

# Lesson Plan

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## A Day at the Fair

**T**he feature article on state and county fairs in the United States introduces readers to the sights and sounds of an American tradition. This lesson plan is intended to get students interacting around the sights and sounds of a fair. Task-Based Learning provides a framework for getting students to speak and listen in a structured problem-solving role-play.

**Level:** Intermediate to high intermediate

**Focus:** Contextualized speaking practice, developing problem-solving skills, cooperative group work, becoming a reflective learner.

**Materials:** “Summary: State and County Fairs” (provided); one set of role-play cards per group (See role-play cards at the end of the lesson.)

### Summary: State and County Fairs

State and county fairs in the United States have a long and interesting history. These fairs are large community gatherings that occur once a year in all states except one, Rhode Island. Fairs started as agricultural events where farmers could meet and share ideas. Over the years, fairs have become so much more. They are now family events that include entertainment and competitions.

One aspect common to state and county fairs is contests. Contests at fairs seek the best-looking animals, the best garden vegetables, the tastiest desserts, and the most beautiful quilts. Fairs also have other strange kinds of contests, such as “pig calling” contests and “demolition derby.”

Entertainment is another important part of fairs. There are carnival rides for all ages, music played by popular bands, and lots of delicious food to eat. Carnival rides include gentle rides such as merry-go-rounds and Ferris wheels and more thrilling rides such as roller coasters. Country music is the most popular kind of music at the bandstand of a state or county fair, though rock and roll is starting to be played more and more. The foods for sale include hot dogs, barbeque, popcorn, and ice cream.

State and county fairs are held over a period of one or two weeks. The fairgrounds usually have an area, known as the midway, with food booths and games to play. The carnival rides are usually next to the midway. Also near the midway is a bandstand where bands play music and people make speeches. The animal barns, where the animal judging takes place, are usually on the edge of the fairgrounds because they can be smelly. Every fair has large exhibition halls to show the most up-to-date farm equipment and display the prize-winning crafts and fruits and vegetables. Some fairs have a race track for car races and the “demolition derby,” in which cars crash into each other until only one is still running.

State and county fairs are large, loud, colorful events full of energy. Families look forward to the fair every year for fun and relaxation. Fairs give families a chance to be together and to celebrate traditions with their communities.

## **Pre-task: Using the Five Senses (approximately 15 minutes)**

1. From your reading of the feature article, describe to your students a state or county fair or read the summary text aloud.
2. Divide the blackboard into five sections. Label each section with one of the five senses.
3. Ask students to write individually on what they may experience with their senses at a state or county fair. What might they see, hear, smell, taste, touch? Remind students that some items can be perceived with more than one sense. Examples:
  - a. See: animals, thrill rides, food booths, contests
  - b. Hear: country music, animal sounds, screams from the thrill rides
  - c. Smell: apple pie, popcorn, barbeque meats, animals
  - d. Taste: hot dogs, apple pie, popcorn, barbeque
  - e. Touch: animals, farm machinery, hot dogs
4. Tell students to choose three items from their writing and circle or underline the items.
5. Have several students volunteer to go to the blackboard and write their three items in the proper sections.
6. After the students are finished writing on the blackboard, ask students if they have any questions about what appears on the blackboard. Let the students who wrote the items in question clarify for their classmates.
7. Tell students that they will be using these new words and phrases in their role-play task.

## **Role-play Task: Family Visit to the Fair (approximately 30 minutes)**

1. Divide students into groups of five or six. Tell students that they are going to play one of five or six family members in a role-play.
  - a. Father
  - b. Mother
  - c. Older brother – 16 years old
  - d. Sister – 12 years old
  - e. Grandmother
  - f. Little brother – 10 years old (optional)
2. Give each group a set of role-play cards face down and have each member of the group take a card. **Important:** Tell students they must only read their own cards; tell them not to share their information with other members of the group.
3. Give students 20 minutes to plan how the family will spend their day at the fair. As much as possible, each member of the group (family) must try to do the things he/she wants to do. Sometimes individuals will have to make compromises.
4. Ask one student in each group to take notes on what the family has decided to do.
5. Have each group take ten minutes to plan a short presentation on the schedule they will follow when they go to the fair.
6. Have each group take a turn reporting its schedule to the whole class.

### Post-task: How did it go? (approximately 25 minutes)

1. Give students 15 minutes to write individually about their experience in the role-play. Here are some questions they can ask themselves:
  - a. How did my group decide on its plan?
  - b. What compromises did the group have to make?
  - c. Were there any disagreements?
  - d. If we had to do the task again, what could we change to improve our work?
  - e. What language learning did I experience?
2. When the students are through writing, have them turn to a partner and tell him/her what they wrote and why.
  - a. Hint: If you want your students to practice their speaking, tell students to turn over their papers so that they don't read their ideas, they tell them.
  - b. Another possibility: Have student trade papers and read each other's ideas silently.
  - c. Yet another possibility: Have students tell each other what they liked most about what they wrote.
3. Have students then share with the whole class one of the most important things they learned from the task.
4. If you have time, have a whole class discussion about making decisions and compromises. For larger classes, students can work in groups. Ask students:
  - a. Do you have to make compromises in your own life? When? How do you handle them?
  - b. Who helps you make decisions? Do you have to make some decisions alone? Why? What kinds of decisions? Describe one.
  - c. Has there ever been a time when you made a decision that had surprising results? Tell the story. Have you ever made some decisions that ended up badly? Tell the story.

### Suggested Extension: Deepening the Language Learning

1. During the task, you may want to walk around the room and take notes on the students' speaking. You could notice grammar or pronunciation errors, vocabulary use, or expression. Write down things you will be able to address in a later class.
2. From the notes you took on student errors during the task, make a list of sentences that can be corrected. Create a worksheet for the students to work on the next day. (Make sure there are no names on the worksheet so that students are not embarrassed by their errors.)
3. Discussion possibilities:
  - a. How do state or county fairs reflect values and traditions of the United States?
  - b. What community gatherings in your country are similar to fairs in the United States? Why are such events important to a culture?
4. Ask students to use their imaginations and write a story from the perspective of the role they played. Tell them to describe their day, what they saw and what happened. They can also write about their feelings and thoughts.

## Role-Play Cards

### Card 1: Mother

- Your daughter [Sister] has a tendency to get into trouble. You would like her to stay with you today.
- You entered a quilt in the quilting contest. The winners will be announced in the exhibition hall at 2:00 p.m. and you want to be there.
- You want everyone to have lunch together on the midway at 12:00 p.m.
- You do not like carnival rides.
- Tomorrow is your wedding anniversary. You want to secretly buy your husband [Father] a gift on the midway.

### Card 2: Father

- Your mother [Grandmother] is old and weak. Someone must stay with her at all times.
- You want the whole family to watch the prize cow judging in the animal barns at 2:30 p.m.
- Your son [Older Brother] has a tendency to get into trouble. You are worried that he will get into trouble today.
- You definitely want to see the farm equipment display at the exhibition hall.
- Tomorrow is your wedding anniversary. You want to secretly buy your wife [Mother] a gift on the midway.

### Card 3: Older Brother - 16 years old

- You want to see the demolition derby at the race track very badly! It runs all day, but the best part starts at 2:30 p.m.
- You don't want your friends to see you with your family. You would rather see the fair alone.
- Your little sister [Sister] annoys you.
- You definitely want to see the farm equipment display at the exhibition hall.
- You want to bring your dog to the "Ugliest Dog" contest at the bandstand at 11:00 a.m.

### Card 4: Sister - 12 years old

- You adore your grandmother [Grandmother] and love to be with her.
- Your tomatoes are being judged in the exhibition hall; at 10:30 a.m. the prizes for "best tomatoes" will be awarded. You want your family there with you.
- You hate the smell of animals.
- You love to ride the carnival rides on the midway.
- You have lots of energy. You like to be very active all the time.

### Card 5: Grandmother

- Your best friend has a quilt in the quilting contest. You want to see if she wins. The winners will be announced in the exhibition hall at 2:00 p.m.
- You cannot walk very well and need to rest often.
- You want to see the "Ugliest Dog" contest at the bandstand at 11:00 a.m.
- You would like to shop for gifts on the midway.
- You would be happy to sit and listen to music at the bandstand.

### Card 6 (optional): Younger Brother - 10 years old

- You have a prize pig being judged in the animal barns at 11:00 a.m. You want your whole family to be there.
- Your brother [Older Brother] is your favorite person. You would like to spend as much time with him as possible.
- You definitely want to see the farm equipment display at the exhibition hall.
- You want to shop for toys on the midway.
- You love carnival rides.

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