

Unit 1

Level: Beginners with no previous knowledge of Roman script

Age: Adults

Time: 90-120 minutes

Language objectives: *hello, what's your name?*, alphabet (upper case), *repeat please*, numbers 1-5, *book, pen, chair, table, goodbye*

Key skills: speaking, reading, listening, writing

Materials: one set of cut-out alphabet cards (laminated, if possible) per pair of students; one alphabet formation sheet per student; one set of flash cards; one **REPEAT PLEASE** sign; the following objects in the classroom: pen, book, table, chair; sticky labels

Notes for an interpreter – Part 1

If an interpreter is available (e.g. a family member or friend of the student who speaks good English), try to follow the steps below before or at the start of the lesson.

- Enlist their help with Exercises 1 and 2 and ask them to translate *repeat please* for the student. They should not be encouraged to stay for the whole lesson as this may inhibit the student and / or reinforce the student's dependence on an interpreter.
- Ask them if they can return at the end of the lesson to clarify, if necessary, any language items.
- If they are not available at the end of the lesson, agree on the best means of communication, e.g. by phone or by attaching notes to the student's worksheet.

2. Ask a confident-looking student *What's your name?* If the student answers, repeat the name as accurately as possible and watch for signs of confirmation that you have got it right.

If the student looks confused, introduce yourself, e.g. *My name is Susan Smith*. Point to yourself as you say this. Repeat *What's your name?* whilst gesturing to the student. If there is still no response, prompt them by saying their name. That should elicit at least a nod. Repeat *What's your name?* The student should now understand what is required and give their name. Introduce yourself again and ask *What's your name?* Encourage, prompting if necessary, the response, e.g. *My name is Yasmin Asif*. Repeat this process with all the students. Encourage group members to help each other.

3. Model the question *What's your name?* and ask the students to repeat please, pointing to the **REPEAT PLEASE** sign on the wall. Put the students in pairs to practise *What's your name? My name is...* . Practise until each student is comfortable with this exchange.

Before the lesson

- Write your own name, and each student's name, on separate sticky labels. Use upper case only and place them on a table in the middle of the classroom (to arouse curiosity).
- Stick the **REPEAT PLEASE** sign to the front wall of the classroom.

Procedure

1. When the students enter, smile and say *hello*. If the student replies with *hello*, smile encouragingly and nod to show that is the right response – even if the attempt is not produced perfectly. If the student says nothing, let it pass for now. The word will be reviewed before the end of the lesson and it is important to start on a positive note.

Why teach upper-case letters first?

Only upper-case letters are introduced in the first unit to simplify the presentation of the alphabet at this stage. This is because:

- a. The aim of the series is to provide 'survival English' and the majority of social signs are in upper case (e.g. street names, shop names, signs for toilets, hospital signs, car registration plates).
- b. One of the main focuses of this unit is the students' names. A name can be written in upper case only but cannot be written in lower case only.
- c. The majority of administration forms require upper case only.

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4. Using upper-case letters only, write your name on the board. Read your name out whilst underlining it with a finger. Make a show of looking for the sticky label with your name on it. Find it, read it aloud and stick it on yourself. Now, write one of the more confident students' names on the board in upper case only. Read the name out whilst underlining it with a finger. Using gesture, ask them to find the sticky label with their name and to put it on themselves. Encourage all group members to help identify the correct label. Repeat for all students' names.

5. Put the alphabet cards with the letters of your name, mixed up, on the table. Model putting them in the correct order and encourage the students to help you. Give each pair a set of alphabet cards and ask them to do the activity. Encourage the students to help each other. Circulate and help as necessary.

Alternatives to using the cut-out alphabet cards

Although it will take time to laminate and cut out the alphabet cards, it will be a sacrifice worth making. The cards are extremely versatile and can be used to play a variety of word games and activities (some of which will feature later in the series). Laminating them will protect them and means that you will be able to use them in future lessons.

If you are unable to print the letters in time to teach Unit 1, you could use the following to teach Step 5:

- a. magnetic letters
- b. tiles from the board game Scrabble
(**Note:** these will also have numbers written on so may be confusing for students.)
- c. the whiteboard, e.g. write down one name in jumbled form (e.g. *MNAIYS* for *Yasmin*). Slowly circle, name and write each letter in the correct order. Repeat this process three or four times with different student names. Encourage the students to help unscramble the letters.

6. Hand out the alphabet formation sheets and write the full alphabet in upper-case letters on the whiteboard. Play Track 1 (the alphabet chant) and point to each letter as it is named. Play the track several times, encouraging the students to join in with the chant and point to the corresponding letters on their alphabet formation sheets. You could test the students at this stage by pausing the audio file and asking students to either say the next letter or point to the last letter spoken on their alphabet formation sheets.

The rhythm of the chant is designed to help students learn the alphabet more easily. It can be repeated several times in the first class and used again in future lessons until the students are comfortable with the alphabet.

7. Hand out the student worksheets and refer to Exercise 1. Using gesture, ask the students to write their name in the space provided at the top of the page. They can use the alphabet formation sheet to practise first. Praise all effort as students will probably find this a challenge.

8. Refer to Exercise 2. Read the dialogue aloud, following the words with your finger, and complete the dialogue with your own name. Read the dialogue again and ask the students to *repeat please*, pointing to the *REPEAT PLEASE* sign. Hopefully, they will complete the dialogue with their own name. Invite confident students to read individually to set an example. Finally, ask the students to write their own name in the blank space at the end by pointing to it and gesturing.

9. Refer to Exercise 3. Ask the students (using gesture) to copy the dialogue. It is acceptable if the student only wants to copy once but there is space for them to do this twice. Again, praise all effort and, at this stage, accept minor errors, e.g. not writing on the lines.

10. Indicate to students that they are going to listen to another audio file by pointing to your ear. Play Track 2 twice. Choose a confident student to model the dialogue. Then, put the students in pairs and ask them to practise the dialogue, pointing to the *REPEAT PLEASE* sign if necessary.

Transcript:

John: Hello.
Emma: Hello.
John: What's your name?
Emma: My name is Emma Black. What's your name?
John: My name is John Williams.

11. Refer to Stage 4. Say *repeat please*. Say it again, encouraging the students to join in. Point to the sign on the classroom wall and encourage the students to read it. If necessary, read it out first.

12. Perform the following sequence:

- a. Hold up a pen. Say the word *pen* clearly. Repeat it and then say *repeat please – pen*.
- b. Hold up a book. Say the word *book* clearly. Repeat it and then say *repeat please – book*.

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- c. Hold up the pen again. Elicit *pen* from the students. If necessary, say the word and ask them to repeat it.
- d. Hold up the book again. Elicit *book* from the students. If necessary, say the word and ask them to repeat it.
- e. Point to a table. Say the word *table* clearly. Repeat it and then say *repeat please – table*.
- f. Repeat steps *c* and *d* and then point to the table again. Elicit *table* from the students.
- g. Point to a chair. Say the word *chair* clearly. Repeat it and then say *repeat please – chair*.
- h. Repeat step *f* and then point to the chair again. Elicit *chair* from the students.
- i. Point to each item in a random order and elicit the words.

13. Hold up the flashcards, one by one. The students should shout out the name of the appropriate object. Using a mix of the flashcards and the real items, reinforce this new vocabulary. Allow the students to point to an item or flashcard and 'test' their fellow classmates. Continue until each student appears to have assimilated the new vocabulary.

14. Refer to Exercise 5 on the student worksheet. Point to the photos and elicit the word. Point to the written word underneath the photo and read it. Encourage the students to do the same.

15. Using gesture, ask the students to complete the words in the spaces provided. Indicate that they can practise first using the alphabet formation sheets if they'd prefer.

Using gesture

At this level, where the spoken word can easily be misunderstood, or simply impossible for the students to understand, gesture is a useful way to communicate. Here are some tips:

- Plan your gestures beforehand.
- Watch out for cultural pitfalls, some gestures may be perceived as rude in other cultures.
- Try them out on a volunteer first to check for clarity of message.
- Be consistent so that students become accustomed to your gestural language.

16. Using gesture, ask the students to turn over their worksheets. Hold up the flashcards so the students can only see the object names and not the pictures. Hold up the flashcard displaying the word *BOOK*.

Model reading it and place it on the book. Lay the other flashcards face-up on a table and encourage the students to find and put the appropriate label on the pen, table and chair.

Note: If you are concerned about the students seeing the image underneath you could print out the object names only.

17. Using your fingers, count *one – two – three – four – five*. Say *repeat please* and count again with the students. Repeat until the students can count 1-5 without your help.

18. Refer to Exercise 6. Point to the numbers in order and say them. Then, point to the numbers in a random order and ask the students to say the number.

19. Using gesture, ask the students to copy the words *ONE* to *FIVE* in the spaces provided. Again, they can practise first using the alphabet formation sheets if they prefer.

20. Say *goodbye*, and encourage any student who attempts to respond with *goodbye*.

Notes for an interpreter – Part 2

If the interpreter is available at the end of the class, try to establish the following:

- Did the student understand the meaning of *hello* and *goodbye*?
- Is there anything that was not clear?

Stress that the student should try to practise the language covered before the next lesson.

In particular:

- The student should start a vocabulary notebook where they write down the word, its meaning in their language and how to pronounce it. The overwhelming majority of complete beginner students will be unaware of phonetic symbols but they should be able to make a note which will help them to reproduce the sounds required.
- The student should use the LOOK – SAY – COVER – WRITE – CHECK method to practise writing the words (see the [Introduction to Absolute Beginners](#) for a full explanation of this method). Check that the interpreter can explain this to the student.
- The student should practise forming the letters at home.

Absolute Beginners

by Frances Marnie

Unit 1

1 NAME: _____

2 HELLO.

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

MY NAME IS _____.

3

4 REPEAT PLEASE

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Unit 1

5



PEN

PE__



BOOK

B__K



TABLE

T__B__



CHAIR

C_____

6

1 ONE _____

2 TWO _____

3 THREE _____

4 FOUR _____

5 FIVE _____



GOODBYE

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A

A

A

A

A



A

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ALPHABET CARDS

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ALPHABET CARDS

Absolute Beginners

by Frances Marnie

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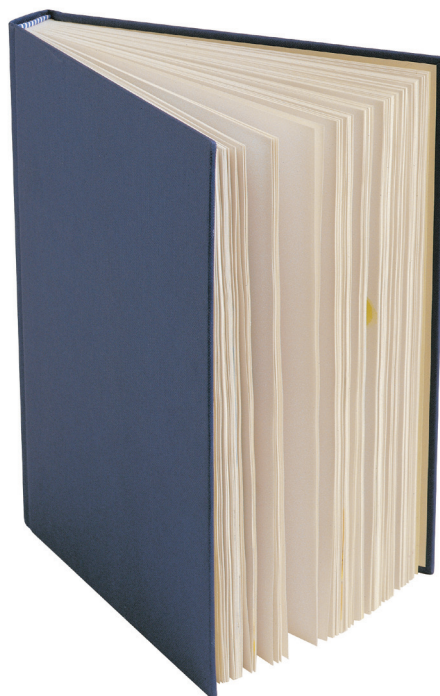
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ALPHABET FORMATION

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FLASHCARDS

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BOOK

PEN

CHAIR

TABLE

REPEAT
PLEASE

