



Living and Surroundings

Aim: to prepare students to talk about different types of accommodation and the best places to live

Level: Upper intermediate / B2

Language: talking about advantages and disadvantages; making suggestions; using indirect questions

Time: 30 - 45 minutes + 15 - 20 minutes for exam task

Materials: one copy of the worksheets and exam task per student

Activity 1

1. Put the students into small groups.
2. Hand out the worksheet and ask the students to read the proverb and discuss the three questions (a, b, c) in their groups.
3. Monitor and help where necessary (especially if students are having problems coming up with answers to question a).
4. Have a class discussion on answers.
5. Ask students to discuss their home using the questions provided as guidance.

Suggested answer: The meaning of the proverb is that a person's home is a very important place for them. It's somewhere they should feel safe and somewhere they are likely to want to protect and look after.

The answers for b & c will be personal and for c will depend on where the students come from. Sometimes, students can't think of any proverbs but when you, the teacher, tell them one, they might already know it.

Activity 2

1. Divide the class into six pairs or small groups.
2. Ask students to read the background information for the debate task and check student comprehension of the context.

3. Explain the activity aim:
 - There is going to be a council meeting to discuss all the different suggestions.
 - Each representative has one minute to present their suggestion.
 - Before the council meeting they are going to think of reasons why their suggestion is the best one per group.
4. Assign each pair or group one of the ideas (1-6) suggested for the task. In their groups, students should discuss the benefits of their suggestion and the drawbacks of the other ideas. Monitor and offer help if necessary.
5. When they are ready, ask students from different groups to sit together, so each new group has one student representing each suggestion.
6. Set a time limit of about ten minutes. Monitor and offer help if necessary.
7. When ready, students vote on which suggestion they think should be accepted. Ask some students to explain their choices to the rest of the class.
8. As a follow-up task, you may ask students to offer an alternative suggestion of their own, and to give their reasons supporting it.

Useful language

Benefits and drawbacks

I think a lot of people like ... because ...

A major advantage to ... is (that) ...

A big plus of ... is (that) ...

(Yet) another benefit of ... is (that) ...

One thing that discourages people from ... is (that) ...

One problem about ... is (that) ...

Another significant drawback of ... is (that) ...

Practice exam question

Note: There are two parts to this section: an individual turn and then a pairwork discussion activity.

Depending on the number of students you have in the class, you could either take the role of examiner yourself or, especially in large classes, get



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the students to work in groups with one of them taking the role of the examiner.

For example, put the students in groups of three. For the individual activity:

- one student takes the role of 'candidate' and speaks
- one takes the role of 'interlocutor', asking questions and prompting the 'candidate'
- one student takes the role of 'examiner' using the mark scheme

For the pairwork, two of the students speak to each other while the third student takes the role of examiner.

Suggested marking scheme

Total mark out of 20 with each criteria worth up to 5 marks.

Content – answering the question

- 5 answers the question and all the information included
- 4 answers the question but one or two things missing
- 3 answers the question but a number of things missing
- 2 tried to answer the question, but quite a lot missing
- 1 failed to answer the question

Range of vocabulary and grammar

- 5 used a wide range of vocabulary and grammar appropriate to the task
- 4 used a wide range of vocabulary and grammar but not always appropriate to the task
- 3 used a fairly wide range of vocabulary and grammar appropriate to the task
- 2 used a limited range of vocabulary and grammar
- 1 used a very limited range of vocabulary and grammar

Accuracy of language (i.e. pronunciation, functional language etc)

- 5 minimal errors, well-developed control of language
- 4 errors occur when attempting more complex language
- 3 a number of errors but they do not impede communication
- 2 a lot of errors, distract the reader, difficult understanding
- 1 frequent errors, difficult understanding

Fluency

- 5 speaks well with only natural pauses (i.e. to collect thoughts)
- 4 sometimes hesitates when trying to think of a word or what they want to say next
- 3 often pauses to think about what they want to say, but can use fairly complex language at times
- 2 struggles to put together full sentences and pauses frequently
- 1 only uses a few words and can't fully talk about the task



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Activity 1

Read the proverb and discuss the questions below.

A MAN'S HOME IS HIS CASTLE.

– Old English proverb

1. What do you think this proverb means?
2. Do you agree with it? Why or why not?
3. Do you have any proverbs in your language about 'home'?

Discuss your home, using the questions below to guide you.

1. Where do you live?
2. How long have you lived there?
3. What are three good things about where you live?
4. What two things would you change about where you live if you could?

Activity 2

You belong to an organization that contributes ideas to the city planning committee. A site has become available for developing in your city centre. Several ideas have been put forward regarding what should be built there. Here is a list of the suggestions.

1. A shelter for homeless people
2. A sports stadium
3. A shopping centre
4. A block of affordable housing flats
5. A five-star hotel
6. A park

Your teacher will assign you one of the suggestions above. Tell your group why your suggestion should be built.



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1. Individual activity



Practice Exam Question

1. Compare and contrast the pictures.
2. Describe your ideal place to live.
3. Choose one of the two pictures. What are / would be the advantages and disadvantages of living there.

2. Paired activity

You are going to study at a university in the UK for three months. The university has contacted you and asked for your opinion about the type of accommodation you would like.

Discuss the following:

1. location (how far it is from the university)
2. facilities and local amenities (i.e. shops, restaurants, cinema, etc)
3. cost
4. the number of students sharing
5. living with a host family
6. laundry, meals, etc

Decide on the three most important criteria.