

Games for Grammar Practice

**A resource book of
grammar games and
interactive activities**

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Introduction

Games for Grammar Practice is a carefully designed selection of over forty games and activities, for intensive and interactive grammar practice with basic to advanced learners of English. Because it follows closely the grammar syllabus of most EFL/ESL courses, it is a most useful complement to many course and grammar books in use today.

THE IDEAS BEHIND THE ACTIVITIES

Cooperative learning You will probably notice that, in most games, knowing the language is not the main factor that leads to winning; actually, luck, strategy and creativity play important roles. This has been done on purpose to foster a cooperative rather than competitive atmosphere, and to make sure weaker learners can also participate and win. Also, in some of the games there is no winner at all.

Teaching, not testing The activities in the book are meant to give learners an opportunity to practise and experiment with language. For this reason many of them present a lot of input while requiring relatively little production in the target structure. This encourages learners to concentrate on processing the meaning of target structures instead of pressuring them to produce such constructions before they are ready to.

Self and peer correction Our experience tells us that self and peer correction are often more effective than teacher correction in helping students to take responsibility for their own learning. Thus most of the game rules and activity procedures urge the participants to monitor their own as well as their peers' language production.

Practice The activities have been designed to make sure that learners get plenty of practice in the target structures.

Personalization There is plenty of room for learners to establish rapport with their classmates by sharing their experiences, values and beliefs.

Oral interaction All the activities are interactive to encourage learners to attend to meaning and form as they interpret and produce language.

Information gap If exchange of information is one of the basic reasons why people communicate in real life, then classroom activities should also urge learners to seek and provide information.

Task-orientation As in real life, learners will be using the information obtained from others to accomplish tasks.

Variety You will find a lot of variety as to context, activity type, type of interaction and materials, because novelty helps to sustain interest.

Enjoyment Fun and pleasure in learning are probably the strongest motivation factors. In our activities, they take the form of challenge, humour and acknowledgement of learners' creativity.

PRACTICAL TIPS

Re-using the material It is probably best to have the boards and cards laminated. However, as this may turn out to be quite expensive, you may instead photocopy the pages directly onto cardboard or paste the photocopies onto sheets of cardboard. As for the boards, another inexpensive solution is to keep them inside plastic bags.

Sorting out sets of cards This task will be much easier for you and your students if you distinguish the sets by colour. So, either photocopy the pages onto coloured sheets or draw straight lines right across or down the back of the sheets with coloured felt-tipped pens before cutting up the cards. You may also want to store them away in coloured envelopes or bags.

Substituting material In case you do not have enough counters, use coloured paper clips instead. They are easy to find and inexpensive.

Preparing for activities Read the instructions carefully and make sure you have the necessary material. Either explain or demonstrate how the game or activity works. Use L1 if necessary, especially with beginners. Note that the vocabulary lists provided in the instruction sheets reflect what we think might be new to students. Always check the boards, cards, or grids for vocabulary items, and pre-teach them if necessary.

Thanks and acknowledgements

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Games for Grammar Practice

Map of the book

KEY: B = BEGINNER; E = ELEMENTARY; P = PRE-INTERMEDIATE; I = INTERMEDIATE; U = UPPER-INTERMEDIATE; A = ADVANCED

| Activity | Language focus | Activity type | Topic | Level | Time (minutes) | Page |
|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|-------|----------------|------|
| UNIT 1 Present | | | | | | |
| 1.1 Balloon tours | Present simple of <i>be</i> | Information pool | Countries | B | 10–15 | 8 |
| 1.2 A day at home | Present continuous | Board game | Activities done at home | E | 10–20 | 10 |
| 1.3 Looking for a flatmate | Present simple | Interview | Habits and routines | E | 20 | 12 |
| 1.4 Lend a hand | Present simple 3rd person singular | Problem solving | Age, occupations and hobbies | P | 20 | 14 |
| 1.5 Time and again | Adverbials of frequency | Betting game | Activities and events | E–P | 20–30 | 16 |
| UNIT 2 Past | | | | | | |
| 2.1 Gotcha! | Simple past | Questions and answers | Activities and events | E | 10 | 20 |
| 2.2 Everyday hazards | Simple past/past continuous | Story telling | Funny accidents | I | 20 | 22 |
| 2.3 Sweet memories | <i>Used to</i> | Board game | Growing-up memories | I–U | 20–30 | 24 |
| UNIT 3 Present perfect and past perfect | | | | | | |
| 3.1 Around town | Present perfect simple | Board game | Recent experiences or events | I–U | 20 | 26 |
| 3.2 Snooping around | Present perfect simple | Truth or dare | Life experiences | I–A | 20–30 | 30 |
| 3.3 Before or after? | Past perfect simple | Card game | Causes and consequences | I–U | 15–20 | 35 |
| UNIT 4 Future | | | | | | |
| 4.1 What on earth...? | <i>Going to</i> | Board game | Intended actions | P–I | 20 | 38 |
| 4.2 Make it snappy | <i>Will</i> | Card game | Unplanned decisions | P–I | 10 | 40 |
| UNIT 5 Mixed tenses | | | | | | |
| 5.1 Easy rider | Mixed tenses | Board game | Travelling | P | 15–20 | 43 |

Map of the book

| Activity | Language focus | Activity type | Topic | Level | Time (minutes) | Page |
|--|---|--------------------|-------------------------------|-------|----------------|------|
| UNIT 6 Conditional and wish constructions | | | | | | |
| 6.1 Nothing's perfect! | First conditional | Simulation | Jobs | I | 20 | 47 |
| 6.2 Watch your step! | Second conditional | Snakes and ladders | Unusual behaviour | I | 20 | 50 |
| 6.3 Pick my good deed | Third conditional | Board game | Justifying actions | U–A | 15–20 | 52 |
| 6.4 The wish race | Wish constructions | Grid game | Regrets and complaints | I–U | 15–20 | 55 |
| UNIT 7 Reported speech | | | | | | |
| 7.1 Who's got my message? | Reported speech | Card game | Telephone messages | I | 15–20 | 57 |
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| 8.2 Let's go together | <i>Like v. would like</i> | Find someone who | Invitations | E | 10–20 | 62 |
| 8.3 Spinning ideas | Modals (simple) | Scattergories | Constraints and possibilities | P | 15–20 | 66 |
| 8.4 Tough luck! | Modals (perfect) | Debate | Speculations | A | – | 68 |
| UNIT 9 Passive and causative | | | | | | |
| 9.1 Something in common | Simple present and past passive | Trivia pursuit | World knowledge | E–I | 15–20 | 71 |
| 9.2 Grown-ups! | Passive + infinitive | Discussion | Growing-up experiences | I–A | 20 | 73 |
| 9.3 Round the clock | Causative with <i>have</i> | Role-play | Errands and services | I–U | 20 | 75 |
| UNIT 10 Questions and auxiliaries | | | | | | |
| 10.1 Making friends | Wh-questions with present simple | Find someone who | Personal information | B–E | 10–20 | 78 |
| 10.2 What's my answer? | Yes/no questions with present simple | Betting game | Open | B–E | 15–20 | 80 |
| 10.3 All about us | Wh-questions with mixed tenses | Personal trivia | Open/personal | Any | 20–30 | 82 |
| 10.4 Unique me | Auxiliaries <i>too, either, so, neither</i> | Sharing | Open/personal | E–I | 10–15 | 84 |

Map of the book

| Activity | Language focus | Activity type | Topic | Level | Time (minutes) | Page |
|------------------------------|--|------------------|--------------------------|-------|----------------|------|
| UNIT 11 Articles | | | | | | |
| 11.1 Come one, come all | <i>a/an</i> v. <i>some</i> | Board game | Food | B–E | 15–20 | 87 |
| UNIT 12 There and it | | | | | | |
| 12.1 Pack 'n' go | <i>There be</i> in present simple | Information pool | Hotels | E | 10–15 | 90 |
| 12.2 Rain or shine | <i>It</i> as subject | Tic-tac-toe | Weather conditions | I | 10–15 | 92 |
| UNIT 13 Verb forms | | | | | | |
| 13.1 Verb trap | <i>To</i> v. <i>-ing</i> | Grid game | Open | I | 15–20 | 94 |
| UNIT 14 Prepositions | | | | | | |
| 14.1 The preposition contest | Prepositions of place and time | Tic-tac-toe | Open | B | 15 | 96 |
| 14.2 You and I | Adjective + preposition | Sharing | Personality and feelings | I | 15–30 | 98 |
| 14.3 Preposition checkers | Verb + preposition | Chinese checkers | Open | U | 20 | 100 |
| UNIT 15 Comparisons | | | | | | |
| 15.1 How do they compare? | Comparative forms of adjectives | Dominoes | Open | I | 20 | 104 |
| 15.2 Three of a kind | Comparative forms of quantifiers | Rummy | Common nouns | P | 10–15 | 106 |
| UNIT 16 Possessives | | | | | | |
| 16.1 Family album | Subject pronouns and possessive adjectives | Maze | Family | B | 15 | 109 |
| 16.2 What a mess! | Genitive <i>'s</i> | Information pool | Personal belongings | E | 10 | 112 |

1.1

UNIT 1 Present

Balloon tours

Language focus

Present simple of *be* in statements and *wh*-questions

Level

Beginner

Type

Information pool

Topic

Countries

Interaction

Pairs

Time

10–15 minutes

Material

Worksheets A and B

Vocabulary

Names of countries: *France, Spain, Australia, USA, Belgium, Mexico*
Wh-questions: *where, what*
Prepositions: *from, in, at*

Comments

This game provides contextualized practice with statements and *wh*-questions contrasting 3rd person singular and plural of *be*. Students are given a task which they can only accomplish by interacting orally with classmates, that is, by requesting and providing information, and then making decisions based on the information obtained.

Language output

A: *Where is/are (name) from?*
B: *He/she/they is/are from (country).*
A: *What hotel is/are he/she/they in?*
B: *He/she/they is/are at (hotel).*

Procedures

- 1 Before class, take copies of the worksheet and cut them in half as indicated. In class, give out worksheet A to half of the class, and worksheet B to the other half. Pair off students with worksheets A and B.
- 2 Elicit the questions and answers in **Language output** using the worksheets. If you like, write a skeleton of the dialogue on the board.
- 3 Set the situation and the task by telling your students the following: *You work for Prime Balloon Tours. The company has three balloons for tours over the city, and three tour guides: one speaks English, one speaks French, and the other speaks Spanish. Your task is to decide firstly which tourists should go in which balloon, and secondly how many hotels each guide needs to stop at to pick up tourists. Talk to your partners first to get the information you need to do the task.*
- 4 Doing the activity:
 - ▶ Without looking at each other's worksheet, students ask and answer questions and complete their respective charts.
 - ▶ When they have finished, they answer questions 1 and 2 on their worksheets, together.
 - ▶ Check their answers or decisions with the whole class.

A**Prime Balloon Tours**

| TOURISTS | COUNTRY | HOTEL |
|----------------------|-----------|------------------|
| John Smith | | |
| Mr and Mrs Dupont | France | The Royal Inn |
| Julio Banderas | Spain | The Palace |
| Marie Delon | | |
| Jose and Pepe Garcia | | |
| Kathy and Fred Brown | Australia | The Bridge House |

1 In which balloon should the tourists go? Write the names of the tourists under the appropriate balloon.

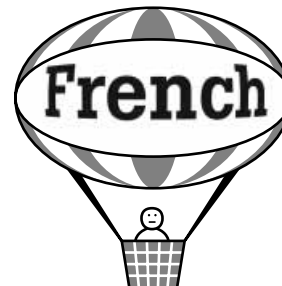


2 How many hotels does each guide need to stop at to pick up tourists?

B**Prime Balloon Tours**

| TOURISTS | COUNTRY | HOTEL |
|----------------------|---------|-------------------|
| John Smith | USA | The Queen's Plaza |
| Mr and Mrs Dupont | | |
| Julio Banderas | | |
| Marie Delon | Belgium | The Royal Inn |
| Jose and Pepe Garcia | Mexico | The Palace |
| Kathy and Fred Brown | | |

1 In which balloon should the tourists go? Write the names of the tourists under the appropriate balloon.



2 How many hotels does each guide need to stop at to pick up tourists?

1.2

UNIT 1 Present

A day at home

Language focus

Present continuous in statements and questions

Level

Elementary

Type

Board game

Topic

Activities done at home

Interaction

Pairs

Time

10–20 minutes

Material

Board (one per pair),
counters (four per
student)

Vocabulary

Parts of the house: *bathroom, bedroom, backyard, dining room, garden, basement, kitchen, attic, living room*

Verbs: referring to activities associated with the various parts of the house

Comments

Adapted from *Achi*, an African game which resembles tic-tac-toe but also incorporates movement, this game is designed for intensive practice with the present continuous in wh-questions and statements to describe ongoing activities. Because it provides a unified context, learners can integrate grammar and vocabulary practice. Winning the game requires language accuracy, creativity and strategic skill.

Language output

A: *What are you doing in the kitchen/backyard?*

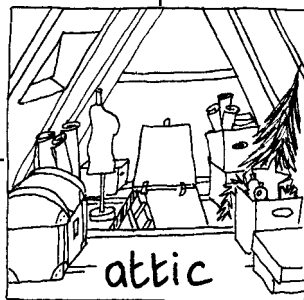
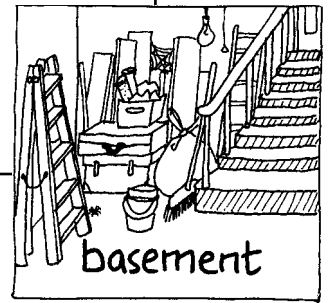
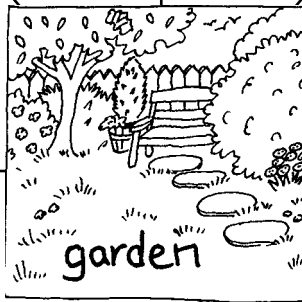
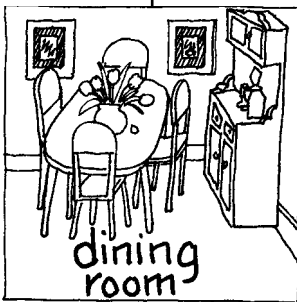
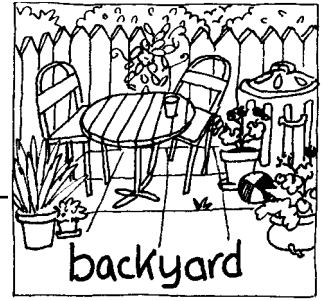
B: *I'm doing the dishes/washing the dog.*

Procedures

- 1 Pair off students, and give out the material. **Note:** If you don't have enough counters, cut out the black and white squares below the board, and use them instead.
- 2 Go over the parts of the house shown on the board, and elicit activities that might be done in each part. If you wish, write the vocabulary on the blackboard. Model the target language shown in **Language output**, and demonstrate the game a couple of times.
- 3 Playing the game:
 - ▶ Objective of the game: align one's counters in a horizontal, vertical or diagonal row of three.
 - ▶ The game begins with student B choosing the spot where he or she wants to place a counter. Then student A asks an appropriate question, as shown in **Language output**. If student B gives an appropriate and correct answer, he or she may place the counter in the chosen spot. Otherwise, no counter goes on the board.
 - ▶ Players take turns doing this until one of them forms a row of three with his or her counters, or until all the counters have been placed on the board.
 - ▶ If no one has formed a row of three and all the counters have been placed on the board, players can once more attempt to form such a row by moving their counters along the lines into the empty spots, one at a time, and interacting as shown above. **Note:** They are not allowed to repeat an answer that has already been given.
 - ▶ The game ends when either one manages to form a horizontal, vertical or diagonal row with his or her counters. As this game depends a lot on the players' strategic skills, it may last anything from two to five minutes. Let them play several times for further practice.

Variations

- 1 To practise vocabulary related to other activities, replace the parts of the house on the board with other places, e.g. *bank, school, petrol station, post office, etc.*
- 2 For practice with the various persons and subject-verb agreement, use the spare counters and write on them: *Your mother / You / Your sisters / Your grandpa* etc. The language output will then change to, e.g. *What's your mother doing in the kitchen? She's feeding the cats.*



1.3

UNIT 1 Present

Looking for a flatmate

Language focus

Present simple in statements and questions

Level

Elementary

Type

Interview

Topic

Habits and routines

Interaction

Pairs

Time

20 minutes

Material

Worksheet (one per student)

Vocabulary

Verbs: *have, cook, get up, take, go, get back, do*

Nouns: *pet, car, hobbies, shower, work, home, dinner, evening, activities, weekend*

Comments

In this activity, students will have intensive controlled practice with the simple present in statements and questions involving the 2nd person singular, plus statements in the 3rd person singular. This is an excellent opportunity for elementary students to get to know one another and talk about themselves while interacting to accomplish the task proposed.

Language output

Phase I A: *Do you have a pet?*

B: *Yes, I do. I have a turtle.*

A: *What time do you get up?*

B: *I usually get up at 7:00.*

Phase II T: *Who do you prefer as a flatmate?*

St: *I prefer (name).*

T: *Why?*

St: *Because he / she cooks / doesn't have a pet.*

Procedures

Phase I

- 1 Introduce the topic of sharing rooms or flats. Elicit problems that people might have, and what it is important to check before choosing a flatmate.
- 2 Set the context and the task by telling students: *You are looking for a flatmate. You are going to interview two friends to decide who will be your flatmate.*
- 3 Hand out the worksheets, and elicit the questions associated with the cues given. Emphasize the correct use of the auxiliary *do*. Encourage students to come up with other questions that are important to them and allow them to omit any questions they do not consider important.
- 4 Doing the activity:
 - ▶ Individually, students complete the first column of the chart with information about themselves.
 - ▶ In pairs, students ask and answer questions to complete the second column.
 - ▶ Students switch pairs, and repeat this last procedure to fill out the third column.
 - ▶ Give students a few minutes to decide who they prefer as a flatmate and why.

Phase II

- 1 With the whole class, elicit some of your students' choices and reasons. Use this opportunity to introduce the 3rd person singular *-s* ending in statements.
- 2 Have students report their choices and reasons to the class.

1.4

UNIT 1 Present

Lend a hand

Language focus

Present simple 3rd person singular in statements and questions

Level

Pre-intermediate

Type

Problem solving

Topic

Age, occupations and hobbies

Interaction

Pairs

Time

20 minutes

Material

Worksheets A and B

Vocabulary

Professions: *reporter, cook, farmer, teacher*

Activities: *cook the meals, wash the dishes, clean the bathrooms, take care of the little kids, entertain the teenagers, give swimming lessons, look after the horses, take care of the garden*

Hobbies: *(go) swimming, (do) gardening, (go) horseback riding, (do) handicraft*

Comments

This contextualized and task-oriented information gap activity asks learners to collect information and make decisions while providing them with an opportunity to practise asking and answering questions involving the present simple 3rd person singular. It can also be used to introduce or review collocations such as *go swimming*, and some phrasal verbs, e.g. *look after*.

Language output

A: *How old is Sharon Miles?*

B: *She's 28.*

A: *What does she do?*

B: *She's a reporter.*

A: *Where does she work?*

B: *She works at/for MTV.*

A: *What does she do in her free time?*

B: *She goes swimming.*

Procedures

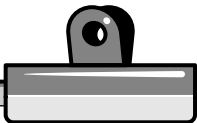
Phase I

- 1 Before class, take copies of the worksheet and cut them in half as indicated. In class, hand out worksheet A to half of the class, and worksheet B to the other half.
- 2 Set the context and the task by telling the class: *You are organizers of a summer camp for homeless children. You have a list of volunteers. Your task is to decide what you are going to do and what the volunteers are each going to do.*
- 3 Individually, students read the list of chores and write their names next to the two chores they want to do.
- 4 Pair off students with worksheets A and B to find out what their partners want to do. Write *What do you want to do? I want to ...* on the board if necessary. In case of conflicting interests, let them sort it out with whatever language they can use.

Phase II

- 1 Using the worksheets, elicit the questions and answers in **Language output** above.
- 2 In pairs, students get from their partners the missing information on the volunteers.
- 3 Students then decide, in pairs and together, what the best chores are for each volunteer.
- 4 If you wish, regroup students so they can report on and discuss their decisions with other peers.

A

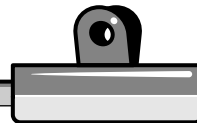


Tasks

- cook the meals
- wash the dishes
- clean the bathrooms
- take care of the little kids
- entertain the teenagers
- give swimming lessons
- look after the horses
- take care of the garden

Who?

B



Tasks

- cook the meals
- wash the dishes
- clean the bathrooms
- take care of the little kids
- entertain the teenagers
- give swimming lessons
- look after the horses
- take care of the garden

Who?

Lend a hand

Help us help our children



Name: Sharon Miles
Category: Volunteer
Age: 28
Job: Reporter
Place of Work: MTV
Hobbies: swimming

Lend a hand

Help us help our children



Name: Phil Lee
Category: Volunteer
Age:
Job:
Place of Work:
Hobbies:

Lend a hand

Help us help our children



Name: Sharon Miles
Category: Volunteer
Age:
Job:
Place of Work:
Hobbies:

Lend a hand

Help us help our children



Name: Phil Lee
Category: Volunteer
Age: 29
Job: cook
Place of Work: Mr Chow's
Hobbies: gardening

Lend a hand

Help us help our children



Name: Maria Fernandez
Category: Volunteer
Age:
Job:
Place of Work:
Hobbies:

Lend a hand

Help us help our children



Name: Sergei Seibel
Category: Volunteer
Age: 53
Job: farmer
Place of Work: Sunny Farm
Hobbies: horse riding

Lend a hand

Help us help our children



Name: Maria Fernandez
Category: Volunteer
Age: 33
Job: teacher
Place of Work: Kinnelon High
Hobbies: handicraft

Lend a hand

Help us help our children



Name: Sergei Seibel
Category: Volunteer
Age:
Job:
Place of Work:
Hobbies:



1.5

UNIT 1 Present

Time and again

Language focus

Adverbials of frequency

Level

**Elementary or
pre-intermediate**

Type

Betting game

Topic

Activities and events

Interaction

Groups of three or four

Time

20–30 minutes

Material

**Two sets of cards per
group**

Vocabulary

Activities: Any activity students can think of for a given picture, e.g. picture 1 may generate: *go swimming, swim in the sea/a lake/a river, swim across the English Channel*, etc.

Adverbials of frequency: *every day, more than once a day, quite often, almost every day, about once a week, sometimes, a couple of times a month, once or twice a year, not very often, hardly ever, seldom, never*

Comments

This game gives learners an opportunity to practise asking questions with *how often*, and answering them with adverbials of frequency, while using a lot of vocabulary related to general activities and events. It is quite challenging and fun in that players must be able to anticipate their opponents' answers in order to lay down their cards and win the game. That means knowing their classmates well and being able to use their picture prompts creatively.

Language output

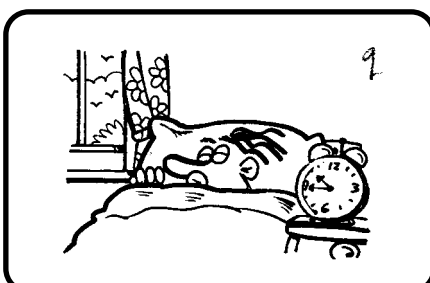
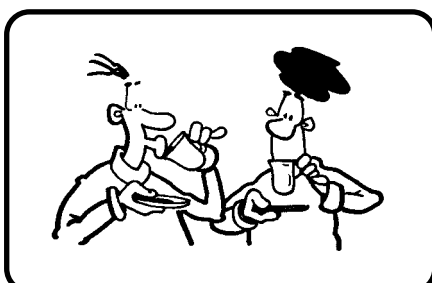
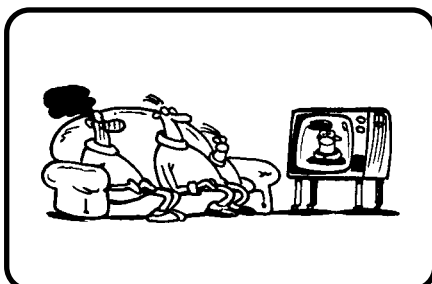
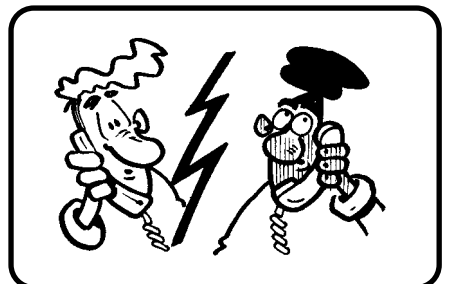
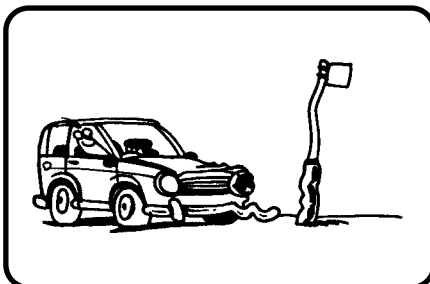
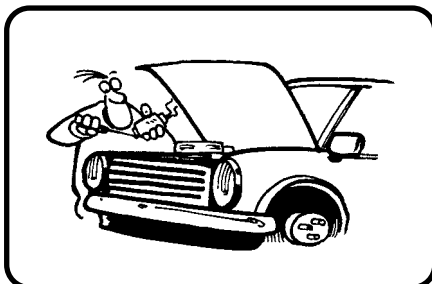
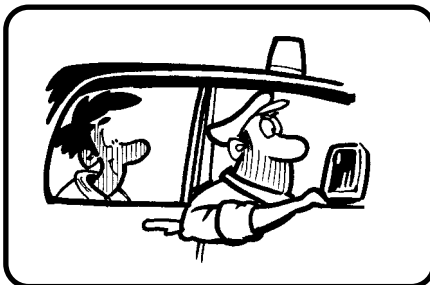
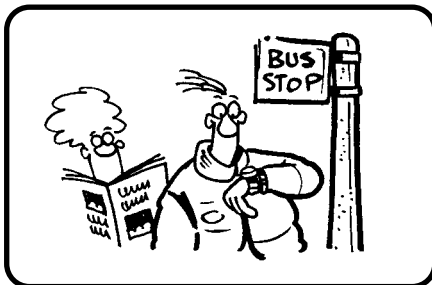
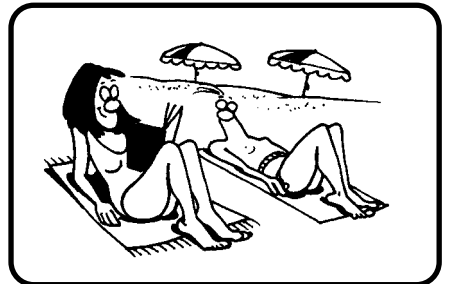
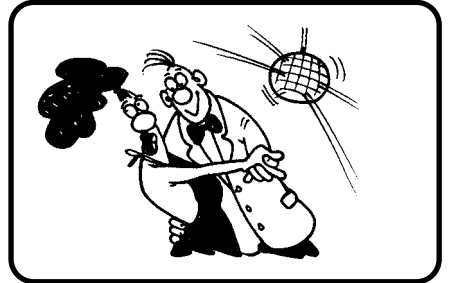
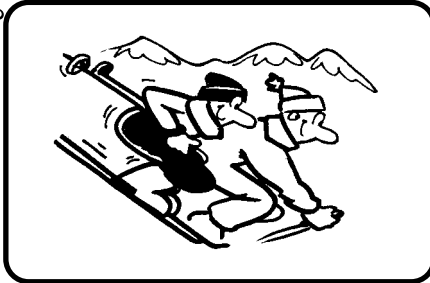
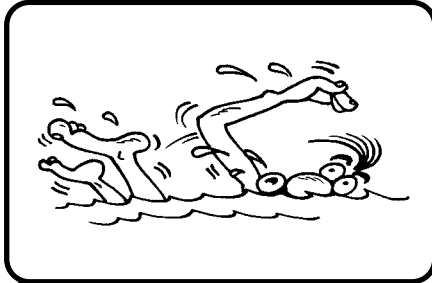
A: *How often do you do your homework?*

B: *I seldom do my homework.*

Procedures

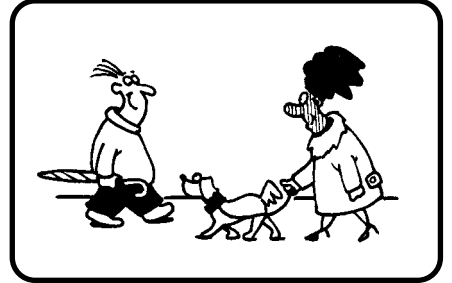
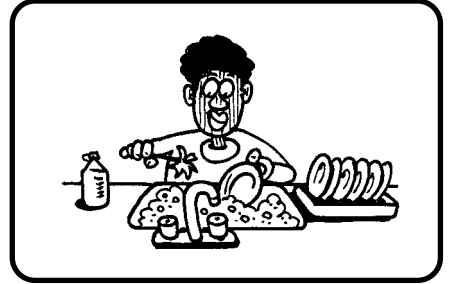
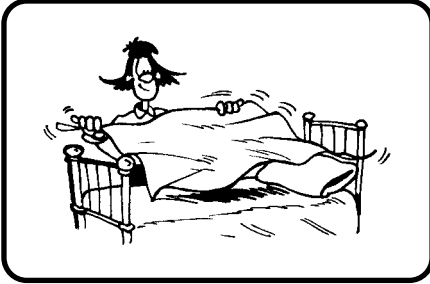
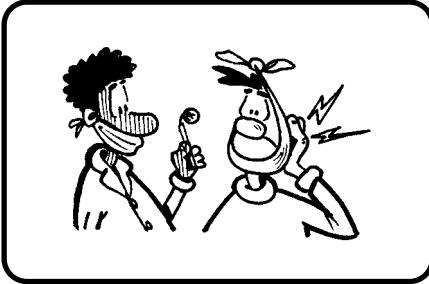
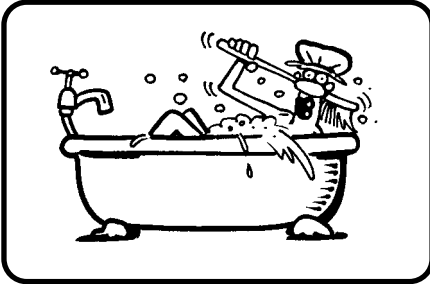
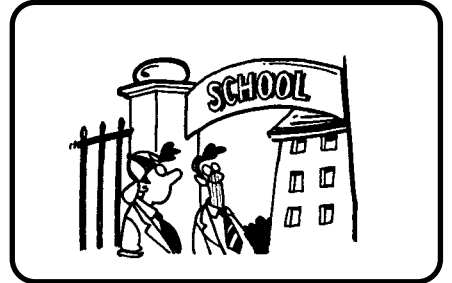
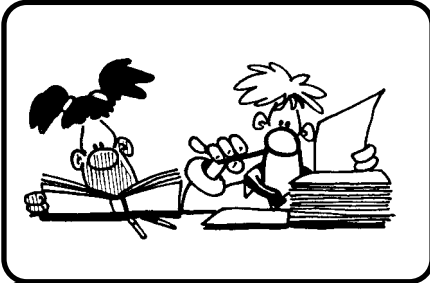
- 1 Before class, cut out one set of picture cards and one set of frequency cards for each group.
- 2 Elicit and model the language in **Language output** several times to make sure students are able to formulate the questions and use the adverbials of frequency.
- 3 Divide the class into groups and hand out the material.
- 4 Demonstrate being student A, using different adverbials. Show them how they can use the picture prompts creatively to generate the adverbials they want, e.g. *How often do you go to the beach in the summer? About once a week. How often does your grandmother wear a bikini on the beach? Never.* Note that some of the adverbial cards are quite specific, e.g. *once or twice a year*, while others are underspecified, e.g. *often*. This will encourage discussion and help learners understand that the meaning of some adverbials of frequency may vary according to the activity they refer to, e.g. *often* in *I often catch a cold* (perhaps several times a year) and *I often have a holiday in the Bahamas* (perhaps once every two years).
- 5 Playing the game:
 - ▶ Players shuffle the picture cards and place them face down in the middle. Then, they shuffle the frequency cards and deal them out evenly.
 - ▶ The first player turns up a picture card from the pile and decides (a) which one of his or her frequency cards to use, and (b) who the 'How often ...?' question will be directed to. The question must involve the picture on the picture card that the player has just picked from the pile, and the purpose is to get an answer containing the adverbial on the selected adverbial card.
 - ▶ The player then formulates the question. If the respondent uses the adverbial on the selected frequency card or some other adverbial that the group accepts as being equivalent, then the first player may discard it. Otherwise, he or she keeps the card without showing it to the group.
 - ▶ The first player to get rid of all of his or her cards wins the game.

Picture cards



1.5 Time and again

Picture cards



Frequency cards

every day

more than
once a day

quite often

almost every day

about once
a week

sometimes

a couple of
times a month

once or twice
a year

not very often

hardly ever

seldom

never