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## How to Use this Document/Terminology

The definitions of “*controlled practice*”, “*semi-controlled practice*”, and “*freer practice*” differ depending on who you talk to, or what reference you consult. Please note that other documents might use a slightly different definition.

That being said, the working definitions for this document is that controlled practices are exercises that require the students to create sentences from a scaffolded prompt in which there is only one right answer. Semi-controlled practices are exercises that require students to create their own sentences without any scaffolding from an open-ended prompt. Freer Practices are activities that require the students to produce an extended discourse either spoken or written.

So, for example, a controlled practice could be a gap-fill (e.g. “I \_\_\_\_\_ (eat) pizza tonight”) because the construction of the sentence is largely scaffolded, there is only one correct answer, and there is no room for personalization.

A semi-controlled practice could be “Write 3 sentences about what you are going to do tonight”. The sentences are not scaffolded for the students, the prompt is open ended, the students have considerable room for creativity and personalization, and there are many possible right answers. This exercise is considered semi-controlled (and not freer) because the focus is still on the sentence level, and not on an extended dialogue.

A freer practice exercise could be, “Talk to your partner about everything you are going to do tonight.” This is considered freer, because it is now an extended conversation, not just isolated sentences. The focus is now not only on grammatical accuracy, but also on fluency as well. The students need to not only focus on the target language, but also use their knowledge of many other language features in order to have a natural conversation.

To summarize, see the table below:

	Controlled	Semi-Controlled	Freer
example	gap-fill: I _____ (eat) pizza tonight	Write 3 sentences about what are doing tonight	Talk to your partner about all your plans for tonight
production level	complete a sentence	Make your own sentence	extended conversation, speaking, or writing
Prompt	Closed prompt. Only one correct answer. No room for creativity	Open ended prompt. Many possible answers. Students can be creative.	Open ended prompt. Many possible answers. Students can be creative.
Focus	sentence level accuracy	sentence level accuracy	general fluency
Error Correction	Immediate correction for any errors	Immediate correction for any errors	Delayed error correction after the activity has finished.

However, please note that the distinction between these categories is not always clear cut. Some activities have elements of both controlled practice and semi-controlled practice. For example, “Describe a Picture” is controlled in the sense that the prompt is closed, and there is no room for

creativity or personalization. However it is semi-controlled in the sense that the students are required to produce a whole sentence on their own without any scaffolding. For the purposes of classifying activities, it was necessary to make some judgement calls about whether an activity was more controlled or more semi-controlled, but much of this is open to debate. Also, some of these activities have considerable flexibility in how they are set up, which could make them more or less controlled.

Additionally, many of the semi-controlled practices can become freer practices if they develop into natural conversations. For example, the activity “2 Truths and 1 Lie” is semi-controlled if the students only focus on producing individual sentences. However, if the students get interested in the sentences, and start asking each other questions to find out more details, and a natural conversation develops, then the activity has become a freer practice.

### **Staging**

Traditionally, grammar lessons consist of a controlled practice, followed by a semi-controlled practice, followed by a freer practice, in that order. However, please note that the range of activities that students are capable of will depend on their level. Higher level classes may get bored with controlled practices, and then it may be appropriate to skip directly to semi-controlled practices. Lower-level students, on the other hand, may not be capable of freer practice, and so then the activities should primarily be focused on controlled and semi-controlled practices.

Controlled practice can also be on a spectrum from more controlled to less controlled. For the purposes of this document, controlled practice has been subdivided into receptive practice, replication practice, and scaffolded production. This order reflects the progression from more controlled to less controlled. Teachers can select the activities which are appropriate for their class. If you use more than one controlled practice in the same lesson, then always do the more controlled one first (i.e. receptive is to be used before replication, and replication is to be used before scaffolded production).

Most of these activities have a high degree of adaptability for different grammar points and different ages. But please note that some of these activities are best suited for younger students, and some are best suited for older students. Additionally, some of these activities may work well with one grammar point, but not another. When choosing an activity, please consider both the grammar point, the age of your students, and the level of your students as well as their individual learning preferences (e.g. some classes prefer more active games, other classes prefer more quiet work.)

**Controlled Practice** (Students are practicing the target language, but not yet producing their own sentences).

**Receptive Practice** (Students practice recognizing the target language, but are not required to produce it.)

### **Board Game TPR--[Example](#)**

Create a board in which each square contains a command in the target language that the students have to physically respond to. Students roll a dice, and move their marker around the board, responding to the prompt on each square.

### **Drawing (Responding to Prompt)--[Example](#)**

Students are given a sentence in the target language, and must draw a visual representation of that sentence.

## Find Your Partner--[Example](#)

Students are given one card, and must walk around the classroom until they find another student with the matching card. (Either the second half of the sentence, or the matching sentence).

**Variations:**

### Find 2 Partners--[Example](#)

Divide the sentence into three parts, and have the students find two partners.

### Falling Leaves

Photocopy the cards onto colored paper. Put the students into different teams according to color (e.g. pink team, green team, yellow team). Cut up the cards, and put them into one big pile. Then throw them up into the air. The paper should (ideally) flutter slowly down to the ground like falling leaves. The students grab all the cards for their team, and then once they have all the cards, as a team they try to match the sentences together.

## Grab the Card (Karuta)--[Example](#)

The students are put into small groups, and given a list of cards with the target language (which they spread out among themselves). The teacher reads prompts, and the students try to grab the card matching the prompt. Whichever student grabs the card first gets to keep that card. At the end, the student with the most cards is the winner. (You may have to introduce penalties for students who grab wrong cards--e.g. lose one point, miss a turn, et cetera).

This game works when you have two complementary sentences (e.g. active/passive) or a sentence that divides neatly into two halves (e.g. if... then...), but it can also work with simple sentences if the prompts are situational--i.e. the teacher reads a situation, and then the students grab the sentence that matches the situation.

## Grammar Auction--[Example](#)

Students are given a set amount of points (or fake money) and are instructed to buy as many correct sentences as they can. (After the auction, correct sentences will be worth points, whereas incorrect sentences will be minus points). The students bid with each other to buy the correct sentences at an auction.

**Variation:** Instead of auctioning the sentences, students can simply place bets on which sentences they think are correct or incorrect.

**Note:** If the students simply identify the sentences which are correct and incorrect, then this is receptive practice. However, if they have to not only identify the incorrect sentences, but make corrections to them, then this becomes scaffolded production. If you want students to correct the incorrect sentences, then various variations are possible. Some teachers make the objective to buy as many incorrect sentences as possible (instead of correct sentences), but then the students can only get the points if they can accurately correct the sentence.

## Jump the Line--[Example](#)

A line is drawn in the center of the classroom. The students all line up on the line, and then are given instructions to jump to the left or the right depending on prompt.

Examples--jump to the left if the preposition should be "on" and right if it should be "in"

--jump to the left if the verb should be present simple, and to the right if it should be present continuous

This game obviously works well when teaching a contrast between two grammar points, but it can also be adapted to any grammar point if the students jump to the left for correct sentences, and to the right for incorrect sentences.

To make it more of a competition, students who jump the wrong way are "out" and have to go back to their seat. To make it less of a competition, there is no penalty for wrong jumping.

**Variation: Throw the Ball**

Instead of jumping, the students are given two targets (e.g. one target for present continuous, one target for present simple). The teacher gives them the prompt, and they must throw the ball at the correct target.

### **Memory Card Game--**[Example](#)

This works best in cases where there are two complementary sentences (e.g active/passive, reported speech/direct speech, past simple/present simple). It can also possibly work with sentences that can be divided into two halves (e.g. if clause and result clause). Sentence or sentence halves are put onto cards. The cards are put face down and, just like the classic game of memory, students have to turn over the cards to try to find a match.

For a purely receptive game, the students just turn over the cards. This game can also be turned into a scaffolded production game if students must predict what the matching card will be before turning it over. (e.g. for active/passive game, if they turn over a card in the active voice, they must say the passive equivalent correctly in order to get a chance to find the card).

#### **Variation: Memory Game on WhiteBoard --** [Example](#)

For a whole class memory game, the teacher writes the numbers on the board, and keeps a secret answer key for which numbers correspond with which sentences. When a student chooses a number, the teacher reads out the corresponding sentence.

Or a combination of cards and board work--e.g. half of the target language is given to the students on cards, and they have to try to match the cards to the numbers on the board, which correspond to various sentences in the teacher's answer key.

### **Picture Identification**

#### **Variation 1: Choose the sentences that match the picture--**[Example](#)

The students are given a picture, and two or more possible sentences from which to choose from. (The sentences are written in the target language.) The students must choose the correct sentences.

#### **Variation 2: Choose the pictures that match the sentence--** [Example](#)

The students are given a sentence in the target language, and must choose the picture which matches the sentence.

### **Sorting Activity--**[Example](#)

Used for when you want to draw a distinction between two grammar points--e.g. past simple versus present perfect. Since, arguably, all grammar is defined by contrasts (e.g. the present continuous is defined by its contrast with the present simple, the past perfect is defined by its contrast with the past simple) this can be used for any grammar point once you think of something to contrast it with.

Students are given a list of sentences, and have to sort them into different categories.

### **Replication Practice** (Students are given a sentence in the target language, and must replicate it, either orally or in writing.)

### **Classroom Survey (Pre-Written Questions)--**[Example](#)

Students have a list of questions (using target grammar) and have to survey several people in the class. (Note: This is considered replication practice because the focus is on repeating a question that uses the target grammar. In the example linked above, the target grammar is present perfect, and the practice comes from repeating the question. However if the focus of the activity is on students giving a personalized response to the question, and the response uses the target grammar,

then this becomes semi-controlled practice).

### **Dictation--[Example](#)**

The teacher reads several sentences containing the target language. The students write the sentences down. They get one point for each sentence perfectly transcribed. This can be done individually, or in teams.

#### **Variations:**

#### **Running Dictation--[Example](#)**

Sentences containing the target language are posted around the room (or just outside of the room). Students are put into pairs, and assigned the role of either runner or writer. The runner is the only one allowed to leave their seat. They run up to the sentence, remember the sentence in their heads, and then run back and dictate the sentence to the writer, who writes it down. The runner cannot write, and the writer cannot leave their seat to look at the sentences. The first pair to get all the sentences correctly written is the winner.

#### **Telephone Dictation**

Students are arranged in rows. The person in the first row looks at sentences containing the target grammar, and must say these sentences to the person behind them, who passes them onto the next person behind them. The student in the back of the row has to write the sentences down.

#### **Shouting Dictation--[Example](#)**

This is done in pairs. The pairs stand on opposite sides of the room. One student is a reader, and one student is a writer. Because they are standing on opposite sides of the room, they must shout their sentences to each other. To increase the challenge, they are competing against many other pairs, all of whom are shouting different sentences. To increase the challenge even more, the teacher can put loud music on. There are many ways this game can be organized, but in my classes I do it in teams, and award 5 points to the first team to finish, 4 points to the second team to finish, etc.

### **Find Someone Who (Pre-Written Questions)--[Example](#)**

Students have to walk around the room and find people who match various descriptions

This is already used as a first day of class ice-breaker, but it can also be designed to emphasise certain grammar points, e.g. "Have you...?", "Can you...?", "Had you...?" "Will you...?" etc.

To lower the challenge of the activity (for younger students) you can write the question forms directly on the sheet.

### **Rehearse the Dialogue-- [Example](#)**

Textbooks frequently contain a model dialogue in which the target grammar is presented. Usually this is between 2 speakers. (If your textbook does not contain model dialogues, it should be possible to create your own.) To practice this dialogue, students can be put into pairs, and can each be assigned one of the people in the dialogue. They practice reading the dialogue together. They should be encouraged to try to be as natural as possible in their rhythm and intonation. (Note: Some teachers will even encourage their students to memorize the dialogue, and then perform it with their partner from memory).

### **Report a Sentence**

Use this simply to focus students' attention on the form of the target language. The students all stand up. The teacher says a sentence using the target language. If any of the students can repeat the sentence exactly, they are allowed to sit down.

**Scaffolded Production** (Students are given a prompt, and must complete the sentence themselves. There is only one correct answer.)

### **Board Game Speaking Prompts--[Example](#)**

Create a board in which each square contains a speaking prompt containing the target language. Students roll a dice, and move their marker around the board, responding to the speaking prompt on each square.

Depending on how open-ended the speaking prompts are, this can be either controlled or semi-controlled practice. In the example linked to above, the questions are closed questions, and so it is controlled practice.

### **Board Race--[Example](#)**

The students are put into 4 teams. The teacher gives the students prompts (either visually, or written, or oral). Common prompts usually include a gapfill (e.g. "The boy \_\_\_\_\_ (eat) the ice cream"), scrambled sentences (e.g. "going, boy, to, cream, the, ice, eat, the, is") or sentence skeletons (e.g. "boy, eat, ice cream"). The students race to the whiteboard to write the correct sentence. The first team to write the correct sentence gets 4 points, the next student gets 3 points, etc.

#### **Variations:**

##### **Mini-whiteboard Race**

Teams are given mini-whiteboards, and the first team to write the sentence on their mini-whiteboard (and hold it up so the teacher can see it) gets 4 points, followed by 3 points, etc. Obviously this game works best with mini-whiteboards, but in a pinch, other material can work--e.g. students can write the answers in their notebook, on blank paper, on the floor, etc.)

##### **Mini-whiteboard Race 5 Star Line-up**

A mini-whiteboard race (as above) but with a twist. The teacher writes numbers on the floor from 1-5. After the student writes their answer on the mini-whiteboard, they then run to the number. The first student to get to 5 gets 5 points. The student to get to 4 first gets 4 points.

The students must write their answer on the mini-whiteboard first in their group before running to the numbers. Only one student from each group takes the whiteboard to run.

### **Correct the Sentences--[Example](#)**

Students are given a list of sentences that contain mistakes. They have to find the mistake in the sentence, and then change the sentence so that it is correct.

This can be done on a worksheet as a paper and pencil exercise. But it is also common to gamify it. This exercise can be gamified as: Grammar Auction, Board Race, Garbage Man, Grass Skirts, Hurricane, etc.

### **Crossword Puzzle--[Example](#)**

Make a crossword puzzle containing prompts for practicing the target grammar point. (Gap fills are the most common prompt for crossword puzzles).

There are various online resources for this, but I like:

<http://www.armoredpenguin.com/crossword/> since it allows you to save the crossword as a PDF file, so you can save it in your folder and keep it for future use.

#### **Variation: Crossword Puzzle Treasure Hunt--[Example](#)**

Remove the questions from the bottom of the crossword, and give the students only the blank grid. The questions are written on a separate piece of paper, and then are cut up and put all around the room. (They can be deviously hidden, or they can be placed in obvious places.) Students are put into groups, and given one crossword grid per group. They must go around the room to find



all the questions, and complete their crossword. The first team to successfully complete their crossword grid is the winner.

### **Describe a Picture--**[Example](#)

Students are given a picture prompt, and must write a sentence using the target language that describes the picture.

This can either be done as a worksheet, or (with the aid of a visual slideshow) it can be gamified and turned into a Board Race. It can also be done as either oral or written practice.

#### **Variation: Make as many sentences as you can describing the picture--**[example](#)

Students are given a picture showing a scene in which many different things are happening. They must make as many sentences as they can to describe the picture using the target language. It is common to gamify this activity by putting students into teams, giving them a time limit, and making it a race--e.g. "You have 3 minutes to write down as many sentences as you can about this picture using the present continuous. The team with the most sentences will be the winner."

### **Find Someone Who (Make the Question Form)--**[Example](#)

Students have to walk around the room and find people who match various descriptions.

The worksheets are designed as indirect questions, and the student has to transform the statements into questions--e.g. the worksheet will say "Find someone who has been to Canada," and the student must transform this to the question "Have you ever been to Canada?"

### **Gap Fill--**[Example](#)

Students are given a series of sentences with one or more words replaced by a gap. Students must supply the missing word to make the sentence grammatically correct. Often the missing word is given to the students in parentheses, and students must supply the grammatically correct form of the missing word. (e.g. "I (buy) \_\_\_\_\_ a great CD last week.")

Gap fills are an extremely common prompt in controlled practice exercises. They don't always need to be gamified. For a more sedentary class, it is perfectly fine to do the gap fills sitting in desks with paper and pencil. However, if you want to gamify them for a more active class, they can be combined with other activities: Board Race, Crossword Puzzle, Garbage Man, Grass Skirts, or Hurricane.

Gap fills can also be gamified by turning them into a running dictation--i.e. the prompts are posted outside the room, and one student must run outside the room, look at the prompt, run back, and dictate it to their partner who will write it down. Then, once all the prompts are written down, the students can begin to answer them.

### **Garbage Man--**[Example](#)

Design a worksheet with several different strips of paper. Each strip contains a controlled practice exercise (e.g. gap fills, complete the sentence, correct the sentence, scrambled sentence, etc) Photocopy the sheet onto different colored paper. (If possible, a different color for each team.) Cut up and shuffle. Put all the different colors together. Throw all the sentences into the air. The strips fall onto the ground. Each team picks their sentences up off the ground, and corrects the sentence. The teacher checks to make sure it is right. Then the team runs and gets another strip off the floor. The first team to collect all their sentences up off the floor is the winner.

#### **Variation:**

Some teachers have been known to play this game in reverse. Each group starts off with all the strips on their desk, and then crumple them up and throw them on the ground as they complete them. The last team to finish all their strips is then designated the "garbage man" and must go

around and clean up all the strips off the floor.

### **Grass Skirts--[Example](#)**

Several sentences are put on a piece of paper. The paper is cut into strips. The teacher doesn't actually cut the strips all the way, but each strip is loosely connected to the top of the paper. (The paper is connected at the top, with strips loosely hanging down--just like a Hawaiian grass skirt.)

Each team has a grass skirt posted at the front of the room. (If possible, use different colored paper for each team.) One person from each team runs up and grabs a strip from their grass skirt (tearing it off at the top). They take it back to their team, where they complete the exercise. (There is some sort of controlled practice exercise on each strip--e.g. gap fills, scrambled sentence, sentence skeleton, etc). After the team completes the exercise, they show it to the teacher. If it is correct, then they can go and rip off the next strip from their grass skirt.

The first team to finish their grass skirt is the winner.

### **Guess Your Partner's Answers--[Example](#)**

Students are given a list of questions containing the target language. They have to guess how their partner will answer each question. (example for "used to": "What did your partner use to hate eating they were little?") After making the guesses, they then ask their partner the questions to check their accuracy. They get one point for each correct guess. The partner with the most guesses is the winner.

### **Hangman (Wheel of Fortune) For Whole Sentences--[Example](#)**

The teacher thinks of a sentence using the target language. Write the blanks (but not the letters) up on the board. Students are divided into teams, and attempt to guess the letters in the sentence. If they guess a letter, they get one point for each time that letter appears in the sentence. If they can guess the whole sentence, they get 10 points. (But I sometimes add a penalty for incorrect guesses, e.g. they can lose 10 points if they attempt to guess the sentence, but guess incorrectly.) Some classes get into this, and some classes don't, but if they get into the game it's a good way to encourage them to try to seek out the patterns in the target language.

### **Human Bingo--[Example](#)**

Similar to "find someone who", but instead of completing a linear list of questions, the questions are arranged in boxes in a bingo grid. Students can fill out a box by finding someone who meets the criteria (ex: Find someone who has been to Canada) and the first person to get five boxes in a row is the winner.

(**Note:** As with "Find Someone Who", this activity could be either replication practice, scaffolded production, or semi-controlled depending on how it is set-up. If the questions are given to the students directly (e.g. "Have you ever been to Canada?") then it is replication. If the students are given an indirect question that they need to transform (e.g. "Find someone who has been to Canada?") then it is scaffolded production. If the students write their own questions in the bingo grid, then it is semi-controlled.

#### **Variation: Human Bingo: Same and Different--[Example](#)**

25 gap fills are arranged on a bingo grid. Students fill in the blanks with answers that are true for them. (example for future forms: I \_\_\_\_\_ watch TV tonight. ) Students then walk around the class and compare their answers with their classmates. If they have the same answer as a classmate, they may write a big "S" in that square. If they have a different answer than a classmate, they write a big "D" in that particular square. If they can get a bingo (5 of the same letter in a row), they win the game and can go back to their seat.

### **Hurricane--[Example](#)**

Divide students up into teams of 3 or 4. Have each group choose a team name. Give each group 100 points to start out with. Draw a grid on the board. Number 1,2,3,4,5 on the vertical axis, and A,B,C,D,E on the horizontal axis.

Each square on the grid corresponds to a question. The teacher has the key to the grid, but the students cannot see it. The students choose a square on the grid, and bet a certain amount of points before hearing the question. The teacher then reads the question, and the group attempts to answer it. Correct answers result in gaining points, incorrect answers result in losing points. If a group misses any question, the other groups have the opportunity to try to steal those points by answering correctly. In addition, there are various surprises hidden among the board: Arrow--swap points with another team, +200--+200 points, Rocket--steal 100 points from another team, Hurricane--lose all your points.

Additional "surprises" can be created depending on how creative and deviant you are.

This is a general feedback game into which various controlled practice prompts can be inserted: gap-fill, correct the sentence, sentence skeletons, etc.

### **Information Gap with Pictures--[Example](#)**

This activity requires two pictures which are mostly the same, but have some differences. Typically these pictures are found from resource books or teachers' resources online. (Unless you're particularly good at drawing, and then you can create them yourself.) Students are put into pairs, and each student is given a picture. Students are instructed not to show their picture to their partner. They must find the differences by asking questions, without looking at each other's picture.

This activity usually works well with present simple (e.g. "Is there a cat in your picture?") present continuous (e.g. "Is the man eating a sandwich?") prepositions of place (e.g. "Is the cat next to the table?").

If you establish that the picture took place in the past, the same picture can also be used with past simple and past continuous, although this is slightly less natural. (In real life, native speakers have a tendency to slip into present tenses when describing pictures, even when they are told that the pictures took place in the past.)

### **Information Gap with Texts--[Example](#)**

This activity requires either a text or some other written information. Students are put into pairs, and each student is given some of the information. They must ask each other questions to get the rest of the information. It should be possible to design information gaps that target many different grammar points. (You can also find many pre-made ones online or in coursebooks.) For example, "What did Tom do yesterday?", "What is Tom going to do tomorrow?", "What would Tom do if he had one million dollars?", etc.

### **Kaboom--[Example](#)**

Students are divided into teams. One person from a team picks a card and unfolds it. They read the word, and have to make a sentence with that word using the target language. If they can make a grammatically correct sentence in the target language, they get one point. However, mixed in the pile of cards are 1, 2, or 3 "KABOOM" cards. If a student unfolds a card, and it reads "KABOOM", their team loses all their points.

### **PowerPoint Games--[Example](#)**

There are various PowerPoint Templates out there floating around on the Internet. They have various themes (Batman, Jurassic Park, Doraemon, Naruto, etc). You can take a pre-made template, and put in your own questions.

During the game, students are given prompts. They answer the prompts, and are awarded with points and other surprises from the game. Common prompts that are used are: gap fills, correct the sentences, describe a picture, sentence skeletons, scrambled sentences

### **Sentence Skeletons--**[Example](#)

Students are given the key words of a sentence, and must grammaticize them into a fully grammatical sentence using the target language. For example: cat, mouse, chase. Depending on the target language, this can be grammaticized into the present simple "Cats chase mice", present continuous "The cat is chasing the mouse", present perfect "The cat has chased the mouse", present passive simple "Mice are chased by cats", etc.

Sentence Skeletons are a common prompt in controlled practice exercises. They don't always need to be gamified. For a more sedentary class, it is perfectly fine to do the sentence skeletons sitting in desks with paper and pencil. However, if you want to gamify them for a more active class, they can be combined with other activities: Board Race, Crossword Puzzle, Garbage Man, Grass Skirts, or Hurricane.

### **Scrambled Sentences--**[Example](#)

Students are given a sentence in the target language in which all the words are out of order. The students have to write the sentence in the correct order. (For example, present perfect continuous: "We / painting / have / been / house / the", which the students must unscramble as "We have been painting the house.")

Scrambled Sentences are a common prompt in controlled practice exercises. They don't always need to be gamified. For a more sedentary class, it is perfectly fine to do the scrambled sentences sitting in desks with paper and pencil. However, if you want to gamify them for a more active class, they can be combined with other activities: Board Race, Crossword Puzzle, Garbage Man, Grass Skirts, or Hurricane.

#### **Variation: Scrambled Sentences with cards--**[Example](#)

For students who enjoy a more tactile experience, the words can be put onto cards, and students can physically arrange the cards into the correct order. Students are put into pairs and given a grid, and a set of word cards that have been cut up and scrambled. They must arrange the words into sentences. They glue the word cards onto the grid to make sentences using the target grammar, and are given one point for each correct sentence.

#### **Variation: Human Scrambled Sentences--**[Example](#)

Print out the words in large font so that each word takes up a whole sheet of paper. Each student is given one word which they hold at chest level, and they must stand up and arrange themselves in a line to make a sentence.

### **Sentence Battleships**

This is a game that students play in pairs against each other. Students are given a sentence in the target language (or make their own). They write the words of the sentence onto a grid in random order. Their opponent cannot see the grid, but makes guesses as to the spaces. (Similar to the classic board game battleship). If they get a "direct hit", their opponent tells them the word. They try to guess each other's sentences.

### **Sentence Formation from a Scaffolding Device--**[Example](#)

Have a scaffolding device where students choose from different columns to form sentences. Students can ask each other questions and answer them using the scaffolding device. To make this more controlled, give the students all the language they will need on the scaffolding device. To make this less controlled, students have to add additional information. In the example linked above with

present continuous sentences, this scaffolding device could be made less controlled by deleting the final column with the objects, which the students would then have to supply themselves.

### **Silly Sentences--**[Example](#)

On the board (or PowerPoint) a square, triangle, and circle are drawn. A noun is put in the square, a verb is put in the triangle, and a number is put in the circle. The students have to make a sentence using the target language with the noun, verb, and exactly the amount of words in the circle (not one more, not one less). The first team to make a grammatically correct sentence with the correct number of words gets a point. (If the target language is not verb phrases--e.g. adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, etc--then you can adjust the game accordingly by putting the target language in the triangle instead of a verb.)

### **Tic-Tac-Toe (Knots and Crosses)**

A tic-tac-toe grid is written up on the white board. In each box, one word is written. For example, a lesson on phrasal verbs might have a grid that looks similar to this:

in	out	to
on	off	over
up	down	away

The students are divided into competing teams. If they can successfully use one of the words in the box in a sentence (using the target grammar for the lesson) they can put their cross or circle in that box.

**Semi-Controlled Practice** (Students are producing the target language at the sentence level. The sentences are personalized. The prompts are minimal, and allow for a high degree of creativity. Many different answers are possible.)

### **2 Truths and 1 lie--**[Example](#)

Students are put into small groups, and have to write 3 sentences containing the target language. Two of these sentences must be true, one of them must be a lie. Their group has to guess which of the 3 sentences is a lie. (**Note:** Some people play this game as just "truths and lies", in which the number of false statements is not specified--i.e. there could be 1 false statement, or 2 false statements, or possibly all 3 are false. In this case, the players not only have to guess which statements are false, but how many are false.)

#### **Variation--**[Example](#)

Two sentences contain a certain grammar point, the 3rd sentence another grammar point. Students read only part of the sentence, and the group guesses which sentences are which grammar point--e.g. "things I may do versus things I will do", "things I must do versus things I can do," et cetera.)

### **Around the Room Memory Game--**[Example](#)

Start at the beginning of the room. One student says a sentence containing the target language. The next student has to remember the previous sentence, and then add their own sentence. Each successive student has to remember all the sentences that came previously, plus add their own sentence.

#### **Variation: Circle Writing**

A similar idea, but done with writing. The first sentence writes one sentence on a piece of

paper, and then passes it along to the student next to him, who continues the story (using the same target grammar). Example: All the things I'm going to do when I grow up (going to future), all the things I would have done if I gone to America last year (3rd conditional)

### **Brainstorming Sentences--[Example](#)**

Students are put into groups, and given a prompt containing the target language. (Example: "must": "What must you do at school?", "2nd conditional": "If you were the teacher, what would you do?")

The students have to come up with as many sentences as possible responding to the prompt within a given time limit. At the end of the time limit, the group with the most acceptable sentences is the winner.

The prompt could also take the form of a picture, which students have to describe using the target language.

### **Change Chairs--[Example](#)**

This is a classic warmer game but it can also be used for individual grammar points. Make sure there are no extra chairs. (If there are extra chairs, turn them to face the wall). The teacher sits in the middle and says a sentence using "Change chairs if + grammar point"

Examples: present continuous "Change chairs if you are wearing sandals", present perfect "Change chairs if you have been to China", past simple, "Change chairs if you watched TV yesterday", going to future "Change chairs if you are going to watch TV tonight" etc.

If the sentence applies to them, the students have to get out of their chair and run to find another chair. The teacher also joins in and sits in one of the recently vacated chairs. The student left standing must now sit in the middle, and make a new "change chairs" sentence.

### **Choose Your Victim--[Example](#)**

Divide the class into two teams, and have each team stand facing each other. There is a ball, and one student from one team will ask a question and then throw the ball to someone else on the other team. Whoever receives the ball has to answer the question correctly. Then, they make a new question, and throw the ball back to someone else on the other team. If there is any mistake with either the answer or the question, then the student who made the mistake has to sit down. If a student repeats a question that has already been asked before, they also have to sit down. The team with the last person standing wins.

All of the questions and answers are supposed to use the target grammar for that lesson.

### **Classroom Survey (Students Make Their Own Questions)**

Students make a list of questions (using target grammar) and then survey several people in the class to get the answers.

### **Classroom Survey (Pre-written Questions)-- [Example](#)**

Although this was previously classified as controlled practice, a classroom survey with pre-written questions can also be classified as semi-controlled practice if the language focus is on the responses--i.e. the questions are designed to elicit personalized responses at the sentence level that make use of the target language.

### **Drawing (Students Create their own Sentence)--[Example](#)**

Students make their own sentences using the target language, and draw the picture.

Alternatively, as a communicative pair activity, one student describes a picture using the target language, and the other student draws it. (This can be either a picture they have drawn themselves, or one supplied by the teacher).

## **Find Someone Who (Student Make their own Questions)--[Example](#)**

Students write their own questions using the target language. Students then have to walk around the room asking the questions and find people who match various descriptions.

## **Guess My Sentence--[Example](#)**

Students are put into small groups. They are given a sentence on a card, and they must come up with hints to help the other people in their group guess the sentence.

### **Variations:**

It is possible to vary the focus of the game by having either the mystery sentence be in the target language (and the students are given a fair degree of freedom in creating the hints), or the mystery sentence is more free, and the students have to create the hints in the target language.

## **Hot Potato Sentences--[Example](#)**

Students are put in a circle, and given a prompt, and must respond to it using the target language. (e.g. "What must you do at school?" "What will you do if it rains today?" "What should I do if...?") The first student is given 5 seconds to respond, and then the next student must respond to the same prompt using the same target language, but with a new sentence. If a student cannot think of a new sentence, or repeats a previously mentioned sentence, they are out. (Or lose a point. Or have to sit in the middle. Or whatever penalty you chose to use with this game).

This can be played as a whole class or in small groups--I usually set it up by playing as a whole class first, and then move the students into small groups.

### **Variation:**

The game can also be played with a "hot potato" (or something representing a hot potato--e.g. a ball). Put on music. (Youtube has various "hot potato" music videos which play songs, and then stop the songs at random moments.) The student must make a sentence, and then pass the "hot potato" to the next person. They cannot pass the ball until they have made the sentence. When the music stops, whoever is holding the hot potato is out.

## **None of us/ One of us/ Some of us/All of us--[Example](#)**

Students are put in groups, ideally of 4 or 5. They think of sentences using the target language that are true for them. They then compare sentences with their group, and try to find at least one sentence that is true for only one person in the group, one sentence that is true for some people in the group, one sentence that is true for all the people in the group, and one sentence that is true for none of the people in the group.

It should be possible to adapt this to any grammar point. e.g going to (What are you going to do tonight?), past simple (What did you do yesterday?), present perfect (What unique experiences have you had?), second conditional (What would you do if you had a million dollars?) etc.

Note: Some variation is possible with the categories according to personal preference. Some teachers omit "none of us". Other teachers add categories like "two of us", "three of us", etc.

## **Sentence Heads--[Example](#)**

Students are given the beginning of a sentence, which they must complete using the target language in a way that is true for them. For example: 2nd Conditional "If I had one million dollars...". They then compare answers with a partner, and discuss which of their answers are similar, and which are different.

## **Zombie Sentences**



The students are sitting along the edges of the classroom in a circle. The teacher is the zombie. The teacher starts walking slowly towards one of the students with his arms outstretched. The student must make a sentence using the target grammar point (or one of the target vocabulary words) before the teacher gets to them. The student then calls out the name of another student. The teacher turns and walks slowly towards the new student.

Examples:

Present Perfect for Experiences:

"Tom, have you been to China?" "No, I haven't. Lisa, have you eaten pizza?" "Yes I have, Rick..."

Reported Commands:

"Tom told Lisa to stand up." "Lisa told Mark to go home." "Mark told Rick..."

There are a few variations on how to play.

- The student is out when the zombie touches them, and we play until we only have one last man standing.
- Some days, when the zombie (the teacher) touches a student, they become the new zombie, and the teacher goes back and sit down at his desk. Then, that student is the zombie until they tag someone else. (The students occasionally have to be reminded that zombies must walk slowly).
- Some days, the number of zombies keeps growing and growing. When the teacher touches one student, the student and the teacher are both zombies. When a 3rd student is tagged, then we have three zombies. Eventually most of the class are zombies.

**Freer Practice** (Students are producing the target language at the extended discourse level--i.e. extended speaking, writing or conversation. The primary purpose of this activity is to practice fluency--either in writing or speaking. The prompts are fairly open ended, and allow the student a lot of freedom in how they choose to respond. The prompts are usually situations in which the use of the target language would be natural but not required. The students are encouraged to use the target language when answering the prompts, but will also have to draw on other language that they know. )

### **Discussion Questions--**[Example](#)

Students are given a list of discussion questions that require an extended response and encourage the use of the target language. They discuss these questions with their partner.

**Variation: Walk around the Room--** [Example](#)

The same idea, but the discussion questions are now posted around the room. With their partner, students have to walk around the room. When they get to a discussion question they stop, talk about the question, and then when they have finished the discussion, they move on to the next question.

**Variation: Speed Dating--** [Example](#)

The discussion questions are put onto different cards, which are cut up before class. Each student is given a set of cards, which they put face down on their desk. Students sit opposite their partner, and then flip over the first card and talk about the question for 2 minutes. At the end of 2 minutes, the teacher announces that the time is up (or a buzzer sounds) and the students have to change seats. Then, with their new partner, they flip over the next card, and talk about it for two minutes.

The seating pattern is usually two lines of chairs facing each other, or one inner circle facing an outer circle. Seating arrangements will vary depending on your classroom set-up, of course.

### **Find the Person Who is Most Similar/Different to You**

Students are given a topic, and encouraged to speak about it at length. The topic should be one which encourages the use of the target language (e.g. past simple "Talk about everything you did



yesterday”, going to future “Talk about your plans for this weekend”, present simple “talk about your daily routine”, second conditional “talk about everything you would do if you had a million dollars” etc.) Students typically require some planning time to prepare before they are ready to produce, so give them a couple minutes to think about it.

Then, students have to go around the class, and listen to as many people as they can. They must try to find one person in the class who is the most similar to them, and one person in the class who is the most different to them.

This can also be done as a writing activity. In this case, post the student writing around the room, and each student will go around and read the writings to try to find who is similar to them and who is different.

#### **Variation: Find the Lie**

This is similar to the above activity, but in this case each student is encouraged to slip one lie into their talk. As they walk around the other room talking to other students, the other students have to try to guess what the lie is. (**Note:** This is similar to the semi-controlled activity “2 truths and 1 lie” game, but in this case it is freer practice because it is taking place at the extended discourse level--i.e. instead of just giving 3 unconnected sentences about what they did yesterday, a student is telling the whole story about everything they did yesterday.)

### **Make a Poster and Do a Small Presentation**

Students are put into groups, and given a topic that will encourage the use of the target language. (e.g. present perfect: “What are some places that everyone in your group has been to?”). They have to make a poster on this topic, ideally using a combination of illustrations and written text. They then present this poster.

For smaller classes, they can present the poster to the whole class. For larger classes, put two groups together and have each group present to each other.

### **Role Play--[Example](#)**

Imagine a situation or conversation in which the target language is likely to be used. (For example: Present Perfect--a job interview in which the applicant is being asked about past experiences; future forms--a conversation with a high school guidance counselor about what you will do after graduating; modals of obligation--a parent telling her child the rules for borrowing the car, etc). Students are put into pairs, each student is given a role (e.g. parent, child) and they must act out this situation with their partner. For less structured role plays, it is not necessary to hand out role playing cards--simply telling the students the situation is often sufficient. But for more structured role plays, it is helpful to give each student a card which gives them the details of their character.