BACK TO SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

THE ‘YES’ – ‘NO’ GAME

This fast-paced activity is a perennial favourite with students because it is game-like and challenging. Here is how you play it:

- Students work in pairs (A – B).
- Student A has to ‘bombard’ Student B with questions for one minute.
- Student B has to give short answers, but they must avoid ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ – if they do, they lose.

The idea is that student A keeps asking Wh-Questions, but from time to time they ask a ‘Do you...’ or ‘Have you ever...’ question or they throw in a question tag (‘You like dogs, don’t you?’) or they pretend to have misheard or misunderstood something (‘Did you say you were married?’/’Did I ask you that earlier?’) in order to catch the other one out.

It is important that you give students a model before they play the game – and that you demonstrate it a couple of times with a good student. If your students’ level is reasonably high, you can use this audio clip.

YOU IN PICTURES

This is a humanistic activity where students share things about themselves and they try to find similarities with each other:

- Students work in pairs (A – B).
- The teacher gives students (or projects on the screen) a number of small pictures (the sun, a rabbit, a heart, a boat, a book ... etc. – see the picture below).
- Students use these images as prompts to ask each other questions (‘Are you a morning person?’ / ‘Do you prefer hot or cold weather?’ / ‘What kind of books do you like?’ etc.)

They then ask follow-up questions trying to spot things they share in common.

Students love this activity because of the ambiguity of the pictures and the fact that they can control how much they disclose about themselves.
ASK ME MY QUESTIONS

This is another activity which aims to help students get to know each other. The thing is that if two people are strangers, not only do they not know much about each other, they also do not know which would be good questions to ask; some might be inappropriate for a particular person, or they might lead to very short responses. Not so in this activity!

- Students work in pairs (A – B).
- Each student writes down a number of questions they would like to be asked and gives them to their partner.
- Now the other person knows which direction to take the discussion to and can safely ask follow-up questions.

For instance, a keen chess player may give their partner the question: ‘Do you like chess? Why?’ while a proud mother might give her partner the question ‘Do you have any children? …’

ARTICULATE

This high-intensity activity is huge fun and it is the perfect way to round off the first lesson. Based on the board game ‘Articulate’ it is extremely flexible. Here is how it works:

- Students work in pairs (A – B).
- Student A sits facing the screen (board) while the other sits with their back to it.
- The teacher projects a set of words on the screen/board. In the actual board game, the word come in the following categories: P = Person, W = World, O = Object, A = Action, N = Nature, R = Random. (For instance, the words can be: Cinderella/Rome/A hammer/Dancing/A shark/Carefully – but of course the teacher can choose words which are suitable for the students’ level, age and interests).
- Student A then has one minute to try to get his/her partner to guess the words on the screen/board. They can use definitions, synonyms, example sentences etc. (but not derivatives or translations).
- They have one minute to do this.
- Pairs score points depending on how many words the second student has managed to guess. The pair with the most points at the end, are the winners.

The game is noisy and chaotic once students get the hang of it. [Warning: This is one of the few cases where the bell may actually fail to get students to stop; you may need to use incentives to get them to leave the classroom... 😊 ]