

Developing Teachers .com

A web site for the developing language teacher

Warmers, Fillers & Coolers



Below is a list of warmer/cooler/filler/game activities in no particular order. If you have any warmers you'd like to add to the list then please send them to site@developingteachers.com

Aims:

- to introduce a theme
- to relax stds after a hard day's work
- to wake stds up after a hard night
- to wait for late arrivals
- to provide a break in the lesson
- to provide humour
- to provide oral fluency practice
- to finish the lesson on a light note

1. Persuade each other that their favourite colour, animal, film, etc. is more important, better, etc

2. Spot the difference. 2 pictures - the same but with a few differences. Without looking at each other's, describe and find the differences.

3 Find someone who.

4. Word association. Go round the class, each student giving a different word connected with previous one given.

5. Word disassociation. Same as previous idea but with no connection between the words - can be tricky. Students challenge each other.

6. Mini-role plays.

7. Correct the mistakes. List of sentences and students correct the wrong ones.

8. Write message on partner's back with finger.

9. Collocations. Sort out which are right/wrong e.g. high person, tall building, Happy Birthday.

10. Cut up story/conversation - put in order.

11. Match headlines and articles.

12. Find connections between words e.g. television, lake and pen.

13. Call my bluff - give three definitions of a word & guess which is right.

14. Brainstorm all words connected with area.

15. 20 questions - give whether it is animal, vegetable or mineral & students guess what it is in only twenty questions.

16. What's my line -guess the job & can only answer Yes or No.

17. Train compartment. Each student has sentence. Must use it naturally in conversation without others noticing.

18. Weekend. 5 words from each student to describe weekend. A different student tells class what other did. Original student verifies.

19. Interpretation of pictures, doodles.

20. Mime what they had for dinner last night.

21. Mime a complaint, as a guest, in a hotel ('Hotel Receptionist'). Rest of the class are the receptionist. e.g. The sheets are dirty and you've found four cockroaches.

22. What's the situation. Students discuss where they might hear the sentence e.g. 'A pint, please.'

23. Brainstorm all words that melt, are green, etc....

24. Put words into lexical groups.

25. Odd man out. Give group of words and decide which is different e.g. hat, tie, bus, trousers.

26. Famous personality party. Students have names on backs and by talking with others guess who they are.

27. Different uses. Students think of as many different uses for different objects e.g. a brick.

28. Charades - mime a film, book or play with a time limit & teams guess.
29. Test each other on vocab. from previous class/week. Could mime them.
30. Guess the word with yes/no questions.
31. Picture dictation. One describes a pic & the other draws.
32. Desert island. 5 things you would take.
33. Mime an idiom. e.g. 'to pull somebody's leg'
34. Logic problems. (See 'Challenge to Think' - Frank et al (OUP) for a list of these.)
35. Clothes touch. Students walk round room and have to touch somebody else's clothing when told. e.g. Touch a white shoe.
36. Anagrams.
37. Functions. Match sentence with functional description.
38. Chain story - A begins, B continues with a sentence, C then adds another sentence etc.
39. Exercises. If they're in need of livening up. Students follow instructions. e.g. Touch your toes. Run on the spot.
40. Blind men directions. One student with eyes closed follows directions of other student.

41. Mime story. The teacher/a student tells a story. Class mimes it walking around the storyteller in a circle.

42. Describing the object. 'A' is taken, with eyes shut, to object 'B' puts A's hand on it and A has to describe it and give it a name.

43. Which picture? 'A' has a few pictures and 'B' has one. B describes it and A identifies which one it is of his pictures.

44. Jumbled sentences. Mix up order of words in a sentence. Students unravel and put in correct order.

45. Guess the town, city, country. One student describes and the others guess.

46. American words. Students match up British English and American English words.

47. Prefix/suffix brainstorming. Give only the prefix or suffix e.g. dis_____, _____ness and students think of all words that could fit.

48. Consequences.

49. Spotting the connection between words (could be dictated and students shout out when they think of the connection) e.g. sun, star, mirror, Telegraph

50. Picture composition cut up. Each student has one picture. Without showing each other, discuss pics and put in order.

51. Prepositions of time. Match times with prepositions e.g. at 6 o'clock on Saturday.

52. Memory. Look at pic for 45 seconds. Turn over and describe.

53.Quotes from famous people. Match quotes and names.

54.Deduction. Students work out what pic is. e.g.the Mexican on a bicycle.

55.Match description and jobs sport, etc...

56.Ordering famous people, personal qualities, verbs using same criteria e.g. usefulness.

57.Lies. One student tells rest/partner about self but lies 3 times. At end others say what lies were.

58.Survival games. e.g. The NASA game. Students have list of things, choose 5 things that will be most useful for survival on the moon, in the desert, etc (See 'Discussions that Work' - Penny Ur (CUP))

59.Write down as many things as you can think of which are (choose one: round/smaller than a CD/beautiful/dangerous etc.), 2 minutes - students brainstorm alone, then words on board. Use words to quiz each other (it's something you use to...) From Tamara

60.Here's a new warmer. I dreamed it up years ago when I was working as a tutor in a writing center in Laguardia Community College in New York City; the majority of the students who came for support work in English were immigrants, adult returning students, younger disadvantaged learners (single mothers, ex-substance abusers, etc.) that is, a population of people who had lived a lot and were not your typical middle class comfortable-life type. One day another teacher passed around an essay one of her students had written about a typical bad day-everything went wrong-no heat or hot water that morning in the house, bad weather, lousy public transit, broken coffee machine at work, broken photocopy machine, etc. It was hysterically funny and a great radical statement on urban life for the less than luxurious-living citizen.

I started by asking a group of students to make a list of all the things in their house that didn't work - bad plumbing, broken elevator, lukewarm fridge, creaky doors and chairs, dead mattresses, etc. We realized that the ideal pushed at us from US commercial culture had nothing to do with the reality that most people live. You can stretch it to service that doesn't come up to snuff, bad jobs that we ourselves do.....the possibilities are endless. And all can be

done with a sense of humor, and with an eye to social criticism - how much perfection can we expect? How much can we give? whose fault is it? It works especially well in business classes which is what I'm mostly doing now-the conversation frequently leads to the conflict between corporate culture and humanism...or something

like that. From Lee Buckley

61. A friend sent this riddle recently – you could use it as a warmer. The students could ask you Yes/No questions to help them to the answer. But do you know the answer?

What is;

- greater than God?

- more evil than the devil?

And what do;

- the poor have?

- the rich need?

And when you eat it you die?

Answer: Nothing!

62. Give this to your advanced students to get into a sound/spelling discussion.

A NEW ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The European Commission has just announced an agreement whereby English will be the official language of the EU rather than German which was the other possibility. As part of the negotiations, Her Majesty's Government conceded that English spelling had some room for improvement and has accepted a 5 year phase-in plan that would be known as "Euro-English".

In the first year, "s" will replace the soft "c". Certainly, this will make the sivil servants jump with joy. The hard "c" will be dropped in favour of the "k". This should klear up konfusion and keyboards kan have 1 less letter. There will be growing publik enthusiasm in the sekond year, when the troublesome "ph" will be replaced with "f". This will make words like "fotograf" 20% shorter.

In the 3rd year, publik akseptanse of the new spelling kan be ekspekted to reach the stage where more komplikated changes are possible. Governments will enkorage the removal of double letters, which have always ben a deterent to akurate speling. Also, al wil agre that the horrible mes of the silent "e"s in the language is disgraseful, and they should go away. By the fourth year, peopl wil be reseptiv to steps such as replasing "th" with "z" and "w" with "v". During ze fifz year, ze unesesary "o" kan be dropd from vords kontaining "ou" and similar changes vud of kors be aplid to ozer kombinations of leters.

After zis fifz yer, ve vil hav a reli sensibl riten styl. Zer vil be no mor trubl or difikultis and evrivun vil find it ezi to understand ech ozer.

63. This is a bit of fun pop psychology. Put the following symbols on the board & ask the students to copy them down. Then tell them to draw some pictures very quickly, each one incorporating a different symbol - so they draw 6 pictures - & put a one or two- word description above or below the picture. The symbols are a small circle, a key, a small box, a vertical line, a wavy line, a dot.

The first picture is sometimes a flower, the third a window of a house, the fourth a tree & the last the top of a mountain. The interpretations are that each picture tells you how you see an aspect of yourself. In the order of the pictures they are how you

see yourself, your friends, your family, your sex life, your job & lastly your future. In the feedback ask what they a few of them had for each picture.

64. This is a fun warmer that Joanne Shipp did on a training course recently. You need some cards with objects written on them - one sock, an empty CD case, a kilo of heroin, one bicycle wheel Hand one to each student & put them into groups of 3 or 4. They then have to choose someone in their group & try to persuade them that they desperately need that thing. The student being persuaded can resist & give arguments as to why they don't need it. The others in the group then vote as to who should have it. And so on until everyone has had a go at trying to persuade someone.

65. In these rather depressing times it is difficult to open a newspaper & find anything uplifting to read about. In class you could change this around & with the front page of a newspaper in front of the group, ask them to change it into positive news. Or without the paper, get them to think of what has been happening in the world lately & discuss what good might have come out of the events or change the stories around into good news.

This could be an isolated speaking activity, an activity linked in to the theme of the lesson &/or lead on to writing practice. A positive beginning to the lesson.

66. Connected to the theme of music, a great piece of material to have at hand for your teenage groups is the recent top 20 music singles charts. Hand out a copy to each group of three or four stds & get them chatting at the beginning of a lesson:

- do they agree that e.g. Michael Jackson's single should be at no. 1.

- who would they vote for no. 1 - explain why - the language of comparison & persuasion.

- design their own top 5, from the top 20 they have in front of them - persuade another group that their list makes more sense.
- describe songs to each other that not yet heard.
- discuss why certain songs have descended in the list.
- can they remember any of the words to any in the top 5?
- which artists would they actually buy concert tickets to go see?
- etc.

A local chart is better but if you need an international/US-based one the address below takes you to Billboard's Hot 100 - should keep them chatting for a while!

<http://www.billboard.com/billboard/charts/hot100.jsp>

67. Some shopping roleplays

1. Customer: You've been short-changed & you reckon it wasn't an accident. Try to get your money back.

Shopkeeper: You just served a 'difficult' customer. You want to get rid of him/her as soon as you can. You think most of these 'difficult' customers invent excuses to be difficult.

2. Customer: You bought an iron last week & it didn't work when you tried to use it. Talk to the shopkeeper who sold it to you & get your money back.

Shopkeeper: You don't accept any refunds or exchanges four days after selling an item.

3. Customer: You are trying to find out some more information about a TV that you want to buy - the different makes, sizes, functions etc. Ask the shopkeeper.

Shopkeeper: You feel it is your job to sell electronic goods but not inform the customers. You feel they should decide what they are going to buy before they come into the shop.

4. Customer: You are looking around a clothes shop that you come to regularly. You are actually wearing a shirt that you bought here last week.

Shopkeeper: You work in a clothes shop & you see a customer in one of your shirts. You think that s/he must have taken the shirt to the changing rooms to try on & came out wearing it as if it were his/hers. You think s/he is trying to steal it. Talk to him/her.

5.Customer: You are very concerned about green issues. You are in a shop that clearly imports goods from developing countries that pays the workers who make the goods a pittance. Try to convince the manager that s/he shouldn't be selling these goods.

Shop manager: You sell a variety of goods from all over the world & business has known better times. You aren't particularly sympathetic towards green issues.

68. Here's a nice puzzle to begin a lesson. Give the instructions orally or give out the text.

1. First of all, pick the number of times a week that you would like to study English. (try for more than once but less than 10 times)
2. Multiply this number by 2.
3. Add 5.
4. Multiply it by 50 - it starts to get a bit tricky here!
5. If you have already had your birthday yet his year add 1751. If you haven't, add 1750.
6. Now subtract the four-digit year that you were born. You should now have a three digit number.
7. Add 10.

And here comes the good part:

The first digit of this number is your original number i.e. how many times you would like to study English each week). The next two numbers are your age.

69. 'When my students come in at the beginning of the morning they're yawning away & in no mood for anything. So to wake them up I get them to stand in a circle & we all do a few physical warm-up exercises together. These are mainly stretching exercises like touching your toes five times. It works & it's fun. We can then all get on with a productive lesson. I sometimes do this during a lesson & I imagine the same can be done for the class that begins at the end of the day too.'sent in by Annie Jones in the UK:

70. Word Change - this warmer really gets your students thinking about grammar. Write a lengthy sentence on the board & volunteer a student to come out to the board with the pen/chalk. The class & the student have to change the sentence word by word but the sentence must still make sense. One word at a time can be changed - keep the original sentence on the board & write the new word below the one it changes. And any word can be changed any time, even the new ones. The key is to keeping grammatical sense.

For example, with this sentence:

I went on holiday to China during the summer and found the people very friendly.

Change 'China' for 'Norway' >> change 'friendly' for 'optimistic' >> change 'went' to 'came' etc each time writing the new word below the word it changed. Works well for conditionals too.

71. Here's one of Nedra's favourite warmers, which she uses when she just can't think of anything else to get the class started.

Each student gets a shape (square, circle, rectangle, cube, sphere, pyramid, diamond, etc.). They have 2-3 minutes to think of as many things as possible, which are generally ONLY that shape. Obviously some are easier than others, so having them do it in pairs is nice, too. You have to emphasize that the things on their list should normally only take THAT shape, to avoid six thousand things on the square and rectangle list. Also, make sure they distinguish between squares and rectangles: books are generally rectangular, not square.

Follow up by eliciting adjectives (square, circular, rectangular...)

72. My name is Marina Cantarutti, and I am a teacher of EFL in Argentina. I would like to share with you my favourite warmer, which serves also as an introduction game. It is based on a card game kids play here, which is called "The Pig". Each student will be given three cards to complete. On the first card, the student should write his name, surname and age. On the second, four adjectives describing his physical appearance; and on the third, his favourite TV programme and music band. All the students' cards are then shuffled and handed out to the students, who will be seated in a circle. Each student will have three different cards, from different students. One of the students will act as the director, and will tell the others to choose one, two or three cards to give to the student sitting at the right or left of them. They will go on following the directions of this student to exchange the cards until any of them gets his/her three cards. When he/she does, he should say "Pig", and all the students should place both their hands in the middle of the circle. The last one to do so gets a letter of the word "Pig" as penalization, while the student who got all his/her cards, should introduce himself/herself using the information written in the card ("My name is...". "I am...years old", "I am tall, thin.." etc.) and then stay as a spectator. The game goes on until all the students have introduced themselves, and the one to get all the "PIG" letters should repeat the names and features of all the other students.

Hope you will all find it both useful and entertaining!

73. Want to do a reading or listening that class and plan to pre- teach some vocab.? What I've done is start off the class with a true or false discussion warmer. I write a series of sentences using target vocab., some true, some false, on the board. I try to make the sentences illustrate the meaning of the vocab., or at least lead them to an educated guess. Students discuss. You do feedback and give correct answers. Example:

For Headway Upper-Int. unit 6, advertisement listening:

In Britain you have to buy a license to watch television. (T)

All ducks are yellow and fluffy. (F-only ducklings)

There are four branches of the military in the United States. (T - army [target word], navy, air force, marines)

You can recycle disposable razors and blades. (my students insist T)

A couple of warmers from Trang Lee:

74. Gap filling : Ask students to work in pairs. Give Ss passages with the same context but different blanks. Without showing his text, each student has to speak with his partner who has got the answers to find the information to fill in the blanks.

75. Code some words using the language of the blind. Give them how the blind write the letters (from A to Z). The first person who decode all the words and find out the theme correctly is the winner.

A warmer from Rob Rushworth

76. A good reading warmer that can be used to recap previous work and focus students after a weekend or short break.

1. Stand all of the students in a line in the centre of the room. Write "True" on one side of the whiteboard, and "False" on the other.

2. Tell the students that you are going to give them some details from previously read pages in the story. The students must decide whether given details are true or false, then quickly run/move to the correct side of the classroom - as indicated by the "True", "False" on the whiteboard.

Boy/girl team elimination works for most levels and can be adapted to target character, setting, story development etc.



Developing Teachers .com