

Activity Corner: Grid Activity

<https://learningtoteachenglish.com/2010/08/30/activity-corner-grid-activity/>

I use The Grid Activity for several reasons. The most obvious is that it's great fluency practice – it requires that they talk to each other and gets the teacher out of the middle of it. I also use it as a pre-writing activity, having students gather information that they'll use to write full sentences later in class. The activity also serves as practice reading a grid.

What you need: a piece of paper for each student with a large grid drawn on it (for Intermediate I often used one that had three columns and eight rows).

Here's an example of how I used the Grid Activity to practice **Present Continuous** grammar.

I drew my own 3x8 grid on the board. On the top row, I wrote in one question per box: What's your name? | What are you doing after class today? | What are you cooking for dinner tonight?

I then proceeded to have a conversation with my coffee mug (I named it Michael for the purposes of this activity) in which I asked it the three questions on the board and wrote all its answers in the same row.

Then I asked a student the three questions and wrote all their answers on the same row.

Then I told the students it was their turn. They needed to interview each other. Just like I did, ask other students these three questions. Write the answers.

It was interesting because for some students, it was very easy. A few students had trouble remembering how a grid worked each time. And a couple other students (the students who had high speaking ability and much lower reading ability) would make up their own questions, usually completely unrelated to the grammar and/or content I wanted to focus on.

The point is that even after both modeling and explaining, **you need to watch them very carefully each time you do the activity**. You can't just assume that because they're talking and writing that they're practicing the language you want them to practice and that they use the grid correctly. Not that it's a disaster if they're not doing it perfectly, but some gentle guidance can make it a richer learning experience than general conversation.

After the interview time (it can easily take 30 minutes), I asked them questions about their classmates' answers. This made them read their grids for specific information.

I also had them write full sentences based on the information they gathered. **The concept of taking the information from the grid and putting it into sentences is not necessarily obvious.** Even in Intermediate, you have to model this a lot.

Other content possibilities:

- alphabetics – just have students write down each other's names. They'll have to spell their name out for their classmates.
- grammar review – use questions that use the target grammar. For example, "Where did you grow up?" "Where would you like to live when you are old?"
- vocabulary review – use questions that call upon target vocabulary. For example, in a food unit, have them ask, "What are three foods you like?" "What are three foods you don't like?"
- advanced – you can use more questions with more complex grammar and vocabulary. This will take the interview process up to their level. Definitely have them work with the information they gather, writing sentences, paragraphs, or even making graphs.