

PRIMARY VOCABULARY BOX

Word games and activities for younger learners

**Caroline Nixon
and Michael Tomlinson**



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Caroline Nixon and Michael Tomlinson

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Map of the book

Activity title	Vocabulary focus	Activity type	Time	Logistics
Level 1: Starting off (age approximately 6–8)				
1.1 Body Bingo	Parts of the body	Listening game	20	Whole class
1.2 Snappy clothes	Clothes	Make and do, card game	45	Small group
1.3 Picture dictation	Transport, numbers 1–6	Information transfer	30	Whole class/pairs
1.4 Alphabet dominoes	a–z, simple nouns	Matching game	20–30	Small group
1.5 Where's the banana?	Fruit	Identification	40	Individual
1.6 On the farm	Farm animals	Make and do, card game	50	Small group
1.7 Sky mobile	The sky	Make and do	60	Individual
1.8 Wordwheel 1	Colours	Matching	20	Individual
1.9 Opposites puzzle	Adjectives and opposites	Matching	50	Individual
1.10 Toy boxes	Toys	Make and do	30	Individual
1.11 Happy families	Furniture	Make and do, card game	50	Small group
1.12 Animal stickers	Wild animals	Matching	30	Individual
1.13 Spell it	The face	Letter recognition	40	Individual
1.14 Pairs of squares	Action verbs	Matching	30	Individual

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Activity title	Vocabulary focus	Activity type	Time	Logistics
Level 2: Moving on (age approximately 9–10)				
2.1 Lexi-mix	Rooms	Memory game	20	Small group
2.2 Spin a number	Numbers 0–99	Make and do, game	60	Pairs
2.3 Picture dominoes	Simple nouns	Matching game	20–30	Small group
2.4 Picture broken words	Colours and nouns	Matching and colouring	20	Individual
2.5 Clothes maps	Clothes, numbers, letters	Communication game	45	Pairs
2.6 In the kitchen	Kitchen vocabulary	Make and do, information transfer	60	Individual/pairs
2.7 Active adjectives	Adjectives and opposites	TPR and crossword	40	Whole class/individual
2.8 Puppet pieces	Parts of the body	Vocabulary reading puzzle	20	Individual
2.9 The magic pencil	Classroom vocabulary	Make and do, game	60	Individual/pairs
2.10 All change	Simple nouns	Spelling puzzle	30	Individual
2.11 Lexical line-up 1	Lexical groups	Classification puzzle	30	Individual/pairs/ small group
2.12 Beastigram	Animals and alphabet	Reading and writing puzzle	60	Individual
2.13 Shopping around	Shops and shopping	Memory game	25	Small group
2.14 Family circles	Family, gender	Vocabulary reading puzzle	20	Individual

Activity title	Vocabulary focus	Activity type	Time	Logistics
Level 3: Flying high (age approximately 11-12)				
3.1 Treasure island	Directions	TPR and reading puzzle	50	Whole class/individual
3.2 Word maze	Occupations	Classification puzzle	45	Individual
3.3 Broken words	Adjectives and nouns	Matching	25	Individual
3.4 Lexical line-up 2	Lexical groups	Classification puzzle	20	Individual/pairs/ small group
3.5 Wordwheel 2	Prepositions and adverbs	Matching	20-30	Individual
3.6 Word quiz	General knowledge	Board game, communication	30	Small group
3.7 Word spider	<i>Do, play and have</i>	Collocations puzzle	20	Individual
3.8 Categories	Lexical groups	Word classifying game	20	Whole class
3.9 Wordchain	General definitions	Vocabulary reading puzzle	30	Individual
3.10 Fabio's timetable	School subjects and days	Cognitive puzzle	30-40	Individual
3.11 Free time	Hobbies	Matching, writing	30	Whole class/ individual
3.12 The spelling game	General spelling	Board game	30	Small group
3.13 Where does it go?	Nouns and containers	Vocabulary reading puzzle	30	Individual
3.14 Supermarket mix-up	Food and drink	Cognitive puzzle	30	Individual

Vocabulary checklists

Activity title	Time	Logistics
1 Toys	10	Individual
2 The classroom	10	Individual
3 The body	10	Individual
4 Clothes	10	Individual
5 Action verbs	10	Individual
6 Food and drink	10	Individual
7 Farm animals	10	Individual
8 Wild animals	10	Individual
9 In the house	10	Individual
10 In the town	10	Individual

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Wordsearches

Activity title	Level	Time	Logistics
1 Colours and numbers	1	20	Individual/small group
2 In the classroom	1-3	20	Individual/small group
3 Clothes	2-3	20	Individual/small group
4 Parts of the body	2-3	20	Individual/small group
5 Adjectives	2-3	20	Individual/small group
6 Wild animals	2-3	20	Individual/small group
7 Furniture	2-3	20	Individual/small group
8 Food and drink	2-3	20	Individual/small group
9 About town	2-3	20	Individual/small group
10 The daily routine	3	20	Individual/small group

Crosswords

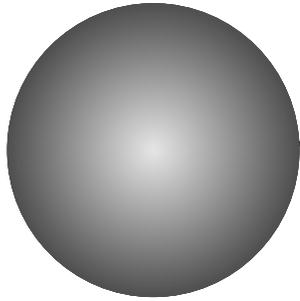
Activity title	Level	Time	Logistics
1 Paint pots	1-2	15	Individual
2 Colours and shapes	2-3	20	Individual
3 Sum it up	2-3	20	Individual
4 On the farm	2-3	20	Individual
5 Weather report	2-3	20	Individual
6 Months of the year	2-3	20	Individual
7 Dress sense	3	20	Individual
8 Jobs	3	20	Individual
9 Parts of the body half crosswords	3	40	Pairs
10 Animals half crosswords	3	40	Pairs

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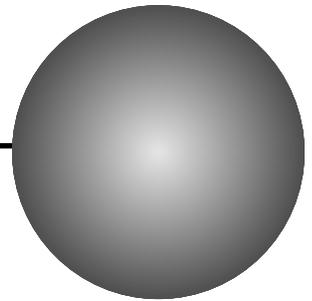
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Dedication

For Lydia and Silvia. CN

For Pablo and Carlota. MT

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Introduction

What is *Primary Vocabulary Box*?

Primary Vocabulary Box is a resource book of supplementary activities for the teaching of vocabulary to younger learners (6–12 years approximately), containing photocopiable worksheets. By ‘vocabulary’ we mean that we are more interested in the meaning and recognition of words themselves than in their function as part of sentence structure, which we feel would be more rightly defined as grammar.

The book is appropriate for beginner and pre-intermediate level pupils and covers most of the vocabulary found in courses of these levels and the Cambridge Young Learners Tests (UCLES).

The book includes 72 photocopiable games and activities from 10 to 60 minutes’ duration, complete with teacher’s notes and extension activities for further language practice. It is divided into six sections: three sections of more complex extended activity types grouped according to pupils’ levels and ages, a section of vocabulary checklists, a section of wordsearches and a section of crosswords.

The intention here is to provide enjoyable activities which will make both teaching and learning fun, while exploiting younger children’s innate capacity to assimilate new information. To this end, the book adopts a non-technical approach and aims to be accessible to native and non-native teachers of English. While there is a selection of activities appropriate to different teaching and learning styles (visual, audio and bodily-kinaesthetic), the emphasis in most of them is on developing reading and writing skills for younger pupils and consolidating lexical knowledge in older ones.

The activities are of different lengths, ranging from ten-minute vocabulary checklists through to ‘make and do’ activities that may occupy the greater part of the lesson. There are task-based activities, where pupils use English as the vehicle to find the answer to a task or problem without necessarily thinking consciously about the language they are using. This challenge can be highly stimulating for the younger learner. Emphasis has been placed upon the use of puzzles and games, quite simply because they are fun to do. Apart from linguistically-based puzzles and games, cognitive puzzles

have also been included. These are especially useful in that they combine language skills with mathematical reasoning, thus exploiting both left and right hemispheres of the brain and making the learning process more complete.

Some of the activities incorporate an element of competition which can be highly motivating for younger learners as it leads them to use vocabulary more enthusiastically, and increases their desire to do so correctly.

The material encourages the fomentation of learner-training, stimulating deductive reasoning and classification skills. This manifests itself in a variety of activities which variously encourage autonomy, cooperation and social skills which are so important for the development of younger learners.

Who is *Primary Vocabulary Box* for?

Age range

The book has been divided into three levels within the 6–12-year age range. Within each level we have tried to bear in mind the specific needs of each age group. The needs of those six-year olds who cannot yet read or write confidently contrast sharply with those of 11–12-year olds who need a more challenging type of activity. For each activity, we suggest the age range for which it is suitable. However, these ages are intended only as a guide, as children’s capacity to do any particular activity will depend largely on their first language, cultural background and the length of time they have been learning English. In all cases, teachers are the best judges of their pupils’ ability to carry out an activity successfully, irrespective of their age. The time it takes to do an activity will also vary with the age and ability of the pupils. The amount of time we recommend for each activity should be taken to be the most that a class at the younger age range would need.

Level

We have organised the activities in *Primary Vocabulary Box* into three levels. This is intended as a guide to the language abilities pupils will need in order to do the activities. These levels do not refer to any wider EFL standards.


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Level	Section	Approximate age	Skills	Focus
1	Starting off	6–8	Minimal or no writing skills Controlled communication	Oral or pictographic presentation and reproduction of vocabulary Basic word recognition
2	Moving on	9–10	Limited reading and writing skills Controlled communication	Understanding and identifying words Initial matching and grouping
3	Flying high	11–12	Intermediate reading and writing skills Freer communication	Cognitive recognition and competent use of vocabulary

When to use *Primary Vocabulary Box*

The activities can be used as extra material to back up a coursebook. We suggest they should be used for revision and reinforcement, rather than as an introductory presentation of new vocabulary. The activities are ideal for teachers who work without a coursebook. They can be used on those days when it is not a good idea to start a new topic: the day before a bank holiday, days of high absenteeism due to bouts of illness or extra-curricular activities, etc. They are useful for teachers who have to stand in when the class teacher is absent.

Using *Primary Vocabulary Box* – tips for teachers

The following suggestions are based on our own experience in the classroom. They are by no means definitive and aim simply to give a few teaching ideas to less experienced teachers.

Preparation

- The most important thing with any kind of task is to make sure that the pupils have been well prepared beforehand, that they know all the words they will need and that they understand the object of the exercise. Equipping your pupils properly with the necessary linguistic tools to enable them to carry out a task successfully will ensure that it is a challenging and enjoyable one for all. Without the necessary preparation, learners may have a negative learning experience, which will cause them to lose confidence and become frustrated with an activity that, quite simply, they have not got the capacity to do.
- Before starting any activity, demonstrate it. For pairwork activities, choose an individual pupil to help you. Do the

first question of the pairwork task with the pupil for the class to get the idea.

- When you divide the class into pairs or groups, point to each pupil and say, e.g. *A–B, A–B, A–B*, so they are in no doubt as to what their role is. Try to give simple clear instructions in English. Say, e.g. *As ask the question and Bs answer the question: A–B, A–B, A–B. Then Bs ask the question and As answer the question: B–A, B–A, B–A.*
- Always bring a few extra photocopies of the worksheet to avoid tears if any children do it wrong and want to start again.

Classroom dynamics

- Try to move around the classroom while explaining or doing the activities, circulating among your pupils. In this way you project an air of confidence, of being in command and of being more accessible to pupils. Moving around the classroom also enables you more effectively to supervise and monitor pupils who may need more attention at times. Movement in the classroom tends to hold pupils' attention better and makes the class more lively and dynamic.
- In the same way that it is a good idea for teachers to move around, it is also advisable to move the pupils around occasionally. By periodically changing seating arrangements, you can help group dynamics and break up potentially disruptive groups. For example, weaker pupils could be put next to stronger ones, and more hardworking pupils next to disruptive ones. Pupils might benefit from working with children they may not usually associate with.
- When forming pairs or groups, we suggest that, whenever possible, pupils just move their chairs. For groupwork,

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they can bring their chairs around one or two tables, allowing them an easy environment for discussion and written production. For pairwork, they can position their two chairs to face each other. This allows a more realistic eye-to-eye communication situation. This change of seating prepares them for the oral work they are about to begin.

- Certain activities in this book can be used to divide the class into random pairs in a more dynamic way. Give pupils a card and ask them to move around the classroom to find their partner. The activities that lend themselves to this are: 1.2 Snappy clothes, 1.6 On the farm, 1.11 Happy families and 1.12 Animal stickers.

Noise

- Some activities, especially those that involve pupils speaking and moving around in the classroom, will generate a lot of excitement. In the book we use the symbol below to indicate this type of activity. When children are excited, they tend to be very noisy and may even lapse into their first language to talk about or discuss some aspect of the activity. Although it can be difficult to get used to at first, noise in the classroom is tolerable if it is related directly to the activity and is an expression of interest or enthusiasm for the task in hand. Regardless of which language they use, if children are sufficiently stimulated by an activity to want to talk about it, then this can only be interpreted as a positive response. You must ensure, however, that only English is used for the completion of specific communication tasks.



Teaching and learning

- Encourage pupils to use their own resources to try to solve a task. Try to guide pupils towards finding the right answers, rather than supplying them yourself, even if this means allowing them to make mistakes. Making mistakes is a vital part of the learning process, so when pupils are asked to invent their own sentences, stories, etc. we should not expect these to be perfect. Sometimes accuracy must be forfeited for the sake of creativity and enthusiastic participation.
- While recognising that their language input may sometimes be limited, we feel that 'make and do' activities are particularly valid for the younger age groups. They adopt a holistic approach to learning, rather than focusing purely on vocabulary acquisition. By this we mean that certain creative aspects of some of the activities, e.g. colouring in, cutting out, folding paper and sticking,

develop fine motor skills and thus incorporate cross-curricular aspects of learning. These activities foment the enjoyment of language learning, thereby making it more memorable. Children also have something concrete to take home and keep, to show their parents or to display. Teachers can choose to do this sort of activity to coincide with holidays, treats, etc. or as part of a bigger project (seasons, time, nature, etc.).

- Many of the extension activities include ideas for fast finishers. These can be given to those pupils who need an extra task to keep them occupied while the rest of the class finish the main activity. In activities where it is necessary to prepare material, these pupils can be kept busy helping the teacher with cutting out, collecting in and cleaning up.
- Try to avoid the immediate repetition of an activity simply because it has worked well in class and your pupils have enjoyed it. If you do this, the novelty will quickly wear off and children will become bored. Save it for a later occasion and they will come back to it with fresh enthusiasm.

Competition

- An element of competition can make many children try harder. However, while a competition can be a good incentive for an otherwise lazy pupil, it can sometimes be demotivating for a less able but ordinarily hardworking one. Before playing a competitive game, it may be useful to explain to children that this is only a means of learning. Although they may not win the game, all pupils are 'winners' if they know more English at the end than they knew at the beginning. Help pupils to see that when they play a game they can practise and learn more English, so they each win a prize, and that prize is knowledge. Nonetheless, it is always a good idea to balance competitions with other activities to be able to reward or praise individuals according to their needs and performances.
- Competitions can also lead to a lot of noise and overenthusiasm in the classroom. Any discipline problems can, however, be curbed by keeping a running total of points on the board and deducting points for shouting out the answer or rowdiness.

Display

- Pupils find it extremely motivating to have their work displayed and will generally strive to produce work to the best of their ability if they know it is going to be seen by others. So try to arrange to display pupils' work around the classroom or school whenever possible.

**Portfolios**

- As parents and carers are taking a growing interest in their children's learning, making personal folders is the perfect way for pupils to take their work home so they can show off what they have learnt in their English lessons. The completed worksheets in *Primary Vocabulary Box* are ideal for including in such a personalised portfolio.

Storage of material

- To make the flashcards more attractive and appealing to younger learners, it is a good idea to enlarge them, colour them in and laminate them with protective adhesive plastic. In this way you will always have them ready for future use.
- In the same way, it is a good idea to photocopy different sets of the same game onto different coloured card and laminate them with adhesive plastic. These can then be stored for easy retrieval at short notice at a later date.

Caroline Nixon and Michael Tomlinson, Murcia 2003

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