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# There are no wrong answers: confidence and creativity in teens

## Webinar handout

by Teresa Bestwick

Here are seven of my favourite activities to promote confidence and creativity in teens.

### 1. Storytelling

*Stories are a wonderful way to get our learners to use their imagination, particularly if we give them minimal details about the characters, settings and events.*

Tell a story in short chunks and give learners questions to encourage them to invent the details of the narrative.

### 2. Spot the difference

*Many learners take exams which require them to describe photos and it's important that we practise the skills and language they need to do this effectively. However, it gets a little boring to do the same activity day in, day out. Spot the difference is a fun way to get learners describing a picture and listening to their partner as well.*

Give learners a copy of the same image and have one person make a false statement about the picture. Their partner has to respond with what they can actually see in the picture.

### 3. Prediction

*Encouraging learners to talk about themselves is a great way to personalise the lesson content and build rapport. Using prediction adds an extra layer into the lesson and helps learners think about their classmates.*

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Divide the class into groups. Have each group make predictions about another group. The predictions can focus on a specific grammatical or lexical point. When they have their predictions, give them time to interview the group and find out if their predictions were correct.

#### 4. A character build

*Character builds are a fun way to practise lots of everyday grammar and vocabulary in an engaging way. You can use the character to focus on particular grammar or vocabulary, or use it as a filler at the end of the lesson. Use images from the coursebook to help learners imagine the lives of the people they see in the book.*

Show the class a picture of a person. Ask questions about the person and encourage the learners to be creative in their answers. Once you have a general background for the person, learners can discuss further questions in pairs.

#### 5. Guided visualisations

*These are a wonderful way to get lots of learner-generated content and to really offer personalisation to the learners. There are four simple rules:*

- *Keep your speech slow, calm and graded*
- *Ask questions to bring in all the senses*
- *Don't move around the room while you're narrating*
- *Lead learners out of the visualisation calmly as well*

Have learners close their eyes and lead them through a situation. Ask open questions, but provide suggestions if you feel learners need more support. When you finish the narration, have them tell their partner about what they imagined and move around the room to provide emergent language.

Find examples of my guided visualisations here:

- Going shopping: <https://viewsfromthewhiteboard.edublogs.org/2018/05/28/a-birthday-present/>
- The beach: <https://viewsfromthewhiteboard.edublogs.org/2016/09/24/a-materials-free-pet-lesson/>
- A rocky close-up: <https://viewsfromthewhiteboard.edublogs.org/2015/02/17/guided-visualisation-the-rock-2/>
- Visiting grandparents (for young learners): <https://viewsfromthewhiteboard.edublogs.org/2020/03/31/visualisation-visiting-family/>

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- Going to school (for young learners):

<https://viewfromthewhiteboard.edublogs.org/2020/03/19/visualisation-going-to-school/>

## 6. Definitely, maybe

*This is one of my favourite activities ever! It's great for getting an individual to speak but because of the prediction task, it also means classmates need to listen. I used to use it as an end-of-class filler and call on a different learner to speak each lesson.*

Call on a learner and tell them they're going to talk about a topic - this can be related to the lesson topic, or be something different. As they're planning what to say, tell the rest of the class to write down five words they think the learner will definitely say and five words that maybe they'll say. As the learner speaks, have the others tick the words they hear. They then get two points for every tick in the definitely column and one point for every tick in the maybe column.

## 7. Missing letter sentences

*This is an easy activity to use at the end of the lesson as it doesn't require any preparation. It gets learners thinking more carefully about words and structures and always produces a few laughs!*

Show learners an image and have them write a sentence about it without using a particular letter. Vowels and common consonants (R, S, T) work well. You can also add more challenge by saying the sentence must use a particular structure or have a minimum number of words.

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A recording of Teresa's webinar can be accessed here:

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/news-and-events/webinars/webinars-teachers/creativity-and-21st-century-skills-english-language>