

First Day: Speaking activities for the first day of class

The following are five quick activities that can be used to encourage speaking in first classes of a course or school year. All have been tested in actual classroom environments and proven to get students talking (with a little help of their teachers, of course).

In Common (Elementary +, 10–20 minutes)

Ask students to sit in pairs. Tell them to find five things they have in common and three things they don't have in common. When they are done, set each pair with another to do the same (five things the two pairs have in common, three they don't have in common). You can also have students change partners and share what they learned they had in common with the previous one.

Tell Me About Me (Pre-Intermediate +, 30 minutes)

Have students take out five objects that may give or show information about them (their ID, a keychain with keys, a personal object they keep in their purses/wallets, etc.) Have students work in pairs or small groups and share their items with each other. Ask students to make deductions about each other based on the objects they have.

A Good Way to Learn English Is... (Intermediate +, 10–20 minutes)

This is a class-discussion activity that can be done with the group as a whole or in smaller groups. Write or project the following sentences on the board.

A good way to learn English is...

1. in class with a professional English teacher.
2. in a café with a native speaker of English (not necessarily a teacher).
3. living in a country where people speak English.
4. doing business in English.
5. watching films and TV in English.
6. repeating what the teacher says in class.
7. keeping a notebook of new words.
8. doing some English homework (writing or reading) very often.
9. having lots of tests in class to help us remember.
10. using a bilingual dictionary all the time.
11. reading in English.
12. speaking English with other students in the class.

Have students go over the list and discuss which numbers they believe are good ways to learn English and which they aren't. You can also divide the class in two and assign a few sentences to them and have a small group debate.

Favorite Food Snake (All levels, 5–15 minutes)

This is a great activity to get to know (and learn!) your student's name and creates a nice ice breaker to make your class more fun. Have one student say their name and favorite food (*My name is...; my favorite food is...*). Have the student right next to (or behind) that student say both their classmates' name and favorite food and their own (*Her/His name is...; her/his favorite food is... My name is...; my favorite food is...*). Have the next student say their previous classmates' name and their own and so on (if you have a large class you may want to break it into two or three smaller groups or it'll take forever).

Funny Holidays (Intermediate +, 30 minutes)

Print out the cards on the next page. Make enough copies so that each group of 12 students have a set of cards. Students take a card in turns (without showing it to their classmates). If the card says *Tell the truth*, then they must tell a true story about a past trip they took. If they choose a card with a destination or holiday already on it, they must talk about an imaginary holiday they took to the location in the card. Encourage them to make it as detailed as possible. The rest of the class must guess which if the story was true or false.

FUNNY HOLIDAYS CARDS



**You went on
a cruise in
the Caribbean**

**Tell the
TRUTH**

**You went
hiking in
the woods**

**Tell the
TRUTH**

**You went on
a canoe trip
in Canada**

**You went to
London for
an intensive
English course**

**Tell the
TRUTH**

**Tell the
TRUTH**

**You went to
New York City,
and it snowed
all the time.**

**You had a
"staycation".
You didn't go
out once.**

**You went to
Australia to visit
your family.**

**You won a trip to
Los Angeles and
visited Hollywood.**

Teacher's notes