

Information gap activities

Information gap (also known as information exchange) activities are communicative activities for two or more learners. They involve learners having different bits of information, that they have to convey orally to each other. These types of activities necessitate accurate use of language by the giver of the information, and careful listening by the recipient. They also give an opportunity for the development of effective questioning and answering, and effective note-taking. Information exchange activities take a bit of organising, but can be fun and a great motivator for students. They are a great way of combining content and language teaching effectively and providing an opportunity for purposeful communication with learners who can provide good models of English. They support learners with the development of strategies for communication: rewording, requesting clarification, questioning, giving and following simple clear instructions (explaining), clarifying and describing.

Types of information gap activities

There are a number of different types of information gap activity, such as:

- ◆ Barrier games (read more about [barrier games](#))
- ◆ Jigsaw activities (read more about [jigsaw activities](#))
- ◆ Text based information gap activities, where learners are given one of three different texts but have the same set of questions to find answers to, or the same grid to complete. The learners work in groups of three to pool their information, perhaps using a graphic organiser (read more about [graphic organisers](#)).
- ◆ Split a text into, for example, 6 sections, then put your class into groups of 6. Give each member of the group a part of the text to read. Without looking at each other's cards the members of the group tell each other about what's on their card. The group then reconstruct the text, order or rank the sections of text.

Practical ideas for using information gap activities

✓ **Top tip:** instructions for these activities need to be really clear
? **To consider:** grouping or pairing EAL learners with peers who can provide good models of English

- ◆ Information gap activities are a good way of giving biographical information about historical individuals. Pairs of learners are given different short texts to read about a particular person in history, e.g. Martin Luther King, then move around the class interacting with other pairs of learners to try and gain a more complete picture of his life.
- ◆ This type of activity also works with types of people (e.g. Lord of the Manor, peasant etc. in the middle ages) where the learners read a short text then take on that role and exchange information about their lives.
- ◆ A variation of the type of activity described above is introducing the characters in a play or novel to a class by giving a short description of a character to individual learners, who then take on that character and go around introducing themselves in role. The 'characters' then have to exchange basic information about each other through asking and answering questions, e.g. 'How do you know Oliver Twist?' 'I met him when I was...' etc.

Good for EAL, Good for All: Can I use information gap activities with the whole class?

Yes, information gap activities work well for everyone. They encourage collaborative learning, and help develop speaking and listening skills for all learners. Your EAL learners can benefit from doing the activities with peers who can provide good models of English.