

Language for ...

phobias

Age: Adult / Young adult



Level: Pre-intermediate-Intermediate

Length: 45-60 minutes (approx.)

Language Focus: key vocabulary associated with phobias

Skills: Reading, speaking


Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student

Aims: To provide students with the language needed to discuss phobias

What are red words?

Ninety per cent of the time, speakers of English use just 7,500 words in speech and writing. These words appear in the Macmillan Dictionary in red and are graded with stars. One-star words are frequent, two-star words are more frequent and three-star words are the most frequent. 'Language for' lessons are based on red words and encourage students to improve their English through communicative tasks using collocation and commonly used phrases.

www.macmillandictionary.com/learn/red-words.html

- 1 To introduce the topic, tell students about a fear or phobia that you have (e.g. a fear of flying/snakes/sharks/the dark, etc). Then ask them to think about things that people are often afraid of. Set a time limit of two minutes and ask them to write down as many as they can. Ask them to compare their ideas with a partner. Then ask each pair to share their ideas with the whole class. Make a list on the board. Common phobias may include: *storms (thunder and lightning), birds, pain, needles/injections, failure, dirt/germs, being ridiculed, clocks, clowns, dogs, dentists, teenagers, speaking in public, doctors, insects, death, hospitals, fire, sharks, snakes, spiders, moths, cockroaches, heights, water, flying, the dark, etc.*
 - 2 Give a copy of the worksheet to each student.
 - 3 Ask students to work individually to match the phobias and definitions in the warmer. They will need to use a dictionary or the internet. Check the answers with the whole class.
-  **Teaching tip:** Giving a personalised example is often a good way of introducing a topic. In this case, if you have admitted a fear of something, your students are more likely to be willing to share their own experiences and ideas.
- 4 Tell the class they are going to read three short texts about people who each have a different phobia. However, first they are going to work out the meaning of some key vocabulary that they will find in the text. Working in pairs, students should use a dictionary to match the words in the first box with their definitions/synonyms in the second box. Go through the correct answers as a class, explaining further/giving example sentences as necessary.
 - 5 Now ask students to read through the eight questions carefully. Then ask them to read the text and find the answers. Ask them to compare their answers in pairs. Then ask them to tell you the answers.
 - 6 Ask students to work in pairs to complete Exercise 2c. Check answers with the whole class.
 - 7 Ask students to work individually to prepare their answers in Exercise 3. Monitor and give help if necessary. Some ideas for overcoming a phobia could be: *facing your fear (e.g. holding a spider, climbing somewhere very high up), taking some medication (e.g. anti-anxiety pills), visiting a doctor, hypnotherapy, deep breathing.* Write up some key phrases for giving advice on the board, for example:

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You could try ... + ing.

Why don't you ... + verb?

Have you tried ... + ing?

I think you should ... + verb.

rational/logical, practical
dizzy/spinning, unsteady
drown/sink and die
pressure/force
races/very fast

- 8** Ask students to work in pairs or small groups to complete Exercise 4. Remind them to use their ideas from Exercise 3. When they have finished, invite students to share some of their ideas with the whole class.
- 9** Exercise 5a can be done in pairs, small groups or as a whole class. Depending on time, students can discuss either one or both of the statements.
- 10** Once students have completed exercise 5b in pairs or small groups, come together as a class and see if everyone can agree on a definitive list. Encourage students to give reasons for their answers.

2 b.

- 1 Deep water.
- 2 His mother said she had a premonition of him drowning.
- 3 The idea of drowning or swimming for his life.
- 4 Her heart races and she starts to panic.
- 5 She catches them and throws them in the garden.
- 6 Hunting spiders.
- 7 Nervous and dizzy.
- 8 By climbing up some tall places.

2 c.

- 1 f
- 2 c
- 3 e
- 4 b
- 5 a
- 6 d

- 1 feel unwell
- 2 poisonous spiders
- 3 rational fear
- 4 deep water
- 5 come true
- 6 give up

KEY:

1.

- 1 e (fear of crowds)
- 2 f (fear of water)
- 3 b (fear of blood)
- 4 d (fear of spiders)
- 5 c (fear of heights)
- 6 a (fear of flying)

2 a.

anxious/nervous, worried
vertigo/acrophobia
panic/extremely scared or worried
premonition/dream
overcome/succeed

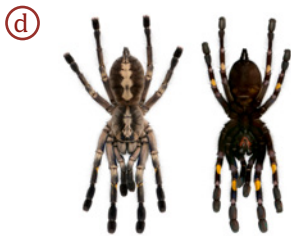
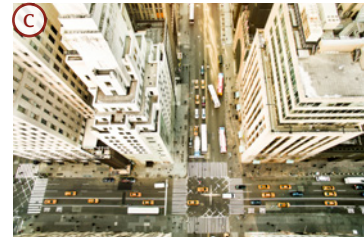
- 3** students' own answers
- 4** students' own answers
- 5** students' own answers

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1 Warmer

A phobia is defined as a very strong feeling of being afraid of something. Match the phobias (1-6) with the pictures (a-f).



1. agoraphobia _____
2. hydrophobia _____
3. haemophobia _____
4. arachnophobia _____
5. acrophobia _____
6. aerophobia _____

2 Text

a In Box 1 below, you will find some words that can be used to talk about phobias. Using a dictionary and your own knowledge, see if you can match up a word from Box 1 with a word or phrase from Box 2.

Box 1

anxious vertigo panic (verb) premonition overcome
rational dizzy drown pressure race (verb)

Box 2

be extremely scared or worried spinning, unsteady logical, practical force
acrophobia succeed sink and die nervous, worried dream go very fast

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b Read the text and answer the questions.

- 1 What is Andrew **afraid** of? _____

- 2 What happened when he was a child? _____

- 3 What makes him feel really **anxious**? _____

- 4 How does Anna feel if she sees a **spider** inside her house? _____

- 5 What does she do with them if she is at home alone? _____

- 6 What are Anna's cats good at? _____

- 7 How does Evan feel when he's in a high place? _____

- 8 How has he tried to **overcome** this fear? _____



Andrew

I'm afraid of deep **water** – water that's twice my **height** or above, as well as anything that swims in it! It makes me feel **anxious**. I feel **pressure** on my chest, like the water is compressing me. I think it started because, as a child, my mother said she had a premonition of me **drowning**. It hasn't come true, though, luckily! That's not to say I haven't tried **overcoming** my phobia, however. Sometimes you have to not think about the **fear** and just do it, especially as a father. I can swim, but I couldn't jump into **water** that I know I can't stand up in. I don't mind swimming pools, but boats scare me. The idea of **drowning** or swimming for my life really makes me feel **afraid**.



Anna

I suffer from arachnophobia – otherwise known as a **fear** of **spiders**. The country I live in doesn't have any **poisonous** spiders, so this is not a **rational** fear, but it's something I can't help. If I see a **spider** inside my house, my heart **races** and I start to panic. If I'm on my own, I have to catch it – usually with a glass, and a piece of card underneath. I then throw the **spider** in the garden, as I don't like killing them – it's not their fault I'm afraid of them! It does make me feel very unwell afterwards though, and it takes me a while to stop shaking. Luckily, my husband isn't afraid of **spiders**, so usually he catches them for me. But even more luckily, my two cats are great **spider** hunters, so I very rarely see any **spiders** inside any more. Phew!

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Evan

I am **afraid** of **heights**, which is sometimes called vertigo. I don't like being very high up, especially when I can see all the way down. It makes me feel **nervous** and dizzy, and I feel like I am going to fall. I have tried to **overcome** this fear by climbing up some tall places such as mountains and historic buildings, and sitting high up in the theatre. I love a great view and don't mind looking across. Sometimes I've been successful, but sometimes I've just had to give up and come down.

c. Match the words 1-6 in the left-hand column with words a-f in the right-hand column to make two-word phrases from the text. Then use the correct expressions to complete the sentences underneath.

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1 come | a unwell |
| 2 deep | b up |
| 3 poisonous | c water |
| 4 give | d fear |
| 5 feel | e spiders |
| 6 rational | f true |

- 1 If you _____, you feel ill.
- 2 There are a lot of _____, in Australia.
- 3 A _____, is one that is completely logical.
- 4 _____ is dangerous if you can't swim.
- 5 If things _____, they really happen.
- 6 If you _____ doing something, you stop doing it.

3 Language in Use

How would you answer the following questions? Make notes.

- 1 Have you got a phobia? If so, what phobia have you got?

- 2 How does it make you feel?

- 3 Where and when do you experience your phobia?

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4 Have you ever had a phobia in the past that you have managed to **overcome** so that you no longer have it?

5 What ways can you think of for overcoming a phobia?

6 Do you know anyone who has an unusual phobia? What is it?

4 Communication

Work with a partner. Ask and answer the questions about phobias. Give advice to your partner about ways to overcome their phobias.

5 Discuss

a. Read these statements. Decide whether you agree or disagree with them. Think of reasons for your answers. Then discuss your answers with a partner or in a small group.

1. 'The best way to overcome a phobia is to face your **fear**.'
2. 'It is good to be **afraid** of something dangerous. It might save your life one day.'

b. Look at the phobias in Exercise 1 again. Rank them in order from 1 (the worst) to 6 (the least problematic). Tell your partner or small group and see if they agree with you.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Red Words

spider*	poisonous*	anxious**	rational**	panic (verb)**	drown**	pressure***
overcome**	races***	heights***	flying*	space***	blood***	water***
afraid***	nervous**					