



Engaging Classroom Activities for the Adult ESL Learner

Friday, October 17th, 2025
Janice M. Batista

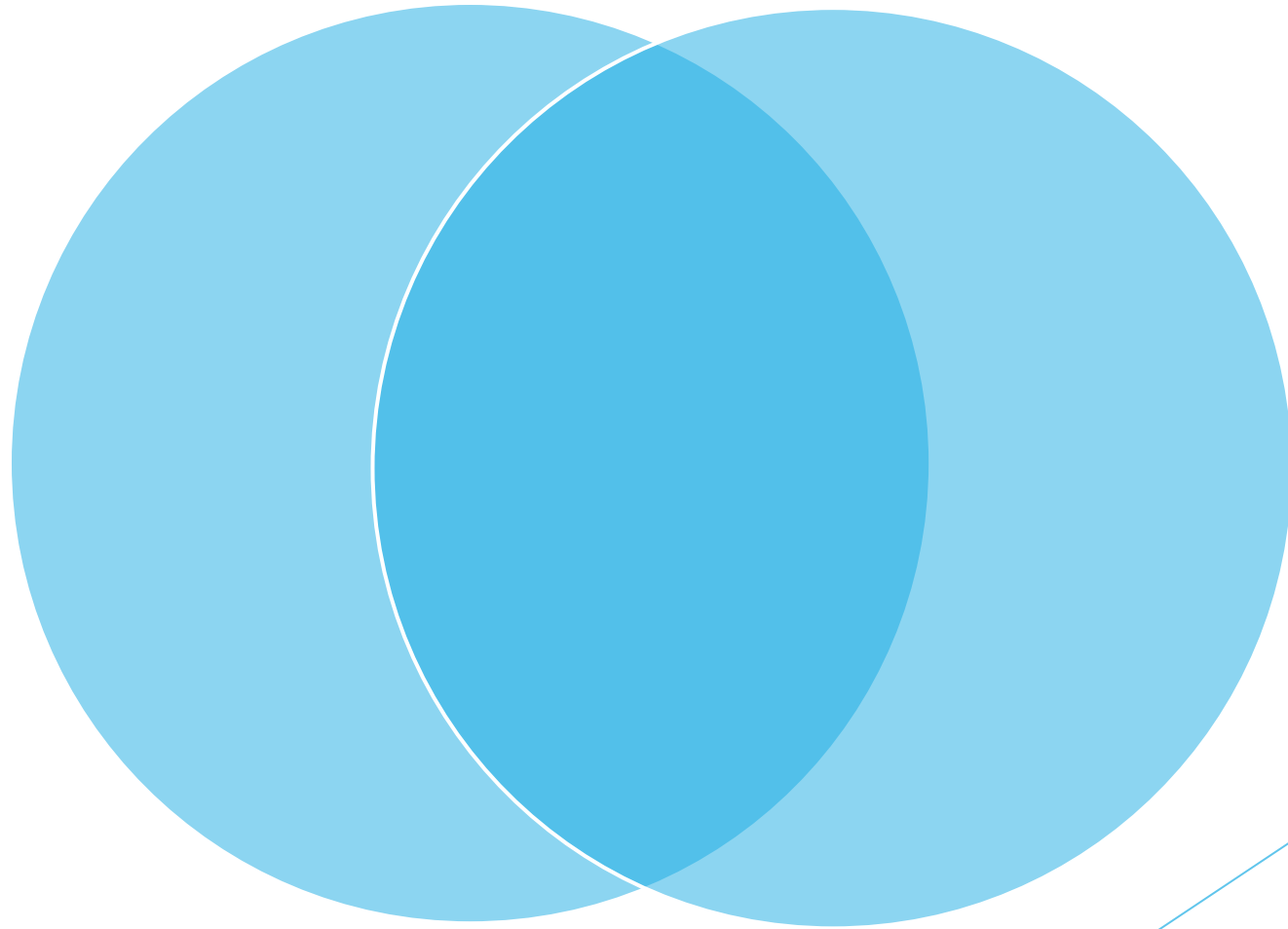
Agenda

- ▶ Welcome & Icebreaker
- ▶ Why Engagement Matters
- ▶ Activities
- ▶ Debrief & Strategy Swap
- ▶ Wrap-Up & Resources

Workshop Objectives

- ▶ • Explore strategies for student engagement
- ▶ • Adapt activities for online and in-person classrooms
- ▶ • Plan to implement in your next class

In-Person and Online



Icebreaker: Find Someone Who...

- ▶ - Teach beginning-level learners
- ▶ - Teach intermediate-level learners
- ▶ - Teach advanced-level learners
- ▶ - Have tried role plays
- ▶ - Use tech tools with their students
- ▶ - Teach evening classes
- ▶ - Teach day classes
- ▶ - Teach in-person
- ▶ - Teach online

Find Someone Who

✓ **Room 1**

✓ **Room 2**

✓ **Room 3**

✓ **Room 4**

✓ **Room 5**

✓ **Room 6**

✓ **Room 7**

✓ **Room 8**

0

Join

0

Join

0

Join

0

Join

0

Join

0

Join

0

Join

0

Join

When have you seen high engagement in your classroom?

Why Engagement Matters

First Literacy Professional Development Workshop

What makes adult ESL learners unique?

- Time constraints
- Responsibilities
- Motivation

What increases engagement in adult learners?

- Real-world relevance
- Collaboration
- Empowerment
- Supportive feedback
- Having fun

Small Group Activity:

Brainstorm key motivations and potential challenges for adult learners.
(8minutes)

*padlet or google slide for responses with demo
or make discussion

Set Class Norms

- ▶ Assigned seats
- ▶ Groupings for each lesson
- ▶ Cold calling
- ▶ Movement
- ▶ Build routines

Demo: Warm Up

- ▶ Example: Weekend chat
- ▶ 4 minutes to write sentences about your weekend.
- ▶ Must use at least 5 different verbs
- ▶ Send a pic to teacher (or circulate/collect)
- ▶ Conversation frame (for those who need it)
- ▶ BORs, touch the wall, speed dating, line-ups
- ▶ Whole class review: ss tells one thing a classmate did over the weekend
 - ▶ *differentiation note: start with slower, shyer students and end with your more advanced students

What did you do over the weekend?

Write 3-7 complete sentences in your notebook with at least **5 different** verbs.

**What did you do
over the
weekend?**



Warm-Up

Focus:

- Correct verb tense
- Fluency
- Eye contact



Work with a partner. Complete the conversation. Then practice with your partner and perform it for the class. You can look at your book before you speak. When you speak, look at your partner.

Small Talk

A: Hi, how's it going?

B: Good. How was your weekend?

A: _____. I _____.

How about you? What did you do?

B: I _____.

A: That sounds _____.

B: It was.

Line-Ups

- ▶ Line-Ups
 - ▶ Can use for simple dialogues
 - ▶ Question/answer
 - ▶ Verb drills
- ▶ Variations:
 - ▶ Touch the wall
 - ▶ Concentric circles
 - ▶ BORs- change partners every 2-3 minutes

How often have you _____ (see) your family since you came to this school?	Who have you _____ (tell) a secret to more than once?
What have you _____ (drink) more than once today?	What have you _____ (do) more than once today?
How many essays have you _____ (write) in writing class?	How many people from your country have you _____ (meet) in this class?
How often have you _____ (buy) a soft drink in the last week?	What have you _____ (begin) to do since coming to the United States?
What is the longest you have _____ (sleep) since coming to this school?	How much money have you _____ (spend) on lunch this past month?
What have you _____ (break) more than once?	How have you _____ (feel) this week?



- ▶ 1. Did Howard fall asleep in class?
Yes, _____ *bored*.



- ▶ 3. Did you cry during the movie?
Yes, _____ *sad*.



- ▶ 5. Did Frank and James forget their lines during the school play?
Yes, _____ *nervous*.



- ▶ 7. Did Abby finish her dinner?
Yes, _____ *hungry*.



- ▶ 2. Did Amy take the plane to Rio?
No, _____ *on time*.



- ▶ 4. Did Brad do well on his exam?
No, _____ *prepared*.



- ▶ 6. Did you and your sister cover your eyes during the science fiction movie?
No, _____ *scared*.



- ▶ 8. Did Timmy drink all his milk?
No, _____ *thirsty*.

Physical Movement

- ▶ Speed dating
- ▶ Touch the wall
- ▶ 2 or 4 walls
- ▶ Stand-sit*
- ▶ Post its
- ▶ Clothing mix up
- ▶ Scavenger hunt*
- ▶ Running dictation
- ▶ Directions

Speed Dating

Prompts:

- ▶ Getting to know you questions
- ▶ Targeted for a verb tense or theme

Key:

- ▶ Aligned to your objective and level appropriate

Demo: Speed Dating

If you could have a pet what would it be?	If you could meet any person in the world who would it be and why?
If you had a million dollars what would you spend it on?	If you could change something about your school what would it be?
If you had to live in another country which one would you choose?	If you could do anything in the world what would you do?
If you could speak three languages well, what would they be?	If you were rich, what would you do?
If you had to spend a day alone at home, what would you do?	If everyone in the world suddenly disappeared, what would you do?

Example
Topic:
Conditionals

Deck of Cards

- ▶ Each suit can be a different verb tense.
- ▶ Each suit can be a different sentence: affirmative, negative, interrogative, wild
- ▶ Create questions for each card.



Say three expressions we use to talk about likes and dislikes.



Say two sentences you can use when you want to give your opinion.



What time is it?
5:35



What time is it?
12:30



What time is it?
7:15



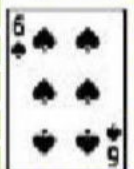
What question do you make when you want to know what time it is?



Tell us the days of the week.



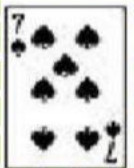
Tell us the seasons of the year.



What do you like to do on the weekends?



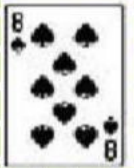
What's the question you make when you want to know the price of something?



How often do you go to the movies?



How often do you have dinner out?



How do we say dates in English?



Complete the sentence:
I always go to work ____ 7 am.

Scavenger Hunts

Demo Scavenger Hunt

- ☐ 1. Find something that makes you happy
- ☐ 2. Find something that is your Favorite color
- ☐ 3. Find something that is soft and snuggly
- ☐ 4. Find something that tastes good
- ☐ 5. Find something that makes you laugh
- ☐ 6. Find something useful to you
- ☐ 7. Find something that makes a lovely sound
- ☐ 8. Find something in the morning that you enjoy
- ☐ 9. Find something that smells amazing

Role-plays

- ▶ Real life, authentic topics
- ▶ Performers get to choose own topic
- ▶ Audience completes a rubric or listens for key information

Dictations

- ▶ Peer dictations
- ▶ Running dictations
- ▶ Whatsapp audio

Sorting

Example: simple past tense pronunciation of -ED

Ideas:

- ▶ carousel
- ▶ list on board
- ▶ sort verb cards
- ▶ sort verb picture cards
- ▶ board races

Demo: Flippity

Step 1: Click on the link
and share your screen

filled dropped Final Sound: /T/ studied slipped talked rented played painted mended wished Final Sound: /D/ changed mailed needed tried closed lasted visited thanked added arrived hurried picked remained saved washed entered
wanted jumped stopped pointed liked planted ended waited showed spelled passed boiled Final Sound: /ED/ earned crossed lived landed finished used looked placed excused killed worked pulled rushed poured walked smoked
burned knocked turned counted



Step 2: The person sharing the screen controls the tiles.

- Move the category tiles to the top.

Final Sound: /T/

Final Sound: /D/

Final Sound: /ED/

filled dropped studied slipped talked rented played painted mended wished
wanted jumped stopped pointed liked planted ended waited showed spelled passed boiled

changed mailed needed tried closed lasted visited thanked added arrived hurried picked remained saved washed entered
earned crossed lived landed finished used looked placed excused killed worked pulled rushed poured walked smoked
burned knocked turned counted



Step 3: All group members work together to sort the verbs into the correct category.

Final Sound: /T/

dropped

Final Sound: /D/

filled

Final Sound: /ED/

wanted

jumped stopped pointed liked planted ended waited showed spelled passed boiled

studied slipped talked rented played painted mended wished

changed mailed needed tried closed lasted visited thanked added arrived hurried picked remained saved washed entered
burned earned crossed lived landed finished used looked placed excused killed worked pulled rushed poured walked smoked
knocked turned counted



BOR:

- One person opens the link and shares their screen
- All students discuss where to place the verbs

[HTTPS://WWW.FLIPPITY.NET/MA.PHP?K=1ZZ6DPRZCSUY4QENPA74AGPLSXBW8KANW7AZN96C-24](https://www.flippity.net/ma.php?k=1ZZ6DPRZCSUY4QENPA74AGPLSXBW8KANW7AZN96C-24)

Activity: Picture Prompts

- ▶ Show an image and ask students to describe, infer, or create a story.
- ▶ Encourages vocabulary use and speaking practice.

Activity: Hot Seat Vocabulary Game

- ▶ One student faces away from the word on the screen or board.
- ▶ Classmates give clues until the student guesses the word.

Adjective Game



Describing Things

Sometimes you may be asked to describe something. You will want to say what it looks like, and its function (what it does) or purpose (what it's for). For example, you may be talking to a person who is not current with the latest technological devices, or you may be telling someone about the newest time saving gadget.

When describing objects we use adjectives, words that describe nouns. Words that describe things such as the size, color, shape, thickness, texture, the material it is made from, etc.

English Expressions

Expression

What does it look like?

How big is it?

How much does it weigh?

What color is it?

What's it made out of?

What is it?

What does it do?

What the purpose of a refrigerator?

What do you use a (... cheese grater) for?

How does a (... water heater) work?

Response

It's big, with eight hairy arms.

It is 3 meters, by 4 meters, by 5 meters.

It weighs 75 kilograms.

It's bright yellow, brighter than a banana.

It's made of plastic and aluminum.

It's a garlic press.

It puts a sharp point on wooden pencils.

The purpose of a refrigerator is to keep food cold so it does not spoil.

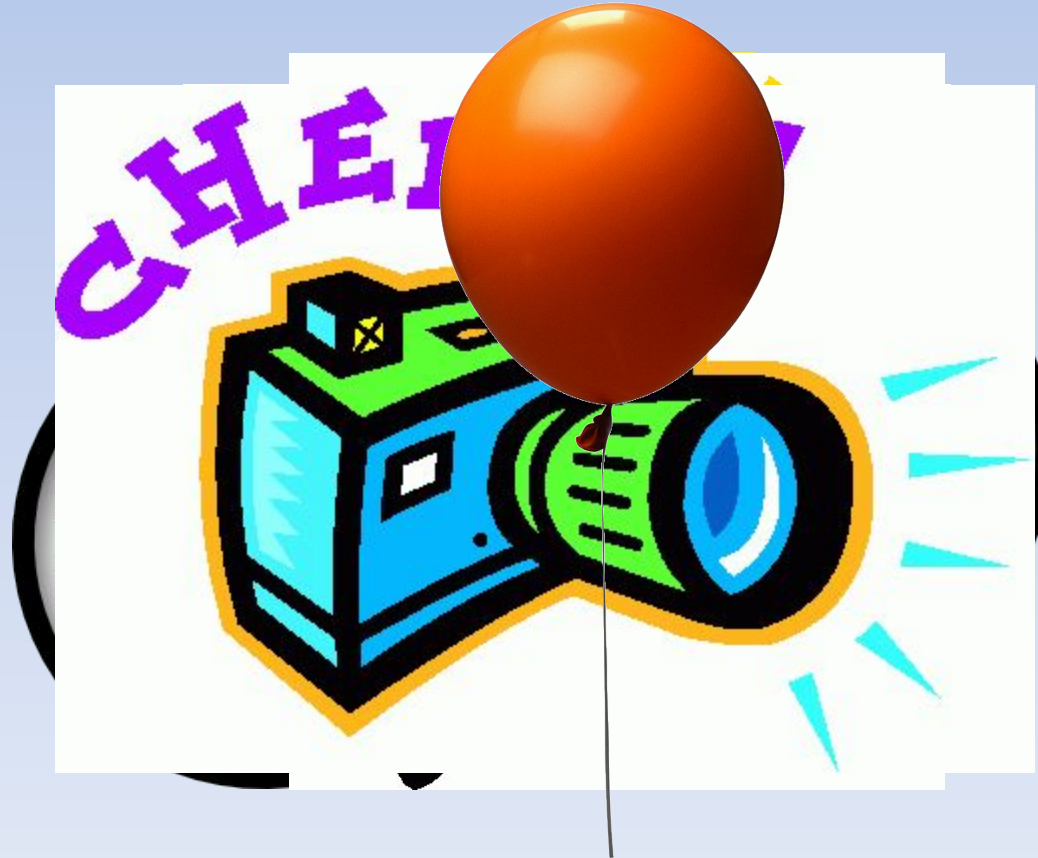
A cheese grater is used to make small strips of cheese from a larger block.

Water is collected in a large tank and heated by either gas or electricity.

Describe It

Work with a partner and describe the following items and how they work. The listening partner should ask questions to get more detail or clarification. Obviously most people already know what these things are and how they work, but the purpose of this exercise is to practice using the language. So, the partner asking about the items should pretend to be very, very naïve or from a very remote, location that has never been exposed to these modern conveniences.

- Pencil sharpener
- Bicycle
- Toaster
- Clock
- Calculator
- Camera
- Balloon



Time For Some Fun!

Apple



- Red
- Fruit
- Sweet
- Doctor

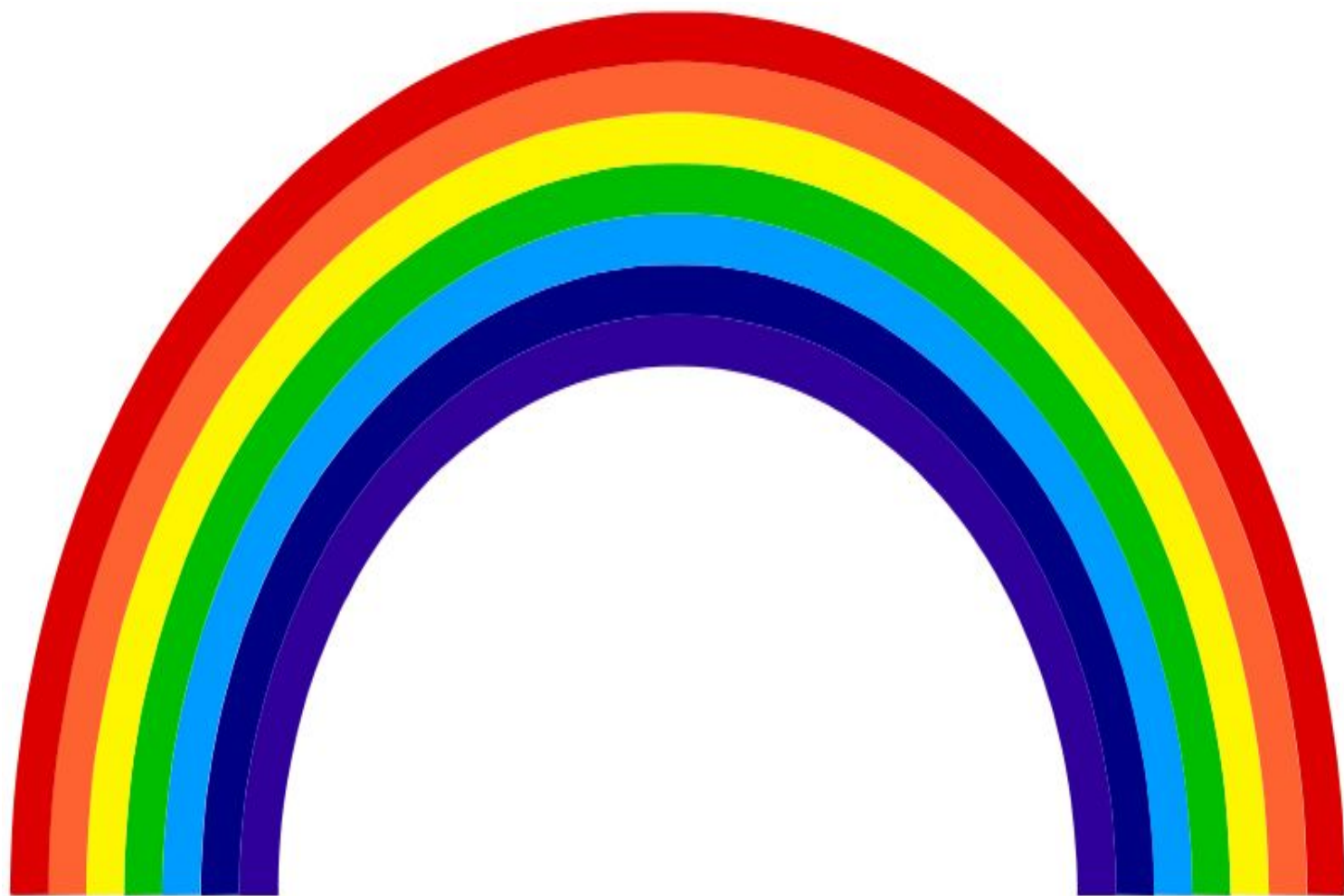
pillow

bed
soft
sleep
head



rainbow

**sky
colors
sun
rain**



ambulance

**accident
emergency
hospital
doctor**



Activity: Job Application Simulation

- ▶ Students practice filling out forms or online applications.
- ▶ Builds vocabulary and real-life literacy skills.
- ▶ Great lead in for an interview role-play

Drills

Types

- ▶ Choral
- ▶ Individual
- ▶ Groups

Content

- ▶ Pictures
- ▶ Vocabulary
- ▶ Past tense verbs
- ▶ Prepositions
- ▶ Tag questions
- ▶ Agreement - so, too, either, neither
- ▶ Phrasal verbs

BOR activities

- ▶ Icebreaker find someone who
- ▶ Sorting verbs- flippity
- ▶ Choose your own BOR topic
- ▶ Read alouds in groups
- ▶ Worksheets

Stations

In-Person

- ▶ Stations
 - ▶ Conversation topics
 - ▶ Writing sentences
 - ▶ Affirmative, negative, interrogative

Online

- ▶ Break Out Rooms
 - ▶ Conversation topics
 - ▶ Writing sentences
 - ▶ Affirmative, negative, interrogative

In Person and Online Variations

In-Person

- Sorting: Ex. Regular past tense pronunciation
 - ▶ Carousel
 - ▶ List on board
 - ▶ Picture cards
 - ▶ Flashcards

Remote

- Sorting: Ex. Regular past tense pronunciation
 - ▶ Flippity
 - ▶ Google slides
 - ▶ Write in notebook, then send a picture

Debrief & Strategy Swap

- ▶ Reflect on the activities:
 - ▶ - What worked well?
 - ▶ - How could you adapt this for your learners?
 - ▶ - Which activity would you try first?

Mini-Lesson Planning- Google slide demo

- ▶ In breakout rooms:
- ▶ - Choose one activity
- ▶ - Create a 10-15 min mini-lesson
- ▶

Google Slides

Wrap-Up & Exit Ticket

- ▶ Reflect: What is one activity you'll try this week?
- ▶ Complete the exit ticket

Virtual Field Trips

- ▶ <https://freedomhomeschooling.com/virtual-field-trips/>
- ▶ <https://www.discoveryeducation.com/community/virtual-field-trips/>
- ▶ <https://education.rowan.edu/lrcsouth/online-resource-site/virtual-field-trips.html>
- ▶ https://thinktv.pbslearningmedia.org/grades/9-12/?rank_by=recency

List of Demonstrated Activities

1. Class mingle
2. Choosing breakout rooms
3. Google slides
4. Scavenger Hunt
5. Drills
6. Flippity
7. Sit-Stand



Thank you!

We want your feedback. Please be sure to complete the evaluation.

Learn more about upcoming First Literacy Professional Development Workshops at www.firstliteracy.org/professional-development-workshops/

Follow First Literacy on [Facebook](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [X](#) | [Instagram](#)