

Activities Using Pictures

Skill Practice Codes: L (listening); S (speaking); R (reading); W (writing)

- HOUSE FURNISHINGS AND PREPOSITIONS OF LOCATION** (Beginner/Pairs—L/S)
Materials: Pictures of a room (two pictures alike for each pair of students)
Procedure: One student asks *where* questions (“*Where is the lamp? Where is the pillow?*”) The other student answers, using appropriate prepositions of location (on, next to, under, between, etc.)
- WHICH PICTURE?** (Beginner/Small Groups of Three—L/S)
Materials: Five pictures for every three students in class + five pictures on the wall
Procedure: (1) Use the pictures on the wall to demonstrate the process. You may use all descriptions or all short (made up) stories—or a combination of the two. (2) After giving a description or telling a short story, students guess which picture is being talked about. (3) Divide the class into small groups of three. (4) Place pictures on the floor in the middle of each small group. (5) Students take turns describing or telling a story about one of the pictures. (6) Others in the group point to the picture that is being talked about.
- TELEPHONE** (Beginner/Whole Class—L/S)
Materials: Several interesting pictures
Procedure: (1) Have students sit in a large circle. (2) Give one picture to the first student without letting the other students see what is in the picture. (3) In one or two sentences, the first student is to tell the person next to him what is in that picture. (4) That student is to pass this information on to the next student, etc. (5) When the last student has been told what is in the picture, he/she says aloud to the rest of the class what he thinks is in the picture. (6) The first student then shows the picture to the class and they see how well they communicated what they were told.
- PICTURE PUZZLES** (Beginner/Whole Class—L/S)
Materials: Mounted pictures that have been laminated and cut into four puzzle pieces
Procedure: (1) Give a puzzle piece to each student. (2) Ask that they walk around the room to find the other pieces of their puzzle. (3) Students are not to show their puzzle piece to other students--but share information about their piece and together decide if there is a match.
- TRUE/FALSE?** (Beginner/Pairs/Small Groups/Whole Class—L)
Materials: Assorted pictures
Procedure: (1) Select one picture and make statements about it. (2) Students indicate whether the statements are true or false.
Variation: Ask yes/no questions instead of true/false.
- PICTURE-SENTENCE MATCH** (Beginner-Intermediate/Student Mingling—L/W/R)
Materials: A picture for each student
Procedure: (1) Students write 2-3 sentences about the picture they hold. (2) Take up and shuffle all the pictures and sets of sentences students have written. (3) Give half the students a picture and the other half a set of sentences. (4) Ask all students to walk about to find their match.
Variation: Each student reads his/her sentences, while others guess which picture (on wall or chalk rail) the sentences are about.
- WHAT ARE THEY SAYING?** (Beginner-Intermediate/Pairs—L/S)
Materials: One picture for each pair—one that lends itself to dialog
Procedure: (1) Students create a dialog that is related to the action or event illustrated in the picture. (2) Share the dialog with others (another pair, a small group, or whole class).
- TWENTY QUESTIONS** (Beginner-Intermediate/Pairs—L/S)
Materials: Pairs of pictures of different animals (or two pictures from any same category)
Procedure: Students work in pairs without showing each other their pictures. Students take turns guessing, through yes/no questions, what is in their partner’s picture.
- WHERE’S THE MATCH?** (Beginner-Intermediate/Whole Class—L/S)
Materials: Pairs of pictures that are not identical but have some similarities
Procedure: (1) Give each student a picture. (2) Students walk about to locate another person who has a picture that is similar to their own. (3) Students discuss what their pictures have in common.
Variation: Have students find three similarities and three differences. (Good with Christmas cards!)

10. **HEADS AND TAILS** (Intermediate/Pairs—L/S)

Materials: Magazine pictures of people cut in half so head and bodies are on separate cards that are all the same size. Each student has at least five cards.

Procedure: (1) Give all “heads” to one partner and “bodies” to the other. (2) The student with a “head” begins by describing a face. (3) As quickly as possible, the partner tries to find a “body” to match. (4) Students must not see each other’s cards. They can only ask questions. (This can be easier if parts of clothing are left with the “heads.”) (5) When the sets are matched, pairs exchange pictures with another pair and the activity begins again. *Variations:* (1) For greater difficulty, include one “head” and “body” in each set that does not match. Students find these and draw the missing halves. (2) Pictures of houses or landscapes could also be cut in two (e.g., a mansion with a pool in the foreground, a farm scene with a barn and animals, a city skyline with a waterfront).

11. **THE AD GAME** (Intermediate/Small Groups—L/S/R)

Materials: Pictures of magazine ads with texts removed, cards containing the ad text

Procedure: (1) Display several ads with the text removed. (2) Students speculate what the product is and why the ad is designed as it is. (3) Give each group a set of pictures and corresponding texts (on cards). (4) Students match the pictures with the text. (5) Check the work of each group as they finish and tell how many matches are correct. (6) Students continue to work until they have matched all text and pictures correctly. (7) *Systematically*, rotate pictures to the next group, continuing until all groups have matched all the pictures. (*Random* rotation can result in confusion!) (8) Finally, lead class discussion in which students explain what visual clues or vocabulary helped them to match the pictures and texts.

12. **WHOWHAT AM I?** (Intermediate/Small Groups/Whole Class Mingling—L/S)

Materials: Sets of pictures from a single category (animals, food, occupations, etc.); one picture per student; clothes pins/string “hangers” or masking tape

Procedure: (1) Make a “hanger” by using masking tape or clothes pins to attach a length of string to the top corners of a picture. (2) Place a picture on the back of each student without the student’s seeing it. (3) Tell students to walk about asking yes/no questions to determine what picture he/she is wearing. For example, with a food category, a student might ask: “Does *this* grow on a tree? . . . Does it taste sweet?” (4) Classmates answer only with yes/no. (5) Students continue asking questions of different students until he/she guesses what the picture is. *Variation:* Give each small group a set of pictures (one picture more than the number in the group). Students within each group take turns leaving the room while the other group members quietly choose one picture. When the student returns to the group, he/she must ask yes/no questions to try to figure out which picture was selected by the group.

13. **ADJECTIVES AND ADS** (Intermediate/Whole Class—L/W/R)

Materials: Advertisements from magazines

Procedure: (1) Choose several ads from magazines with only a short text. (2) Number the ads. (3) Black out an adjective or two from each ad and make a list, making sure you keep track of which ad the words came from. (4) Hang the ads around the room. (5) Dictate the adjectives in random order. (6) When you have finished the dictation, ask students to find the ads that the words came from, matching each word with the number on the ad.

14. **PASS THE PICTURE** (Intermediate-Advanced/Small Groups—L/W/R)

Materials: Lined writing paper attached to a picture of a person (one per student)

Procedure: (1) Give each student a picture with paper attached. Numbering each set helps to avoid confusion. (2) Begin reading the questions, one at a time, from the list of questions that you have prepared. (3) Each student writes an answer on the paper provided then passes the picture and attached paper to the student on the right. (4) Allow students time to read previous responses so that their new sentences relate to what has already been written. (5) Continue asking questions until each person has his/her original picture back, along with its accompanying sheet of answers to the questions. (6) Have students work in their small groups to write a story containing each of the characters represented within their small group. (7) Share story with whole class. Sample questions:

- (a) What’s this person’s name?
- (b) Where is he/she from?
- (c) What does he/she do for a living?
- (d) Is he/she single, married, or divorced?
- (e) What are three adjectives that describe this person?
- (f) What does he/she do in his/her spare time?
- (g) What is something exciting that has happened to this person?

Questions should reflect the level of your students and include structures and vocabulary from previous lessons.

Variation: Eliminate the questions and let students develop their own stories by simply writing and passing to the right.

15. **PICTURE COMPOSITION** (Intermediate/Advanced Groups of Five—L/S/W/R)

Materials: Lined writing paper attached to a picture of a person (one per student)

Procedure: This activity is a variation of #14 above. Instead of asking questions orally, the questions are written on the board for students to read. (1) Divide class into groups of 5. (2) Ask groups to sit in a circle or around a table. For this explanation, pictures of persons are used; but activities or places may be used as well. (3) Write one question on the board for everyone to answer (*Who is this person?*). Students look at their own picture and write the appropriate answer on the attached paper. (4) When each student has written an answer, he/she hands the picture and attached paper to the person on the right. (5) Write a second question on the board (*Where does this person live?*). (6) Students answer this question and pass the picture and attached paper to the right. (7) This process continues until each member of the group has contributed to the paragraph by answering at least one question (and each person has his/her original picture back with its attached paper.) (8) Each member of the group reads the paragraph attached to the picture he/she is holding. (9) The group chooses one best paragraph. (10) The person holding that paragraph goes to the front of the room and reads that group's best paragraph to the class. In this way, each group is represented by their best paragraph.

16. **HEADLINES** (Intermediate/Whole Class—W/R/L/S)

Materials: Several pictures numbered and placed in the front of the room

Procedure: (1) Show students several good examples of headlines from the newspaper. (2) Point out the pictures at the front of the room and ask that they write a headline for each picture. (3) After they have done so, have students get into groups of 3-4 to share the headlines they have written. How do they compare? Are they similar? Different?

17. **STORY SWAP** (Intermediate-Advanced/Pairs or Small Groups—L/S)

Materials: An identical picture or set of pictures for each student

Procedure: (1) Group students in pairs and ask each pair to create a story about their picture or set of pictures. (2) Have each pair join another pair and share the story they have made up. Encourage the listening pair to ask questions about the story they hear. (3) Have each person join with one of the partners from the opposite pair in their foursome. (4) Ask each new pair to join another new pair to make a new group of four. All four original stories will be represented in each new group. (5) Have each person retell the story he/she heard from the new partner, i.e., everyone tells someone else's story. The listeners ask questions and make corrections, if needed.

18. **TALKING ABOUT THE PAST** (Intermediate-Advanced/Pairs or Small Groups—L/S)

Materials: Pictures of children doing things

Procedure: Ask students to identify what the children are doing in the pictures; then use "used to" to talk about things they used to do as children.

19. **EMOTIONS** (Intermediate-Advanced/Pairs or Small Groups—L/S)

Materials: Pictures depicting various emotions

Procedure: (1) Divide students into groups of 3 or 4. (2) Give each group 5 or 6 pictures of people expressing emotions. (3) Have students in each group select a picture and describe to the other group members a time when they experienced that emotion.

20. **CHAIN STORY** (Intermediate-Advanced/Pairs or Small Groups of Three—L/S)

Materials: Pictures having lots of action or emotion (one picture per pair or group)

Procedure: Distribute pictures. Have one student in each pair or group start a story about the picture. The next person continues the story with another sentence. The third student continues the story, etc., until there is a natural conclusion.

21. **PICTURE DOMINOES** (Intermediate-Advanced/Small Groups—L/S)

Materials: Small pictures mounted on cards (and laminated), like a domino (two separate pictures mounted on one card); one set of 20 for each group

Procedure: (1) Divide cards among students in small groups. (2) One student lays down a card and begins a story using the two pictures on his/her card. (3) Taking turns, each student lays down a picture card and tries to continue the story. (4) One person in each group could be designated a secretary to write down the story as it develops. (5) If a student cannot add to the story, he/she keeps the card and play passes to the next student. (6) The first person to get rid of all of his/her cards wins the game.

22. **STEREOTYPES** (Intermediate-Advanced/Small Groups—L/S/R)

Materials: Numbered pictures of individuals

Procedure: (1) Select pictures of people who fit common stereotypes, such as a housewife, a homeless person, a business person or a model. (2) Hang pictures around the room. (3) Prepare descriptions for each picture, making them as different as possible from the stereotype the picture evokes. For example, the homeless person is really an eccentric millionaire who gives millions to charity; or the business person is in prison, serving a sentence for fraud. Have more pictures than descriptions to allow for different choices. (4) Give each group a set of your descriptions written on strips of paper or cards that are identified by a letter—a,b,c, etc. (5) Ask students to work together to match

the numbered pictures and the lettered descriptions. One in the group keeps record of the group's choices and reports to the whole class. Students usually match the description with the picture that fits the stereotype. (6) Lead into a discussion of stereotypes and how people often judge one another by outward appearance. (Time and Newsweek—good sources for this activity)

23. **THIS COULD BE** (Intermediate-Advanced/Small Groups—L/S/R)

Materials: Advertisements from magazines with no text

Procedure: (1) Display ads and ask each group to guess what each could/might/may be advertising. (2) After a few minutes, let each group share their guesses and the reasoning behind their conclusions. (3) Distribute the texts taken from each ad and ask students to match them with the correct picture. (4) This activity using modals can be followed up by one in which small groups create their own advertisement for a product by drawing the product, creating a slogan, etc. (5) Have a contest to choose the best creation!

24. **SPECULATING SPECIFICS** (Intermediate-Advanced/Small Groups—L/S)

Materials: Interesting pictures of people

Procedure: Give each group a picture and allow three minutes for the groups to collaborate on answers to the questions below that are written on the board. Emphasize that there are no wrong answers. Encourage everyone to say what he/she is thinking.

- (a) Who is this person?
- (b) Where was he/she born?
- (c) How old is this person?
- (d) What is his/her occupation?
- (e) Where does he/she live now?
- (f) Does he/she have a family? If so, tell about the family.
- (g) What kind of person is he/she? (Interesting? Pleasant? Angry? Hard-working?)
- (h) What is his/her economic condition? (Rich? Poor? Middle Class?)
- (i) What is this person feeling now—and why?
- (j) What are the plans this person has for the future?

25. **JIGSAW STORY** (Intermediate-Advanced/Small Groups—L/S)

Materials: Four pictures that convey a story (a cartoon or other kind of picture)

Procedure: (1) Divide the class into four large groups by numbering off A,B,C,D,A,B,C,D, etc. (2) Give each group one picture. (3) Ask students to talk about the picture in their group. (4) Take up all four pictures. (5) Make new groups of four by taking one person from each of the large groups to form a new foursome (resulting in one A, one B, one C, and one D in each new group). (6) Ask the students in the new groups to reconstruct the story by sharing what each person saw on his/her first group's picture. (7) Allow time for each person to share, then ask a representative from each group to tell the story arising from that person's most recent group of four. (It is quite possible to have more than one version of the story.) (8) Conclude by showing all four pictures to the class.

26. **DISASTERS** (Advanced/Small Groups—L/S)

Materials: Pictures of tornadoes, floods, hurricanes

Procedure: (1) Place disaster pictures on the chalk rail or on a table. (2) Ask students to select one picture and pretend to have been present for that disaster when it happened. (3) Ask that they tell what they did when disaster struck.

27. **WHAT'S THE IDEA?** (Advanced/Small Groups or Whole Class—L/S)

Materials: Several pictures depicting various themes or concepts

Procedure: (1) Show several pictures to the class. (2) Guide discussion as students determine the main idea shared by all the pictures. (3) Divide the class into small groups, giving each group a set of pictures around a central theme or concept. (4) Ask groups to decide on the main concept shared by all of their pictures. (5) Conclude with a report from each group.

28. **WRITE AND SHARE** (Multilevel/Individual and Pairs or Small Groups—L/S/W)

Materials: A picture that is rich in detail for each student

Procedure: (1) Give each student a picture. (2) Ask that he/she spend five minutes writing a "story" (or sentences for beginners); then (3) share with a partner or small group.

29. **HEAR ME WELL!** (Multilevel/Pairs—L/S)

Materials: For each student—a grid with 16 squares and 16 small thematic pictures and a visual barrier (manila folder cut in half horizontally); same pictures for each partner

Procedure: (1) Give each person a grid, a set of small pictures, and a visual barrier. (2) The speaking partner places pictures anywhere on his/her grid, then describes each picture and tells the listening partner where to place it (*top*

right, bottom middle, middle left, etc.). (3) When all pictures have been described, the two students compare their grids to see if the picture placement is the same. (4) Partners switch roles and begin again.

30. **WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?** (Multilevel/Pairs—L/S)

Materials: A pair of pictures with subtle differences

Procedure: Students compare their pictures to find the differences. Beginners can simply draw an "X" on the different parts. More advanced students can use increasingly complex sentences to explain the differences. *Variation:* (1) Use photos you make yourself, making one slightly different from the other. (2) Use before/after pictures of people's faces or room make-overs. (3) Find coloring books with some degree of sophistication for adult learners. White-out or draw in sections of a picture (e.g., stripes on a curtain) in order to create differences.

31. **RELATIONSHIP CONNECTION** (Multilevel Pairs or Small Groups—L/S)

Materials: Assorted pictures with potential for matching

Procedure: (1) Distribute pictures face down. (2) Students take turns flipping over two pictures that show relationship and describing their relationship.

32. **PICTURE-BASED COMPLETION EXERCISES** (Multilevel/Individual-Pairs—R/W)

Materials: Pictures showing rich detail + humorous or emotional content

Procedure: (1) Use the same picture for everyone. (2) Create fill-in-the-blank activities for your level of students to review a single grammar point or category of words (e.g., feeling words, simple/continuous present tense verbs, articles: *a, an, the*).

33. **RACE FOR DESCRIPTIONS** (Multi-Level/Small Groups—L/S/R)

Materials: A number of "theme" pictures (for example, clothing/personal description)

Procedure: (1) Number pictures and set them around the room, e.g., on chalk rail, windowsill. (2) Write out a descriptive sentence about each picture (like the following examples). (3) Divide the class into groups of 3-4, each with a captain. (4) Give each captain a list of the sentences. (5) Team members work together--reading a sentence, hurrying around the room to find the corresponding picture, and reporting the picture number back to the captain who records it beside the correct sentence. (6) The winning team is the first to finish. (7) Follow-up may include new vocabulary and perhaps discussion of what each person is wearing. *Tip:* If one student is less proficient, you may appoint this person to be captain whose only job is to record numbers beside sentences.

- (a) *This woman has short blonde hair and a beige jacket. She is a secretary and is unhappy with her boss. He has short gray hair and glasses.*
- (b) *These people enjoy skiing in the snow. They are all wearing warm ski suits. One lady is wearing orange.*
- (c) *This smiling man has a gray beard and is holding a funny pair of red boots.*

Suggestions for Picture Categories

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|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Ages | 18. Music |
| 2. Analysis | 19. Occupations |
| 3. Culture | 20. Pets |
| 4. Descriptors | 21. Places |
| 5. Emotions | 22. Recreation |
| 6. Family | 23. Religion |
| 7. Famous people | 24. Seasons |
| 8. Flowers | 25. Sports |
| 9. Foods | 26. Telephone |
| 10. Friendship | 27. Time of Day |
| 11. Games | 28. Transportation |
| 12. Health | 29. Verbs of action |
| 13. Holidays | 30. Weather |
| 14. Housing | 31. What's the Story? |
| 15. Leisure | 32. What's wrong here? |
| 16. Life passages | 33. World Problems |
| 17. Love | |