

Happy New Year!

Three speaking activities to start off a New Year

by Lindsay Clandfield

The following three activities are all suitable for your first classes back in January, or if you are starting a new course in January.

New Year discussion

Time: 30-45 minutes

Preparation: Copy and cut out the questions on worksheet 1 (make one copy for every four students in the class). Put each collection of questions in an envelope. Note: if you are allergic to cutting things up, then just make a copy of the questions, which are all on one sheet of paper.

Stage One: Divide the class into groups of four. Give each group an envelope with the questions inside. Explain the rules. Each student takes turns taking out a question from the envelope and asks it to another person in the group. Then it is the next student's turn.

Stage Two: While students are doing the activity, monitor and help where needed. Make notes of language that students requested to do the task, and any mistakes that you hear.

Stage Three: Bring all the students back to a whole class formation and do some feedback. What did they find out about each other? If you have time, correct and review new language that came up in the activity.

New Year resolutions

Time: 30 minutes

Preparation: Make a copy of the New Year Resolutions (worksheet 2) for every student in the class.

Stage One: Play hangman with the word RESOLUTION. When students discover the word ask them if they ever make resolutions at the beginning of the year. Have they made any this year? What were they?

Stage Two: Tell the students that the beginning of the New Year (or new course, if you are starting a course now) is a good time to make some resolutions about language learning. Ask students to work in small groups (three or four) and to brainstorm things that they can do to help improve their English. Allow five to ten minutes for this.

Stage Three: Distribute the worksheet 2 and ask students to check their ideas next to the ideas on the worksheet. Any extra ideas they have can go in the spaces at the bottom. Now tell students to put a tick next to any of the resolutions they would like to try and keep.

Stage Four: Direct students to the bottom of the worksheet. Can they think of two things they CAN'T do in English but would like to learn? Give them some thinking time for this and tell them to write those things at the bottom of the worksheet.

Stage Five: Ask students to discuss their answers to stages three and four. Tell them to write their name on the worksheet and then collect the worksheets.

Stage Six: You can use these worksheets for two things now:

1 as an informal needs analysis, using the information at the bottom of the worksheet to plan future activities and lessons

2 as part of learner training, by giving back the worksheets for the students to check their resolutions during the course.

New Year: Find someone who ...

Time: 30 minutes

Preparation: Make a copy of the New Year Find Someone Who (worksheet 3) for every student in the class.

Stage One: Give each student a copy of the worksheet and explain the objective of the activity. The students must find different people for each category on their list. Before they start, tell them to complete at least one of the blank spaces at the bottom (stronger students can complete more than one).

Stage Two: Demonstrate the activity with a student by asking one of the questions, e.g. *Did you celebrate Christmas?* Review question forms with the students if you think they need this help. Point out that on their worksheet, when they do their activity, they must not have a name repeated more than once (that is, they can't simply ask questions to only one person to fill up their sheet). Encourage the students to ask 'follow up' questions as well.

Stage Three: Ask students to stand up and mingle, asking and answering the questions. Circulate and make a note of any persistent errors or good examples of language use.

Stage Four: At the end of the activity, do some whole class feedback on the results, e.g. *Who stayed at home on December 31?* If time allows, you could use the notes you made during stage three to do some correction, or praise for good language use.

Worksheet 1

New Year discussion

Did you speak English over the holidays? Who with?

Did you read anything in English, or see an English film? Which one?

Did you celebrate New Year's Eve? What did you do?

Were these holidays 'typical' holidays? Did you do anything different? What?

Did you see your family this holiday? Who did you see?

Did you have a special meal during the holidays? What did you eat?

What did you get for Christmas? What did you give for Christmas?

Can you think of TWO things you were happy about from last year?

What are you looking forward to this year?

If you aren't you looking forward to this year, why aren't you?

Here are some popular New Year Resolutions. Would you like to do any of them? *quit smoking, eat more healthily, do more exercise, lose weight, learn a language*

Are you going to take a holiday this year? Where are you going to go?

Did you make any New Year Resolutions? What were they?

Have you ever made a New Year Resolution? What was it? Were you successful?

If you had another week of holidays, what would you do?

What TWO things would you like to see or do this year?

Worksheet 2

New Year resolutions

This year I am going to ...

RESOLUTION	√
see a film in English (without subtitles!)	
do all my English homework	
get an English pen pal	
practise English with people outside the class	
read a book in English	

Think of three things you CAN'T do in English, but that you would like to do.

Worksheet 3

New Year: Find Someone Who ...

Find someone who ...

	Name
stayed at home on December 31.	
worked between December 24 and December 31.	
ate or drank too much over the holiday.	
went to another country during the holidays.	
went to a party on December 31.	
has made a New Year's Resolution.	
is going to change jobs/school this year.	
wants to buy something big this year (a computer, a car, a house etc).	
didn't celebrate Christmas.	