

## Remote learning

### Important – please read

This lesson has been created for teachers working in face-to-face classrooms where Covid-19 restrictions may be in place. The guidance at the start of the lesson plan is designed to provide suggested ideas for managing pair work and group work in a physically distanced classroom environment. It is a general guide, and your situation may be different. You may need to adapt the lesson to the context you are working in.

There is also an online version of this lesson plan, which you could refer to if you are working in a 'hybrid' learning situation. Hybrid learning is the method of teaching remote and in-person students at the same time.

### Topic

Positive and negative aspects of remote learning

### Aims

- To practise speaking through discussion
- To practise listening skills
- To practise reading skills
- To develop writing skills by writing a report

### Age/level

Secondary students at CEFR level B2 and above

### Time

60–90 minutes

### Materials

- Remote learning student worksheet
- Texts about remote learning around the world

### Introduction

This lesson plan is designed to be used with students who have had recent experience of remote learning. Students reflect on some of the differences between remote and face-to-face learning by completing a survey about the remote learning that they have done. They watch a video of a student talking about her own experiences and read about the experiences of different students from around the world, comparing them to their own contexts. Finally, students will prepare to write a report about these experiences, in which they give recommendations for how remote learning could be improved in the future.

## Guidance for communicative activities in face-to-face, physically distanced classrooms

### Make sure you are familiar with the rules for face-to-face teaching in your school


These lesson plans are designed to include opportunities for students to work in pairs or groups to develop their communication skills. This is likely to present a number of challenges, as there may be different physical-distancing rules you may need to follow in your classroom to protect the safety of students and teachers. Procedures and rules will vary but may involve some of the following:

- reduced class sizes so that desks can be placed up to two metres apart
- student 'bubbles', in which groups of up to ten pupils are able to work together safely
- clear plastic screens placed around students' desks to allow for safer interaction
- hybrid learning situations, where some students are physically present in the classroom and others join the lesson remotely
- policies on handouts and worksheets, where it is not possible to give learners a physical worksheet.

All of the issues above will bring new challenges and influence the way you teach. The ideas below are intended to help you manage your lessons effectively and ensure that students have sufficient opportunity to communicate as much as possible during the lesson.

### Suggestions for communicative activities

A key purpose of communicative activities, such as pair work and group work, is to ensure students have an opportunity to practise their productive skills at the same time as other students in the class. However, due to restrictions, this may not be possible in the normal way. To avoid your classes being too teacher-centred, we have suggested some ideas below that can replace more traditional group- and pair-work speaking activities.

Where you see the  symbol on the lesson plan, this tells you that the instructions include a group- or pair-work activity. Refer to the suggested activities below for ideas, or the instructions on the lesson plan.

### Using written dialogue in place of spoken dialogue for simple tasks

- Pen and paper. In low-resource environments, ask students who are physically in the classroom to communicate using pen and paper. For example, where students have been asked to give an opinion, they write this in larger than normal writing on a piece of paper and hold it up for their partner to read. Their partner then responds by writing on their own piece of paper.
- Sticky notes. Ask students to write comments on sticky notes, or on small pieces of paper, and take turns to stick them to a board in the classroom or on a 'post-it' wall. This gives students the opportunity to write their opinions, ideas or responses to a question and share them with the rest of the class. The teacher can read comments and focus on any follow-up language work, respond to the students' writing or extend the discussion as a whole class. If working in a hybrid situation, where some of the students are learning simultaneously in a remote environment, they could do the same activity using an online 'wall', such as [Padlet](#). Alternatively, they could write their

comments and ideas into a shared online document, which could be displayed on a computer, via a data projector in the classroom, or read out by the teacher.

- **Using messenger applications.** In contexts where students have access to an internet connection, students could use a messenger tool such as WhatsApp to write messages to each other online. Again, with hybrid learning situations, this pair-work activity could be done between a student physically in the classroom and a partner learning remotely. If students are working in larger groups of four or five, they can create a closed group with the students they are working with.
- **Collaborative writing.** An online solution, which may be effective in a hybrid learning situation, is to use an online messaging board such as [Padlet](#) or a shared document in [Google Docs](#). The teacher asks a simple open-ended question, for example 'What are some of the advantages/disadvantages of learning from home?' Having shared the link with the students, the teacher gives a word limit and a time limit for students to add their comments to the messaging board or Google doc for their group. The teacher follows up with whole-class feedback, responding to the comments and asking students to clarify orally.

### Using voice recording tools for spoken communication

- **Recorded voice messages.** If resources and connectivity make this possible, using voice recording tools can be an effective way to encourage dialogue between students for pair-work activities. Make sure all your students have access to a mobile phone before doing this type of activity to ensure everyone can participate. Ask students to record their turn and send via SMS or a messaging application to their partner to respond and build a recorded dialogue. Alternatively, an online voice recording tool like [Vocaroo](#) is a simple way to create voice recordings and share via SMS or an online messaging application. Most basic mobile phones have a built-in voice recorder, so it might be possible to share one or more phones and for the teacher to pass it between pairs or small groups of students, who listen and respond or add their comments.

Both of the above activities could be done effectively in hybrid learning situations.



- If you are working in a low-connectivity context and have access to cassette recorders and blank cassettes in your school, using these to record students speaking is a possible solution. Ensure there is a quiet space where they can do this. Divide students into groups and invite them to record themselves individually. Play back the recordings as a whole class to evaluate communicative competence and focus on any common errors.

### Setting up traditional group- and pair-work activity

- If none of the above are possible, consider ways of rearranging your classroom by moving desks and chairs to the side of the room or to the middle of the room for speaking activities in groups or pairs. Arrange students so that they are able to speak at a recommended distance from each other and also from the other groups.

This is a small selection of ideas that may be used to encourage student-led communication in physically distanced face-to-face classrooms or in hybrid learning contexts. If it is possible where you work, we recommend that you work with your colleagues to create a list of activities and ideas for your own context. We also recommend that you join the [British Council teacher community](#) on Facebook to share ideas and collaborate with a global group of teachers.

**Procedure**

Stage	Instructions
<p><b>1. Lead-in (10–15 minutes)</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write the words ‘remote learning’ on the board. Can your students tell you what it is or write a definition?</li> <li>• Give students the <a href="#">student worksheet</a> and tell them to look at the pictures at the top of the page (you could project these onto a whiteboard if you have a projector in your classroom). Ask students to read out the adjectives to check pronunciation and make sure students are aware of the meanings. Give them a couple of minutes individually to decide if they associate each adjective with one or other of the photos (or perhaps neither!).</li> <li>• Nominate students to explain which adjectives they chose and why. Alternatively, you could give students sticky notes and ask them to write adjectives for each picture and then come to the board and place them next to the picture they associate them with.</li> <li>• Ask students to write three positive and three negative things about each way of learning (use the examples on the worksheet to help).</li> <li>• <b>Pair-work activity:</b> Students work in pairs to write their sentences, which they can then read out to the class. Again, as an alternative, you could ask students to all write one sentence on a sticky note and stick them on the board, and then read them out to the class to see if there are similar ideas.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Short survey (10 minutes)</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell students that they are going to complete a survey about their experiences of remote learning. If technology allows, you could create an online survey using Google Forms, which is free, or Survey Monkey, which is also free. Students complete the survey on their phones or other mobile devices and you can show the results in real time. You would need to set up the survey before class and send the link to students or create a QR code so that students can access the survey directly from their device.</li> <li>• If you do not have access to a survey tool, ask students to complete the survey on the worksheet.</li> <li>• <b>Group-work activity:</b> If possible, put students into groups of four or five to compare answers and write a few sentences summarising the main points. Alternatively, you could put each question on a large piece of paper around the classroom and ask students to move around the room, writing their answers on each paper. This way, students can then walk around the room and see all the results. Again, try to synthesise the main results, e.g. <i>Most students had online classes every week. Everyone missed seeing their friends.</i></li> <li>• Ask students if there were any answers that surprised them.</li> </ul>

**3. Video for listening comprehension (5–10 minutes)**

Option 1: Viewing the video as a whole class

- Tell students that they are going to watch a short video of a 17-year-old Argentinian student talking about her remote learning experience. Direct them to the questions on the student worksheet and encourage them to make notes as they listen.
- Play the video once:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bN64cl669qU&list=PLWuYED1WVJINNwvkHWOjQWz5oS6z1yIVE&index=7&t=0s>
- **Pair-work activity:** Ask students to make notes on their worksheet. If possible, ask students to compare their answers in pairs.

Option 2: Students view the video on mobile device in class

The same as option 1, but students watch the video on their own mobile device. Make sure they use headphones.

Option 3: Students view the video before class at home

In the preceding lesson, give students the link to the video and tell them to watch it in preparation for the class. They should make notes on the following questions:

- Are there any similarities/differences between Augustina's experience of online learning and your own experience?
- What positive and negative things does she mention?

In the lesson, at this stage, ask students to report back to the class, or compare their notes with a partner, then conduct whole-class feedback.

Answers



*Positive things: not having to get up early, not having to do homework*

*Negative things: missing her friends, school not organising her day, her schedule being messed up, missing her classes, not understanding her classes, how teachers are managing the situation*

*Overall, she is more negative than positive about remote learning.*

**4. Reading (5–6 minutes)**

- Tell students that they are going to do a reading task to find out about experiences of remote learning from different countries.
- You can cut up the reading tasks and give each student one text (from A to E) to read.
- First, tell students to read their text individually and to identify which of the statements from Task 4 apply to their text. They should write the letter of their text next to each statement that applies. Tell students to underline the part of the text which gives them the answer. Set a time limit (5–6 minutes).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correct Task 4 together. Identify which students read each text.</li> <li>• Then go through each statement and ask students to raise their hands to show if their text mentions it. If there is any disagreement (or more than one answer), be sure to ask students to read out the relevant part of the text.</li> </ul> <p><u>Answers</u></p> <p>1. D, 2. A, 3. D, 4. E, 5. A, 6. C, 7. B, 8. C, 9. E, 10. D, 11. B, 12. B, 13. D, 14. A, B, 15. C</p>
<p><b>5. Post-reading discussion</b> (10 minutes)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Group-work activity:</b> If possible, put students into groups of five, where each student has read a different text. Ask students first to make notes on the questions in Task 5.</li> <li>• Each student should briefly talk about their text and explain it to their group. Encourage students to justify their opinions here.</li> <li>• You could ask students for ideas about how remote learning could be improved, based on what they have read, and write up some suggestions on the board. This will help them with ideas for the writing task.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Writing preparation</b> (10 minutes)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask students what a report is and when they might have to write one.</li> <li>• Tell students that they are going to write a report about their experiences of online learning, so that they can give recommendations for how it might be improved. Emphasise that they can write about their own experience but can also make reference to the other contexts they have learned about in this lesson, perhaps using the statements from Task 4 for more ideas.</li> <li>• <b>Pair-work activity:</b> Tell students to look at Task 6 on the worksheet. They are going to work in pairs to write a plan for their report. Ask students to talk together to make notes for each section of their report. They should decide what to include in each section and write some sample sentences, using the useful language from the table. If students need to see a sample report, you can show them this sample: <a href="https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/skills/writing/upper-intermediate-b2-writing/report">https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/skills/writing/upper-intermediate-b2-writing/report</a></li> <li>• Encourage them to use clear sections and expand their ideas to give examples and reasons for their ideas.</li> <li>• Set a time limit (10 minutes) and monitor to help students with ideas if they need them.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Focus on register</b> (5 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remind students that reports should be semi-formal, so it is important to think about register. Show them Task 7 on the worksheet. Individually, they should choose which sentence (a or b) is more appropriate for this type of task.</li> </ul> <p><u>Answers:</u> b, a, a, b</p>

**8. Writing: In class or at home (30 minutes)**

- There are two options here, depending on the length of your lesson – one is to ask students to write the text collaboratively in class. One way to do this is to open a collaborative document (for example, in Google Docs) and for students to work from a device (laptop, tablet or smartphone) in the classroom. They can then work together to write their text, using the plan that they have already made. Remind them to focus on the useful language and maintain a formal style. With this kind of document, students also have the option of continuing their collaborative work outside of class.
- Alternatively, you can give the task for homework individually. Students can write the report at home, using the plan that they developed collaboratively in class.

**8. Optional extra activity**

- As an extra activity for homework or as a follow-up, you could ask students to record themselves answering the four questions that they saw in the video earlier and you could ask students to share them in the next class. This is a nice way for students to talk about their own experiences in English. If students are already back at school, they can use the past tense to answer the questions.
- The questions are:
  - How do you feel about not being at school?
  - What do you miss most about not being at school?
  - How are you keeping up with your lessons?
  - What do you want to say to the people watching this video?

**Contributed by**

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