

# First Class Activities

## 6 speaking activities for the first day of class

*The following are six quick activities that can be used for first classes. Some are quite well known but with variations. All have been tried and tested in the class to get students talking quickly. The level and time needed for each activity is included in parentheses.*

### In common

(Elementary +, 10-20 minutes)

Ask students to sit in pairs. Tell them to find five things they have in common and three things they don't have in common. When they are done, set each pair with another to do the same (five things the two pairs have in common, three they don't have in common).

### Tell me about me

(Pre-Intermediate +, 30 minutes)

Bring in some things to class that have information about you (your passport, your latest plane or train ticket if you have one, a book that you like, pictures of your loved ones etc.) Give students different things of yours and tell them to work together to build an idea of what you are like as a person. They must do this orally. Get them to tell you about you after five minutes. Then they do the same activity with each other (they can use the contents of their wallet or purse).

### Make the Rules

(Intermediate +, 30-45 minutes)

There are two ways of doing this well-known activity.

1. Conduct a whole-class discussion on what the rules of classroom behaviour should be for both the teacher and the students. When you are finished, write the rules on a large piece of paper and display it in the classroom.
2. Divide the students into two groups. Have one group draft rules for students, and the other group draft rules for teachers. When they are finished, have students from each group pair up with someone from the other group to tell them their rules and make suggestions. Re-form the original groups to write a final draft based on the suggestions. Suggest some rules yourself. Post the rules in the classroom.

### A good way to learn English is...

(Intermediate +, 10-20 minutes)

Give students the following sentences on the whiteboard or on an overhead projector. Tell them they can agree, disagree or change the sentences. Below are some examples. You can add your own. This can lead into a class discussion about how to learn a language, as well as past experiences learning a language.

*A good way to learn English is...*

1. In class with a professional English teacher.
2. In a café with a native speaker of English (not necessarily a teacher)
3. Living in a country where people speak English.

4. Doing business in English.
5. Watching films and TV in English.
6. Repeating what the teacher says in class.
7. Keeping a notebook of new words.
8. Doing some English homework (writing or reading) very often.
9. Having lots of tests in class to help us remember.
10. Using a bilingual dictionary all the time.
11. Reading in English.
12. Speaking English with other students in the class.

## Variations on the Name Whip

(All levels, 5-15 minutes)

The Name Whip is a quick activity for everyone to get to know each other's names. One person starts by saying "My name is...". The next person continues, naming the first person and then themselves, "His name is ..., my name is ..." and so on until the last person has to name everybody. You can vary this by adding more information at the end. Here are some ideas.

1. My name is Maria and I like...
2. My name is Carlos, when I was a child they called me Carlitos (nicknames)
3. My name is James and I am ... (job)
4. My name is Pavel and I am ... (dream job)\*

\* When you finish this name whip get students in pairs to find out from each other what their real jobs are and why they would like that dream job.

## Funny Holidays

(Intermediate +, 30 minutes)

Use the cards on the next page. Make enough copies so that each group of 12 students have a set of cards. Students take a card in turn. If it says truth then they must tell a true story about a past holiday. If they choose a card with a destination or holiday already on it, they must talk about an imaginary holiday they took there. Encourage them to make it as fanciful and detailed as possible. The group must guess which is true and which is false.

## Other First Classes at Onestopenglish

*Take a look at the following lessons that appear in [www.onestopenglish.com](http://www.onestopenglish.com). They are also suitable for first classes, or early in the year.*

**Names** (in the American Vocabulary Section) – Students learn the vocabulary of names, look at some popular names in English and talk about their own names.

**Intelligence** (in the Metaphors Section) – Students learn some of the metaphors for talking about intelligence in English and learn about Multiple Intelligence Theory and Learning Styles. They can then take a test on the Internet to find out what their intelligences and preferred learning styles are.

**Speaking in Circles** (in the Lesson Share competition archives) This activity gets students practising typical getting to know you questions from international English oral exams but can be used in any intermediate+ class.

## FUNNY HOLIDAYS CARDS

You went on a cruise in the Caribbean	<b>Tell the TRUTH</b>	You went hiking in the mountains
<b>Tell the TRUTH</b>	You went on a canoe trip in Canada	You went to London for an intensive English course
<b>Tell the TRUTH</b>	<b>Tell the TRUTH</b>	You went to New York City
You watched TV all holiday. You didn't go out once.	You went to Australia to visit family.	You won a holiday in Hollywood and Los Angeles