

Film and TV

TV / Documentaries

Teacher's notes

Age: Teenager/Adults

Level: Intermediate (B1)

Time: 90+ mins with 30 mins optional presentations


Activity: In this lesson, students will:

1. practise speaking about documentaries, traditions and comparing past to present;
2. improve listening comprehension of real-life English from online videos;
3. revise and expand grammar for comparing past to present as well as vocabulary related to traditions;
4. research certain traditions and then use new language from this lesson to give a short presentation.

Language focus: speaking, listening, grammar, vocabulary

Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student, a PC or projector, an internet connection in the classroom.

Notes:

1. **WARNING:** This lesson refers to two online videos taken from comedy TV series. While these videos don't contain explicit material, you should watch the videos before the lesson to judge whether they are appropriate for the particular group of students.
2. This lesson contains exercises which focus on listening, speaking, reading and vocabulary. If you wish to maximise class time for listening and speaking, you could ask students to complete the reading and vocabulary exercises as preparatory homework before the lesson. It would then only be necessary to quickly correct these parts in class. The exercises which could be done as preparatory homework are marked with a symbol. 

1. Speak (15 minutes)

Aims: to generate interest in the topic of documentaries, to provide spoken practice of describing documentaries, to explore what type of structures students use to compare past to present

Procedure: Ask students to work in pairs to match the titles to the synopses. For students who haven't seen any of these documentaries, remind them that the titles themselves contain information about the content of the movie.

Encourage students to communicate and give reasons for their choices. Elicit the correct answers. In the same pairs, ask students to discuss questions a–c. If there are students who can't think of any documentaries, perhaps they could talk about an interesting news report which they have seen or read. Monitor as they speak and provide feedback at the end. Focus on the grammatical constructions which students used when answering question b (comparing past to present) as this will be relevant to later tasks.

Key:

Documentary name	Synopsis
(A) <i>Inside Job</i> (year: 2010)	(D) Cameras followed former US vice-president Al Gore around the USA as he gave presentations to try to convince American people that climate change is real.
(B) <i>Super Size Me</i> (year: 2004)	(E) This documentary explains the story of a man who walked on a metal cable between the Twin Towers in New York in 1974. It shows his amazing act and how he was treated like a criminal by police.
(C) <i>Amy</i> (year: 2015)	(B) A 32-year old man made a documentary about his decision to only eat McDonald's food for 30 days. He ate there three times a day and explained the physical and emotional effects.
(D) <i>An Inconvenient Truth</i> (year: 2006)	(A) This documentary explains how the 2008 financial crisis happened. It investigates factors like de-regulation of the banks and favours by governments to corporations.
(E) <i>Man on Wire</i> (2008)	(C) This documentary tells the story of a young, British popstar who rapidly became internationally famous. Her sudden fame brought addictions to alcohol and drugs, leading to her death at age 27.

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2. Listen and speak (15 minutes)

Aims: to provide listening practice of understanding a TV show, to provide spoken practice of language related to documentaries and comparisons of past to present

Procedure: Play the video. Ask students in pairs to briefly compare answers to the three questions. Play it again and let students decide their final answers. Elicit the answers. Ask students to briefly discuss the final questions in pairs. Give feedback. Focus on ideas which students have mentioned which could be relevant to the next task (comparing past to present).

Key:

- a. He says that we teach them to be comfortable and to want a stable job, house, car, etc. He thinks that this kills children's dreams.
- b. He says that hard work and risk-taking are necessary.
- c. We need to have uncertainty in our lives and not be obsessed with just being comfortable.

3. Grammar and speak (20 minutes)

Aims: to revise and expand grammatical structures for making comparisons and comparing past to present, to provide spoken practice of these structures

Procedure: Ask students to complete the box in pairs. Monitor them as they do this and help weaker students by underlining words in each sentence which will help them to identify which word they need (e.g. in the first sentence, underline 'more' to help the student identify the construction 'more' + 'than'). Ask students to read the rules on the final page of the worksheet to decide if their suggestions were correct. As they read these rules, perhaps check understanding by asking them for further sample sentences to illustrate each rule. Elicit the correct answers.

Key:

Purpose	Sentence 1	Sentence 2
To say that things have changed	Children in the past were more ambitious THAN children nowadays.	Children nowadays aren't as ambitious AS children in the past.
To say that things haven't changed	Children nowadays are as curious AS ever.	Children nowadays are STILL curious.

To talk about past states and actions	Children in the past used TO spend more time outdoors.	Children in the past WOULD spend more time outdoors.
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Look at the instructions and sentences for 3b. Elicit some examples of sentences for the first sentence, encouraging students to use a variety of constructions (e.g. 'In the 1980s, flights weren't as affordable as nowadays', 'Long-distance flights are still quite expensive', 'Before low-cost airlines, people would only fly when it was absolutely necessary', etc). Ask the students to discuss the sentences in pairs. Monitor and provide feedback. Pay particular attention to possible confusion between 'would' and 'used to' (see rules).

4. Listen and speak (20 minutes)

Aims: to provide further listening practice of understanding a TV documentary, to provide spoken practice of talking about different cultures and traditions

Procedure: Play the video. Ask students in pairs to briefly compare answers to the four questions. Play it again and let students decide their final answers. Elicit the answers. Ask students to briefly discuss the final questions in pairs. Give feedback, focusing especially on language to describe different cultures and traditions.

Key:

- a. The lake is sacred and so it is prohibited to fish there during the rest of the year. This tradition protects the fish numbers.
- b. He is the chief of the ceremony and he is saying a prayer. Tradition suggests that wearing the basket will provide protection for the words of the prayer as he speaks them.
- c. The presenter says that Dialo doesn't have time to be polite to the people around him. We then see in the subtitles that he tells people to keep out of his space.
- d. There are no fish remaining in the lake and the chaotic competition finishes. Dialo feels very tired.

5. Vocabulary (5 minutes)

Aims: to revise and expand typical vocabulary related to traditions

Procedure: Ask students to work individually to match up the vocabulary. Monitor and help weaker students. Then ask them to compare with a classmate. Elicit the correct answers and focus on correct pronunciation.

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Key:

<i>Clothes which a person wears to look like a different person (e.g. children wear this at Halloween).</i>	<i>costume</i>
<i>The process in which different countries influence each other, often meaning that smaller countries adopt the traditions of bigger countries.</i>	<i>globalisation</i>
<i>A celebration in which many people walk down the street in colourful clothes and perhaps with special cars and trucks.</i>	<i>parade</i>
<i>An object for a celebration which you launch into the sky so that it explodes with lots of colours.</i>	<i>firework(s)</i>
<i>The day before an important public holiday e.g. 25th December is Christmas Day, 24th December is Christmas _____.</i>	<i>eve</i>
<i>Something which a person says or does in order to say 'Hello' to another person.</i>	<i>greeting</i>
<i>A traditional story which has existed for many years but which is probably not true. It often includes elements of magic.</i>	<i>myth/legend</i>
<i>An outdoor fire which people sit around to talk, cook food and sometimes celebrate.</i>	<i>bonfire</i>
<i>Colourful pieces of paper, plastic or metal which people put in houses or on streets in order to celebrate an event.</i>	<i>decoration(s)</i>

6. Speak (15 minutes)

Aims: to consolidate grammar and vocabulary studied in previous tasks, to provide spoken practice of describing culture and traditions

Procedure: Tell students that they have about ten minutes to discuss the questions in pairs. Remind them to make an effort to incorporate new language from this lesson (structures for comparing past to present, vocabulary related to traditions, vocabulary from the two videos). Monitor as they speak. At the end, provide feedback.

If you have heard any student mentioning a particularly interesting tradition, perhaps ask him/her to explain it to the whole class.

7. Project: Prepare a presentation (30 minutes at home, 5–10 minutes per student in class)

Aims: to consolidate grammar structures for comparing past to present and vocabulary related to traditions, to provide students with practice of preparing and giving a presentation, to familiarise students with typical expressions for public speaking

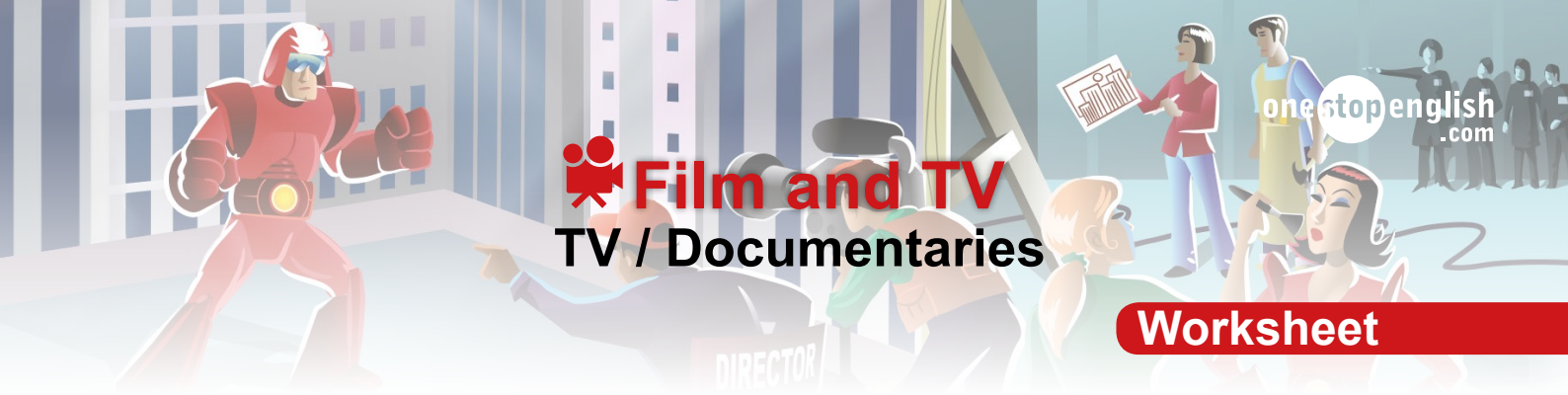
Procedure: On the classroom board, open one of the links included in Step 1:

<https://europeisnotdead.com/video/broadcasts-of-europe/european-weird-traditions/>

<http://listverse.com/2014/10/11/10-unique-customs-youll-only-find-in-specific-cultures/>

Look through some of the unusual traditions described on the website. Choose one that seems interesting and search for more information about this in your search engine. Tell students that this is the type of research that they need to do at home in order to prepare their presentation. Remind them that, if they prefer, they could research a tradition from their own country.

Emphasise that a presentation of five minutes is very short and that students shouldn't prepare much more than just the basic information about their topic. Tell students to simply follow the instructions in Steps 1–4 to prepare their presentations at home. In small classes, all the students could do their presentations in the next class. In larger classes, you may want to divide the presentations over several days. When a student does a presentation, make sure to encourage questions from classmates at the end of the talk. Provide feedback, focusing especially on good language/pronunciation.



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Worksheet

1. Speak

The box below contains the names and synopses of five famous documentaries. Work in pairs. Try to match the name to the synopsis.

Documentary name	Synopsis
(A) <i>Inside Job</i> (year: 2010)	() Cameras followed former US vice-president Al Gore around the USA as he gave presentations to try to convince American people that climate change is real.
(B) <i>Super Size Me</i> (year: 2004)	() This documentary explains the story of a man who walked on a metal cable between the Twin Towers in New York in 1974. It shows his amazing act and how he was treated like a criminal by police.
(C) <i>Amy</i> (year: 2015)	() A 32-year old man made a documentary about his decision to only eat McDonald's food for 30 days. He ate there 3 times a day and explained the physical and emotional effects.
(D) <i>An Inconvenient Truth</i> (year: 2006)	() This documentary explains how the 2008 financial crisis happened. It investigates factors like de-regulation of the banks and favours by governments to corporations.
(E) <i>Man on Wire</i> (2008)	() This documentary tells the story of a young, British popstar who rapidly became internationally famous. Her sudden fame brought addictions to alcohol and drugs, leading to her death at age 27.

Now answer the questions below.

- Can you elaborate on the information about any of the five documentaries?
- Each documentary is a few years old. Do you think the subjects are still relevant or interesting? Explain.
- Can you describe a different documentary which you have seen (as a movie or a TV series)?

2. Listen and speak

Watch this short video from Chef's Table (Netflix), a documentary series in which each episode profiles a famous chef. This clip shows Argentinian chef Francis Mallmann. Listen carefully and answer the questions.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQ8Htm4jAGc

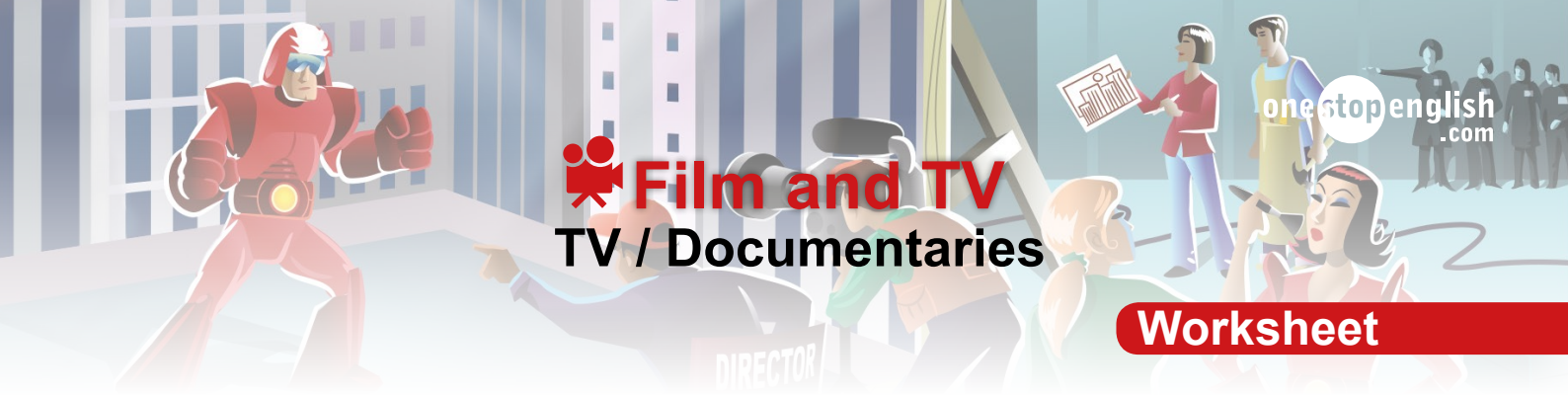
- What does the chef say about the way we teach children these days?
- What two elements does he say are necessary in order to achieve our life-ambition?
- At the end of the video, what does he say is necessary if we want to grow as people?

Discuss with your classmate:

Do you watch any TV shows related to cooking? Describe them.

Do you agree with the man that people are becoming more interested in being comfortable than in being ambitious?

Describe a time when you pushed yourself to do something which was outside your comfort-zone.



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Worksheet

3a. Grammar

Work in pairs. Complete each sentence in the table, which compare past to present, using one of the missing words.

Missing words: as / would / than / to / still / as

Purpose	Sentence 1	Sentence 2
To say that things have changed	Children in the past were more ambitious _____ children nowadays.	Children nowadays aren't as ambitious _____ children in the past.
To say that things haven't changed	Children nowadays are as curious _____ ever.	Children nowadays are _____ curious.
To talk about past states and actions	Children in the past used _____ spend more time outdoors.	Children in the past _____ spend more time outdoors.

Once you have decided on the words, read the rules on the final page of the worksheet to check if you were correct.

3b. Speak

Look at the timeline of significant events in the past 25 years. Talk to your partner about the changes that each event has caused in people's lives.

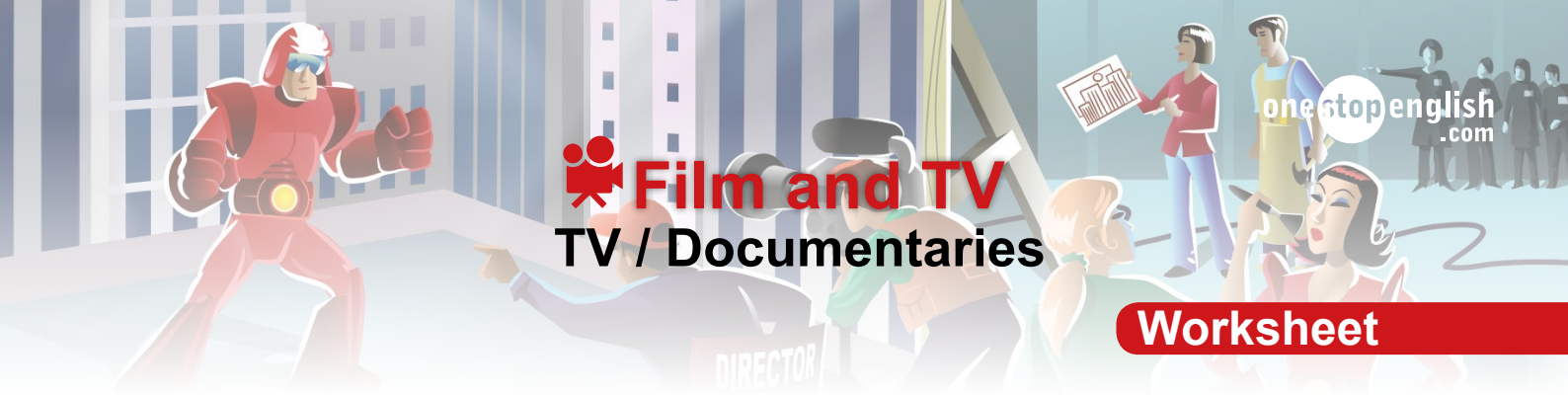
- 1990s – low-cost air travel became popular
- 2001 – the September 11th terrorist attacks
- 2003 – the digital camera became popular
- 2004 – Facebook was launched
- 2005 – YouTube was launched
- 2005 – Google Maps was launched
- 2007 – Apple launched the first smartphone
- 2008 – The economy of many countries crashed
- 2009 – Obama became the first black president of the USA
- 2014 – Online dating apps became popular

4. Listen and speak

Watch this scene from Human Planet (BBC/Discovery), a series which shows the relationship between humans and the natural world. In this clip, the camera follows a man called Dialo who attends a fishing competition at Lake Antogo in Mali. Listen carefully and answer the questions.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=v920s0oTi1I

- a. Why do people only fish at this lake one day a year?
- b. Why is one man wearing a basket on his head?
- c. According to the presenter, what doesn't Dialo have time to do?
- d. What happens after fifteen minutes?



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Worksheet

Discuss with your classmate:

In the YouTube comments for this video, many people expressed their concern for the fish population of the lake. What do you think?

Have you ever travelled to a country which is very different from your own? Describe it.

5. Vocabulary

The table below contains vocabulary related to traditions. Match the words to the definitions.

Definition	Word
Clothes which a person wears to look like a different person (e.g. children wear this at Halloween).	eve
The process in which different countries influence each other, often meaning that smaller countries adopt the traditions of bigger countries.	parade
A celebration in which many people walk down the street in colourful clothes and perhaps with special cars and trucks.	decoration(s)
An object for a celebration which you launch into the sky so that it explodes with lots of colours.	bonfire
The day before an important public holiday e.g. 25 th December is Christmas Day, 24 th December is Christmas _____.	greeting
Something which a person says or does in order to say 'Hello' to another person.	firework(s)
A traditional story which has existed for many years but which is probably not true. The story often includes elements of magic.	costume
An outdoor fire which people sit around to talk, cook food and sometimes celebrate.	globalisation
Colourful pieces of paper, plastic or metal which people put in houses or on streets in order to celebrate an event	myth/legend

6. Speak

With a partner, discuss the questions below.

a. What are the most important public holidays in your country?

- Describe what people do on these days.
- Describe the origin of the holiday.

b. Describe traditions in your country related to the following items:

- greeting people
- eating meals
- weddings
- funerals

Do you know the origins of any of these traditions?

c. Can you think of any traditions which were popular in your parents' generation but which are less popular now? Describe them.



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- d. Does your country have any traditions which foreign people find strange?
e. Do you know any typical traditions from other countries?

7. Project: Prepare a presentation

In an upcoming class, you will need to give a short presentation (approx. five minutes). It will be about an interesting tradition. Follow the steps below to prepare your presentation at home.

Step 1: Find your topic. You might want to choose a tradition from your own country. Alternatively, there are many websites dedicated to funny traditions. For example:

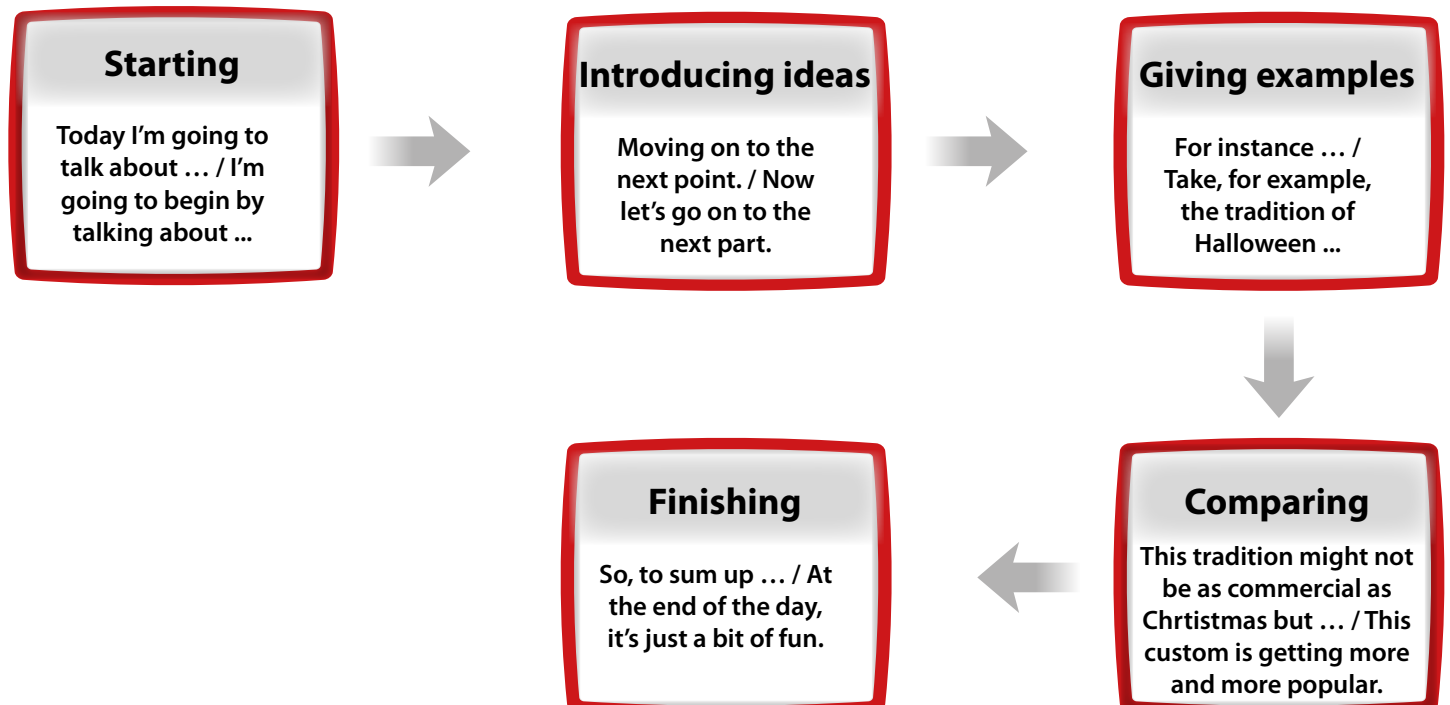
<https://europeisnotdead.com/video/broadcasts-of-europe/european-weird-traditions/>

<http://listverse.com/2014/10/11/10-unique-customs-youll-only-find-in-specific-cultures/>

Your presentation is going to be very short, so try to choose a topic with a lot of focus.

Step 2: Do some research. Once you find your topic, search for more information about it from different websites. Look for relevant images or even short videos which you could include. You don't need much information, just enough for five minutes of talking.

Step 3: Prepare some cue-cards or a PowerPoint with just the main ideas of your presentation. Think about how you can connect these ideas. Look in the diagram for useful expressions.



Step 4: Practise your presentation at home.

Step 5: Class presentations

Student presenting – You have approximately five minutes to give your presentation. Your classmates will ask you some questions at the end.

Students listening – Take some brief notes as you listen to the presentation. When the speaker finishes, ask him/her some questions related to the topic.



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Rules sheet

Structures for comparing past to present

purpose	grammatical structure 1	grammatical structure 2
to say that things have changed	more + adjective + than (exceptions: for one-syllable adjectives just add '-er' e.g. big → bigger; for two-syllable adjectives ending in 'y', change the 'y' to '-ier' e.g. lazy → lazier)	not as + adjective + as
to say that things haven't changed	as + adjective + as	still (this adverb usually goes before the verb but after the verb 'to be')
to talk about past states and actions	used to (this describes regular past actions, e.g. 'When I was a child, I used to play outdoors every day'; it also describes past states, e.g. 'When I was a child I used to have blonde hair')	would (this describes past states, e.g. 'When I was a child I would play outdoors every day'; it doesn't describe past actions)