

ESL Icebreaker Activities

for

Kids and Adults

Two Truths and a Lie

Objective: Develop speaking and listening skills while encouraging students to share information and learn about each other.

Level: Intermediate

Duration: 20-30 minutes

Materials Needed

- Optional: Whiteboard and markers for writing examples

Instructions

Begin by explaining the activity: each student will share two true statements and one false statement about themselves. The objective is for their peers to guess which statement is the lie. Model the task by sharing your own examples and asking the class to guess which one is false. This helps students understand the activity and feel more comfortable participating.

Next, divide the students into small groups. Instruct each student to take turns sharing their statements with their group while the others guess the lie. Encourage students to be creative and to use facts that their classmates might not know to make it more challenging. Monitor the groups and offer support as needed.

Finally, bring the class back together. Ask a few volunteers to share their statements with the entire class, letting everyone participate in guessing. After each volunteer reveals the lie, discuss some of the most surprising or interesting truths that were shared.

Find Someone Who

Objective: Encourage students to interact, ask questions, and learn about their classmates, promoting speaking and listening skills.

Level: Intermediate

Duration: 20-30 minutes

Materials Needed

- Printed question sheets
- Pens or pencils

Instructions

Begin by distributing the printed question sheets to each student. Explain that their task is to find classmates who match the descriptions or have done the activities listed on the sheet (e.g., “Find someone who has visited another country”). Encourage students to ask follow-up questions to learn more about their classmates’ experiences and interests.

Allow students to move around the classroom, engaging with as many people as possible within the time limit. Emphasize the importance of speaking English during the activity to practice their language skills. Monitor the interactions, providing help if needed and ensuring everyone is participating.

Once time is up, gather the students and ask a few to share interesting facts they learned about their classmates. This recap helps students connect their interactions with new vocabulary and provides a fun opportunity to learn more about each other as a group.

Would You Rather

Objective: Promote critical thinking and conversation skills as students express and justify their preferences.

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Duration: 20-30 minutes

Materials Needed

- List of “Would You Rather” questions
- Optional: Whiteboard and markers

Instructions

Start by explaining that students will choose between two options for each “Would You Rather” question (e.g., “Would you rather live by the sea or in the mountains?”). Demonstrate with a few examples, explaining why you made your choice. This will show students how to respond with reasons, making the activity more interactive.

Divide the students into pairs or small groups, and provide each group with a list of questions. Ask them to take turns asking each other the questions and to discuss their choices. Encourage them to use English to explain why they prefer one option over the other. Circulate around the room to listen and offer support where needed.

After group discussions, bring the class together for a few volunteers to share their answers. This allows for a fun debate where students can agree or disagree with each other’s choices, promoting further conversation and engagement.

Who Am I?

Objective: Enhance speaking, listening, and critical thinking skills as students ask questions and make guesses based on clues.

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Duration: 20-30 minutes

Materials Needed

- Sticky notes (or small pieces of paper) and pens

Instructions

Begin by writing the names of famous people, fictional characters, or common occupations on sticky notes (e.g., “teacher,” “superhero,” or “Albert Einstein”). Stick one note on each student’s back without letting them see it. Explain that students will need to walk around and ask their classmates yes-or-no questions to figure out who they are. Model a few questions to show how they might approach the task (e.g., “Am I a man?” or “Do I work indoors?”).

Instruct students to move around the room, interacting with their peers to gather clues about their identity. Encourage them to use as much English as possible and to keep their questions simple. As they interact, monitor the conversations and assist if necessary, ensuring that all students are participating actively.

After most students have guessed correctly or time is up, bring the group together and ask a few students to share how they figured out their identities. This wrap-up helps students practice using their language skills in a fun, social context and reinforces the vocabulary they learned during the activity.

Alphabet Scavenger Hunt

Objective: Build vocabulary and promote teamwork as students find objects corresponding to letters of the alphabet.

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Duration: 20-30 minutes

Materials Needed

- Alphabet checklist sheets
- Pens or pencils

Instructions

Start by explaining that students will work in teams to find objects around the classroom or school that start with each letter of the alphabet (e.g., “B” for “book”). Hand out an alphabet checklist to each team. Model the task by pointing out a few examples of objects around the room so students understand the goal.

Divide the students into small teams and set a time limit for the scavenger hunt. Instruct them to move around their designated area, writing down or sketching objects that correspond to the letters on their checklist. Encourage teams to work together and communicate in English as they find items. Walk around to monitor progress and assist teams as needed.

When time is up, gather the teams and ask each group to share some of the items they found. Discuss any difficult letters and see if other teams found creative solutions. This recap encourages vocabulary reinforcement and teamwork, making the activity both fun and educational.

Word Association

Objective: Enhance vocabulary and quick-thinking skills as students connect words based on meaning and context.

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Duration: 15-20 minutes

Materials Needed

- None

Instructions

Begin by explaining the game: one student says a word, and the next student must quickly say a word that is associated with it (e.g., “apple” followed by “fruit”). Model a few examples with the class to demonstrate how the words should connect. Emphasize that the goal is to keep the chain going without hesitation.

Arrange the students in a circle or line, and start the game by saying a word. Go around the circle, with each student adding a new associated word. If a student hesitates too long or says a word that doesn’t connect, they are temporarily “out” and must observe the game until the next round. Encourage students to think quickly and use vocabulary they have learned.

After the initial round, play a few more rounds, gradually increasing the difficulty by choosing specific categories (e.g., “foods” or “places”). This allows students to practice using targeted vocabulary while having fun and staying engaged.

Picture Description

Objective: Develop speaking and descriptive skills as students describe images in detail to their classmates.

Level: Intermediate

Duration: 20-25 minutes

Materials Needed

- Printed pictures or flashcards
- Whiteboard and markers (optional)

Instructions

Begin by showing an example picture to the class and describing it in detail (e.g., “In this picture, there is a park with children playing on swings, and a dog running near the pond”). Explain that students will work in pairs to describe pictures to each other while their partner listens carefully and asks follow-up questions for more details.

Hand out a different picture to each pair of students. Instruct one student in each pair to describe their picture while the other listens. Encourage the listener to ask additional questions to learn more about the image (e.g., “What color is the sky?” or “How many people are there?”). After a few minutes, have them switch roles so each student gets a turn.

Once both students have described their pictures, bring the class back together and ask a few pairs to share their descriptions with the entire class. This allows students to practice their speaking skills in a supportive environment and reinforces their ability to use descriptive vocabulary.

Memory Circle

Objective: Improve memory and listening skills as students learn and recall each other's names and facts.

Level: Intermediate

Duration: 15-20 minutes

Materials Needed

- None

Instructions

Start by arranging the students in a circle. Explain that each student will say their name and share one interesting fact about themselves (e.g., “My name is Anna, and I love to play soccer”). Model the activity by introducing yourself and sharing a fact. Emphasize the importance of listening carefully because each student will have to repeat the information.

The first student says their name and fact. The second student must repeat the name and fact of the first student before adding their own. The third student repeats the names and facts of the first two students and then shares theirs. Continue around the circle, with each student recalling the information shared by all previous participants before adding their own.

If a student forgets someone's name or fact, encourage classmates to help them out. This ensures everyone stays engaged and supports each other in the learning process. Once the circle is complete, you can challenge the group by randomly asking individuals to recall the names and facts of other classmates to further test their memory.

Human Knot

Objective: Promote teamwork and communication as students work together to untangle themselves.

Level: Intermediate

Duration: 15-20 minutes

Materials Needed

- None

Instructions

Begin by arranging the students in a circle, standing shoulder-to-shoulder. Explain that they will need to work together to untangle themselves without breaking the chain. Ask everyone to extend their right hand and hold the hand of someone across the circle. Then, have them do the same with their left hand, making sure they grab a different person's hand.

Instruct the students to communicate with each other in English and carefully move to untangle the "knot" they've formed. Remind them that they must not let go of each other's hands during the process. Encourage them to talk through their movements, step over arms, and twist around until they form a circle or line.

If the group is struggling, offer hints or guidance to help them find a solution. Once they have untangled themselves, discuss the importance of teamwork and clear communication in solving challenges like this one. You can repeat the activity with different groups or challenge the same group to improve their time.

Ball Toss

Objective: Enhance speaking and listening skills as students ask and answer questions while tossing a ball.

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Duration: 15-20 minutes

Materials Needed

- A soft ball

Instructions

Begin by gathering students into a circle and holding a soft ball. Explain that when someone catches the ball, they must answer a question and then toss the ball to another person in the circle. Model the activity by tossing the ball to a student and asking a simple question, such as “What’s your favorite color?” or “What did you eat for breakfast?”

Once students understand the concept, start the game by tossing the ball to a student and asking a question. The student who catches the ball answers the question and then tosses it to another classmate, asking a new question. Encourage students to be creative with their questions to keep the activity interesting and engaging for everyone.

After a few rounds, switch things up by setting a time limit for answering or by choosing a specific category for the questions (e.g., hobbies, animals, or food). This variation helps students practice vocabulary related to different topics and keeps the game dynamic and fun.

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