

visiting the doctor

Age: Adult

Level: Pre-intermediate

Time: 45–60 minutes

Language focus: key vocabulary for registering as a patient and seeing a doctor

Skills: reading, listening

Materials: audio and worksheets, internet access

Aims: to provide students with language to help them deal with being ill



What are red words?

Ninety per cent of the time, speakers of English use just 7,500 words in speech and writing. These words appear in the Macmillan Dictionary in red, and are graded with stars. One-star words are frequent, two-star words are more frequent, and three-star words are the most frequent. 'Language for' lessons are based on red words and encourage students to improve their English through communicative tasks using collocation and commonly used phrases.

- 1 As preparation for the lesson, ask students to look at one or two UK-based healthcare websites (e.g. [NHS choices](#), [Health.org](#)) note down any words they see repeatedly (e.g. *appointment*, *symptom*, *prescription*, *virus*), and check their meanings in the Macmillan Dictionary.



Teaching Tip: Encourage students to record new vocabulary in a systematic way, by noting down whether the words they find are nouns, verbs or adjectives. When they check the meanings in the Macmillan Dictionary, ask them to note down any words that are derived from the same root, e.g. *prescribe* / *prescription*; *virus* / *viral*, and any collocations they find, e.g. *make an appointment*.

- 2 Make a copy of the worksheet for each student.
- 3 Start the lesson by asking students to work in

pairs and ask and answer the three questions in the warmer exercise. Then get them to report their partner's answers to the whole class.

- 4 Explain that there are two ways of saying that something hurts. Some parts of the body are followed by 'ache', while for others we use 'a pain in my ...'. Ask students to work individually and complete the table. Have them compare their answers in pairs and then check the answers with the whole class. Note that *stomach ache* is written as two words.
- 5 Tell students that they're now going to listen to two conversations involving a woman called Jane. In the first part, Jane is registering as a new patient at the doctor's. Ask them to read the questions in exercise 2a in preparation. Play Track 1. Give students time to complete exercise 2a and compare their answers in pairs. Replay the recording so they can check their answers, then check the answers as a class.
- 6 Before completing exercise 2b, explain that you're going to play the second part of the recording and students will need to listen out for words to complete each of the sentences. Ask them to read the sentences and briefly think about what the words might be. Play Track 2, pausing if necessary to give students time to write in the answers. Once students have completed the exercise, check the answers as a class, showing how the sentences highlight typical phrases which occur in this situational context, e.g. *describe symptoms*, *have a temperature*, *a sore throat*, *write out a prescription*.
- 7 Ask students to carefully read the sentences in exercise 3a and then work in pairs to complete the exercise. Encourage them to first complete any answers they immediately know so that they can be eliminated. Check the answers as a class.

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- 8** Exercise 3b uses words first encountered in the previous exercises and in the listening extracts. Ask students to work individually to complete the exercise and then compare their answers in pairs. Check answers with the whole class.
- 9** Exercise 3c focuses on some common collocations in this context. This exercise can be done individually. Check answers with the whole class.
- 10** Divide students into pairs for exercise 4. Tell them to read the questions and note down some ideas for the responses. Remind them to look back at the words and phrases featured in earlier exercises, as well as any suggestions given in exercise 4. Ask them to take turns in asking the doctor's questions and responding to them.
- 11** As a wind-up exercise, ask students to look at the discussion questions in exercise 5. Tell them they should talk about what they should and shouldn't do if they have flu symptoms (e.g. *should: drink plenty of liquid, get a lot of rest; shouldn't: go to work, ask the doctor for antibiotics*) and then discuss what is both good for and bad for their health. Finish off with whole class feedback.

Answer key:

- 1** a pain in my foot, arm, shoulder, leg; headache, earache, backache, stomach ache
- 2a** 1 registration
2 surname
3 date
4 permanent
- b** 1 symptoms
2 headache
3 sore
4 temperature
5 unwell
- 3a** 1 f
2 h
3 a
4 g
- b** 1 symptoms
2 sore
3 temperature
4 headache
- c** 1 e
2 c
3 f
- 4,5** students' own answers
- 5 allergies
6 medication
7 appointment
8 surgery
- 6 several
7 virus
8 serious
9 recommends
10 prescription
- 5 c
6 b
7 e
8 d
- 5 appointment
6 water
7 prescription
8 virus
- 4 a
5 b
6 d