

When going over the definition and examples, you might give examples of famous people your students are familiar with. If they know Bill Gates, tell them that Bill Gates' first business was a failure. Or you could use a name from a unit you've studied; for example, if your students have studied American inventors, you could use the following quote by Thomas Edison: "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." You could also ask students if they remember a character in a book your class has read who experienced failure and later found success.

A spoken script to guide students into meditation could read as follows:

*Today let's clear our minds of negative thoughts, and let's dare to fail and learn by trying. See yourself trying and learning more each time you try. Clear your mind and let yourself feel the happiness you feel once you learn from something that didn't work. Now focus on your breathing. Breathe in. And as you breathe out, say to yourself, "Through failure, I learn." Breathe in. "Through failure, I learn."*

## CONCLUSION

Meditating in class helped my students to be more focused and open to language acquisition. The technique described here can be used for nearly any age and for any language level.

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# Speed Drawing for Vocabulary Retention

by **SARA HENDRICKS**

This exciting drawing activity helps students remember vocabulary. I created the activity when I was working with beginning students at a middle school in Japan. The students were 12 to 14 years old and had a limited vocabulary. Speed drawing was a fun and successful way to help them practice asking questions and using targeted vocabulary.

The activity can work in any style of classroom with a minimum of supplies. The only things necessary are a vocabulary list, scraps of paper, and things that students can use to draw pictures (e.g., pencils, pens, markers). In order to save paper, you may cut the paper into small squares so that students use a small amount of paper for each drawing.



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Begin by providing a list of about 12 new English vocabulary words; the activity works best if the words are nouns, especially at lower levels of proficiency. This list can be written on the board or a piece of poster paper, taken from a textbook, or distributed on a handout. Go over the meanings of the words. The students should have some time to study the words, but it's not necessary to memorize them, as the students can refer to the list during the activity. You can lead the class in repeating the words or allow students to read and practice saying the words alone, in pairs, or in small groups. Familiar vocabulary can be mixed in and used for review as well.

It's often good to have the words center on a theme, like animals, occupations, or weather. One reason is that it focuses students' attention on words that are related thematically. Another reason is that using nouns that may be similar—such as a dozen words about animals—really makes the drawing and guessing parts of the game challenging and fun.

After a few minutes, explain that the students will play a drawing game so that they can practice using the words. Emphasize that

the goal is to practice English, rather than to showcase artistic talent. For a lower-level class, you might say, "This is English class. Which is more important? Practicing English or drawing a picture?"

Once students feel reassured that they don't need to be artists to participate, you can explain that they will pair off and take turns choosing a vocabulary word and trying to draw it so that their partner can guess which word it is.

But wait! It's not that easy! The students will have only ten seconds to draw their picture. And wait again! They must also close their eyes while they draw!

At this point you should model the activity by closing your eyes and drawing a picture either on the board or on a large piece of paper while counting to ten (or, better yet, have the students do the counting). Once the picture is "finished," encourage the students to guess what it is, even if they aren't sure about the answer. Obviously, the picture will be terrible because of the time limit and closed eyes; that's what makes this activity fun. The point here is for students to practice saying

the vocabulary words over and over again, so if they need to guess three or four or nine words, that's just more practice. Depending on the students' level, you can provide simple phrases (either on the board or through speaking practice) for students to use—for example, "Is it a table? Is it an oven?" You can also provide responses, such as "Yes, that's right!" or "No, it isn't. Please try again."

For higher levels, you might ask students to provide and model a few useful phrases, such as the following:

- "I think it might be a \_\_\_\_\_."
- "I'm not sure, but is it a \_\_\_\_\_?"
- "It looks a little bit like a \_\_\_\_\_."

If you are confident that most of the students understand the activity and will be able to ask the question phrases with the vocabulary words, ask the students to break into pairs. Students in each pair decide who will draw first and then secretly choose a vocabulary word. After that, ask the students who will draw first to raise their hands. Make sure the students with their hands raised are prepared with paper and something to draw with. Your directions might sound something like this:

*Now please find a friend. Two students will work together. One student will draw first. Who will draw first? ... OK, the student who will draw first should have paper and a pencil. Please raise your hand if you will draw. Thank you! Do you know what you will draw? Don't say it! Shhh! It's a secret. Are you ready? I will count to ten. Ready, set, go!*

After ten seconds, students stop drawing, and you can walk around to help them use their questioning phrases with the vocabulary words. If you like, you can encourage them to show nearby students their pictures and have those students guess the vocabulary words in English. Discreetly help any students who may have done the activity incorrectly while the rest of the class guesses and shares their pictures. Continue to emphasize that this is

a game for practicing English, so students should have fun while using their time wisely to practice their vocabulary words, and of course, remind them to guess and respond in English.

Have the students change who is drawing and then play the game again. One option is to have the partners take turns counting to ten; that is, one person draws while the other person counts and then guesses what the drawing is, and then they switch roles.

This game can be repeated up to about ten times, or more if students are still engaged. It should be played enough to use nearly all the vocabulary words, but not so many times that the students get bored. The explanation and demonstration may take about ten minutes, with the actual playing of the game taking another ten to 15 minutes or so. The game is appropriate for students of almost any age and is recommended for use with students whose English skills are at the beginning to intermediate level. You can play it again from time to time with different vocabulary lists.

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#### Answers to *THE LIGHTER SIDE*

#### YOU'RE NOT LISTENING!

1. Change people to hours.
2. Change intent to silent.
3. Change hours to ears.
4. Change silent to people.
5. Change ears to intent.