

Better learning activities

Teacher's notes

Introduction

As well as the 30 photocopiable Extra classroom activities, each one linked to the corresponding unit in the Student's Book, here are ten learning-to-learn activities which can be done in parallel to the main course.

They do not necessarily take up a great deal of time, but they are important in getting students to think about how they learn and so learn better. Especially at this level, students should be taking on more responsibility for their learning and developing learner autonomy.

Since there are ten activities, you might want to do one after every third lesson.

Procedure

Most of the activities are self-explanatory. They are all designed as pairwork activities: see the notes on pairwork in the Introduction (page 13 in the Teacher's Book). The main difference is in the amount of attention you pay to accuracy – here the focus should be very much on content rather than form.

You will need to return to some activities as you progress through the course. This is the case in Better learning activity 2, for example. Make sure you allow time for this in class and that students have enough sheets. If you start something, don't forget to finish it!

Timing

The length of time required to complete the activities will vary from class to class and it will be up to you to decide how much time to spend on them.

What to do

See the following Teacher's notes for each activity. Before the lesson, photocopy the relevant activity page. Each student will need a copy of the sheet. You are likely to want to take in the sheets for your own interest and review at the end of several of the activities.

1 Needs analysis

- This activity is best done early in the course, or even before the course begins because it will provide you with important information about your students' needs and it will help to focus students on what their objectives are.
- You could get students to fill in the needs analysis and then compare with a partner. Alternatively, you could do this as a pairwork activity and get students to interview each other.

2 What I can do

- This activity is best done soon after you have finished Unit 1 because students will be able to talk about what they have learnt in that unit. The intention is that they will then complete the record after every lesson.
- As there are 30 units, you will need to give each student five copies of the sheet at the beginning or give one out after every six units.
- Stress that this activity will encourage students to reflect on and assess what they have learnt as well as what they haven't learnt, so it should be useful in focusing students on the problems they have and the areas they need to work on.

- Don't expect to spend too much time on this in class – the important thing is to set it up correctly and explain the rationale, and then students should record what they can do in their own time. You could check up on this from time to time, however.
- You could also suggest that students use the *On the agenda* and *Remember* sections of the Student's Book to help them.
- The Common European Framework places a great deal of emphasis on the use of 'Can do' statements. For more information about this, go to the *English365* website: www.cambridge.org/elt/english365 and follow the links.

3 A focused learning plan

- Again this is best done early in the course and hopefully it will help students to get into good habits from the beginning.
- Explain that any successful learning needs a plan and that this short-term plan needs to be incorporated into their overall needs. It should help students to improve steadily if they have clearly defined and achievable targets.
- Students could create a detailed learning plan for each week. In that case, you will need to give out new sheets each time. Encourage them to be realistic – they will probably not want to focus on something from each area. One or two is probably enough. If you see the students every week, you could set aside a few minutes for planning of this kind.
- Tell students to focus on particular areas every week and be aware of them when they are, for example, speaking in English.

4 Keeping a portfolio

- This is intended as an introduction to how to keep a portfolio of learning materials.
- Of course, different people learn and organise learning in different ways, so it may be a good idea to allow students to organise their portfolios in any way they want. The important thing here, though, is to think about how they are going to do this.
- You may want to allow classroom time occasionally to check the portfolios and discuss their organisation with students. Don't allow the good ideas to fizzle out!
- As with 'Can do' statements in Better learning activity 2, the idea of keeping a portfolio has been highlighted in the Common European Framework. For more information about this, go to the *English365* website: www.cambridge.org/elt/english365 and follow the links.

5 Using the internet

- There is an immense amount of free material available to learners of English on the internet. You should definitely make sure that students look at the following: www.cambridge.org/elt/resources www.cambridge.org/elt/english365/resources www.dictionary.cambridge.org.
- There is also a great deal of other material available – some of it can be useful, some perhaps not. Doing this activity will help students to become more discriminating and better able to refine their searches. Perhaps the best way is simply through trial and error. As well as web pages there are, of course, numerous discussion boards and chatrooms in which students can interact in English.
- Get students to do the discussion activity and compare any useful material that they have found. If they haven't used the internet before, go straight to the section where they consider key words.

- You could give some help with this. For example, 'English', 'language' and 'materials' are likely to be good general key words. Students could then add the following to refine their search: 'grammar', 'vocabulary', 'writing', 'listening', 'discussion board' or 'chatroom'. You could also mention that adding the word 'free' will mean that they will be directed to websites that do not charge for the use of material.
- Unless you have the internet available in your classroom, you will need to do this section in two separate lessons, as students will need to go away and search.
- They should then come back and compare their ideas, rate any sites they have visited and decide which are worth recommending to other students.

6 Keeping an electronic vocabulary book

- This activity is primarily designed to suggest that students may want to explore the possibility of storing their notes and vocabulary in electronic form. This might be particularly useful for students who may be very used to using computers for their work but have been told to use paper-based materials for their language study.
- Start by asking if students use databases in their work and what the name of the software is. The simple package on many home PCs is Microsoft Works. What do they use the database for?
- Get students to consider their responses with a partner before asking them to compare. Students may be more technologically adept than you, so be open to students suggesting their own ideas!
- One of the primary advantages of using a database is that students will be able to sort information according to what they want whenever they want. In a paper notebook, they may put words in a 'topic' category and it either stays only in that place or they have to write the word in another place to list it alphabetically. With a database, students can call up words according to whatever criteria they choose and only have to enter the word once.

7 Using graded readers

- This activity is designed to encourage students to use graded readers. Elicit or tell them that graded readers will help to improve their fluency as well as their reading skills. Highlight the importance of reading for pleasure – students who read for pleasure are likely to improve their reading skills more quickly. It is important, therefore, for students to spend time thinking about the kind of books they want to read.
- You might also mention that using readers and reporting back on them is a good opportunity for realistic speaking practice. You will need to play a leading role in the use of readers and allow time for discussion of them in class, as well as giving guidance on choosing the most appropriate reader.
- Refer students to the CUP website, where they should follow the links in order to do a test to determine their level: www.cambridge.org/elt/readers.

8 Correcting your mistakes

- This activity will help students to focus on areas of English that they find difficult and will help them to think about ways of improving. The intention is to raise awareness of problem areas so that students can start to correct themselves, and it is worth stressing this.
- Remind students of the importance of reviewing and recycling new language that they have covered in the coursebook. Finishing a unit does not mean that they have 'done' the language point and can now move on. They might need to review the structures in order to continue using them accurately in a range of different situations.
- Also try to encourage students not to be afraid of making mistakes in English. Explain that this is all part of the learning process and the important thing is that they should always try to experiment with the language.
- Refer students to the *English365* website, where they should follow the links for further resources and worksheets: www.cambridge.org/elt/english365.

9 Improving your pronunciation

- This activity will help students to focus on their pronunciation, their pronunciation problems and what they can do to overcome them. Note that there is a focus on students reflecting on what they can do – it is important for students to be positive and think about their achievements.
- This links to and extends the work in the pronunciation section in Unit 1 of the Student's Book. It also links to the work in Better learning activities 2 and 3 where students reflect on what they can do and where they create a focused learning plan.
- You could mention that practising in front of a mirror will help students to focus on the mouth shape and use of the lips. You will need to help students with this.
- Also advise them to use dictionaries which have phonemic symbols in them and refer them to the pronunciation symbols in the Student's Book.

10 End of course review

- This activity should be done at the very end of the course. Tell students that reaching the end of *English365* does not mean the end of learning!
- The early Better learning activities focused on students making plans and identifying needs. This activity stresses the importance of thinking about how successful they have been.
- The success ratings link back to Better learning activity 3.
- Get students to compare their ideas with a partner.
- When talking about the future, get students to consider the following:
 - other English courses that students can take
 - reviewing the course and their portfolio
 - meeting up with former classmates to speak in English
 - buying self-study material.

1 Needs analysis

Objective

To identify your needs in English.

Introduction

In this activity, you are going to think about your reasons for learning English and what you need to be able to do in it.

What to do

- 1 Look at the English skills here. Decide what you need to be able to do in English. Then rate how important each skill is for you.
1 = not very important 5 = very important
- 2 Think about your situation now and how it might change in the future.
- 3 Talk about your answers with a partner. Can you add any more details? For example, what kind of telephone calls do you need to make in English? Who do you speak to?

Name

Input

	Now	In the future
Speaking Making telephone calls Giving presentations Taking part in meetings Socialising Telephoning Travelling		
Writing Formal letters Emails Reports Proposals Articles Informal letters		
Listening To presentations In meetings In lectures To the radio, television, etc. In social situations		
Reading Newspapers Reports Emails Journals Technical papers		

Is there anything else you need to work on?

How important are the following?
 Grammar
 Vocabulary
 Pronunciation

2 What I can do

Objective

To record what you are able to do in English.

Name

Introduction

In this activity, you are going to think about what you are able to do in English after each unit of *English365* Book 3.

What to do

- 1 After each lesson, write down what you have learnt and what you can do. For example:
Unit 1
I can meet and greet people and make a positive impression.
I can use the present tenses more accurately.
- 2 Talk with a partner about what you can now do after each unit as you progress through the course.

Input

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What I can do

Unit

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Unit

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Unit

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Unit

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Unit

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Unit

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3 A focused learning plan

Objective

To develop a short-term focused learning plan.

Name

Introduction

In this activity, you are going to think about what you can study and how often.

What to do

- 1 Each week, try to create a focused, realistic learning plan. Think about how much time you have – little and often is best.
- 2 Think about exactly what you are going to study and focus on. For example, you might decide that you are going to focus on ‘using the present perfect’.
- 3 Compare your plan with a partner.

Input

Week beginning:

1 How much time can you spend on learning English every day?

- 10 minutes
- 20 minutes
- 30 minutes
- Over 30 minutes

2 What are you going to focus on this week?

Grammar

Pronunciation

Vocabulary

Listening

Reading

Writing

Speaking

Social skills

Communicating at work

4 Keeping a portfolio

Objective

To help organise your learning and learning material.

Name

Introduction

In this activity, you will discuss ways of organising your learning material.

What to do

- 1 Answer the questions below.
- 2 Compare your ideas with a partner.

Input

How do you usually organise your learning material? Where do you store your class notes and extra classroom material that your teacher gives you?

You could organise everything in a portfolio: a ring binder file with dividers.

Think about how to organise it. Choose the best way for you and your learning style.

1 Decide where to put the following:

- Classroom notes
- Vocabulary records
- Grammar notes
- Extra classroom activity sheets
- Better learning activity sheets (for example, your progress records in activity 2 and your plans in activity 3)
- Language you have learned outside the classroom

2 You could organise these things in different ways. Which is best for you?

- *Linear* Organise your materials following the order of the units in *English365*.
- *By unit type* Put material from Units 1, 4, 7, etc. together, for example.
- *By material type* Put your classroom notes together, for example.
- Can you think of any other ways?

5 Using the internet

Objective

To explore ways of using the internet for learning.

Name

Introduction

In this activity, you will discuss ways of using the internet for learning English.

What to do

- 1 Discuss the questions below with a partner and write down your answers.
- 2 Do the searches and report back to the class on what you found.

Input

Have you ever used material on the internet to help you with your learning?

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What have you used?

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How did you find it?

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Did you pay for it?

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.....

Can you recommend any useful websites?

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.....

Have you used a discussion board?

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Searching the internet

What key words could you put into a search engine if you want to ...

- Improve your grammar?
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- Improve your vocabulary?
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- Improve your writing?
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- Improve your listening?
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- Find a discussion board?
.....
- Find a chatroom?
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Internet resource record

What did you find?

Websites

Discussion board

Chatroom

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.....

How would you rate the above?
Which would you recommend to other students?

6 Keeping an electronic vocabulary book

Objective

To explore ways of recording vocabulary electronically.

Name

Introduction

In this activity, you will discuss ways of using databases and other software to improve your learning.

What to do

- 1 Answer the questions below.
- 2 Compare your answers with a partner.

Input

Do you have a vocabulary notebook?
How do you organise words?
What information do you include about a word?

What are the advantages of using, for example, a database to record new words? Decide if the following might be advantages of paper-based notebooks or electronic versions.

- I can draw pictures.
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- I can sort words in different ways when I want to.
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- I can carry it around with me.
.....
- I can easily add new words and new sections.
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- I'm used to using computers.
.....
- I can easily search for words.
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Can you think of any other ways of taking advantage of technology for your language learning?

7 Using graded readers

Objective

To think about using graded readers.

Name

Introduction

In this activity, you will talk about the benefits of using graded readers and what kind of book you would like to read.

What to do

- 1 Answer the questions below and note down your answers.
- 2 Compare your answers with a partner.
- 3 Keep a record of the books you read in the table below.

Input

How will graded readers help me to improve my English?

How much reading can I do every week?

What kind of book would I like to read?

What level am I?

Where can I find graded readers?

Graded reader record

	1	2	3	4
Title				
Author				
Level				
Time taken				
Plot				
Characters				
My recommendation				

8 Correcting your mistakes

Objective

To help you think about the kind of mistakes you make and to help you to correct them yourself.

Name

Introduction

This activity will help you to think about the typical mistakes you make and how to improve your accuracy.

What to do

- 1 Think about the areas of English that you have problems with. For example:
tenses
spelling
word order
prepositions.
- 2 Look back at the *Do it yourself* sections in the Student's Book, if necessary.
- 3 List the typical problems you have and make notes below.
- 4 Think about ways you can try to improve. Compare your ideas with a partner.

Input

.....

My mistakes

Correct version

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.....
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What can I do to improve my grammar? Which of the following could I do?

- Buy a grammar book
- Concentrate on using one structure or piece of language correctly all week
- Study a language point every day
- Look for grammar pages online
- Practise the problem structure by writing short texts including it

Your ideas

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Notes

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9 Improving your pronunciation

Objective

To help you think about your pronunciation and how to improve it.

Name

Introduction

This activity will help you to think about the specific pronunciation problems you have and consider ways that you can improve your pronunciation.

What to do

- 1 Think about your pronunciation. Do you have problems with any particular sounds?
- 2 Look back at the *Sounds good* section in Unit 1 of the Student's Book, if necessary.
- 3 List the typical problems you have and make notes below.
- 4 Think about ways you can try to improve. Compare your ideas with a partner.

Input

What can I do? Which of the following is true for me?

- I can pronounce basic sounds but still have problems.
- I can pronounce most sounds so people can understand me.
- I can pronounce nearly all sounds but one or two still cause problems.
- I can pronounce all sounds.

My problem sounds

Symbol	Example word
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.....
.....
.....
.....

What can I do to improve my pronunciation? Which of the following could I do?

- Listen and copy
- Listen and record and listen to myself to compare
- Practise in front of the mirror
- Concentrate on one sound all week
- Buy a pronunciation book

Ideas

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Notes

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10 End of course review

Objective

To review your objectives and think about what to do in the future.

Name

Introduction

This activity will help you to focus on the areas you have made progress in and think about how you can consolidate your English and continue to improve in the future.

What to do

- 1 Think about the progress you have made and make notes below.
- 2 Think about your objectives for the future and compare your ideas with a partner.

Input

.....

Rate your progress in the following areas using a scale of 1 to 10.
1 = not much progress 10 = excellent progress

- Grammar
- Pronunciation
- Vocabulary
- Listening
- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking
- Social skills
- Communicating at work

How many readers have you read?

Have you used the internet to improve your English?

Have you met your goals? Did you carry out your plans?

Have you met your needs?

How useful is your portfolio?

The future

What do you still need to work on in the future?

What are you going to do about it?

.....

Teacher's diary

Date	Class
Unit objectives	
How do I rate the lesson? 1 Terrible <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Not very good <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Good <input type="checkbox"/> 5 Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	
What went well?	
What went less well?	
Did I try anything new?	
What should I think about for next time?	
Anything memorable?	