

Fat: Teacher's notes and tips – upper-intermediate

1 Pre-reading tasks

- a Ask each student to write down *everything* that they ate and drank yesterday.
- b Then ask them to compare their lists: who had the most, and the least?

Tip: keep the subject light-hearted

Personalizing a subject is good but bear in mind some students may be sensitive about their weight and how much they eat so try and be jokey about this lead-in and the subject in general.

- c Photocopy the worksheet double sided. Divide the class in half: one group is *fat* and the other is *thin*. Give each student a worksheet; they only look at their side, i.e. *fat* or *thin*.
- d Working in small groups and with a good dictionary ask students to do the vocabulary gap-fill.

Tip: provide useful vocabulary

Too often course books pre teach vocabulary simply because it is needed for a reading. Only a few of these words are actually in the text but they promote interest in the topic, and a receptive knowledge of them leading to active use, which is important at upper intermediate level.

- e Monitor well and make sure those who have done it correctly are helping weaker students. Everyone needs to have the right answers.

Answers:

Fat: 1. overweight; 2. big; 3. large; 4. plump; 5. chubby; 6. tubby; 7. flabby; 8. obese

Thin: 1. slim; 2. slender; 3. lean; 4. skinny; 5. bony; 6. gaunt; 7. underweight; 8. anorexic

Tip: point out the cultural aspect of the vocabulary

Direct those students who have finished the gap-fill correctly to the points of view at the end of the worksheet. Get them to talk about it with the other students: Do they agree? Is being fat considered to be attractive or unattractive in their culture? Why?

- f When everyone is ready put the students into pairs – a *fat* with a *thin* person. Get them to exchange the correct information on their worksheets.

Tip: promote learner centred tasks

You only need to monitor, there is no need for a teacher led feedback. Students exchange their information and the quicker ones can discuss the cultural aspect.

- g Now tell the students, *You are going to read an article about Frank Banks, a man who, by the age of 37, weighed almost 350kg and was eating his way to an early grave, and who had to choose between diet and death.*
- h Ask the students to think about what information the article will contain and elicit/give three main topics:
 - A The problems of being fat
 - B Why / how he got fat
 - C Why / how he lost weight

- i Now divide the class into three (A, B and C) and get them to talk together in their groups about what they think the article will say about Mr Banks for their topic only. In addition they should also think about any questions they would like answered from the text.

Tip: encourage anticipation

Giving students time to anticipate the content of what they will read promotes motivation and also makes it easier to understand the main points of the text.

2 First reading tasks

- a Hand out reading A to the A group, B to the B group and C to the C group.
b Students read to:
▪ compare the article with what they thought would be in it and
▪ see if any of their questions were answered.
c In their groups the students can discuss any surprising or interesting information.

Tip: let them talk!

Readings like these often get students talking so be flexible with the time. Reacting to the text in this way, as we do in real-life, is a purposeful activity and also checks comprehension.

3 Second reading tasks

- a Students read the text again quietly on their own, this time in order to be able to tell another student about their topic. There is no need to make notes but they can underline key points.
b Encourage students to discuss together the content in their groups to help them remember.
c Regroup the students into threes so that each group has A, B and C. Make sure nobody is looking at the texts. They take it in turns to talk about what they have read, while the other 2 listen and ask any questions.
d Together they decide which piece of information about Banks was the most interesting / unusual.

4 Post-reading tasks

- a Dictate the following questions:
▪ Have you ever been on a diet? Why / why not?
▪ Do you know how much you weigh?
▪ Do you think about what you eat in terms of whether it's 'good' or 'bad' for you?
▪ Do you eat more when you're unhappy, or less?
▪ What's your favourite kind of food, and how often do you eat it?
▪ What food is a real treat?
b Ask students to discuss the questions – do they have different opinions?