



RIDING THE METRO

A functional language speaking lesson by Lindsay Clandfield

- Level:** Pre-intermediate
Aim: Giving directions for a metro system in a city.
Language: How do I get to...?
Where is...?
Get on/off at...
Change trains...
Metro lexis (stop, train, line)

Rationale: using a foreign transport system is a very demanding task for many people visiting another country. Some systems, like the tube in London, are extremely confusing and it isn't uncommon to see tourists pouring over maps for long periods of time. In many coursebooks, asking for directions presumes that the students are outside on the street. This lesson is especially useful for students living in cities with an underground (metro) system that is frequented by English-speaking tourists.

Preparation: For this activity to really come alive, find maps of a real city's metro system. If you live in a city with a metro, that's the best idea. Otherwise, do a web search for the city of your choice: name of city + metro + map. The following site also provides links to metro maps from several cities around the world

<http://www.reed.edu/~reyn/transport.html>

Print out and make copies of the maps. You also need copies of the Useful language worksheet for students to refer to.

Vocabulary note: In Britain it is called the underground, or the tube. In America it's called the subway. The metro is a more international word. You can teach all three words if you like. For the lesson notes I've kept to the word metro.

Acknowledgement: I'd like to express my thanks to the teacher Susan Bippus whom I observed teach a very interesting lesson on directions. That lesson was the inspiration for this one.

NOTES

Stage one: Explain to the students that you are going to mime a series of actions. They must guess what you are doing (and where you are) for each sentence. Mime the following:

You are going to work (bag in hand, walking purposefully, looking at watch). Elicit the sentence and continue.

You are going downstairs.

You are getting a ticket out of your pocket.

You are putting the ticket in the machine and going into the station.

You are running for the train.

You are getting on the train. (mime squeezing through the doors)

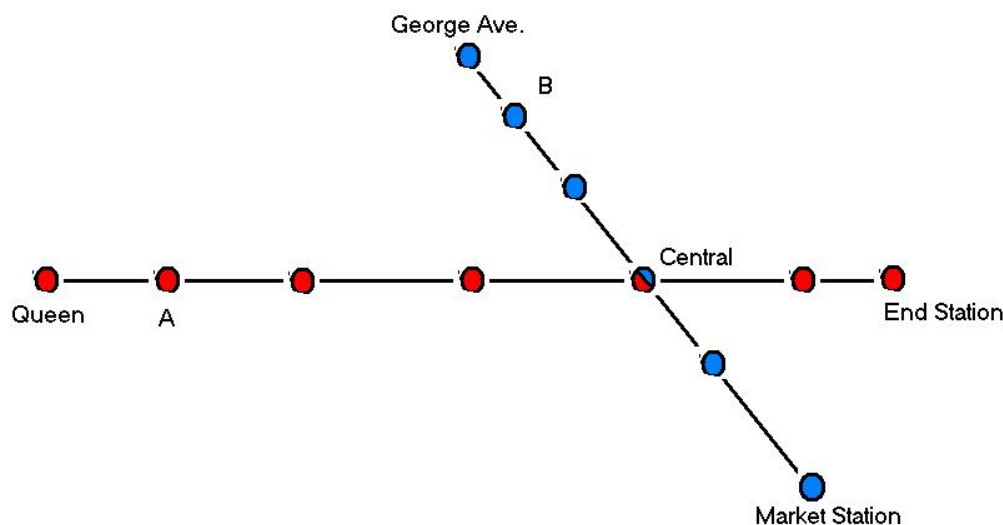
You are sitting down.

You are reading a newspaper.

Explain that today's lesson is about using the metro.

Stage two:

Draw a simple metro map on the board. You should include at least one station change.



Tell the students you are at point A, but you want to get to point B. Ask students to tell you how to get there. Allow different contributions, and accept all of them at this point.

Stage three: Now tell students to listen to another set of instructions on how to get from A to B. Write the following words and phrases on the board and ask students to copy them down in the order they hear them in your talk.

Change trains
Get on
Get off
Go... stops
Take the train towards...

Read out the following instructions (note: if you've used your own metro map, you'll have to adjust this).

Get on the red line at station A. Take the train towards End Station.

Go three stops.

Get off at Central Station.

Change trains to the blue line.

Take the train towards George Ave.

Go two stops.

Get off at station B.

You can read the instructions again if needed. Allow students to check answers in pairs.

Stage three

Put students in pairs. Tell them to practise giving the same instructions to each other. They can use the words on the board as prompts.

Stage four

Erase the language from the board and tell the students to put their papers away. Put the students into new pairs. Tell each pair to role play the same situation. One person is asking the other for directions.

Optional task: You could make this into a more challenging/interesting role play by giving each person more details about their role. For example:

Student 1, you are in a big rush, you have to get to the hospital at point B. Ask Student 2 for directions.

Student 2, you speak VERY slowly.

or...

Student 1, you want to go to point B. You have very little English. Ask Student 2 to repeat the instructions (several times).

Student 2, you only speak a little English (and with a very strong accent). Help Student 1.

Stage five

Distribute metro maps. Have students give directions to one station or another. Distribute the Useful language sheets and tell them to incorporate this into their practice. Circulate and monitor, correcting only if students make mistakes with the language you've taught them today.

Stage six

Ask different pairs to come up and present their role play to the rest of the group.



RIDING THE METRO USEFUL LANGUAGE

Asking for directions

Excuse me, how do I get to...?

Excuse me, can you tell me how to get to...?

Can you say that again please?

Thank you very much.

Giving directions in the metro

Get on the ... line.

Go for ... stops.

Get off at ... station.

Change trains (at ... station).

It's the (second, third...) stop.