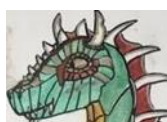
1. What's Your Answer?

How?

- T writes on the board 'What's your answer?', drills it with the students if necessary.
- T asks one of the students to go out of the room for a minute and tells this student that they will ask the main question (What's your answer?) and try to guess the question that everyone will be answering.
- T asks the students to read the question in silence and think of the answer which should be only one or two-words long.
- T writes the key question, gives the students the time to read it and then wipes it out
- The student comes back to the classroom, asks everyone the question 'What's your answer?' and tries to guess what the original question was.
- NB It is better to avoid yes/no answers and focus on Wh- questions. Some good examples may include: What's your favourite, If you could be a..., what would you be, What did you have for lunch, Where do you live, What do you think about..., What are you scared of etc.

Why?

- It is a nice time-filler, give the teacher a chance to be flexible and to manage the time well as it can be played once or ten times
- It can be easily adapted to the students' level



- It is a low-risk game, the students do not really need to share any personal details and they play as a group. The students to be challenged can be volunteers
- Online classrooms: One of the students is sent to the breakout rooms while the teacher shows the question to answer.

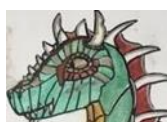
2. Associations

How?

- Stage 1: T explains the rules of the game: students take turns and make a chain of associations with the words they hear. They can only give word answers or short phrases.
- T starts with one word, students build the chain of words, until one of the students 'makes a mistake' and uses a word that has already been used. This is when the game stops.
- Stage 2: The whole group tries to recreate the chain going backwards. They make sentences such as 'I said 'cat' because Masha said 'milk'.' Masha: 'I said 'milk' because Sasha said 'cow'', until they get back to the original word.
- Stage 3: students work in teams and try to make a list of all the words and use them to write a short story using as many of these words as possible.

Why?

- It is a nice time-filler, give the teacher a chance to be flexible and to manage the time well as it can be played until one of the words is used for the second time or during a certain time slot, according to how much time is available
- It can be played by students of different levels
- It is a low-risk game, the students do not really need to share any personal details and they play as a group in the feedback stage where the whole group can help remember the sequence of the words.



- It is an effective settler which involves the whole group and there are quite a few options for extending the activity further i.e. by story writing
- Online classrooms: it works very well.

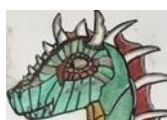
3. Blind Drawing

How?

- All the students get a piece of paper and a pen or a marker.
- T says 'Pen to paper. Close your eyes. Now, draw an apple. Open your eyes. Show your picture to your friends'
- The first few rounds should be easy, using only single words, to give the students an opportunity to relax and become familiar with the activity.
- The later rounds turn into more complex phrases such as: *Draw something you like to eat. Draw something you are scared of. Draw something you like to do in the summer* etc. but in the second stage of the activity, the teacher asks the students 'Tell your friends about this picture' which turns into a fun speaking activity.

Why?

- It is just a lot of fun. There isn't much in terms of the linguistic challenge but students are curious whether they can actually manage to draw with their eyes closed.
- It can be turned into a mini-speaking activity and students can be involved even further if they take turns and dictate what to draw.
- At the end of the game, teams can exchange their drawings and they can be asked to guess what the pictures show. Here they can practise 'it looks like...' or 'It might be...'
- It is a low-risk game and its successful completion will not depend on the linguistic or artistic skills. Everyone's pictures will be less than professional.
- Online classroom: students show their drawings to the camera



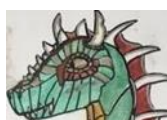
4. Silly Gestures Orchestra

How

- It is a combination of two drama games Build the Robot (<https://www.stagemilk.com/acting-games/#new>) and Orchestra of Sound and Emotion (<http://www.bbbpress.com/2015/06/drama-game-orchestra-of-sound-emotion/>)
- Everyone sits or stands in a circle.
- T explains that the students will be an orchestra and asks them who is the leader in the orchestra (the conductor) and asks what the conductor does (tells everyone what to do). T explains that in this game they will not be playing music but using movement and gestures.
- T makes a few gestures, to give a few examples, something very expressive (for example a windmill with her arms) or something very safe (for example, wagging a finger) and highlights that all ideas are good ideas and that everyone will be the conductor, too.
- T starts the game, with a few safe gestures such as clapping hands, waving a hand, stomping a foot etc.
- Then the students take over and take turns in being the conductor of the Orchestra

Why

- The main advantage of this game is its kinaesthetic character and an opportunity to express yourself through movement. It is a group activity and the students quickly learn that they are responsible for the entire group. They can dictate a gesture for everyone to do but they also have to take it into consideration that they will be requested to do what someone else asks them to.
- The students decide themselves how involved they want to get, even the least energetic gestures are acceptable, standing also is.



- It helps if the T makes 'a fool' of herself in the beginning, while demonstrating, the students will feel more comfortable doing that, too later on.
- The activity works as a nice stirrer, especially if the lesson is longer than one academic hour.
- Online classroom: yes, why not.

5. Greetings, Your Majesty

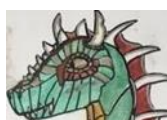
How

- It is another activity that I have found on Stage Milk (<https://www.stagemilk.com/acting-games/#new>)
- T asks the students to sit or stand in a line and prepares one chair in front of the board, facing the board.
- T explains that one person will be sitting on the chair, away from the group. One of the students will step out, stand behind the chair and say '*Greetings, Your Majesty*' in a strange or a different voice and then go back to the line.
- The person in the chair turns around and tries to guess who said it.
- T demonstrates and plays a few rounds to help the students become familiar with it and relax a bit
- Students (volunteers) take turns, sit in the centre and one of the students standing in line, comes up and says '*Greetings, Your Majesty*' using a strange or a different game.

Why

- Another activity that helps the group to relax and bond while doing something not so serious.
- It is a low-risk game because students themselves are in charge and make a decision to what extent they want to change their voice. Even if they don't and use their regular voice, this activity can help the students memorise their peers' names.

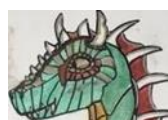
Activities



1. 16 Boxes

How

- T gives out paper, one A-4 page per student.
- T asks the students to fold the paper in half and show it when they are ready.
- T ask the students to repeat it three more times, each time pausing and asking them to show the paper when they are ready.
- T waits for everyone to finish and then asks students to unfold the paper.
- T ask how many boxes they can see. T tells them that each box is one word and highlights that they can write them in a random order.
- T dictates the categories and at the same time writes the categories on the board
- Some ideas for categories
 - The name of your best friend
 - The name of your grandma
 - The name of your favourite character from the book/film
 - The name of someone you don't like
 - The number of your house/flat
 - The number of your contacts/friends on VK/FB/followers
 - The number of your school
 - The number you like
 - The animal you like
 - The animal that could be your symbol
 - The animal you don't like
 - The animal you're scared of
 - I am...
 - My school is...
 - My room is..

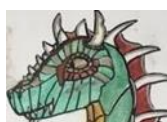


- I am not...
 - Any category will do but it is good to keep a few categories of the same kind (numbers, names, objects, places etc)
 - T monitors, T makes her own chart on the board. This chart is used later to model the activity. Students try to guess what the T's words mean.
 - Students work in pairs, they exchange the cards and try to guess what the words mean, they keep on guessing until they finish but the T can also set a time limit
 - If time, students change pairs and repeat the activity
 - FB: What interesting thing that you have found out about anyone in the room?

Why

- This activity can be used with new group as a getting to know each other activity or with existing groups, after the questions have been adapted to focus on holidays etc.
- The first part of the activity (folding and unfolding) works very well to get the students attention. From the very start they follow the teacher's instructions and it is easy to monitor and supervise.
- The activity can be adapted to many different levels and topics and it can be done a few times if the students change pairs. It can be also used in a follow-up activity in the following lesson (Quiz about us or True or False, the teacher only has to be taking notes while monitoring)
- Online classrooms: probably not, unless students can take notes and share their screens but they might be new to zoom so they might not be able to use it as skilfully as they might have to. Alternatively, students could create their notes and then just read out words in a random order for the students to guess.

2. The Game of 5

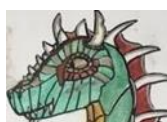


How

- This game has been adapted from one of the activities that I have encountered in Rewards Resource Pack by Macmillan
- T prepares a set of cards with categories. These can be vocabulary categories but it is good to include trivia categories, too. See below for ideas.
- Students work in teams, ideally three. Each team gets a set of cards with categories. T tells them that they have to work in secret and prepare a list of five words of their choice in their categories. T demonstrates with one category, for example colours and also makes a list of 5.
- It is very important to monitor students at this point to make sure that they take notes and that their words match the category. And that they actually keep their words secret.
- Once they are ready, T demonstrates with the sample category. T tells students that they have 1 minute to guess all the colours on T's list. T sets the time; students shout out all the colours that they can think of.
- T crosses out the words on the list as soon as students mention them.
- When time is up, T counts the words, students get ten points for each word they have guessed, T gets all the leftover points. For example, if students guess 3 words, they get 30 points in this round and T gets 20 points.
- Students play the game. Team A guesses the words of Team B, Team B guesses the words of Team C and Team C guesses the words of Team A. T monitors and awards points. Each team can choose the order of their categories.

Why

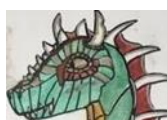
- It is a great activity to revise a lot of vocabulary from the topics chosen by T but it also works wonderfully well as a team building activity.
- It gives the T a lot of flexibility because, regardless of how many categories students prepare in stage 1, T can play as many rounds as there is time for.



- The activity can be adapted to any vocabulary and any categories appropriate for the age and level of the students.
- It is a very competitive activity and the teams really bond trying to win. It might be a good idea to mix the students for this stage of the lesson to give them a chance to work with someone that they have not worked with yet.
- Online classroom: T can share categories through the chat in the breakout rooms and the categories can be divided among the team members to take notes of the 5 words

5 jungle animals	5 pets
5 irregular verbs	5 things you've got in your schoolbag
5 body parts	5 means of transport
5 school subjects	5 sports
5 things to do at home when you don't go to school	5 things to do on the beach
5 European countries	5 football clubs
5 composers	5 Moscow metro stations

3. Discussion Battle



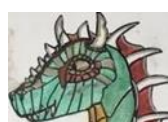
How

- This activity was inspired by a communicative activity in New English File Pre-Intermediate, 2nd edition, by OUP.
- T divides the class into three teams.
- T writes on the board: Which one is better....? and demonstrates one of the topics with the whole class. Students work all together and try to come up with as many arguments as possible in two minutes.
- T tells the students that they will try to find all the arguments in a discussion.
- Rules: two teams take part in the discussion; they provide as many arguments to defend their side of the argument in the allotted period of time.
- The third team listens to all the arguments and at the end of the round, they vote for the team who provided better arguments in a discussion. The judging team get three votes and they have to decide how they want to use them. Voting is done in secret and the points are counted only at the end of the game and the winners are announced.
- There will be at least three rounds (Team A and Team B, Team B and Team C, Team A and Team B), with each team being the judging team once.

Why

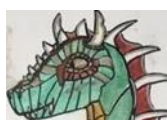
- It provides plenty of opportunities for speaking practice and the judging team is involved, too as they have to listen in order to be able to award their points.
- Some students will be expressing their opinions and views and at the same time they will be working with their team and with the other team as there might be students defending cats in both teams.
- Online classroom: yes, it works very well. Breakout rooms can be used for preparation.

Which one is better?	Which one is better?
-----------------------------	-----------------------------



Cats or dogs	Summer or winter
Which one is better? Holidays in the mountains or holidays at the seaside	Which one is better? Eating in or eating out
Which one is better? Online school or offline school	Which one is better? Holidays abroad or holidays in Russia
Which one is better? Travelling with parents or travelling with friends	Which one is better? Going to the cinema or watching Netflix
Which one is better? Waking up early or going to sleep late	Which one is better? Reading a book or watching a film
Which one is better? Talking on the phone or messaging	Which one is better? Doing homework or doing housework
Which one is better? Travelling by bus or travelling by train	Which one is better? Buying presents or getting presents

4. Photographs



How

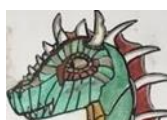
- T prepares a set of pictures, two for each topic for instance: people and animals, festivals, holidays, children, school, sport etc.
- Students work in pairs or teams; they talk about the pictures answering the following questions
- Stage 1: Student A: What can you see in the pictures? Where are the people? What are they doing? Are these two photos similar or different? Why? Which picture do you like more? Why?
Student B: Do you agree?
Then they swap roles.
- Stage 2: What is your favourite photo? What is your least favourite photo?
- Stage 3: Whole class feedback.

Why

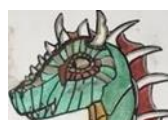
- It is an open-ended activity; the photographs are open to interpretation. All answers are good answer.
- The activity will enable the students to produce a lot of language, depending on their level. It also gives T an opportunity to assess the students' speaking skills and fluency.
- It doesn't take a lot of time to prepare. The same set of materials can be used with many levels without practically any adaptations.
- Online classes: absolutely. T can share the screen to demonstrate the photos or share a link to the google document.

5. Poem writing

How



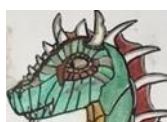
- This activity was based on a game found in Drama Techniques by Alan Maley and Alan Duff by CUP
- The main aim of this activity is creative writing and team work.
- T chooses the topics for the poems, these should be everyday topics such as school, music, football, YouTube, cheese etc. They don't have to be very serious topics.
- T prepares A4 pieces of paper and she writes the topic at the bottom of each page. It is important to ensure that there is one sheet of paper per student plus one for the teacher and that all topics are equally distributed, for instance with a group of six students, seven sheets and three topics:
Sheet 1: school
Sheet 2: school
Sheet 3: school
Sheet 4: music
Sheet 5: music
Sheet 6: music
Sheet 7: cheese
- T gives out the papers, each student receives one and there is also one for the teacher.
- Stage 1: Students work individually. They write sentence about their topic. They can either finish a sentence 'School is...', 'School is like' or they can write any other simple sentence with this word. When they are ready, they fold the top of the paper and pass the card to the student on their left. T helps to decide how the papers are going to be travelling.
- Each student gets a new paper and they repeat the procedure, they write a new sentence about their topic. It does not matter if they have to write the second sentence about school. The aim here is to generate as many sentences as possible and students become more creative, too after they have written all the most obvious things.
- The procedure is repeated until all the papers have been filled with sentences.



- Stage 2: T divides the students into two teams and assigns the topics. The music team sit together and the school team sit together. The teacher will be the cheese team.
- Students unfold the cards, read the sentences and together choose the best eight lines.
- Students discuss how they are going to organise their lines. Each poem will have two verses of four. Students rewrite their poem and together write a title. T prepares her own poem, too.
- Stage 3: Poetry reading: one student from each team recites the poem, T encourages the students to applaud the writers.

Why

- It is a low-risk activity that focuses on writing. Students can express themselves and they might be willing to do it since they do it anonymously.
- The task is achievable because students have to only write one sentence at a time and the verses will not rhyme.
- It is also an effective team building activity because they will have to make decisions for the group.
- If the students are too shy to take part in the poetry reading, the poems can be just passed around or displayed on the walls for the students to read.
- T can decide to focus on only one topic for the whole class and this way the whole activity can be followed-up by a speaking task in pairs or teams. Students can read all the poems or listen to all the poem and compare them as well as choose the most positive, the saddest, the most surprising poem etc and justify their choices. The questions for discussion will be created by T depending on what students create in class.
- Online classroom: possibly, if the students are familiar with google documents. T can share a document where everyone will type up their sentences still remaining relatively anonymous and then students will work in the breakout rooms to compile their own poem out of all the sentences produced by the group.



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