

Think of someone who...: A one-to-one lesson format

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Many published ELT materials are designed with the class in mind. The length of a coursebook “unit”, the instructions on the page (‘Check with a partner’, ‘work in small groups’) and the communicative activities all presuppose a group of at least six or eight in most cases. In some cases, the instructions for a photocopyable activity read along the lines “Give each student a card from 1 to 15. If you have more than 15 students, make two sets...” Many language teachers, working in small groups or one-to-one, just laugh out loud at this.

The answer is, of course, to adapt activities or create your own materials to tailor the specific needs of the student. The following lesson format suggests one way of adapting a classic language class activity – *Find someone who...*

The purpose of *Find Someone Who...*

The *Find Someone Who...* (FSW) activity is an example of an information gap. In FSW each student has a list of sentences. It looks something like this:

Find someone who...
had short hair in the past
didn't go to school in this town
was tall when he/she was a child

The students circulate and ask each other questions: *Did you have short hair in the past? Did you go to school in this town?* until someone answers *Yes, I did* or *No, I didn't* (depending on what is being asked for) at which point the student writes that person's name on their list. This continues until a) one student has filled up the whole sheet or b) the teacher decides it's time to stop.

The language that is being practised in the FSW is essentially a drill – in this case past tense question forms and short answers. Students are repeating various different questions and answering *Yes, I did/No, I didn't*. Follow up questions can be added for higher level students. But if one of the essential aims of the FSW is controlled practice of a target structure there is no reason it cannot be adapted for a one-to-one situation. The follow lesson is one example.

Sample lesson: Think of someone who/somewhere that

Aim: Talking about places and people that the student knows

Language aim: modifiers (*a bit, very...*)

Level: Pre-intermediate

Stage 1:

Set up the situation by asking the student to describe the room where you and he/she are sitting. Try to elicit adjectives (is it *big? small? nice? comfortable?*). Make some notes of what they say.

Stage 2: Now tell them that you are going to do the same, but that you are going to add other words to the description. Tell the student they don't need to do anything at the moment, only listen.

Now give the description, but add in some quantifiers. For example, see the description of the room below. The quantifiers are in **bold**.

*This room is **quite** big. There's a window and one door. It's **fairly** comfortable, there are two very nice lamps in the corners, a sofa and a desk. The desk is **a bit** small, but it's made of **very** nice wood. On the wall there are some paintings of trees and a lake. There's a phone and a computer on the desk. The computer is **quite** new.*

Stage 3. Ask the student if they noticed any of the new words. Read the description again, this time allowing them to take notes. Check back again.

Stage 4. Write on a piece of paper:

It's fairly comfortable.

Concept check *fairly* by asking the following questions:

Is it uncomfortable? (no)

Is it very comfortable? (no)

*It's in between. It's **fairly** comfortable* (you can reinforce this by indicating so-so with your hand).

Stage 5. Write other quantifiers above and below the word *fairly*. You should finish with a chart like this:

It's	a bit	weak	comfortable.
	quite	↓	
	fairly		
	very		
	really		
	extremely	strong	

Stage 4.

Explain that these words are called modifiers. You can use modifiers to make an adjective stronger or weaker. The modifiers in the chart come before the adjective.

Stage 5.

Now ask the student to try and repeat their description of the room, but using some of the modifiers.

Stage 6.

Give the student the worksheet and ask them to write names of places or people that they know in the circle that correspond to different numbers on the worksheet. They

should write at least four different names, without putting any numbers next to them. While they are doing this, do the same yourself.

Stage 7

Now begin the drill. Take turns asking questions about the names in the circle using the sentences in the *find someone who...* It's easiest if you start, to give the student a model of what to do.

For example,

Is your brother fairly young? No he isn't.

Is your flat extremely small? Yes, it is!

Continue until you have identified which person or place goes with which sentence. Use this activity to ask follow up questions.

For example

Is your flat extremely small?

Yes, it is!

Really? How small is it? Have you always lived there?

Stage 8

Now ask the student to describe one or more of the places or people on the list more in detail.

Notes: HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN *THINK OF SOMEONE WHO* LESSON

One-to-one teaching is ideal in many ways because you can tailor each lesson to the learner's needs. If you want to make your own *Think of Someone Who* lesson with your student, here's how to prepare it:

1. Choose the grammar point you want to exploit/the student has asked to practice. Prepare a worksheet similar to the one in this lesson or adapt an existing *Find Someone Who* activity from a coursebook or other resource.
2. Think of a situation in which the grammar would come up naturally. Ask the student to talk about that situation and make notes.
3. Prepare a short oral text that you could tell the student and that contains examples of the target grammar.
4. Focus on the examples of the grammar that came up in your text.
5. Ask the student to repeat their own text, but trying to use the target grammar.
6. Do the worksheet activity with the student.
7. Ask the student to talk about a different situation and to try and naturally include examples of the target language.

Worksheet

Choose at least *FOUR* places or people you know from the lists below and write the names in the circle.

THINK OF SOMEWHERE THAT...

is really uncomfortable
is quite ugly
is very modern
is a bit small
is extremely hot

THINK OF SOMEONE WHO...

is very tall
is a bit short
is quite old
is fairly intelligent
is extremely funny

