

This section presents three stand-alone language learning activities related to the theme of knitting. Each activity is designed for students at the proficiency level indicated.

Knit a Colorful Outfit

Level: Upper Beginner

Time required: 60 minutes

Goals: To introduce students to the clothing that knitters commonly produce; to review vocabulary related to colors and acquire clothing-related vocabulary

Materials: chalk and a chalkboard or markers and a large sheet of paper; paper and colored markers or crayons (or pens and pencils—colors are preferred)

Optional materials: paper of different colors; knitted items; a picture of a person knitting

Procedures:

1. Ask your students to brainstorm all the English words for colors that they know. As they call out their ideas, write them on the board or on a large sheet of paper. To get your students thinking, you can point to items in the classroom (a green chalkboard, a blue notebook, a red book, etc.) and ask students to identify the colors. If students require further help, you can ask them questions, such as the following:

- What color is the sky?
- What color is the chalkboard?
- What color do red and yellow make?
- What color do red and white make?

Make sure your students identify at least seven to ten colors.

2. Now ask a student, “What color is your shirt?” After the correct answer is given, write the word *shirt* on the board. Then ask students to help you make a list of other things they wear. As upper beginners, your students might not know many of these words. Their list might include just a few

other words, like *dress*, *socks*, and *shoes*. With a little assistance, students may be able to think of more clothing vocabulary. To aid their thinking, ask them questions:

- What do you wear on your head? [*hat*, *cap*]
 - What do you wear on your hands? [*gloves*, *mittens*]
 - What do you wear around your neck when the weather is cold? [*scarf*]
 - Do you wear a T-shirt when the weather is cold? What do you wear instead? [*sweater*, *coat*, *jacket*]
- ... and so on.

If your students do not know the words for these articles of clothing, you can teach them by showing examples (if you have them), pointing to things your students are wearing and giving the names, or drawing the items on the board and writing the words next to them. Make sure that at the end of the brainstorming session, the list of clothing includes these words: *hat*, *scarf*, *gloves*, *mittens*, *sweater*, *socks*.

3. Read the following information to your students:

Some people make their own clothes by knitting. This is a popular hobby in many parts of the world. Popular items to knit are scarves, hats, socks, mittens, gloves, and sweaters.

Students may need help understanding this information. Supplement your reading of the text by showing the class a picture of a person knitting and/or by miming the act of knitting. Assess your students’ understanding by returning to the list of clothing items students brainstormed and asking

students to identify the pieces that people like to knit (*hat, scarf, gloves, mittens, sweater, and socks*). Mark a star next to those items in the list.

4. Tell your students to imagine that they are expert knitters and that they are going to knit clothing for themselves. (If you and your students live in a warm climate, you can also tell them to imagine that they are going on a trip to a part of the United States where it is cold, such as New York City in December.) Tell them to draw pictures of themselves wearing the items they would knit. In their pictures, they should be wearing a complete outfit and at least three knitted pieces that will keep them warm: a hat, gloves or mittens, a scarf, a sweater, and socks. They should save space at the bottom of the paper where they will write sentences about their outfits.

If students have markers or crayons, they should color their drawings. If students are using pens or pencils, they should write the words for the colors they would choose for each article of clothing. To help students understand the directions, you might draw your own self-portrait on the board or on paper. Make sure your students know that they should not simply copy your example! They should choose their own colors and draw pictures of themselves, not of their teacher.

5. Tell students to write a short passage underneath their pictures to describe what they are wearing. You can write the following template on the board (or a large sheet of paper) and ask students to fill in the blanks when they write their own sentences. Tell students to write one sentence for each article of clothing. If you have drawn a self-portrait, you can write your own sentences as examples.

I am wearing (a) _____
(color/colors)

(clothing item)

My _____ is/are
(clothing item)

(color/colors)

You may need to remind students that if, for example, their hat is blue and green, they need to write the word *and* between the color words in their sentences (e.g., *I am wearing a blue and green hat*). You may also need to remind students that they should use the verb *are* in statements describing their mittens or gloves and socks, and that they do not need to use an article with these plural words (e.g., *My socks are yellow* or *I am wearing yellow socks*).

6. Ask students to share their drawings with a classmate or to present them to the class by reading aloud the statements they wrote. Their drawings can be displayed around the room.

Variation: Pair Interview

1. Divide students into pairs. Ask partners to interview each other about what color clothing they want to knit. This task will be easier for beginners if you write the following sentence starters on the board and ask students to fill in the blanks as they interview their partners:

What color _____ do you want
(clothing item)
to knit?

I want to knit (a) _____
(color/colors)
_____.
(clothing item)

Partners can also ask each other about the items that will complete the outfit by asking questions like the following:

Do you want to wear (a) _____
or (a) _____ ? What color?

(Fill in the blanks with *pants, shorts, dress, or skirt*, for example.)

2. Once students have finished interviewing each other, they can draw a picture of their partner wearing the clothes the partner described.

How to Start a Knitting Circle

Level: Intermediate

Time required: 60 minutes

Goals: To introduce students to the concept of a knitting circle; to facilitate students' understanding of the relationship of ideas in an essay through a paragraph-ordering activity

Materials: Copies of the reading passage "How to Start a Knitting Circle" (one for each group of two or three students to share), scissors, chalk and a chalkboard or markers and a large sheet of paper

Optional materials: a picture of a group of people knitting

Preparation:

Option 1: Make copies of the reading passage "How to Start a Knitting Circle." Cut up the copies of the passage so that each paragraph is on one strip of paper. Shuffle the paragraphs and clip them together. You will need one set of paragraphs for each group of two or three students.

Option 2: Write the reading passage on the board or on a large sheet of paper *with the paragraphs out of order*. (Note: Save space on the board for brainstorming at the beginning of the lesson.)

How to Start a Knitting Circle

Knitting is a popular craft in the United States. Knitters use needles and yarn or thread to stitch (or create) garments such as scarves, mittens, hats, and sweaters. Some people prefer to knit by themselves. Other knitters enjoy getting together to form a knitting circle—a club whose members chat and stitch at the same time. If you want to start a knitting circle, planning is easy.

First, you should invite people to join your knitting circle. Ask your friends if they are interested in being a part of the group or if they know people who are. You only need two people to start your circle, but as the saying goes, "The more, the merrier!"

Next, you need to decide when and where to meet. A time in the evening or on the weekend might be most convenient. You could get together at a member's home, a local coffee shop, or a community center.

After you have decided on a time and place, contact the other members of the circle to tell them where you will meet and what they should bring. You might want to ask them to bring their own yarn and needles—and extra to share! Knitting circle members often lend and borrow materials.

At your first meeting, you should discuss your long-term plans for the club. How often do you want to meet? Do you want to take turns bringing refreshments to the meetings? Do you want to donate the items your group knits to a charity?

Starting a knitting circle does not require much work. With some successful planning, after a few meetings, your group can become a close-knit community!

Note: To complete this activity, students should have a basic understanding of the way a typical academic essay is organized in American English—with a general introduction, supporting body paragraphs, and a conclusion that summarizes the main points of the essay.

Procedures:

1. Activate your students’ background knowledge around the topic of the reading passage: knitting circles. Write the word *clubs* on the board and ask the class the following questions:

- Do you know what a club is? (If your students don’t know, you can tell them that a club is a group of people who get together for an activity, such as a hobby, sport, or other pastime.)
- Have any of you ever been a part of a club? What did you do in your club?
- What kinds of clubs would you like to join?

2. Write the kinds of clubs students mention on the board or a large sheet of paper. Add some of your own examples to their list, including knitting circles. Tell students that knitting circles are a popular kind of club in many parts of the world. If your students are not familiar with knitting, you can explain what it is by miming and, if possible, sharing a picture of a group of people knitting. When you define the concept, explain the terms *yarn*, *needles*, and *stitch*, using gestures and, if possible, pictures.

3. Ask students if they have ever organized their own club. If they have, ask them to share what steps they took to organize their club. If they have never organized a club, ask them to make predictions about what is involved. (These ideas do not need to be written on the board.)

4. Tell students that you want more information on the topic of how to organize a knitting circle. You tried to read a short essay about it, but the paragraphs were unorganized. You would like the class to help you put the paragraphs in order.

5. Ask the class the following questions about how they would structure an essay called “How to Start a Knitting Circle”:

- What kind of information would you include in the introduction?
- What would you discuss in the body paragraphs? How would you order this information?
- What kind of information would you include in the conclusion?

Have students share their ideas with the whole class. If there is room on the board, you can write notes on what they say. Tell them that as they work with the essay, they should check to see whether the author included the information they suggested.

6. Put students in groups of two or three. Then give the following directions:

a) If you chose Option One (see “Preparations” at the beginning of this activity), give each group a set of paragraphs. To ensure that everyone participates, you might give two or three paragraphs from the set to each student in the group. Give the groups about ten minutes to work together to put the paragraphs in order. Tell them to underline specific words or phrases that help them decide on the order of the paragraphs.

b) If you chose Option Two in your preparations, ask each group to rewrite the essay on their own paper with the paragraphs in the correct order. You may need to remind groups not to copy the essay exactly as it is written on the board (or sheet of paper) because the paragraphs are not in the correct order there. Tell the groups to underline words or phrases that help them decide on the order of the paragraphs. (If you feel that having groups rewrite the essay will take too much time, you can label the unorganized paragraphs A through F on the board, and have groups arrange them in logical order.)

7. Circulate and listen to your students discuss the essay. Provide guidance as necessary; ask students if they notice a word in the first sentence of the paragraph that can help them determine where the paragraph should go in the essay. Take note of students who make useful observations

Classroom Activities

about transition signals or content that helps determine the order of information. Tell those students you would like them to share their ideas with the whole class when everyone is finished putting the essay in order.

8. When all groups believe they have their essays in the correct order, have students report their choices to the whole class. Ask a student to read aloud the paragraph his/her group chose for the introduction and explain why they made that choice (e.g., because it introduces the topic by defining the topic of the essay, knitting circles). Ask a different group to read its choice for the first body paragraph and so on until the whole essay has been read in order. Make sure to draw your students' attention to the introductory clauses in each body paragraph and the way they help connect the paragraphs in chronological order.

- a) **First**, you should invite some people to join your knitting circle.
- b) **Next**, you need to decide when and where to meet.
- c) **After you have decided on a time and place**, contact the other members of the circle to tell them where you will meet and what they should bring. (In this sentence, *time and place* is a reference to *when and where to meet* in the previous paragraph.)
- d) **At your first meeting**, you should discuss your long-term plans for the club. (The other paragraphs discuss what to do *before* the first meeting.)

Be sure your students notice that the conclusion summarizes the main idea and provides a

concluding remark—in this case, one that offers a prediction for what might happen in the future.

9. You may choose to provide everyone with a copy of the reading passage in the correct order after you finish the class discussion about the correct order of information.

10. Ask your students to think back to their predictions about the information that might be included in the essay. Were they correct? What is different or missing, and why?

Variation

Use the “How to Start a Knitting Circle” passage for a basic reading comprehension activity. Follow steps 1 through 4 above, and then complete the steps below.

1. Allow your students two to three minutes to read through the text and highlight or write down the four steps they should follow when organizing a knitting circle.
2. Ask students to read more carefully and “plan” their own imaginary knitting circle according to the steps described in the essay. They should write down who they will invite, where to meet, what to bring, and the “business items” to discuss at the first meeting. Ask students to add ideas of their own to develop or improve their knitting circle.
3. Have your students work in groups to organize a club of their own. After they plan, they can work together to write a process essay or speech about the steps they followed as they planned their meetings. Their essays or speeches should make use of transition signals to show chronological order.

Knitting Idioms

Level: Advanced

Time required: 60–90 minutes

Goals: To facilitate students' understanding of the form, meaning, and use of idioms associated with the theme of knitting

Materials: Paper (thick stock works best) for creating the idiom and definition cards, notebook paper for students' use, paperclips or rubber bands, chalk and a chalkboard or markers and a large sheet of paper

Optional materials: something to write with (a dark pen or fine-tipped marker would work best), dictionaries

Preparation:

1. Create one set of idiom and definition cards for each group of three to four students. (In the sample cards at the end of this section, the idioms appear in the grey boxes and their definitions appear in the corresponding white boxes on the following page.) If you are writing out the information on your cards, have students help you. One student can create the idiom cards, and another can create the definition cards. Make sure the students do not look at each other's information!

2. Keep the idiom cards separate from the definition cards. Make sure the cards within each deck (set of cards) are mixed up. Use paperclips or rubber bands to keep the cards together in sets.

Note: The sentences and definitions can be written on the board or on a large sheet of paper rather than on cards. However, using the cards lends a kinesthetic aspect that can aid students' learning and retention of the English.

Procedures:

1. Write the words *knot*, *pins*, *needles*, *seams*, *stitch*, and *thread* on the board or a large sheet of paper. Ask students if they can figure out what these words have in common. Allow them to think about the list by themselves for about two

minutes. Then, have students work with a partner to share their ideas and to define or provide synonyms for each word, if they can. (You may choose to allow students to use a dictionary to look up the words they don't know.)

2. Ask for volunteers to share with the class what they discussed. Start by reviewing the definitions, and provide clarification as needed. Then, ask students to think about the concept or subject that all the words can be used to describe. If students do not know the word for the concept (*sewing* or *knitting*), encourage them to try to explain it using English.

3. Tell students that knitting is a handicraft and a popular pastime in many parts of the world. You may choose to show students a picture of someone knitting. Then explain that many English idioms are associated with the theme of knitting. Tell students that they are going to discover the meaning of ten of these idioms.

4. Divide the class into groups of three or four students. Give each group a set of the idiom cards, saving the definition cards for later. Have the students read the example sentences and make guesses about what the idioms (in **bold**) mean. Encourage students to use context clues to make these guesses. For instance, they can think about their personal knowledge of or experience with concepts discussed in the sentences (such as failing a test or doing a math problem). They can also look for a defining example or cause-and-effect relationship in the sentence.

5. Give each group of students a set of definition cards and have them match the definitions to the idioms. As groups finish, you can circulate and check their work, possibly rewarding the group that finishes first with a small prize.

6. Tell students to write a short dialogue that incorporates three or four of these idioms. The class may need extra time to do this. You can assign this task for homework or give students time to work on their dialogues in the next class.

Classroom Activities

When the assignments are complete, collect your students' work and provide written feedback. You might choose to have your students revise their work and submit a second draft.

7. Have the groups perform their dialogues for the class.

Extensions

1. Give each student in your class one card—either a definition or an idiom. Then ask students to circulate and find the classmate with the corresponding card.

2. Use the cards to play Memory. Have students form groups of two to four students. Give each group one mixed-up set of all of the idiom and definition cards. Groups should lay the cards facedown in a grid, on a table or other flat sur-

face. Then students can take turns flipping over two cards at a time, trying to match the idiom to the definition. If they are successful, they take that pair of cards out of play and earn a point for themselves. If the two cards do not match, the student turns the cards facedown again and lets the next person take his or her turn.

3. Have students sort the idiom cards according to the connotation of the idiomatic expression—positive, negative, or neutral.

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Key to the Cards (on the next two pages)

Idiom	Definition
coming apart at the seams	failing
close-knit	close and supportive
stitches	laughing very hard
hanging by a thread	in danger of coming to an end
on pins and needles	to be very excited or worried
bursting at the seams	completely full or crowded
tie the knot	get married
A stitch in time saves nine.	Fixing problems or doing a task now saves time later.
a needle in a haystack	something that is very difficult to find
knitted (her) brows together	frowning in concentration or confusion

The plan is
**coming apart
at the seams.**

A **close-knit** family
spends a lot of
time together.

The joke was so funny
that I was **in stitches!**

After their many arguments,
their friendship was **hanging
by a thread.**

I am waiting
on pins and needles
to find out if I got the job.

The game was sold out,
and the stadium was
bursting at the seams.

After dating for several years,
they finally decided
to **tie the knot.**

You should fix the leak
before it gets worse.
A stitch in time saves nine.

Trying to find him in this
crowd is like trying to find
a needle in a haystack.

She **knitted her
brows together** as she tried
to solve the math problem.

failing

close and supportive

laughing very hard

in danger of coming
to an end

to be very excited
or worried

completely full or crowded

get married

Fixing problems or
doing a task now
saves time later.

something that is
very difficult to find

frowning in concentration
or confusion