

How to Use this Course

Talk a Lot

How to Use this Course

Course Outline:

- Before the course begins perform an initial assessment with each student to check that they are at a suitable level for the course, and then enrol them onto the course. This course is aimed at students who are at a good elementary level or pre-intermediate level. For this course we recommend that there are no more than ten students per class.
- The course is divided into twelve three-hour lessons. The first ten lessons each have a different topic; while lesson 11 is intended for the revision of material studied over the ten weeks, and lesson 12 is reserved for the students' examinations and an end of course review. We recommend that you hold one lesson per week, making this a twelve week course comprising 30 guided learning hours, plus 6 hours of guided revision and examination. It's up to you what order you do the lessons in; you don't have to follow our order of topics!
- If your students need more than three hours of study per week, why not offer them two 3-hour lessons per week: one Talk a Lot lesson, as described below, and one lesson using traditional teaching methods, which include conventional reading, writing and grammar-based activities that could complement the intensive speaking and listening work of the Talk a Lot lessons. You could follow a standard EFL or ESL course book such as New English File or New Headway, using material that complements the Talk a Lot lesson, so that in Week 2, for example, both 3-hour lessons are on the subject of Sport. This would then give you a course with 60 guided learning hours.
- The lesson topics are:

Lesson 1	Crime
Lesson 2	Sport
Lesson 3	Music
Lesson 4	Weather
Lesson 5	Animals
Lesson 6	Cars
Lesson 7	The Human Body
Lesson 8	Colours and Numbers
Lesson 9	Life Events
Lesson 10	Nature
Lesson 11	Revision
Lesson 12	Exam & End of Course Review

Lesson Outline

- In our lesson outline, each lesson lasts for three hours (180 teaching minutes). This can vary according to your needs, for example, in some English language classrooms one teaching hour is equal to 45 minutes, and so 3 teaching hours would be 2¼ hours. Or it may be that you have only 2 hours per week with your group of students. You can still use Talk a Lot activities to serve up a satisfying and stimulating lesson – just in a shorter timeframe.

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- Each lesson focuses on a specific vocabulary topic, for example “Music”. For each lesson the teacher can draw from seven different activities:

Sentence Blocks
Discussion Questions
Information Exchanges
Discussion Words
Vocabulary Test
Lesson Test
Show & Tell

It is not necessary to use every activity in every lesson. We believe that there is more material in this book for each lesson than is needed to fill 3 hours, so the teacher can mix and match, using different activities in different lessons. Similarly, it is not necessary to do the activities in the same order (as given below) in every lesson, but mix things up each time so that students don't become used to a set lesson order.

- Bearing that in mind, here is an example of how you could structure a 3-hour long Talk a Lot lesson:

- 15 mins Welcome and **vocabulary test** (see page 5) based on the previous lesson's topic. The teacher reads out the twenty words to the students in their native language and they write them in English. The teacher gives back lesson tests, discusses the answers with the students, and can also ask random questions from the previous lesson's sentence blocks to check how much the students have remembered.
- 15 mins The teacher introduces the topic of this lesson, for example, “Music”. Each student has to **show and tell** an item to do with this topic, e.g. for “Music” a student could bring a musical instrument, or a CD or poster, and then tell the class about it. The teacher also brings something to “show and tell”, and then introduces the eight new **sentence block** starting sentences and wh-questions on the board or on the handout (see page 8). It is essential that the teacher checks that the students understand the sentences, so that they are meaningful to students when they practise them later on.
- The teacher asks different students to model one or two of the sentence blocks, which will act as a reminder to students of how to make the sentence blocks.
- 20 mins Students make the sentence blocks in pairs, for example, sitting back to back without eye contact. They don't write anything down and must not copy the sentence block starting sentences from the board. For this activity all the talk flows from the students making the sentence blocks from the starting sentences and wh- questions on the board or on the handout.
- 10 mins Next, the teacher introduces the eight **discussion questions** for this lesson to the whole class (see page 13). Again, it is important that the teacher checks that their students understand the vocabulary that is used. Students should be encouraged to use their dictionaries to check new words.

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30 mins Working in pairs or small groups, students practise the discussion questions. This is free speaking practise – the antithesis of having to make pre-set sentences using the sentence blocks. The students can change partners several times in order to get a good variety of practice, then the whole class comes together and feeds back to the group, with the teacher asking additional follow-up questions. During this time the teacher removes the sentence block sentences from the board, or asks the students to return their sentence block handouts.

We're halfway through! Have a cup of tea and some fresh air – or just hang out!

25 mins After a relaxing break it's time for some brain work – the **lesson test** (see page 5)! The aim of this test is for the teacher to find out what vocabulary the students can remember from the previous lesson and to get an idea of how well they are coping with making the sentence blocks.

25 mins The teacher could decide to use this slot for activities with the **discussion words** (see page 15) or for doing the **information exchanges** (see page 14) – or for both, if your students are up to the challenge!

30 mins The students practise the sentence block sentences again, but this time without any written record – nothing on the board and no handout. The teacher monitors each pair and helps them where necessary, making sure that they are making the sentence blocks successfully. Towards the end of this time the whole class comes back together to give each other feedback. The teacher asks questions from the eight sentence blocks to different students, who should give a correct, or nearly correct, sentence – all from memory. In the early weeks this will be more difficult for the students, but after a few lessons with this method students should be able to answer confidently, having memorised some or all of that lesson's sentence blocks.

10 mins Open question time – students can ask any English-related question. The teacher looks at the students' workbooks (this can be any suitable course book that students work through at home and which complements the lesson) and checks students' progress. The teacher sets the topic for the next lesson and gives out the handouts for the next lesson's vocabulary test. The teacher could either give or spend a few minutes eliciting the twenty new words in the students' first language. The teacher should encourage students to keep all of their handouts in their own file, for revision and further study at home.

Assessment Methods, Tests and Examination

The overall course mark for each student is reached by continuous assessment and an end of course oral examination. Individual students are monitored throughout the course and their progress recorded in a number of different ways. The aim of using continuous assessment is to encourage students to work hard in every lesson – because every lesson counts and effort is rewarded along with accuracy – and to work hard at home, e.g. learning the vocabulary words each week.

Each student gets a combined mark out of 80 for each lesson which is based on the following:

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- vocabulary test: maximum of 20 marks
- lesson test: maximum of 40 marks
- student's lesson mark – accuracy: maximum of 10 marks
- student's lesson mark – effort: maximum of 10 marks

- total lesson mark: maximum of 80 marks

The lesson marks are added together on the individual Student Course Reports as the course progresses. Students don't have access to their lesson marks as they are added together, but they do see their marks for the vocabulary and lesson tests, as well as getting feedback on these tests and on their general performance each week.

Teachers should award marks out of 10 to each student for every lesson based on the level of their achievement during the lesson (accuracy) and their commitment during the lesson (effort). It goes without saying that teachers should strive to be wholly objective and not give in to favouritism when awarding these marks.

Over the ten lessons all of the lesson marks are added together to give an individual total for each student, to which is added the score from their final exam. This gives each student a grade for the whole course, ranging from A to U (ungraded fail):

- maximum lesson mark of $80 \times 10 = 800$ marks +
- maximum final exam mark of 100 =
- maximum course mark of 900 marks

Grade system:

Grade A = 800-900 marks	First Class
Grade B = 650-800 marks	Very Good
Grade C = 550-650 marks	Good
Grade D = 400-550 marks	Fair Pass
Grade E = 250-400 marks	Pass
Grade U = less than 250 marks	Fail

Grades A-E are passes. Grade U is ungraded and means that the student has failed the course. The student's grade is recorded on their course certificate, for example:

"Grade: A"

"Achievement: First Class"

You could use one of the course certificate templates at the back of this book (see pages 106-107), or create your own.

Lesson Assessment

During pair and group work the teacher monitors the students, checking and correcting grammar and vocabulary where necessary, e.g. during discussion question and information

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exchange practice. In all such “free practice” work the teacher should keep referring students back to the grammar that is being learned by making the sentence blocks, for example if a student says: “What you want?”, remind them that: “You must have a verb after a wh-question.” In this way the free practice work will help to consolidate what is being learned from the more structured practice of forming the sentence blocks.

Written homework based on the topics and activities from each lesson could be given, checked and marked by the teacher. However, written work must be kept to a minimum during the lesson and students should not write out full sentence blocks. This is Talk a Lot, after all! The students may instinctively begin to write down the starting sentences from the board, or make notes about the sentence blocks, but discourage this because it is a waste of lesson time in which they have a valuable opportunity to talk in English. The Talk a Lot method encourages students to use their memories as a learning tool and to activate the grammar that they already know before they join the course. **When a student writes down the sentence blocks, they give full permission to their memory to forget this information, since they know it is safely recorded somewhere.** Without the safety net of pen and paper students have to challenge themselves to work harder to make the sentence blocks (which are, after all, simply question forms and answers, based around individual verb forms). The time for writing out sentence blocks is at home, where students can write to their hearts’ content! They also get a chance to see full sentence blocks in written form when they do the lesson test – once per lesson. As we have seen, the Talk a Lot certificate is based on marks gained during continuous assessment along with a final oral exam at the end of the course. Lesson assessment also includes more formal testing with regular vocabulary tests and lesson tests, the marks from which are added to each student’s running total of marks. The teacher keeps track of each student’s progress by adding the results of their tests and other marks to their individual Student Course Report (see page 17).

Vocabulary Tests

All Talk a Lot tests should be run in exam conditions, with folders and dictionaries closed, no talking, and no copying. The vocabulary test could be held near the beginning of the lesson, as a way of quietening students down and getting them into study mode. We recommend that the teacher runs the vocabulary and lesson tests in the same positions during the lessons each time so as to give a sense of structure and routine to the tests which can be reassuring for students. Teachers should try to mark the vocabulary test during the lesson break and give students their results in the same lesson. The teacher keeps a record of the students’ scores on their Student Course Reports and measures progress made, as well as spending time during and between lessons addressing issues with individual students.

Lesson Tests

The primary aim of the regular lesson test is to consolidate the work done in the previous lesson. If you run this test immediately after the break it will help to settle students down and get their minds focused again on learning English. Set a time limit of no more than 25 minutes and stick to it. As with the vocabulary tests, the aim of the lesson test is to check students’ progress and both identify weaker students who may need extra support, e.g. help with making the sentence blocks, and identify stronger students who may need a greater challenge during lessons. For example, to maximise the effect of pair work the teacher could pair a stronger student with a weaker student.

Lesson tests are marked by the teacher after the lesson and the results given to students at

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the beginning of the next lesson, when there is time for a brief discussion of incorrect answers and other points raised by the test. The results from both tests enable the teacher to see not only who is paying attention during lessons, e.g. when making the sentence blocks, but also who is working at home: learning the vocabulary words, both meanings and spellings, and writing out sentence blocks.

At their discretion, a teacher may allow students who have missed a lesson to catch up on course marks by taking both tests at another time, e.g. after the present lesson. Or the teacher may decide that the student has missed the lesson and so cannot catch up on the marks, a scenario that will affect their final course score. However, if the latter applies the teacher should give the student in question the material to study at home in their own time.

Verb Forms Practice

These pages can be introduced by the teacher as extra worksheets at any time during the course if students are having problems with sentence blocks based on a particular verb form, or if they need more focused verb forms practice. A follow up activity would be for students to imagine their own sentence blocks based on particular verb forms, e.g. the teacher asks students to work in pairs and make four new sentence blocks using present perfect form – orally, without writing anything down.

In general, it's better for students to use a variety of different verb forms in a normal lesson, rather than studying a different verb form each lesson, because if a student misses one lesson they won't have missed out on studying a complete verb form.

End of Course Oral Examination

General Notes on the Examination:

The Talk a Lot end of course exam is a one to one oral examination with the teacher reading the questions and the student answering. The exam should last for a maximum of 20 minutes. The exam is recorded onto tape and marked by the teacher. The results are added to the student's individual Student Course Report and their overall course score and final grade can be calculated, which are then added to the student's certificate.

At no time should the student see the examination paper, whether before, during or after the examination. Nor should the student write down anything during the exam. The teacher writes the starting sentence and question word (printed in bold) on the board for each sentence block question.

The examination questions are taken randomly from the course work studied and include material from every topic covered during the course. During the examination the teacher should not prompt the student for answers or help them in any way, apart from to explain the instructions so that the student understands what they have to do. Students **may not** use a dictionary during this examination.

At the end of the course the teacher could give a prize to the student (or students) with:

- the best course score overall
- the best vocabulary test grades overall

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- the best lesson test grades overall
- the best attendance record
- the most improved student (comparing the beginning with the end of the course)

Marking Guide:

There are four kinds of question that form the examination:

1. Make sentence blocks (questions 1, 5, 9, and 13)

The maximum score is 8 marks. Students score one mark for each fully correct line, with correct intonation and sentence stress, and one mark for naming the correct verb form. Students get only half a mark if the intonation and/or sentence stress of a line is incorrect. In the last two lines of each sentence block the answers will vary as students have to change part of the original information to produce a negative answer. Accept any answer that is grammatically correct and makes sense within the given context.

Don't penalise students for making contractions, or not making them. For example, if the answer on the examination paper says "No, he doesn't", but the student says "No, he does not", don't mark them down. It is still an accurate answer.

2. Answer discussion questions (questions 3, 7, 10 and 14)

Students can score up to a maximum of 4 points for each question based on the following criteria:

The student should answer the question and speak for approximately 1 minute:

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 4 marks: | the student produces sentences which are completely or almost completely correct in terms of grammar, pronunciation, intonation, and sentence stress. There are between 0-2 errors. Excellent use of vocabulary and interesting subject matter |
| 3 marks: | the student produces sentences which are good in terms of grammar, pronunciation, intonation, and sentence stress, but there are between 3-4 errors. Good use of vocabulary |
| 2 marks: | the student produces sentences which can be understood in terms of grammar, pronunciation, intonation, and sentence stress, but there are many errors |
| 1 mark: | the student attempts to answer the question, but not using full sentences nor correct grammar, pronunciation, intonation, and sentence stress. Part of their answer can be clearly understood, but there are many errors |
| 0 marks: | the student has not attempted the question or the answer is incoherent |

The teacher should make a note in the box provided of several examples of the student's performance, including errors as well as correct structures.

3. State ten vocabulary words on a given topic (questions 4, 6, 11 and 15)

When students have to list ten vocabulary words, the teacher could keep a tally in the box provided, e.g. -III IIII ... Give a half mark in the event of wrong word stress or incorrect

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intonation and/or pronunciation. When stating ten different vocabulary words the student cannot include the example word which is given in the question.

4. Answer discussion word questions (questions 2, 8, 12 and 16)

The answers and marks for these questions are provided on the examination paper. Give a half mark in the event of wrong word stress or incorrect intonation and/or pronunciation.

Sentence Blocks

Designed specifically for the Talk a Lot course, the sentence block method is a brand new way to teach English grammar with speaking practice. The main benefit of this method is that the students have to do all of the work. They must listen, think hard, and remember. They must produce eight sentences, both positive and negative, using a given verb form, and two different question forms, using *wh-* questions and questions with auxiliary verbs. They must produce the eight sentences based on a given starting sentence and a given *wh-* question word, using a pre-agreed set of rules. When they are working on the sentence blocks students are speaking and memorising correct English. They are learning to use key verb forms in English, forming questions and responses organically as they focus all their attention on making the sentence blocks successfully. They are also learning new vocabulary and have to produce their own ideas to make the last two negative sentences work.

So what is a sentence block and how do you make one? A sentence block is a group of eight consecutive sentences, made up of seven lines, that forms a two-way conversation. There are strict rules governing how a sentence block must be made, which students should learn.

At the beginning of the course:

The students receive two handouts explaining the basic terminology used when talking about sentence blocks and some helpful rules for making them (see pages 18 and 19). The teacher should spend time discussing these pages with the students, in particular explaining:

- When we use each of the eight verb forms that are explored during the course
- What we mean by subject-verb “inversion”
- How auxiliary verbs are used, and the rule for using “do” as an auxiliary verb

In the first lesson or two the teacher will need to train the students to make the seven lines that form a sentence block. In the ensuing lessons students should be able to form the sentence blocks themselves, based on the given sentences on the board or handout. It is very important that in each lesson the teacher ensures that students understand the vocabulary used in the sentence blocks before they are let loose on the task of making them.

This is an example of how an individual student could be coached to form a sentence block for the first time. When coaching groups, ask a different student for each of the lines.

The teacher has written the first starting sentence on the board; for example, this one from the “Music” lesson:

We saw a great jazz concert at the Palace Theatre last night.

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The teacher:

OK, we're going to make a sentence block. There are seven lines in a sentence block and eight different sentences. [Pointing to the board at the starting sentence.] This is the first line. Can you read it for me, please? [The student reads it out loud.] Do you understand this sentence?

The student:

Yes.

The teacher:

OK. [Writes "Where" underneath the starting sentence.] To make the second line can you ask a "where" question based on the starting sentence?

The student:

Where did you see a great jazz concert last night?

The teacher:

Good. Very good. Excellent.

Note: if a student has a problem producing any part of the sentence block, the teacher should prompt them with the first word, then the next, and in this way "coax" the sentence out of them by, if necessary, saying the whole sentence and getting the student to say it with them, then to repeat it without the teacher's help.

The teacher:

And what is the short answer?

The student:

At the Palace Theatre.

The teacher:

OK. Great.

Note: it is very important that the teacher praises the student as they get sentences right and gently encourages them when they have taken a wrong turn. It is also important for the teacher to keep the momentum going so that the sentence block is made with a sense of rhythm and an almost urgent pace. This will keep the student focused and thinking about the task in hand.

The teacher:

So now we've got three lines. Can you repeat them for me? [The student does so correctly.] Now, let's get to five lines. Ask a question with inversion.

The student:

Did you see a great jazz concert at the Palace Theatre last night?

The teacher:

Good. And the short answer?

The student:

Yes.

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The teacher:
Yes, what?

The student:
Yes, we did.

The teacher:
Good. Very good. So now we've got five lines. We're almost there. Can you repeat the five lines, please? [The student does so correctly.] OK, so, to complete the sentence block, let's ask the same kind of question with inversion but this time to get a negative answer. Look at the question word. Focus on the "where". Change the "where" to get a negative answer.

The student:
Did you see a great jazz concert at the Roxy last night?

The teacher:
And give a short answer in the negative.

The student:
No, we didn't.

The teacher:
Then a full negative answer. The last line is made up of two negative sentences.

The student:
We didn't see a great jazz concert at the Roxy last night.

*Note: students have to invent something here ("...at **the Roxy** last night?") that makes sense in the same context. They should try to think of a sensible option to get a negative answer. For example, the teacher must not accept: "Did you see a great jazz concert at the newsagent's last night?" because it doesn't make sense. Students often struggle to remember to make two negative sentences for the last line. Encourage them and stress the two negative sentences.*

The teacher:
Excellent! Now tell me all seven lines...

Throughout, the teacher should help the student to achieve the correct pronunciation, word and sentence stress (see page 139), rhythm and intonation. If a student makes a mistake during a line, ask them to repeat the whole line again. Of course, in the example above the student has given almost all of the correct answers straight away. This is purely to serve a purpose in this guide – to give a clear example of what the students should aim for. The teacher should also encourage the students to think about word and sentence stress and to emphasise the correct words in each sentence, for example:

Did you see a great jazz concert at **the Palace Theatre** last night?

Yes, we **did**.

Did you see a great jazz concert at **the Roxy** last night?

No, we **didn't**. We didn't see a great jazz concert at **the Roxy** last night.

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Students may have a tendency to try to say all seven lines with a questioning intonation at the end of each line. For example, they might say:

The student:

Did you see a great jazz concert at the Roxy last night? No we didn't?

Ask them to think about the meaning of what they are saying and to make definite statements without the questioning intonation. Some students may try to gabble and deliver their lines very quickly without apparent thought of what they mean – wholly focused on their goal of remembering each line and forming the sentence blocks as quickly as possible. Ask them to slow down and to focus on what each sentence means.

So, in the example above the seven lines and eight sentences of the sentence block are:

1. We saw a great jazz concert at the Palace Theatre last night. (*starting sentence*)
2. Where did you see a great jazz concert last night? (*wh- question*)
3. At the Palace Theatre. (*short answer*)
4. Did you see a great jazz concert at the Palace Theatre last night? (*question with inversion*)
5. Yes, we did. (*short answer*)
6. Did you see a great jazz concert at the Roxy last night? (*question with inversion to get a negative answer*)
7. No, we didn't. We didn't see a great jazz concert at the Roxy last night. (*two sentences – a short negative answer and a long negative answer*)

The teacher should ensure that the students follow the sentence block structure and that they recap each group of sentences after the 3rd and 5th lines. If a student has a tendency to “Um...” and “Er...” their way through each line, challenge them to say the lines without doing this. As they monitor the pairs engaged in making the sentence blocks – saying one line each – the teacher will sometimes need to be firm with the students, and ask them to keep focused when it looks as though their minds are beginning to wander, and of course the teacher also needs to keep focused! For example, when leading sentence block practice at the front of the class, the teacher will need to be one step ahead of the students and know the next sentence in their mind – what they want the student to produce – before the student produces it.

Embedded Grammar:

In each lesson students will practise making positive sentences, negative sentences and question forms using the following verb forms:

- present simple
- present continuous
- past simple
- past continuous
- present perfect
- modal verbs (e.g. can, should, must, have to, etc.)
- future forms (with “will” and “going to”)

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- first conditional

While doing sentence block practice the students may be unaware that they are using eight different verb forms. It is better not to focus on this and blow their minds with grammar, but instead make sure that the students are making the sentence blocks correctly. For example, it is essential that students understand the eight starting sentences on the board or handout at the beginning of the lesson, and also know how to make a sentence block, before they begin pair work with a partner.

The starting sentences all contain embedded grammar, which means grammar that occurs as a natural part of the sentence block as it is being spoken and automatically memorised, rather than grammar that is explicitly presented to students as an isolated grammar topic, such as: "In today's lesson we are going to study wh- questions..." etc. The embedded grammar in the sentence blocks at Elementary level includes:

- positive and negative forms
- use of articles
- use of auxiliary verbs
- a variety of main verbs in each unit
- subject and object pronouns
- yes/no questions
- wh- questions
- active and passive sentences
- punctuation marks
- prepositions of place and time
- some/any
- singular/plural
- nouns: common, proper, abstract, countable, uncountable, etc.
- intensifiers – too, really, very, completely, etc.
- use of infinitives
- adjectives
- adverbs of frequency and manner
- possessive pronouns
- determiners – this, that, those, these, etc.
- there is/there are
- formal and informal situations
- use of gerunds
- comparatives and superlatives
- relative clauses – that, which, who, where, etc.

The teacher could pick up on any or all of these grammar topics in more detail if they run the course as a 60-hour course (see page 1).

Miscellaneous Notes:

- As well as with students in groups and pairs, this method can also be used successfully with students on a one to one basis, with the teacher prompting the student to produce the sentence blocks, first with the sentences on the board or handout, and later from memory.

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- Teachers (or students) can also imagine their own starting sentences based on the verb form or vocabulary that they wish to practise.

Different Ways to Practice Forming Sentence Blocks:

- In a circle – the teacher or a student leads and chooses each student in turn to form the complete sentence block.
- The students sit back to back in pairs and say one line each, then reverse who starts.
- The students chant a complete sentence block altogether as a group.
- The students say one line or one word each, going around the group in a circle.
- The teacher says a random line from a sentence block and asks a student to produce the next line.

Note: every sentence block can be said or chanted in a continuous way by adding an **eighth line** at the end that begins with “So...” and continues with the question on line 2. For example:

Line 1: Joanne can play the saxophone really well.

Line 2: Who can play... [etc.]

Line 7: No, he can't. George can't play the saxophone really well.

Line 8: So, who *can* play... [then, continuing with line 3, “Joanne can.” and so on]

Discussion Questions

Students work in pairs with student A asking student B the first question, then student B asking student A the same question, before moving on to the next question. After between 5-10 minutes the students change partners and repeat the process with a different student. Where there are empty boxes on the handout – for example questions 2, 4 and 7 on the Cars Discussion Questions handout – the students should write down their partners' answers. This is partly to encourage the students to focus on the task in hand, and partly so that the teacher, who should be monitoring all the pairs, can see written evidence that the questions are being asked and answered. Before the students move off to work in pairs the teacher should look at the handout with the whole group and ensure that everybody understands the task and vocabulary used in the questions before they begin. For example the teacher could pre-teach some of the more difficult words and there could be a dictionary race to see which student finds each word the fastest.

Extension activity: pairs that have finished the activity early could think up their own new discussion questions based on the same topic, or the teacher could prepare additional questions for the students.

At the end of the activity the whole group comes back together for group feedback, where the teacher chooses a student to read a question and tell the class both their own answer and their partner's answer. The teacher should highlight errors that have occurred and elicit the answers from the group. Interesting structures could be explored in more detail on the board.

Assessment:

This activity is assessed by the teacher checking and correcting students as they monitor each pair, listening in and making comments where necessary, e.g. challenging incorrect question forms, and writing down notes for later exposition on the board during the group feedback period. The students' achievement in this activity is recorded as part of their overall lesson score (for accuracy and effort) by the teacher at the end of the lesson.

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Information Exchanges

Information exchanges are a terrific way to get students talking because they can only be completed by students asking each other questions. The objective of each information exchange is for students to find out and write down the information that is missing from their handout, but which their partner has. This objective is complemented by a super-objective – or additional purpose – which is topic-specific. For example, in the “Crime” information exchange students have to find out information about possible suspects by exchanging information with their partners – so that they can make a deduction as to who is the murderer. In “The Human Body” information exchange students have to find out details about the physical appearance of four different people, so that they can decide who they would most like to swap bodies with for a day... and so on!

Students should work with a partner and not look at their partner’s handout. If they need to know a spelling or look up a word in their dictionary their partner could write the spelling on a separate piece of paper, or better still say it out loud. Do discourage students from simply reading and copying from their partner’s handout – this is Talk a Lot, not Write a Lot!

This activity is also great for practising and consolidating question forms and answers. The teacher should monitor the students as they work and encourage correct question forms, or spend time looking at the question forms for each information exchange on the board, for example:

Topic: “Cars – Buying a Used Car” – sample questions and answers:

Student A: “What make is Used Car 1?”	Student B: “It’s a Citroën.”
Student B: “What model is Used Car 1?”	Student A: “It’s a C4 Picasso.”
Student A: “What colour is Used Car 2?”	Student B: “It’s brown and grey.”
Student B: “How many miles has Used Car 2 done?”	Student A: “It’s done 126,001 miles.”
Student A: “What kind of fuel does Used Car 2 use?”	Student B: “Petrol.”
Student B: “How many doors has Used Car 3 got?”	Student B: “It’s got five doors.”
Student A: “Has Used Car 4 got a CD player?”	Student B: “Yes, it has.”

There is a complete list of sample questions and answers for each topic’s information exchange activity in the answer section at the back of this book (see page 116), along with a completed grid for each activity.

Assessment:

As with the discussion questions activity this activity is mainly assessed by the teacher checking and correcting students as they monitor the groups, listening for errors that could be dissected later on in a group feedback session, and correcting question forms and grammar in line with the work being done on forming sentence blocks. Again, the students’ achievement in this activity is recorded as part of their overall lesson score (for accuracy and effort) by the teacher when they sit down and write each student’s course report.

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Talk a Lot

How to Use this Course

Discussion Words and Question Sheets

It's amazing how much you can do with forty cut-out vocabulary words! We have outlined many activities for using these words with students on the discussion words question sheets. First of all, print a discussion words page onto thin card and cut up the cards with scissors. If possible you could laminate them to make them extra sturdy.

The main activity goes as follows: sit down with the whole class around a large table and lay out all of the cards face down. Students take a number of cards each. The number they take depends on the number of students in the class and for how long the teacher wants the activity to last, e.g. for a ten minute activity ten students could each take two cards.

Go around the group one student at a time. Each student picks up a card and has to describe the word in English without saying it. The other students have to guess the word. The students could use dictionaries to find new words that they don't know. It's possible for students to make this activity deliberately harder for their peers by giving a more cryptic description!

Using the Question Sheets:

The teacher reads the questions out loud in a random order. Or one or more of the students could read the questions out. The teacher should use as many of the questions as is necessary to fill the time that they have allotted to this activity. For example, if you have 25 minutes for this activity it's unlikely that you will need to use the main activity as described above as well as all of the questions on the handout. As with the Talk a Lot course in general, there is more material here than will probably be needed; but as all teachers know, it's better to have too much material planned for a lesson than not enough!

Extension Activities:

- The students work on the main activity with the words in pairs or small groups.
- The students have to think of ten, twenty, thirty or forty additional words on the same topic, e.g. Music, and make their own discussion words cards.
- The teacher or the students invent new questions based on the original/new words.
- Have a game of vocabulary bingo. Each student writes down fifteen words from the forty words in three lines: five on the top, five on the middle and five on the bottom. The teacher reads out words from the group at random. The students cross out the words they have written down when they hear the teacher say them. The students race to see who can cross off the first line, then two lines, then all of the words.
- "Yes/No" questions: one student takes a card with a word on it, keeping it secret from the others, who have to ask "Yes/No" questions in order to find out what the word is. The first student can only answer "Yes" or "No". For example, for car words the other students could ask: "Is it inside a car?", "Can I put my foot on it?", "Does it play music?", etc. until they are able to guess the identity of the word. This is a great activity to get students making questions with inversion.
- The students match the phonetic and English spellings of different words (see pages

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Talk a Lot

How to Use this Course

147-151), translate words into/from the IPA, or group words by the sounds they contain.

- A student mimes different words without talking, while the others have to guess them.
- Word association activities:
 - a) the teacher (or a student) chooses a word and each student has to say six words that they associate with this word, or each student in the group has to say one word. For example, if the word is “head” the students could say “nose”, “face”, “eye”, “ear”, “chin”, “mouth”, and so on.
 - b) the teacher (or a student) chooses a word and the first student says the first word that comes into their head, followed by the next student and the next in a kind of word association chain. See how long your group can go for without running out of steam. You may be surprised where you end up! For example: “dog” > “bark” > “tree” > “field” > “farm” > “cow” > “milk”, and so on.
- Play vocabulary battleships! Students have to work in pairs and they both have a copy of the discussion words page from that lesson’s topic, e.g. “Sport”. They should label the columns at the top A, B, C, and D, and the rows on the left-hand side from top to bottom 1-10, so that the word “volleyball” is in cell B5, for example. Each student marks ten cells in their grid – these are their “battleships”. Without showing their partner their page, each student asks for a cell on their partner’s grid, for example, “Can I have D5, please?” If this cell (“cue”) has not been marked as a battleship, the partner says, “Miss!” and play passes to them. They request a cell on their partner’s grid, e.g. “I would like A6, please”, which is “swimming”. If “swimming” has been marked as a battleship, the player who marked it must describe the word without saying it. If their partner can guess it, they “sink” the battleship and can choose another cell on the grid. The object of the game is to sink all of your partner’s battleships by a) guessing the correct grid reference, and b) guessing the vocabulary word. Obviously it is in each player’s interests to make the definitions of their words as oblique as possible, so this is a good game for encouraging creative and lateral thinking!
- Make any of these activities into a competition – individual or team – with points given for correct answers, and prizes. The teacher could even deduct points for incorrect answers. Prizes could be awarded for the first student to answer a question correctly, or the student who wins the vocabulary bingo, or who can think of the most new words on the same topic without a dictionary. For a fun group competition there could be a league, with the same teams competing in each lesson for points that accumulate towards a running total. It depends on how competitive your students are!

Assessment:

As with the other free practice activities in Talk a Lot (show and tell, discussion questions and information exchanges) assessment is performed by the teacher checking and correcting during the task, giving individual and group feedback, and referring students back to the grammar learnt from forming the sentence blocks. The students’ achievement in this activity is also recorded as part of their overall lesson score (for accuracy and effort) by the teacher on each student’s course report.

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