



Teaching Activities: Five ways to use video

Videos are a great way to bring some authentic listening into your classes. The options for using them are almost endless. You may have access to videos as part of your coursebook or perhaps you use videos that you find online to supplement the topics in your course. You can also encourage your learners to bring in videos they find interesting to share with the class.

When using a video, it's a good idea to structure your activities as you would with a listening text:

- start with a gist or general viewing task
- then one or two more detailed viewing tasks
- finish with an activity which opens up or extends the content of the video.

The following activities can each be used at one of these stages. You could mix and match the activities to create a complete lesson or use one in place of a task in your existing lesson materials. These five ideas will help you make the most of video in your classes.

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1. Silent viewing

Description

In this pre-watching task, learners work in pairs to describe the video without the sound.

Aims

- To create interest in the video
- To activate key language

Procedure

1. Put learners into pairs: one facing the screen, one facing away.
2. Play the video without sound. The learner watching describes and narrates the video for their partner. You could provide some guiding questions such as *What's happening? Who are the people? What do you think they're saying?*
3. The learner facing away listens to their partner and writes down two questions they have about the video based on their partner's commentary. This could be something that doesn't make sense or something else they want to know.
4. Halfway through, they swap over.
5. Play the video with sound so learners can compare with their ideas and try to answer the questions they wrote down.

BONUS ACTIVITY: Play the audio only. Learners have to listen and draw what they think is on screen.

2. Transcript gap fill

Description

Practise detailed listening by turning the transcript into a gap-fill task. Videos from a coursebook will have a transcript but many sources of video also provide transcripts you can use.

Aim

- To listen for specific information

Procedure

1. Remove 8–10 key words or phrases from the transcript. Make sure they are spaced out enough to give learners time to write before the next gap.
2. Give learners a copy of the gapped script and play the video so learners can complete the missing text.
3. Allow them to compare in pairs then share the answers.
4. Play the video again so they can hear the missing words.



3. Vocabulary bingo

Description

If learners bring in their own choice of video, this is a task that they can create for the rest of the class. It develops listening and vocabulary skills for both the task setter and the rest of the class.

Aims

- To promote learner autonomy through leading a classroom activity
- To develop ability to listen for specific words and phrases in context
- To develop ability to clarify meaning using explanations and examples

Procedure

1. Demonstrate with your own video first. Choose ten words or phrases: seven from the video and three distractors. Write them on the board.
2. Make sure learners understand the words and phrases. Encourage them to ask questions: What does ____ mean? or use concept checks to check their understanding.
3. Learners choose six words to write in their notebook.
4. Watch the video and play listening bingo with the vocabulary. When they hear one of the words, they cross it off. They shout 'bingo' if they hear all six.
5. Learners can take turns to bring in a video for the class on a topic of their choice and create a similar task. The learner is in charge of explaining and clarifying their ten words to the rest of the class.

TIP: This is a nice way for learners to share one of their hobbies or interests with their classmates. Make sure you set a time limit for the videos, for example, 3–5 minutes.

4. Mini dictation

Description

This is a post-watching activity that focuses on connected speech. Videos are a great source of authentic pronunciation which you can use to get learners thinking about connected speech. Learners should be familiar with the contents of the video you use.

Aims

- To practise intensive listening
- To raise awareness of features of connected speech



Procedure

1. Select a short extract that shows some interesting features of connected speech. Two or three sentences is enough. If it's the first time you've talked about connected speech with your learners, one sentence and one feature might be enough.
2. Play the video several times, asking learners to write down exactly what they hear. They can compare with their partner after each play. This can be challenging so give learners lots of encouragement.
3. When learners have written most of the text, show the script on the board so they can compare.
4. Emphasise that the aim is not to recreate the script perfectly but to notice where it sounded different. The discussion around this is the most important part of the activity.
5. Highlight where the differences were and model how the pronunciation changes in natural speech. Note the changes on the board so learners can see.
6. The point of the activity is to improve listening skills rather than pronunciation skills. Learners don't have to copy the speaker's pronunciation but to be aware of features such as weak sounds and elision to help them be more effective listeners.

Extra support: The aim is for learners to notice how pronunciation changes in order to develop their listening skills so you could use learners' home language to make the discussion easier.

TIP: You can do this regularly with any video or audio. 'Bottom-up' listening (listening for individual words and sounds rather than for overall meaning) is a key part of developing learners' listening skills. Learners can even do this activity on their own provided they have a transcript to compare to.

5. Video voiceover

Description


Even silent videos can be used to practise and develop English skills. In this activity, learners get creative and develop their writing skills by creating their own voiceover or dialogue to accompany a video.

Aim

- To develop writing skills using visual input

Procedure

1. Play the video once. Learners just watch. You can use a silent video or use it without the audio.
2. Play it again. Learners take notes on:

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3. who the characters are
 4. what is happening.
 5. In pairs or small groups, students write a short script for one or more voices.
 6. They can present their work as a writing task or turn it into a speaking task and perform their scripts while the video plays again.

EXTRA IDEA: Ask learners to think of different styles of film/video – a children’s cartoon, a soap opera, an instructional video, an action movie – and then write in that style. They can use contrasting styles too: if the video is an animation, they could write a voiceover in the style of a wildlife documentary, for example.

Useful links

Read more about mini dictations and connected speech [here](#).

Listen to [this podcast](#) on using short-form video to support teaching and learning aims.

Watch [this webinar](#) about different ways you can use YouTube in your classes.