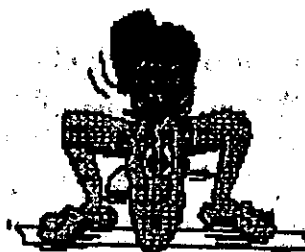


# Ready... Previewing Activities



## Establishing Prior Knowledge and Building Background

*Before reading a text, it's important to establish prior knowledge, build background knowledge, motivate the reader, and set an explicit purpose for reading. Therefore, many of the activities and discussions that one might reserve as a follow-up to reading a text are often more effective in the front end, prior to reading. Here are some ideas for how to do this:*

### Establish prior knowledge:

- Ask students to do a **timed quick-sketch**, in which they draw as many associated thoughts, ideas, topics etc. as possible (alternately they may write instead of draw, or be given the option to do either)
- **Anticipation guides:** the teacher creates a written list of statements about important information from the text to be read. Students agree or disagree with each, and then may discuss the statements or individually respond to them. After reading students adjust or modify their responses.

**Plus-Minus-Interesting (P-M-I):** This is a good technique when working with potentially controversial topics. The teacher presents a statement from the text or a main idea. Students react to the statement in groups by listing pluses, minuses, and interesting thoughts related to the statement. Students can review and revise their lists after reading.

- **KWL charts:** Ask the group and scribe their responses: "What do you know?" "What do you want to know?" and after reading, "What did you learn?". *A caution about KWLs: make sure to revisit any false concepts students may have about the topic and compare them to the original responses, or students may stay with the original misconception*

**Brainstorming:** Place students in pairs or small groups and have them brainstorm ideas around a prompt or question related to the topic of the text. Share out with the whole class.

**Picture this:** Show a picture depicting a topic related to the text. Ask students to make predictions about the picture. You may want to assign different questions or questions stems (i.e. what, who, when, how, etc.) to each pair or group of students and have them make up their own question regarding the picture, which they then try to answer. Not only does it get the students thinking about the topic, in addition when the picture is closely related to the text, students become interested in whether or not the predictions turn out to be true.

## Building background:

- **Pictorial input chart:** (*adapted from Brechtel, Bringing it all together*) Students love this strategy because they watch carefully as clues as to the identity of the picture are slowly revealed. Post a large piece of butcher paper on the wall, on which you have previously lightly drawn in pencil the outline of the figure you'll be drawing in marker in front of the class (*you may want to use an opaque projector or an overhead projected onto the butcher paper to trace around prior to the day of the lesson.*). Group the information you'll be discussing regarding the background knowledge necessary to understand the new topic. As you trace around the outline of the shape (i.e. the figure of a conquistador if you're studying the conquest of the Americas), discuss important background information. (*for example, as you draw the head, discuss factors motivating the Spanish and Aztecs and how they were different. As you draw the arms discuss the difference in weapons between the two groups, etc. You can also use this as an opportunity to activate prior knowledge by asking anticipatory questions about each sub-topic.*)
- **Gear them up with a movie, pictures, or realia.** (If it's a movie and the vocabulary is much too advanced, turn the volume just low enough for you to hear or off, and use simple sentence structure and your target vocabulary to narrate the video.)
- **Use graphic organizers, such as Venn Diagrams, Brainstorming Webs, Structured Overviews**
- **Simulation games:** have a small mini-skits or simulation around the topic of the text. Placing students in roles related to the topic is a powerful way to build background around the topic.
- **Field trips and films:** "Virtual" field trips, in which the teacher asks students to close their eyes and imagine the scene as the teacher describes it, or showing a picture, taping a drawn figure or photo of a student(s) inside the photo, and relating the events of the "field trip" is a low-budget way to travel.
- **Experiments:** in addition to the traditional science experiments (which are excellent for building background), experiments in which we explore, for example, the range of human reactions to a particular stimulus (i.e. when someone calls someone unflattering names) can be a good way to build background ideas and vocabulary prior to reading a text, particularly for social studies themes.
- **Preview guides:** This guide directs students to pre-read titles, headings, subheadings, descriptions of related figures, and summaries. Students can preview and make predictions about content in pairs, followed up by a whole-group discussion.

## Preview vocabulary

*With ELL students, it's crucial to go through the reading selection or text and determine which are the key vocabulary words. Pre-teach these words and reading comprehension (and student confidence and enthusiasm) will improve dramatically. Listed below are some ideas for how to do so.*

- **It's all in the hand:** You'll be amazed at how well students remember the words when you add some gestures. As you go over each word, explain it and make up a gesture using their hands, faces, and/or heads. Every few words return and repeat all the ones up to that point. They'll remember a list of 10 words in no time!
- **Puppet quizzes:** (Good for early production students) Give students a list of vocabulary words with the definitions included. Go over the words and definitions as a whole class to make sure everyone understands them. Then give time to study and provide each student with a puppet. One puppet quizzes the other on a word. They then switch. Since the puppet's the one on the spot, it's less intimidating to be wrong, and who cares if the puppet has poor pronunciation!
- **Fictionary:** Students work in groups of four to six (students can be paired up within the group if desired). The teacher presents a word from the vocabulary list. Each student or pair of students invents a possible definition for the word on small pre-cut pieces of paper. The student "reader" collects the definitions and is also given the correct definition on a paper of the same size and shape. The "reader" reads all the definitions and members or pairs of members in the group choose the most likely correct definition. The teacher then reads a sentence containing the target word. Students decide whether to keep the original chosen definition, or whether to change their choice. (Optional: Students explain their choice and defend it to the other members in the group.) The reader reads the correct definition. Students with the correct answer are given a point. Students whose incorrect definition was chosen by other members of the group are also given a point. *(This technique is particularly powerful when working with the meaning behind roots, suffixes, and prefixes. Students' knowledge of the meaning of these various building blocks of language can aid them in constructing and choosing correct definitions.)*
- **Who Needs Paper?** *This is a quick way to learn or review vocabulary, and it's kinesthetic... great for some of your right-brain dominant students.* As you say each vocabulary word, ask students to draw something representing its meaning in the air with their fingers. (other options: pair students and have one read the word to the other, who then "draws" it on the back of his or her partner. Ask students to close their eyes and draw with their fingers on their forearms, alternating arms between words.) If you're working with categorical or process words, have students draw something that represents the idea or category in question. To encourage divergent

thinking students can draw as many different representations of the idea within a designated time limit as possible.

- **We Drew That:** *This is great for teaching the target vocabulary while reinforcing adjectives at the same time.* Students work in groups of four or so. Each starts with a piece of paper. Tell the students to draw a piece of the final object or organism in question (i.e. Draw the head of a raccoon. or Draw the turret of the castle. [If you wish to develop adjectives as well, include them in the instructions... Draw a long, pointed, rounded blue turret for the castle.]). The student then passes the paper to the next person in the group, who meanwhile passes his or her paper to the next, and so on in a pre-determined order. Each student will end up with a paper, but not the one each had started drawing with. Give the next command. (i.e. Draw the large, furry brown trunk of the raccoon's body.) Continue until the drawing is completed. (Variation: With younger students - 2nd grade and below - it may be more successful to have one student from each team come to the board and draw, rotating one teammate at a time, until the drawing is completed.)
- **You'll Remember What You Teach:** Hand out a list of 10-12 vocabulary words. Have students check off any words they already know the meaning of. Then have them share those words with a partner, who in turn shares his or hers. As a pair they are responsible for both to know the meaning of all of the words that each knows. Have the pair join another group and repeat this process until all students have shared what they collectively know. In pairs, they can then look up any words that no one was familiar with.
- **Let me organize my thinking:** Provide two or more category names (i.e. animal and plant: noun, verb, adjective, and adverb: things and actions: space and terrestrial, etc.). Ask students to cut up the list of words and place them in a pile or inside of a paper bag. Students, working in pairs or small groups, draw the "cards" and place them under the category to which each belongs.
- **Let's Have a Chat:** After having introduced the words with some of the other methods listed on these pages, pair up students and ask them to have a discussion. The first student talks for one minute, including as many words from the vocabulary list as possible. (The sentences must make sense). While that student talks, the partner checks off each word as it's used. Then switch and time the other partner for one minute while his or her partner checks off words. (This technique works best when students are paired by similar language proficiencies.)
- **That's Absurd:** Pre-teach the list of words, perhaps using some of the methods in this section. Students, working in pairs or small groups, try to create the most ridiculous story using a pre-assigned number of vocabulary words (i.e. 8 of the 10). The usage must be syntactically correct. The class can vote on the winning entry.
- **He Said, She Said:** Students sit in a circle with five or six members. The first student names a vocabulary word and gives its definition, or correctly uses the word in a

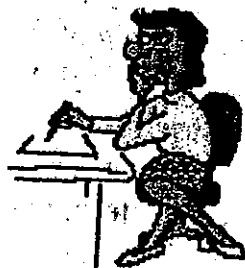
sentence. The next student repeats what the first student said, adding another word with its meaning or sentence. The third student repeats what the first and second had said and adds yet another word with the definition or sentence, and so the game continues. This technique also works well as a review after studying content.

- **Bingo:** Ask students to make their own cards.
  - ✓ Students can cut up the list of vocabulary words and put them in the squares in whichever order they choose. The instructor gives a synonym or definition for the word, and the students cover the appropriate square on their cards.
  - ✓ Students can draw something for each word on the list wherever they'd like on the card. Then when the caller reads the word, the students cover the picture.
- **Rodin's Realia:** Give students clay. Have each sculpt a different vocabulary word. Make a large diorama, map, etc. Have each student label and describe the item she's contributed. This is particularly good for geographical terms and 3-dimensional geometry, but it's great for nouns & verbs in general, and can be used with concrete and abstract words. *(If you choose to have students present and explain their sculptures to the class, classmates can take notes by making quick sketches, labeling their drawings of each sculpture.)*
- **Flannel boards:** Cut up flannel in shapes to represent the vocabulary words. Then have students select and place them on the flannel board as you say them. You can also study prepositions by asking them to place one piece in relation to another (i.e. "Put the barn next to the horse.")
- **Concentration:** Xerox pictures from the story, or use pictures from magazines, a photo library, or your clip art package. Paste them on cards if they aren't already. Make another card with the written label for each picture. Lay them all face down on the table or floor. Each player turns over two cards, trying to match the label with the picture. Each time a match is made, the player keeps the match and is given an extra turn. Continue play until all cards are removed from the playing area. The player with the most cards at the end of the game wins.

# Techniques for Constructing Meaning

## Journals:

- **Double-entry journal:** Students reflect upon what they're reading. Fold a paper vertically into two columns. On the left students copy a passage from the text that the student or teacher has selected. On the right the student responds, questions, asks for clarification, analyzes, makes connections, etc.
- **Learning log:** This is similar to a double-entry journal, but the student puts the ideas from the passage on the left side into his/her own words, or translates into the native language.
- **Metacognitive journal:** Metacognition is thinking about the learning process itself. On the left side students note what they've learned, and on the right side students indicate the steps or process used to learn.
- **Problem-solution journal:** The student notes a problem on the left side of the journal, and possible solutions to the problem on the right side.
- **Quickwrite:** Before or after studying a topic, time the students for 2-3 minutes and have them furiously write any and everything they can think of about the topic, either in English or their native language. If they need to draw or code-switch (write some in English and some in the native language) that's okay. Students shouldn't worry about spelling and grammar. This activity is designed to generate ideas and concepts. The timed element doesn't allow for evaluation and censure, which is sometimes an ELL students' worst enemy because they are often so critical of their imperfect ability to express themselves in English.



## Responding to text:

- Have students read an appropriately leveled selection in pairs, stopping every paragraph, half, or whole page to summarize what they've understood on that portion of the text. The instructor checks at the end of paragraphs or every so often to make sure they're comprehending. Often an ELL student who decodes well and a native English speaker who has decoding difficulties make a good

Based in part on the ideas presented in "Smart Yellow Pages", the California Literacy Project, 1989

pair. The ELL student helps to pronounce the words correctly and the native English speaker helps with vocabulary comprehension.

- **Reader's theatre:** The text is turned into a script. Students are given parts and read the text dramatically. Students can be placed in small groups, and perform the reading for another group in the classroom. Those students who speak little English can become "shadow actors", in which they are given designated roles or characters, and they silently act out what is being voiced by the readers.
- **Transformation:** Rewrite the text into a new form. This can be done individually, as a group, or whole-class (i.e. story to play, novel to poem, expository to persuasive).
- **Creating chapter titles:** This is a good way to work with extrapolating the main idea from text. Students work alone or in pairs/groups to create a title for a chapter or text selection. Students share titles from a common portion of text and discuss.
- **Tableau:** Students visualize text by choosing a section and, as a group, depict the text as a "frozen" scene, as though they were a photograph. They may use props. Another variation of this activity is that a student from the audience may tap one of the "frozen" characters, who then "comes to life" and makes a statement, in character, pertaining to the text, or what the character might be thinking about what has happened in the text.

### **Graphic Organizers:**

- Graphic organizers are a great way to distill out the main ideas and meaning while reducing verbiage. That is an essential combination for ELL learners. As you discuss the topic under study, the graphic organizer can be on the overhead and you can note important points in short phrases as the discussion continues. ELL students can have a copy of the graphic organizer at their desk, or perhaps the teacher provides a copy when you're done so students can concentrate on you and not be concerned about copying down information. See several examples in this handbook.

### **Cooperative Activities:**

- Cooperative instructional strategies should play a prominent role in classrooms with ELL students. See the page in this handbook entitled "Cooperative Learning and the ELL Student".

## Review... In Conclusion...



Reviews can easily turn into major projects that take big chunks of time. Make sure you know what you want to accomplish. If you just want a quick review of the major concepts and vocabulary, make it clear you're not expecting a perfectly spelled draft that's gone through two revisions. Beautiful pieces of art may be fun, but they can take an enormous amount of time. Lists of fun activity extensions to reading selections or books should either be quick or something students can do at home, and always academically useful. At the point the conclusion activity is no longer furthering your objectives, it's time to move on.

- **Make a poster, collage, diorama, mural, etc.** Pictorial representations with or without accompanying text, is a great way to indicate understanding. Encourage students with enough English to give a presentation and explanation of the project. Those who can't do this in English can do so in their native language. You can still provide feedback on eye contact, posture, volume, etc.
- **Fold books:** Fold books add fun and interest to the task of summarizing, and allow students to support their writing with illustrations. See the teacher resource section for the names of some good sources for instructions on how to make them.

**Write a short summary paragraph (or three paragraphs for the more confident and able).** You can pair up students who are able to write in English with those who can't. (Literate ELL students unable to write in English may work on concept development with an English-speaking student, and write in their native language.)

**Throw a foam ball around the room.** Each person who catches it must name something he or she learned from the reading passage. (For students who have very little English, you can ask them a yes or no question, a true or false question, or ask them to choose between two possible answers or statements.)

**All the room is a quiz.** Designate a location around the room for *true* statements, another for *false* statements. Tape category names (*i.e.: mammals, reptiles, birds, etc.*) around the room, or tape "*never, seldom, sometimes, frequently, always*" in different locations. Give students statements written on pieces of paper. They then find the category, frequency, or true/false indicator that goes with the statement, and stand next to that location.

**Check informally for understanding.** Maybe all you need to do is ask the student to briefly summarize their understanding, answer yes-no questions, or write short definitions next to the key vocabulary words. If the students demonstrate understanding move on.

**See Cooperative Learning and the ESL student (in this handbook) for more ideas for additional culminating ideas and activities.**



# Cooperative Learning and the ELL Student<sup>1</sup>

*Why is cooperative learning so important? Here are two good reasons...*



✓ In order to learn language, one must USE language. In a classroom with 25 students, and if students respond only to teacher input, each student would have an extremely limited language production time. With cooperative learning, the input/response ratio per student increases dramatically.

✓ Many ESL students come from homes where children primarily interact with siblings and peers. Parents play more of a guiding and structuring role. These children may be more comfortable and successful learning from peers than adults. This may be a good thing for the teacher, because there's just one of you and several of them. So let's use this to our advantage! Here are some ideas for how to do so...

**Guidelines to keep in mind during cooperative learning activities:**

- Explain to students why cooperative activities are so important to their learning.
- Teach social skills and problem resolution techniques before assigning group work.
- Equip students with tools for success and strategies to deal effectively with frustration. Class meetings (see Positive Discipline by Jane Nelson) and New Games-type activities can be very helpful.
- Group teams, with a mix of English ability and academic strengths in each team.
- Ensure that at least part of the final grade or evaluation is a group collective grade.
- Debrief at the end of the activity, allowing students to evaluate their success in working together as a group.

## **Jigsaw:**

*This is one of my favorite strategies because it puts the students in the "teacher's seat"... which is where they should be...often!*

1. Have enough different tasks or readings so that you can form groups of five, with each member having a different part. Make everyone in the class who has the first reading an "A", everyone with the second a "B", and so on.

For more cooperative ideas, see Second Language Learning Through Cooperative Learning.  
Kagan Publishing 1-800-933-2667

1. Group all of the "A's" together and have them read the text/perform the task or operation, or whatever they are to do.
2. Give them time to discuss the reading/task until all members are comfortable discussing the major points/explaining the operation on their own.
3. Form groups with one A, one B, one C, etc. Each member of the group is in charge of explaining their reading/operation to the others.
4. This group makes some kind of presentation to the class/makes a product to turn in to the teacher, etc.

**What about the student who speaks little or no English?** Put this student with a bilingual peer and have them work together. Make sure the non-English speaker has some contribution to the final product (i.e. a drawing, a non-verbal demonstration, or an explanation in the native language, translated by the bilingual peer). If there is no bilingual peer, have the non-English speaking student look up selected vocabulary pertinent to the readings/project in a bilingual dictionary and illustrate/present.

### **Numbered Heads Together:**

*This activity legitimizes the sharing of answers, actively includes everyone in the discussion, and ensures that a variety of students will be called on.*

1. Number the students from one to four (if you have one more or less in one of the groups, give two people one number to share, or give one person two numbers).
2. Ask a question with multiple responses. (i.e. What were some of the characteristics of the Great Depression?)
3. The four students put their "heads together" to come up with some answers. They make sure everyone can name at least two.
4. The teacher then says a number between one and four, and only the students with that number can raise their hands and are called on to answer.

▀ **Variation:** Have all students whose numbers have been called come to their designated space on the board at the front of the room to write or draw their answer.

**What about the student who speaks little or no English?** Put this student with a bilingual peer and have him/her translate the question and help formulate an answer if necessary. The ELL student can answer in the native language and the bilingual peer can translate.

### **Fold the Line:**

1. Students line up according to some criteria (shortest to tallest, birthday chronology, alphabetical order by first or last name, how often they go to the movies, hiking in the woods, or to the grocery store, etc.).
2. The tail of the line walks over to the head of the line and the line "folds" until everyone is across from someone else.

3. Supply students with a topic to discuss, depending upon the content or language acquisition goal under study.

*What about the student who speaks little or no English?* Prep your students so that if they end up across from students with limited English production skills, their job is to use hand or body gestures, yes/no or either/or questions, etc. to make the discussion comprehensible.

### **Outside/Inside circle:**

This is similar to *Fold the Line* except that you make two concentric circles. The outer circle can move one to the left each time you wish students to change partners, either to discuss the same or a new prompt or question.

### **People Hunt:**

1. Create a questionnaire/survey in which you list some qualities or conditions, involving the target subject vocabulary under study. ( i.e. I use green toothpaste. I walk to school. I know how to cook at least three things by myself. I can name at least four past United States presidents. etc. )
2. Have students walk around, asking other students if they meet the conditions.
3. If a student says yes, he or she is asked for a signature on the line next to the statement.
4. Students may share their results with a partner to further practice the vocabulary.

### **Continuum:**

- Even students who are not yet ready to produce much English can participate in this activity, depending upon the sophistication of the opinion statements.*
1. Set up a continuum line at the front of the room.
  2. Put a plus at one side of the board and a minus on the other. ( Variations can be having a student hold up cards, or put up numbers 1 through 5, designating 5 as very true, and 1 as very false.
  3. Make a statement and direct students to line up according to their response to the statement. ( i.e. "Cutting taxes is more important than adding more public bus routes." or "Everyone should be required to recycle." or "Peter and Judy shouldn't have taken the Jumanji game back to the park and left it there.")
  4. Have students from the 1 and 2 side of the continuum pair up with students from the 4 and 5 side to defend their points of view.

*What about the student who speaks little or no English?* Give the student the phrases ahead of time and have a bilingual peer translate. They can plan together the ELL student's opinion or response.

## **Group Races:**

*The racing and group cooperative components of this game keep students absorbed and motivated*

1. Hang a piece of butcher paper per group somewhere around the room. Provide a list of instructions to each team. (i.e. If you're studying about the body write "Draw a green head. Draw a black nose." etc. If you're studying the continents write "Draw Australia in the southeast quadrant." etc. At the end of the list of commands, write some action the group must do when it finishes. i.e. "Sit in a circle in front of your drawings, raise your hands, and yell "Good work team!")
2. Explain to students in groups that they will be asked to perform the commands quickly and accurately, and, if it's an ELD class, that students may only communicate in the target language. All students must participate, although students may help each other.
3. Then the race is on.
4. Afterwards check each group's work for accuracy.

*What about the student who speaks little or no English?* If this activity is being done in the mainstream class with native English speakers and the emphasis is content knowledge, allow a bilingual peer to translate. If that's not possible, pair the student with a peer and have them perform one of the commands together OR make one of the commands quite basic and be sure the student has the vocabulary to perform the task before you do the activity.

## **Race to the Answer:**

*This is a fun way to give a true/false quiz. You need a big space in which to play.*

1. Place the students in two lines facing each other.
  2. Draw or designate lines at least 15 feet behind each line of students as the safety zone.
  3. Designate which team turns around and runs back toward the safety zone behind them if the statement is true.
  4. The other team will turn around and run if it's false. The team who is not turning around and running becomes the tagging team and chases the students who need to run to safety.
  5. If a tagging student tags someone from the other team, the tagged student must join the tagging team.
- *This game is better played with an all-ELD class, or if in the mainstream, with students who have enough English to quickly process the vocabulary.*