

# SECTION ONE



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## TASKS

for Students at  
the Entering Level  
of English Language  
Proficiency

### Section I • Everyday Tasks for Students at the Entering Level of English Language Proficiency

1.	Total Physical Response	Listening
2.	Picture Retelling	Listening
3.	Building Vocabulary Using Realia	Listening
4.	Building Vocabulary With Word Banks	Listening
5.	Word Journals	Listening & Writing
6.	Choral Reading	Listening & Speaking
7.	Zoom the Room	Speaking & Listening
8.	Practicing Simple Phrases	Speaking & Listening
9.	Answering Yes or No	Speaking & Listening

# Overview

As you work with students who are new to English, often called *newcomers*, refer to the stages of language acquisition on page 4 and see the WIDA description of the Entering level, below. Students new to English may experience a silent period, which is a period of time (days, weeks, months) when they may say nothing at all (Krashen, 2003; Himmele & Himmele, 2009). Not speaking, but rather taking in language, is completely normal and to be expected. Don't expect students to do what you have asked. They may prefer to watch and listen, enjoying participation by experiencing the lessons. Once they are ready, they will begin to talk and interact more.

As students progress from no understanding of English to some understanding of English they will move from being **new to English** to being at the **emerging level** of language proficiency. Additionally, students new to English may be new to living in the country where you are teaching and may be experiencing many changes in their personal lives. These students may have experienced trauma prior to arriving in your classroom if they are political refugees (Souers & Hall, 2018). They need support and understanding from the adults at school. Small group instruction can provide students with a learning setting that is more intimate and less overwhelming. For teachers, it provides the opportunity to differentiate lessons for the students, or differentiate objectives and activities (Akhavan, 2014). We can attend to targeted skills, and in this way, help close the gap.

When students are new to English, we will likely be doing the reading and writing, reading aloud and using interactive writing to help students compose ideas. We will also be creating experiences for students to listen to information about interesting topics and talk once students feel comfortable.

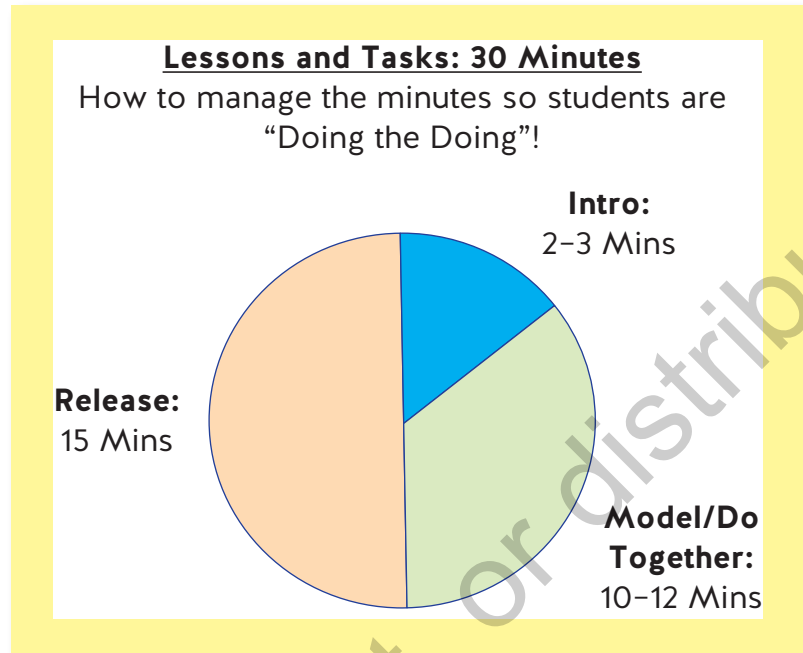
## WIDA'S Descriptor for English Language Proficiency Levels for the Entering Level

Level 1 Entering	What Students Are Able to Do
Listening	Point to stated pictures, words, and phrases
	Understand repeated words, and phrases
	Point to objects and people
Speaking	Emerging use of words and phrases
	Use single words, phrases, or chunks of language
Reading	Match icons and symbols to words, phrases, or environmental print
	Listen to stories with limited language and strong visual support
Writing	Draw in response to a prompt
	Label pictures of familiar or repeated words and phrases

Source: WIDA (2012, 2020)

## 10 Tips for Success

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1. Take two to three minutes to introduce the lesson. At this stage of language acquisition, brevity is key. If you speak the heritage language of the students, it's helpful to preview (very quickly) for students what they will be doing in their heritage language.
2. State the purpose of the lesson. Students do better when the “Why” is clearly communicated at the outset.
3. Model for ten to twelve minutes. For students new to English, you will model the entire task.
4. Use visuals to help you communicate your messages, expectations, and content.
5. Look for ways to connect the visuals, real objects, and content to students' lives and interests. It puts students at ease when they see you are bringing in what you know of them to teaching and learning.
6. Release students to do the task. Reserve fifteen minutes. Look if students need more time, though, and continue it the next day. At this stage, generally students aren't ready for independent or partner work; it's more realistic that you conduct the task and students copy you.
7. Altogether, including release—plan on thirty minutes.
8. As students work, and when and if you bring them back together, look for those students who you can tell are still shaky with the task. Don't single them out but remind the group that you are always there with any question.
9. Plan to meet one-on-one with any students who need additional support.
10. Plan on reviewing students' strengths and needs once a week. Formative assessments of their participation, oral language, and understanding are the engine of your planning.

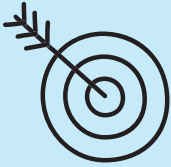
# Total Physical Response

## Listening



### WHEN YOU MIGHT OFFER IT

Once students are feeling comfortable enough in class to play a game along with you.



### TARGET

Students can follow along with the teacher.

**Total Physical Response**, known as TPR, is a kinesthetic activity in which students get moving! Students move to commands or signals that you give. Brain research has shown that physical movement during learning activates different processes, helping students make connections between the words said and the meaning of those words.

### Your Instructional Playbook

**Materials:** No materials are needed at first. When students know the games or songs you might be using, you can write out the commands or lyrics on a slide or chart and students can read while moving. One popular song for this game is “Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes.”

**Name It:** Today we are going to play a game where we move our bodies to what I am saying. It will be fun!

**What You Might Say Next:** “Let’s practice. Touch the part of your body or move your body the way that I tell you to. Do what I do and say. You can watch me if you are not sure what I am saying.”

*If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands.*

*(clap, clap)*

*If you’re happy and you know it, touch your toes.*

*(touch toes, touch toes)*

*If you’re happy and you know it, then your face will surely show it. If you’re happy and you know it, touch your elbows (touch).*

*If you’re happy and you know it, sit down.*

*(sit)*

*If you’re happy and you know it, walk to the door.*

*(walk)*

*If you’re happy and you know it, then your face will surely show it. If you’re happy and you know it, stand by your desk.*

*(stand)*

**Model/Do Together:** Start out by practicing a few commands. Tell students to touch their head, toes, or any other body part. Model it for them and make sure students are following along. Say the words slowly so students have time to hear the word, think about what it means, and watch

you move. As you play the game over and over again, you can mix it up. You can have students move about the classroom to work on prepositions or verbs. For example: “Walk to the door,” “Stand to the left of Mariam’s desk,” and so on.

## Watch Fors and Work-Arounds

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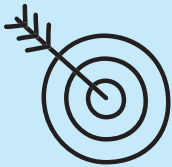
**Students may be in the silent period where they don’t talk or talk very little.** They may not be comfortable repeating after you. This is perfectly fine. Students need to feel comfortable and safe when they begin speaking, so ensure your classroom atmosphere supports risk-taking. If students are saying words incorrectly, simply model the correct way; don’t call out students for incorrect mispronunciations. You can encourage and celebrate any attempts students make to say the words.

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### WHEN YOU MIGHT OFFER IT

When students are able to understand the gist of a story read aloud.



### TARGET

Students can put pictures in order after listening to a story read aloud.

**Inviting students to** retell a story you have read aloud to them is a powerful way to develop learners' listening comprehension. The routine also helps them understand story structure. Since students new to English are often not speaking in school, they need alternative ways to retell a story. They can point to pictures to put them in order, or they can manipulate the pictures themselves and order the pictures on their own.

### Your Instructional Playbook

**Materials:** Simple picture books – photocopy the picture pages and/or cut out images from the beginning, middle, and end of the book. You don't need to copy every page—just the big events that depict the beginning, middle, and resolution. A well-known story like “The Three Little Pigs” is a good introductory one or any narrative with a simple story line.

**Name It:** Today we are going to retell a story after I have read it to you aloud. You are going to use pictures to retell the story (point or hold up pictures so students can connect to what you are saying).

**What You Might Say Next:** “When we retell stories, we can think about what we understand. We think about the characters and what happened to them. Often, they have a problem they have to solve, right? When we retell, we don't say everything about the story, but the main events. We tell what we think of what happened in the beginning of the story, during the middle, and at the end of the story. I have pictures ready for us to use to retell the story I am going to read today.” (Point or hold up the pictures/book so students can make connections to what you are saying.)

The little girl went into the treehouse.



She called for her brother to come up.



He was too small to climb the rope.



The little boy cried.



**Model/Do Together:** Read the story aloud, stopping often to restate what is happening in the story, using simple language that summarizes the setting, characters, conflict, and action. Point to pictures as you go. After you are done reading and using the pictures you have cut out, ask students to help you retell. Support students in making their choices. Scaffold students' sense of sequence by using words like *first*, *then*, *next*, and *last*.

**Release:** Once students have practiced retelling stories with you, have them work with a partner, or in a small group to retell stories using pictures.

### Watch Fors and Work-Arounds

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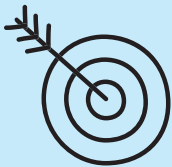
**Students may use a mix of their heritage language and English to retell or may speak only in their heritage language.** That's okay! If students are understanding you when you read aloud in English but need to express their comprehension of the story in the language they feel more confident in, this is natural. It may reflect that although they have acquired listening skills in English, they still need to lean on their heritage language to convey their understanding. In my experience, they earnestly want to share their thoughts accurately, so it makes sense they would rely on their heritage language to ensure they are doing so. Encourage students to use the language they have to work on retelling the stories. Asking students to only speak English will not help them acquire English. It raises negative emotions and shuts down students' desire to participate.





### WHEN YOU MIGHT OFFER IT

Once students have been in school for a short time and have acclimated and are ready for a small group lesson to learn vocabulary.



### TARGET

Students can repeat the name of an object after the teacher and identify the correct object.

**Realia is a real** object that you use to help students acquire vocabulary. By touching moving objects, students are supported in making connections between words and the meaning of words. Visit places like the Dollar Store to gather a variety of inexpensive little objects for vocabulary-building like small toys and household items. Once students have acquired basic words, you can use picture cards, but in the beginning real items are more powerful.

### Your Instructional Playbook

**Name It:** We are going to learn new words today. I've brought in some items that we use often, so this new vocabulary is going to be helpful for you to know.

**What You Might Say Next:** "When we work with real objects, we can connect the word to what it means so we can begin to use the words when we talk in English."



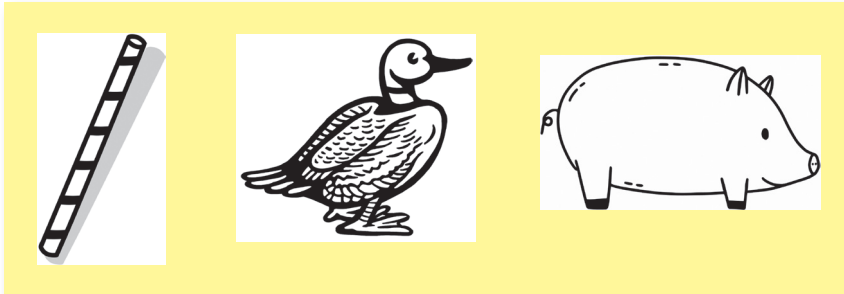
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**Model/Do Together:** Choose five objects. Introduce the objects and their name in a sequence. It might go something like this:

- Hold the item, say its name, and ask students to repeat it.
- Practice saying the name of the object with students a few times.
- Pass the object around or have students touch it, and say the name again.
- On a whiteboard or chart paper, write the object's name and draw a little picture, or add a photo next to the word. For objects in the room, you can use a sentence strip to label the object.
- Invite students to touch and say the name of the objects in the days after this lesson.



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You can also use picture cards to teach vocabulary. At the beginning of the year, though, use real objects that students can touch and pass around.

### Watch Fors and Work-Arounds

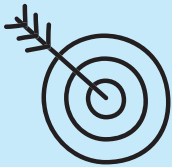
**Students may not know the names of objects and cannot participate.**

If students are quiet during the task, and don't try to say the names of the objects, it could be that they don't remember their names. Or it could be that they are not comfortable speaking in English. It is perfectly normal and acceptable for students to remain quiet when they are new to English. This stage, also known as the preproduction stage, means that you need to talk more and explain more so that students can feel comfortable during the task.



### WHEN YOU MIGHT OFFER IT

When students are ready to say a few words out loud.



### TARGET

Students will be able to repeat after the teacher and identify the correct word and picture.

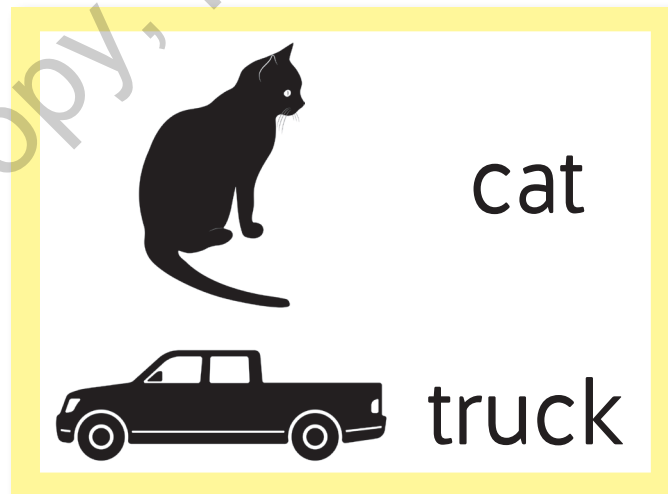
**Developing students' vocabulary** is a daily, all-year affair. Research shows that it helps students to focus on words that are high utility and to cluster conceptually similar words. That's why using word banks is powerful. Word banks help children organize dozens of new vocabulary words into sensible categories. Sometimes your focus will be on "everyday" words students would benefit from knowing, such as *mom*, *table*, *book*. Other days, you stock your word banks with words about various emotions. And word banks can reflect books, concepts, and content you are teaching, of course, too.

### Your Instructional Playbook

**Materials:** Pictures of items and things captured from the Internet and organized on slides, Word cards with pictures (optional), chart paper, pictures printed out (optional).

**Name It:** We are going to learn new words that will help us understand more of what we hear. We will also be able to say more things to express ourselves.

**What You Might Say Next:** "As we learn more words, we can understand more of what everyone is saying, plus we can say more ourselves. I bet there are things you would like to get better at asking for and have more ways to tell how you feel or what you think!"



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**Model/Do Together:** There are various ways you can use pictures to teach words that you will add to a class word bank. No matter what, remember that with students new to English, the idea is for them to learn the label in English of *things they already know about in the world*. Emergent bilinguals do not need to relearn concepts of typical things, items, ideas, and feelings. Following are two different ways you can approach this modeling:

**Picture and say:** Say the word describing a picture you display. Say it again slowly so students can hear the sounds. Invite students to repeat the word and say it with you. Chat about the word and use it in a simple sentence. Invite students to repeat the word on their own. They can also repeat the sentence you say or make up their own sentence. Repeat this process with a new word. Plan to introduce three to four new words at a time.

**Picture, say, and write:** Show students a picture by putting it on a table in a small group. Say the word the picture represents and then write the word on a whiteboard. Ask students to think of a sentence and then write it on the whiteboard for them to see and say aloud with you. (If using a pocket chart, vary steps accordingly.) Continue with additional words. Keep the number of new words introduced to a minimum.

**Conclude activity with a word bank.** Wrap up the activity by adding the words to a word bank (either one that is already on display or a new one). Use chart paper or cardstock; with a thick marker, write the word, and draw or paste a picture beside it. These visual references around the classroom are so beneficial to children acquiring English. Organize words in a word bank around topics or themes like feelings, or household items, or food, parts of the body, adjectives, prepositions, and so on.

## Watch Fors and Work-Arounds

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**Students need additional practice.** Avoid the one-and-done trap! Practice the words introduced often until students are comfortable with the word set, then dive into a new theme or topic of words to explore with students.

## 5

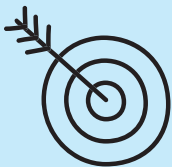
# Word Journals

## Listening & Writing



### WHEN YOU MIGHT OFFER IT

Once students have acquired a few words in English and are ready to have words handy to look up.



### TARGET

Students take ownership of learning words by keeping their own word journals.

**Once you notice** students have begun to use words and phrases from Task 4 on their own, help students with logging word meanings in their own word journals. Students need access to the journals any time of day to help them with writing or logging a word they are working to remember. While they will record words you present, they will also log words of their choice.

### Your Instructional Playbook

**Materials:** Composition books, one per student

**Name It:** We are going to make personal word journals so you can have your own dictionary.

**What You Might Say Next:** “We learn new words throughout our lives. Many adults jot down new words and phrases that interest them in notebooks. So, throughout the year, you can copy words from our word cards we use in class together, or you can record words you want to add. I will help you spell the words, and you can draw a picture to remember what the word means.”



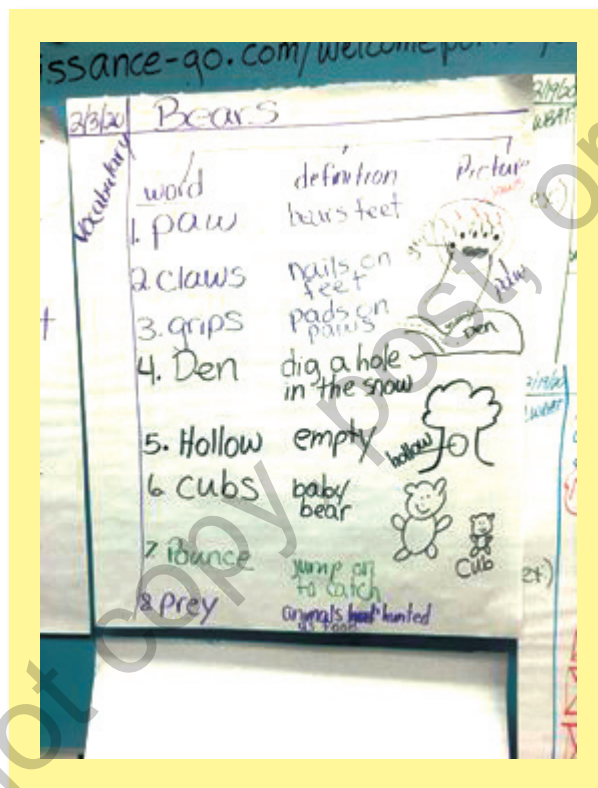
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My family has an orange grove, and I have always loved walking in it. When I model learning new words, writing, and reflecting, I often draw on this favorite place for details.

**Model/Do Together:** I introduce this activity by holding up my Words That Wow Me dictionary and encourage students to name their own notebooks. I share a recent word discovery, saying something simple like, “The other day, a friend said she was going on an awe walk. An ‘awe walk’? What’s that? I knew the word *awe* means a sense of wonder, like awe of a beautiful mountain or the sight of an eagle soaring. I discovered that it means going outside for a stroll, where you pay attention to nature. I love this new noun, which has been added to official dictionaries recently. So, I am going to write it in my dictionary and do a sketch of me walking in my favorite spot, an orange grove.”

## Watch Fors and Work-Arounds

Students fluent in their heritage language can write the definitions of the words in English in their heritage language. Students can also use a mix of English and their heritage language, a process called *translanguaging*, to write definitions or make notes about the words. Use of students' heritage language will strengthen their knowledge of content and vocabulary in English.



Word banks that are visual provide a support for students to write words in their journal.

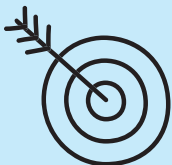
# Choral Reading

## Listening & Speaking



### WHEN YOU MIGHT OFFER IT

When students are able to follow along with you while you read.



### TARGET

Students can read print while the teacher reads a poem, text, or book. Students articulate the words after the teacher says them.

**Choral reading is** a type of shared reading where the students read along with the teacher. Your role is to give students opportunities to hear how you pronounce words and how the language flows. Students new to English are unlikely to be actually *decoding* the words along with you, but that is just fine for now; they can repeat along with you, and they may even begin to memorize the words through repeated readings. When they memorize words, they are memorizing how to say the word. They are not reading.

### Your Instructional Playbook

**Materials:** Poems, song lyrics, rhymes printed on chart paper or typed on a slide; add clip art visuals that relate to the meaning of the text.

**Name It:** We are going to read together today so we can practice saying words.

**What You Might Say Next:** “First, I am going to read aloud the poem/song/ rhyme, and the second time I am going to read it and you will repeat after me. After that, we will read it all together.” (You can sing the lyrics to simple songs also.)

**Model/Do Together:** Ensure text is visible to all students. Read through the text moving your hand underneath the words so students see the sound-to-print match. Read the text in small chunks of about two lines so students new to English have an easier time processing it. Students may only be listening to how the sounds in English work or they may be able to read some words, but either way, going slower is better until they have worked with the text repeatedly. You can reread the poem, song, or lyrics multiple times, over days and weeks, as a fun and engaging activity for students.

### Watch Fors and Work-Arounds

**Some students may be in the silent period, where they are not yet speaking in class.** Have the students clap to the beat along with you or move their arms. You can also play a song on YouTube and encourage students to move, dance, or act out the lyrics.



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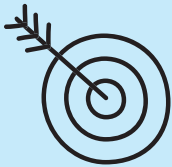
# Zoom the Room

## Speaking & Listening



### WHEN YOU MIGHT OFFER IT

When students are ready to practice reading a simple word to another student.



### TARGET

Students can read words they have practiced multiple times.

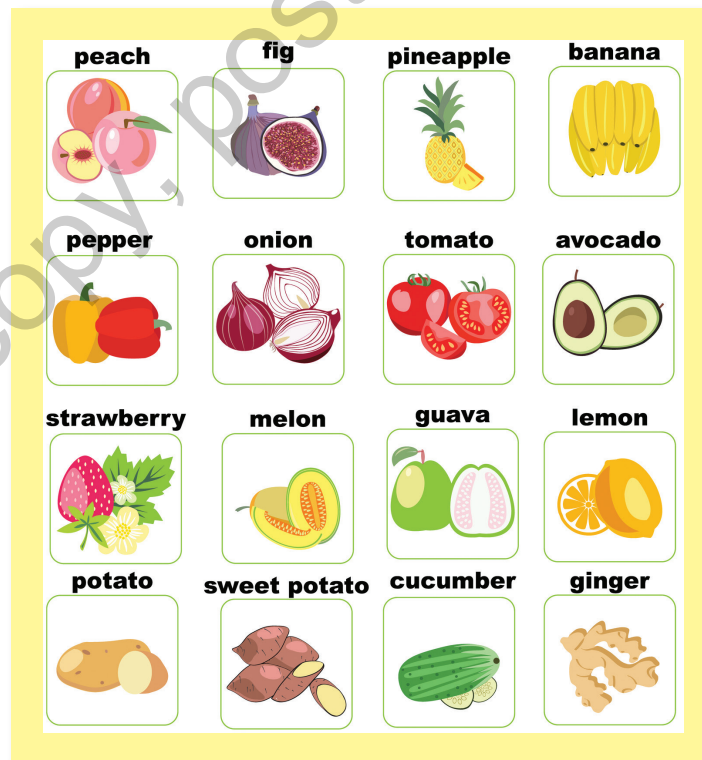
When it comes to developing vocabulary, using oral language and collaborative practice with peers is critical. In this activity, students get a chance to move about the room and hear how classmates pronounce letters and words. It's guided, it's low risk, it's game-like, and thus builds all students' confidence.

### Your Instructional Playbook

**Materials:** letter cards or word cards for every student; a bell or chime

**Name It:** Today you are going to have fun moving around the room to practice saying aloud letters and words with various partners.

**What You Might Say Next:** "When I see everyone standing with their chair pushed in, I am going to ring a bell to start the activity. Hold your card so it's facing out. We want your partner to be able to see it and read it aloud. Ready?"



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Word cards can be cut apart and given to students. Have an ample supply of them!

**Model/Do Together:** Follow this procedure: Each student stands and pushes in their chair. When given the signal, students walk around the room, not touching anything or anyone, not talking. When given the signal (bell or chime), students are to get back-to-back with the nearest student. Those without a partner raise a quiet hand and the teacher pairs them. Students turn to face their partner, read their letter or word, listen to their partner, trade cards, and wait for the teacher to tell them to start their “zoom” again. Repeat several times to give students several words/letters to practice.

### Watch Fors and Work-Arounds

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**Students may take advantage of walking around the room and not properly interact.** Be very clear in your expectations. You can teach your expectations for interaction before Zooming the Room the first time.

**Students are ready for more.** Students will read material posted around the room and write an exit ticket. Students repeat the same steps as in Zoom the Room but now they have to read words and labels you have posted around the room, including word banks and the sound wall. This activity is a powerful way to keep the visual references in your classroom relevant and in your students’ awareness. Label your classroom, labeling everyday objects. The more labels the better.

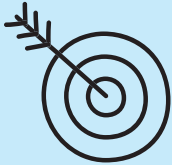
# Practicing Simple Phrases

## Speaking & Listening



### WHEN YOU MIGHT OFFER IT

When students are feeling comfortable saying a few words in English.



### TARGET

Students can say common phrases to ask for help or get around school.

**Students need the** opportunity to practice saying simple phrases in an environment that is supportive. Begin with phrases students tend to need right away, related to basic needs like asking to go to the bathroom, or asking for help if sick or injured. Note that some students may be in the silent phase (see page 4 in the introduction) and may not say the phrases during the lesson, no matter how nurturing you make the classroom environment.

### Your Instructional Playbook

**Name It:** We are going to practice how to say things that might help you get around the school. This might be a bit difficult at first, but it will become easier the more we practice.

**What You Might Say Next:** “I am going to make a list of things that we might want or need to say or ask. Would you help me think of topics? (As students offer ideas, write them on a chart paper. Your chart paper might look like the list below.) Now let’s look at our list, and I am going to write a phrase we can use for each one. Sound good?”



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#### I need to use the bathroom.

Example of dialogue cards to support students as they learn high-utility phrases.

**Model/Do Together:** As you craft each phrase, use simple words and be brief. Draw or paste a picture next to it. Practice saying the phrases with the students. Set students up in pairs to ask each other questions. They don’t have to answer in words. They can point or gesture to answer questions as needed. It’s important to not make the language practice artificial but keep it as real as possible. Choose phrases that will truly help your students flourish at school.

**A list of ideas for the phrases include the following:**

- I need to use the bathroom.
- I don't feel good (point to head or stomach).
- I am hungry.
- I need a Band-Aid (point to injury).
- I need a pencil.
- I need to sharpen my pencil.
- I lost my . . . (book, pencil, crayon).
- Where is the office?
- Where is . . . (breakfast, lunch, cafeteria, bathroom, office, classroom)?

As you continue practicing different words and phrases, you can mix up the ways that students practice. You can invite students to:

- Model for each other
- Practice in a fishbowl setting with two to three students who feel confident in the center and the remaining students surrounding them in a circle watching and listening.
- Practice using sentence strips. Write phrases on sentence strips and randomly hand them out. Doing a hand up, pair up, share up, students can practice phrases with each other. You can also set up a pocket chart and have the phrases on sentence strips and matching pictures pasted on index cards available.

**Release:** Once students feel comfortable asking for help, encourage them to say the phrases any way they can. Don't overcorrect. Just communicate and encourage.

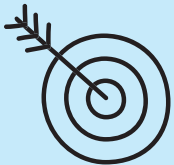
## Watch Fors and Work-Arounds

**Students may not hear the sounds in English well enough to repeat them correctly in sentences.** Don't correct students individually. Instead, model the correct pronunciation by saying the words slowly so the students can hear each word and the sounds in the word. Students may answer each other in their heritage language after saying the sentence or phrase in English. This response is more than okay! It indicates that students are interacting and even understanding the word or phrase in English but are not yet ready to answer in English. Also, don't introduce too many phrases at any given time. Take it slow and make it fun! I suggest three to five times per week, and as the year progresses, be ready to retire the activity if students no longer need it or don't seem engaged by it.



### WHEN YOU MIGHT OFFER IT

Once students are able to ask questions for help or say short phrases.



### TARGET

Students can state how they feel or what they think in a short phrase.

As students become more comfortable speaking, they may feel ready to express their opinions. A motivating way to get started is by having them agree or disagree with a simple yes or no statement. I call them opinion games, and you can give them your own twist. For example, you can start by making a statement to students that a thing is the *best*, the *worst*, *good* or *bad*. Students can then think about what you said and answer on their own, agreeing or disagreeing with you.

### Your Instructional Playbook

**Materials:** Yes/no cards. Using index cards, make two cards for each student. Write yes on one card and no on the other card.

**Name It:** We are going to play a game that I call the *opinion game*. You are going to practice sharing what you think about things I say. You may agree or disagree with me.

**What You Might Say Next:** “Your voice and your ideas are important to me. I want to know more about your opinion on things.”

**Model/Do Together:** Show the yes/no cards and demonstrate how to hold up a card to express an opinion. Next, display a question on a whiteboard or doc cam. Then, answer your own question. For example, write *Chocolate is the best ice cream* on the board and hold up the yes or no card depending on what you think. Additionally, you can write a sentence stem on the board to help students ready to answer more fully in English.

Sentence stems might include the following:

Yes, I agree.  
 No, I don't agree.  
 Yes, I agree. I like \_\_\_\_\_.  
 No, I disagree. I don't like \_\_\_\_\_.  
 Yes, I agree. I think \_\_\_\_\_.  
 No, I don't agree. I think \_\_\_\_\_.  
 Yes, I agree because \_\_\_\_\_.  
 No, I don't agree because \_\_\_\_\_.

## Watch Fors and Work-Arounds

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**Don't rush the process by making students talk before they are ready.**

Remember the phases of language acquisition (see introduction page 4) and know that students will speak as they are comfortable and confident. It is important to keep the students' affective filter low as they begin expressing their thinking orally. If students say something incorrectly, model it immediately afterwards correctly. For example you might say, "*You agree with me. You like chocolate ice cream.*" Also look for puzzled expressions and be prepared to provide context by drawing pictures, having pictures handy on cards or on a device, or showing a video snippet with a device. For example, in this instance, some children might not yet know what ice cream is.

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