

# Warming-up

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## Why warm up?

This unit is about preparing learners for language skills work. You will be introduced to various types of pre-skills or warming-up activities and by the end of the unit, you will have experienced and evaluated several warming-up activities, you will also be able to design some pre-skills activities for your learners.

The type of work your learners are going to do and the type of task you are teaching will influence which type of pre-skill activity you might choose. Some are short, others are long, some are content-based and others are language-based: your pre-skill activities will also depend on the amount of time you have and the importance you wish to place on each language skill. During the preparation stage, the learners will also be using English – perhaps talking about a picture or discussing a topic or learning new vocabulary. But by the time they do the language task, they should be well prepared for it.

## Warming-up in real life

In real life before you read, listen, watch, speak or write, you already know a lot about what you are going to do. You have all kinds of expectations and predictions in your head. Even before you open a letter from a good friend who frequently corresponds with you, you usually have a reasonably clear idea about possible topics in that letter: you know who sent it, you know something about the events in their life and what kind of letters they usually write. When you write, you probably think about what you are going to write before you put pen to paper: if you are writing a report, you might plan each section carefully beforehand; if it is a quickly scribbled note you know who you are writing to and what your message is. If you switch the radio on, you anticipate the kind of programme you are going to listen to whether it will be news or drama or pop music or you will tune the radio to your favorite station. When you meet someone, it is likely that you have anticipated some of the topics you might discuss and perhaps imagined some of the things you will say.

In the classroom, if a teacher turns on the recorder and says, *Listen to this*, without having introduced the topic of the recording, for example, it may be very difficult for the learners to understand what is happening on the recording. It can help our learners if we prepare them for language work, thus trying to replicate how they often read or listen or speak or write in real life.

In real life, in your own language, you are aware of many things before you communicate, other aspects of communication are unconscious. For example:

- You predict
- You expect
- You hope
- You know something about the topic
- You know the language you will use
- You are motivated to read
- You have a context or a situation in which you communicate
- You are focused on what you are going to do
- You have a purpose for listening, reading, etc.
- You are personally involved.

We can relate this to teaching English by using warming-up activities with our learners, which help them to contextualize their learning. This, in turn, may help them to be more successful learners.

## Some aims of warming-up activities in class

The general goal of warming-up activities is to help learners learn better. Some more specific aims are:

- to create expectation about language, so that learners can understand better what is going to happen
- to give learners a reason to listen, read, speak or write
- to motivate learners to want to read or listen, speak or write
- to interest learners in a topic
- to involve learners by asking for their ideas or knowledge about a topic
- to introduce or pre-teach vocabulary or difficult language which might otherwise prevent learners from understanding
- to introduce learners to the topic by giving background information for better understanding and communicating
- to draw attention to something of importance
- to focus learners (after a change in activity or if the lesson is beginning)
- to prepare learners with language to use during the activity
- to provide links between different stages of a lesson.

Pre-skills activities, therefore, aim to make language learning a more meaningful and effective experience so that learners can be successful in their learning in the classroom.

## Some variable in instruction giving

- clarity and simplicity of the language
- voice quality
- body language and gesture
- use of visual aids
- checking understanding
- using L1
- your own teaching style.

## Pre-reading

Step1: In this task, you read about using magazine articles for teaching reading, as well as experiencing a pre-reading task for yourself.

- 1 You are going to read the first part of an article entitled Reading tasks with magazines from a magazine for English language teachers in secondary schools. What do you think the general idea of the article will be?
- 2 What do you think might be in the section entitled 'Using headlines'?
- 3 What would you hope to learn in the section entitled 'Key words'?
- 4 Below are some key words taken from the article. Based on these, what else do you think the article is about?

**involve, personally, effectively, skill, prediction, idea, sub-heading, develop, guess, arouse curiosity**

## Reading tasks with magazines

In the third part of her series on using magazines in the language classroom *Clare Lavery*, who works with teachers in Italy and France, presents a variety of magazine activities designed to help your students read more effectively. We rarely read a magazine article without having at least a vague idea of its content and interest for us - we use headlines, sub-headings, pictures and captions to think about the topic before reading. If students are given an article without preparation they may struggle through without focus. Here are some hints for preparing students before they read and to involve them personally in the reading process. All of the tasks are designed to arouse curiosity, to inject a puzzle element and to maintain students' interest.

### Using headlines

Magazines use a variety of headlines and sub-headings for visual appeal and to give readers an idea of the layout of an article at a glance. They develop the skill of prediction, necessary for successful reading,

- 1 Take the sub-headings from an article (or invent your own) and put them in a jumbled list on the board. (See A). Ask students in pairs to use these to guess what the article is about. Ask questions such as *Why are these burgers green?* and *Where are hamburgers from?* You can also ask the class to give you suggestions for a main headline and then compare it to the original one in the magazine.
- 2 With a good class you can ask students in small groups to try and decide (looking at the sub-heading) what each paragraph will contain. The captions in magazines and newspapers are often a summary of the gist of the article and this trains learners to use them.
- 3 The sub-headings, if there are two or three, often break up the paragraphs in an article and give us an idea of its organization. Ask students, in pairs or groups, to decide which paragraphs could be the introduction and which could be the conclusion. Using the example illustrated in class most students decided that 'Hamburger history' was the sub-heading for the first paragraph because it gives general background information about the birth of fast food. It is fun to do this if students can justify their choice.

### Key words

If you make a list of the key words in an article, they give us an idea of the story or general subject matter. In class they can give students support before reading and can be exploited to develop skills of prediction.

- 1 Here are some key words from two articles in different magazines:

From an article about the British NHS:

*treatment, Britain, resources, money, charges, doctors, nurses, patient, government, problems, efficiency*

From an article about working as an au pair in the USA:

*America, Europeans, money, work, visas, family, home exchanges, au pair, driving Licence*

Students can be asked to guess what the article is about and then, if you wish, they can invent their own headline. After reading they may wish to change their headline in the light of what they have discovered.

- 2 You can take this activity a stage further by asking students in pairs to invent two sentences using the key words before they read. Collect suggestions from the whole class before reading the article. It is surprising how 'closely' the invented sentences match some of those encountered in the article.
- 3 If you leave the key words on the board, students can use them after reading as prompts for discussion or summary writing.
- 4 You can also ask students to read through an article and underline the key words. They should then compare their chosen words to their partners. This focuses students' attention on getting the main ideas rather than concentrating too much on the detail or on unknown items.



A

Read the article **Reading tasks with magazines**. As you read, think about the predictions you made in Step 1: are they correct?

**Reflect on the following questions:**

- How would this task help you to teach reading? In other words 'How would you teach reading differently now?'
- Find another text, either in a coursebook used in your teaching context or from online resources.
- Create a pre-reading activity using **key words** or **headlines** for your chosen text.
- Send your answers to those questions to my email in the form of a 300-word essay by the **2<sup>nd</sup> of March**.

For more ideas on how to use magazines in the English classroom, **Visit:**

- <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/activities-using-magazines-classroom>
- <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/using-magazines>

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