

No-Prep Communicative Grammar Activities

As students become aware of a grammatical structure's form and meaning, it is important to facilitate opportunities for them to use the target language in a communicative setting.

In this session, we will:

- examine how to create opportunities for students to personalize the content by engaging in dynamic, communicative grammar activities.
- explore ready-to-use activities for common grammar points at each proficiency level: beginner, intermediate, and advanced.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE



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Stephanie has over 10 years of TESOL experience, and she began her career as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Temuco, Chile. She has since taught (and learned!) in Turkey, India, and the United States. In her recent position as Director of Teacher Training and Academic Support at ELS, she provided professional development for teachers and directors, and led curriculum development and training projects. She is currently an English Language Specialist working with teachers in Ukraine.

Her professional interests include metacognition, student motivation, and increasing rigor in the classroom. Originally from Connecticut in the United States, Stephanie holds a CELTA and a Master's degree in TESOL from Adelphi University.



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No-Prep Communicative Grammar Activities

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Objectives

1. Participants will be able to identify features of the LEARN framework.
2. Participants will learn five grammar-focused activities to use in their classrooms.



Session Plan

- Explore what makes learning memorable
- Review the LEARN Framework
- No-Prep vs. No Plan
- Practical applications using LEARN
 - Advanced Grammar: Reported Speech
 - **Activity 1:** Rumor Mill
 - Intermediate Grammar: Passive Voice
 - **Activity 2:** Where Was It Made?
 - **Activity 3:** Fun Facts
 - Beginner Grammar: Superlatives
 - **Activity 4:** Internet Scavenger Hunt
 - **Activity 5:** Convince Me
- Recap and References



What makes a learning experience memorable?



**What good memories of language learning
do you have?**

**Consider specific activities that helped you
remember concepts, vocabulary, and/or rules?**



Learning Experience 1

Purpose of activity: Counting Practice

- Teacher poured colored toothpicks onto the floor.
- In groups, we collected **two** colors.
- At our desks, we divided our toothpicks into piles of **one-hundred**.



Learning Experience 2

Purpose of activity: Spanish Vocabulary Acquisition


- I read *The Witches* in English.
- I re-read the book in Spanish and looked at the pictures.
- I learned words like ***claws***, ***wigs***, ***masks***.



Learning Experience 3

Purpose of activity: Identifying masculine and feminine nouns in Spanish

- Teacher hung posters of common suffixes around the room.
- We walked around and added words.
- We separated the posters into masculine/feminine.
- We created rules for identifying the gender of nouns.

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**What do you think made these
learning experiences
memorable?**



- Novel
- Enjoyable
- Included repetition



- Linked to prior knowledge
- Enjoyable
- New words connected to pictures and L1



- Novel
- Linked to prior knowledge
- Vocab words connected to rules



The LEARN Framework



E

A

R

N

Link

Make a connection to **previous knowledge** or **personal experience**:

- Think of a time...
- What do you know about...
- Create your own example of...

LEARN

Enjoy

Cultivate **positive emotions**:

- Interest
- Curiosity
- Humor
- Confidence
- Relevance

LEARN

Anchor

Connect and organize **sets of information**:

- Concepts and images
- Mnemonic devices
- Graphic organizers
- Comparison of L1 and L2
- Form and meaning
- Movement and memory

LEARN

Repeat and Reflect

Strengthen connections by reviewing concepts in small chunks:

- Reviewing concepts
- Reflecting on learning
- Quizzes & review games

LEARN

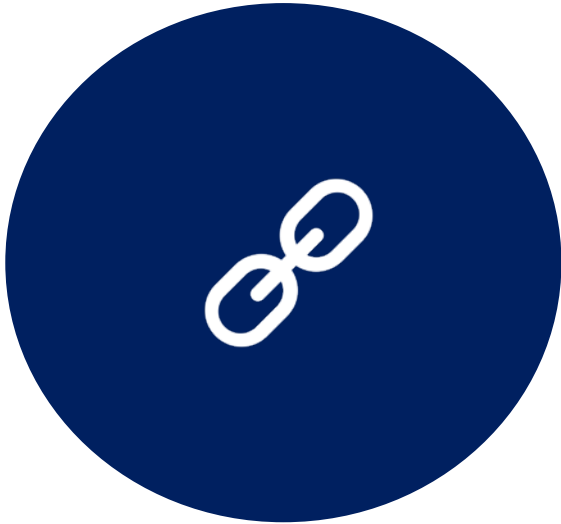
Novelty

Encourage students to pay attention by doing something in a **new way**:

- New grouping
- New techniques
- New formats
- New location

Concept Check

Linking



Linking or connecting an idea to your experience or your prior knowledge

Anchoring



Summarizing learning by organizing and connecting sets of information

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You will see two examples from a classroom.

Which one uses linking?

Which one uses anchoring?



Simple Past vs. Past Continuous

Simple Past

We use the **simple past** to talk about:

Completed actions, habits and facts in the past.



- I **went** to the cinema **yesterday**.
- I **always visited** my grandparents in my summer holidays **when I was little**.
- I **lived** near Liverpool for a couple of years.

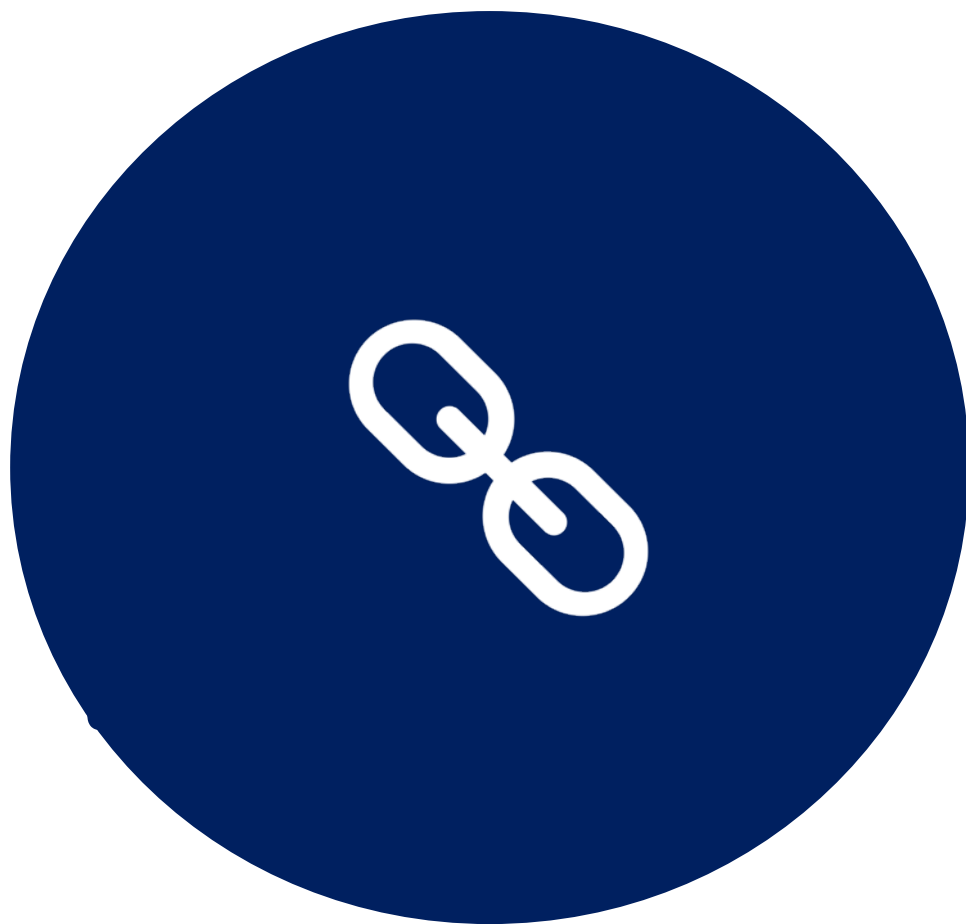
Past Continuous

The **past continuous** is used to express:

Interrupted actions, specific time as an interruption and parallel actions.



- I **was watching** TV when the phone rang.
- Last night at 7pm, I **was having** dinner.
While she **was doing** her homework her brother **was playing** football.



We were playing outside when the ice cream truck came. They were eating ice cream when I took the picture.

LEARN

Link

Enjoy

Anchor

Repeat and Reflect

Novelty





What do we mean by “no prep”?

“No-Prep,” but not “No Plan.”

No-Prep

- No copying, printing, cutting, or creating documents/slides
- Includes materials that are already available, or can be generated by students
- Requires basic learning tools like pen/paper (and maybe a phone)

A Thoughtful Plan

- May have deliberate groupings
- Has clear instructions
- Has models and examples ready
- Has a method for students to share responses as needed
- Can be accessed or adjusted at any point during a lesson plan based on students' needs



Practical Applications Using LEARN – 5 Activities



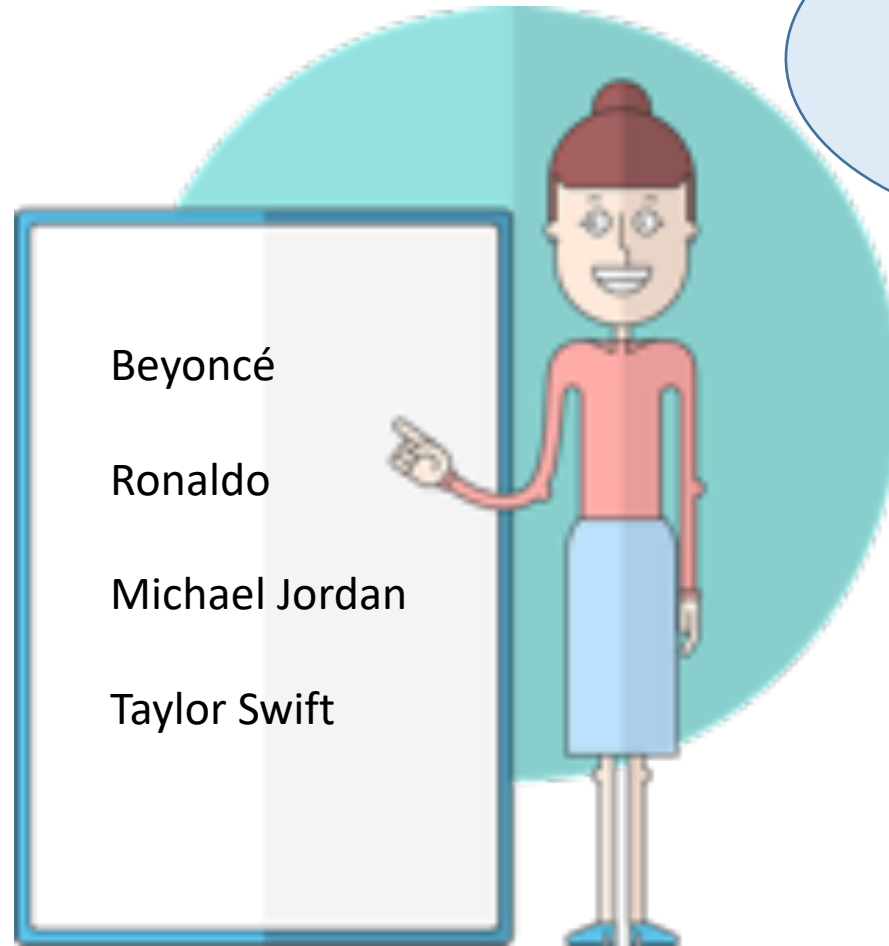
Advanced Grammar: Reported Speech

Activity 1: Rumor Mill

Students will be able to share information (specifically, rumors) that they've heard using reported speech.

Name of Activity	Rumor Mill
Level	Advanced
Grammar Focus	Reported speech, mixed verb tenses
Vocab Focus	Celebrities
Materials	Whiteboard
Interaction	Whole class mingle
Time	25-30 minutes

Step 1: Ask students about a recent event or a well-known person and write them on the board.



Beyoncé

Ronaldo

Michael Jordan

Taylor Swift

**Let's brainstorm
well-known
people!**

Step 2: Invent information about one of the people on the list. You can encourage students to add to the list.

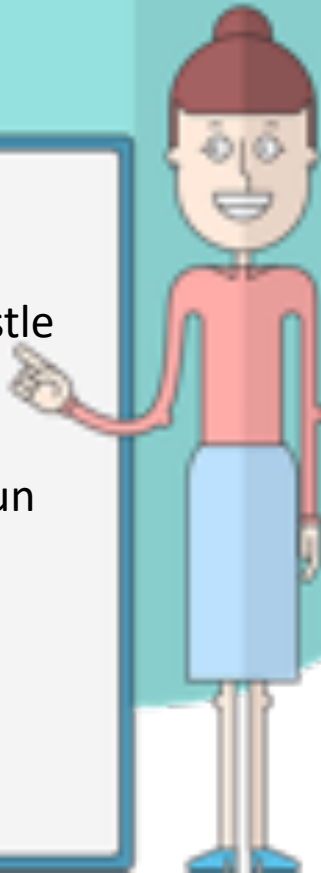
I heard that...

Taylor Swift

She bought a castle in Scotland.

She is going to run for president in 2024.

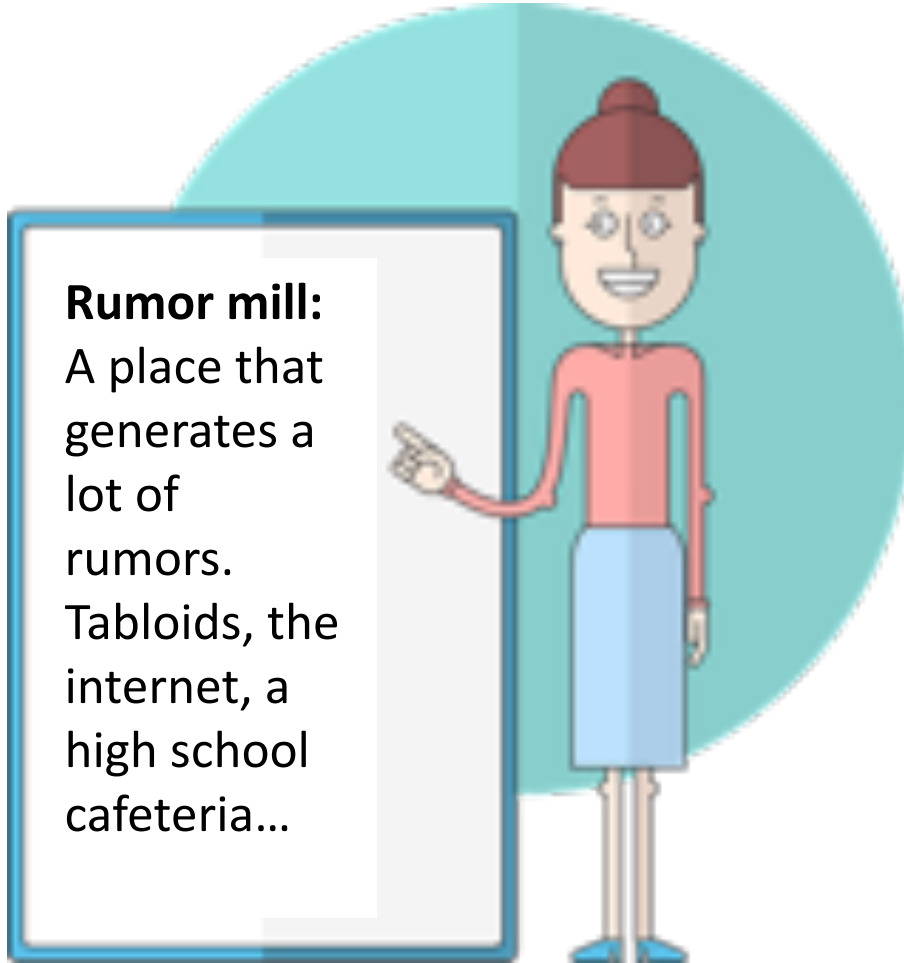
She eats 18 avocados a day.



Get students to reflect on this information.

1. Is it exciting or shocking?
2. Where did you hear it?
3. Would you tell someone else?
4. Is it true?

Step 3: Introduce the term “rumor” and “rumor mill.”



Step 4: Teacher reviews activity rules. Students write down **three** rumors about celebrities.

Rules:

- **Discuss celebrities only**
- **Stick to approved topics**
 - Salary
 - Behavior at work
 - Weird habits or hobbies
 - Friendships
- **Off limits**
 - Romantic relationships
 - Rude language

Language Reminders:

- **Use a mix of verb tenses.**
We've studied:
 - present
 - simple past
 - present perfect
 - future



Step 5: Students stand up and exchange rumors.

- Tell **five** people your rumors
- Repeat **five** new rumors you heard
- Listen to at least **eight** rumors

Step 6: Students work in groups to make a list of the rumors they heard, using reported speech.

"I heard that...Taylor Swift had bought a castle in Scotland."

"Someone told me...Taylor Swift was going to run for President in 2024."

"A little bird told me...Taylor Swift ate 18 avocados a day."

I heard that...

Someone told me...

A little bird told me...

Step 7: Teacher checks and corrects sentences for accuracy. Students actively reflect on the activity.

- **Grammar check:** Students use a grammar chart to see if they accurately converted their sentences to reported speech.
- **Quick Response:** Students vote on which rumor was the craziest.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students do research to disprove the rumors.
- **Speaking/Writing:** Students discuss or write about the negative effects of rumors.



The background of the slide is decorated with a cluster of overlapping circles in various colors (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and grey) on the left and right sides. Each circle contains a white question mark. The central text is enclosed in a white rounded rectangle with a dark blue border.

Which parts of LEARN are applied to this activity?

Link

Enjoy

Anchor

Repeat & Reflect

Novelty

LEARN

Link



Enjoy



Anchor

Repeat and Reflect

Novelty



Intermediate Grammar: Passive Voice

Activity 2: Where was it made?

Students will be able to talk about the origin of objects using the passive voice and names of countries.

Name of Activity	Where was it made?
Level	Intermediate
Grammar Focus	Passive voice (was made/were made)
Vocab Focus	Clothing, classroom items, countries
Materials	Whiteboard <i>Optional: Sticky notes or world map</i>
Interaction	Group work
Time	15-20 minutes

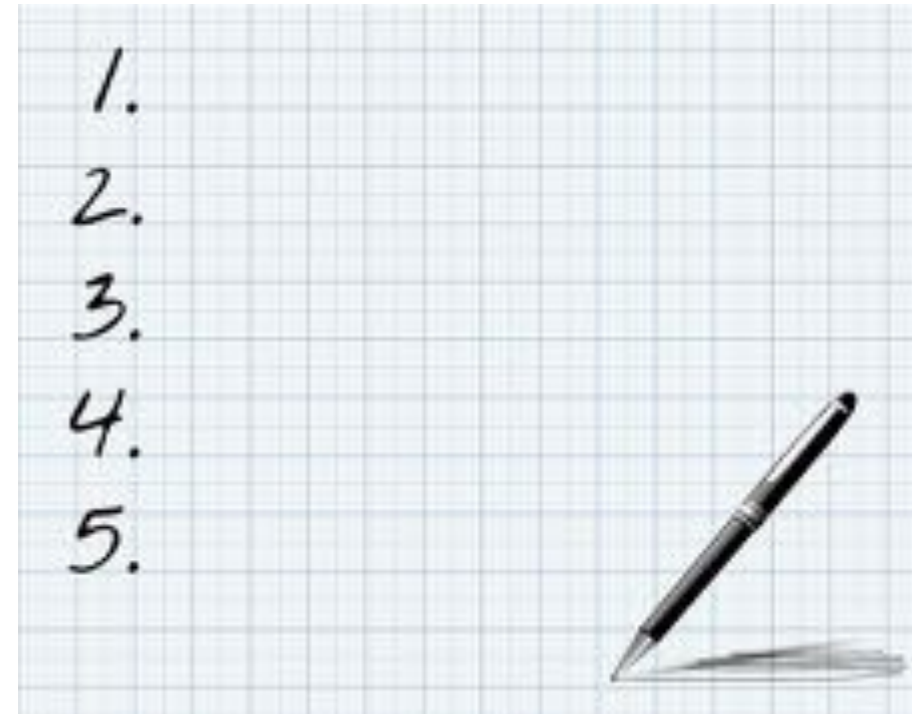
Step 1: Provide a model for students.

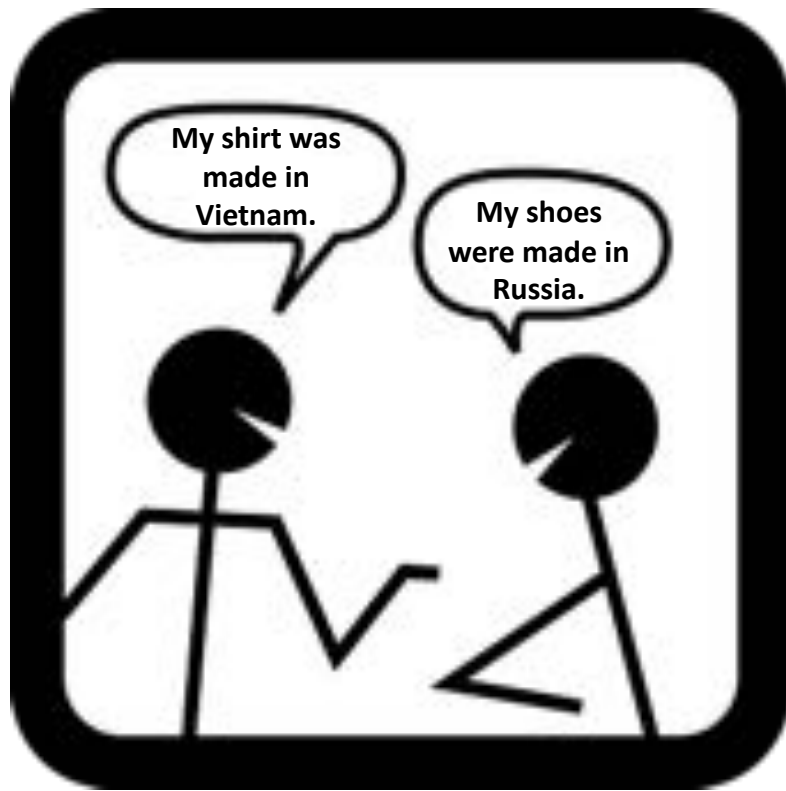


Step 2: In small groups, students look at their clothes and school supplies to see where they were made

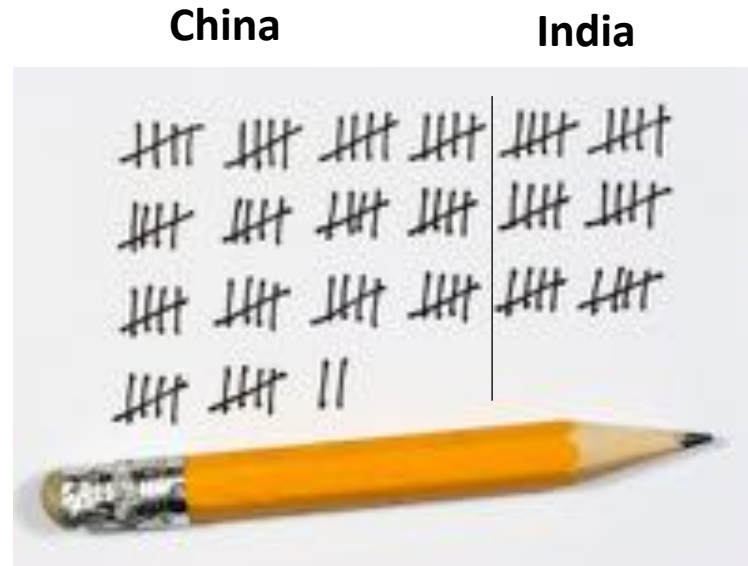


Step 3: Each student writes **five** sentences following the model on the board.





Step 4: Students read their lists to the whole class.



Step 5: While listening, students take notes such as:

- Tally or write the item
- Mark a map
- Make a bar graph with post-its (can also write what item)

Step 6: Recap

- **Drill:** Students repeat what they remember.
- **Memory game:** Students pick a post-it note and return the “item” to its owner.
- **Critical Thinking:** What conclusions can we draw from our lists?



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Which parts of LEARN are applied to this activity?

Link

Enjoy

Anchor

Repeat & Reflect

Novelty

LEARN

Link



Enjoy



Anchor



Repeat and Reflect



Novelty



Activity 3: Fun Facts

Students will be able to share interesting facts about their country using the passive voice.

Name of Activity	Fun Facts
Level	Intermediate
Grammar Focus	Passive voice, <i>optional: superlatives</i>
Vocab Focus	List of verbs to describe places
Materials	Whiteboard, example fun facts
Interaction	Whole class mingle
Time	25-30 minutes

Step 1: Make a list of verbs commonly used to describe a country.

grow

manufacture

build

discover

invent

make

find

Step 2: Have students convert the verbs to the past participle.

Step 3: Provide an example of a fun fact.

grow	grown
manufacture	manufactured
build	built
discover	discovered
invent	invented
make	made
hold	held
find*	can be found

Every year, a new Christmas stamp is designed for the Post Office.

The oldest house in my town was built in 1730.

Step 4: Students use the word bank to write 3-5 fun facts about their town or country.

"The best pearls are cultivated in Thailand."

"The largest clock face was built in Saudi Arabia."

"The number 0 was invented in India."

"Microchips are manufactured in Taiwan."

Step 5: Students stand up and mingle and have to talk to at least **three** people to learn about their country.



Step 6: Recap Options

- **Make a choice:** Students vote on what country they would like to visit or learn more about based on what they heard.
- **Superlative summary:** Students choose the most interesting fact they heard.
- **Reflection:** Students make a chart on what they learned and what was reinforced
- **Project:** Students can use their fun facts to make a PPT/video/poster about a country



LEARN

Link



Enjoy



Anchor

Repeat and Reflect



Novelty



The background of the slide is decorated with a cluster of colorful, semi-transparent circles of various sizes, each containing a white question mark. These circles are scattered around the central text box, with a higher concentration on the left and right sides. The colors include shades of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and pink. The central text box is a white rounded rectangle with a dark blue border.

**What fun facts would you like to share about
your country?**

Beginner Grammar: Superlatives

Activity 4: Internet Scavenger Hunt

Students will be able to use superlatives to ask and answer questions about a country.

Name of Activity	Internet Scavenger Hunt
Level	Beginner
Grammar Focus	Superlatives
Vocab Focus	Countries, geography/weather terms
Materials	List of questions, Whiteboard, smartphones*
Interaction	Pairs or small groups
Time	15-20 minutes

Step 1: Give students list of questions about a country they might not know about. The questions should all use the superlative.

1. *What's the tallest mountain in Brazil?*
2. *What's the rainiest place in Brazil?*
3. *What's the most expensive city in Brazil?*
4. *What's the longest river in Brazil?*
5. *What's the most popular tourist attraction in Brazil?*

Step 2A: In groups, students try to predict the answers.

Step 2B: They use their phones to look up answers using a search engine.



Step 3: In groups or pairs, students make their own set of questions about a different country.

Step 4: Groups/pairs exchange their lists and answer each other's questions.

Step 5: Recap

- Superlative summary: Students share the most interesting fact they learned.
- Critical Thinking: Introduce the concept of Fact versus Opinion



Low-tech Adaptation

- Step 1:** Make the sample questions about your local area, so students are likely to know the answers.
- Step 2:** Tell students you’re going to read an article about a different place (the article should be pre-selected and contain answers to superlative questions).
- Step 3:** Students complete a KWL chart.

Things I know about Chile	Things I want to know about Chile	Things I learned about Chile
The driest desert is the Atacama.	What is the tallest mountain in Chile?	

LEARN

Link



Enjoy



Anchor

Repeat and Reflect



Novelty



The background of the slide is decorated with a cluster of overlapping circles in various colors including red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and pink. Each circle contains a white question mark. The circles are of different sizes and are arranged in a way that they appear to be floating or scattered around the central text box. The text box itself is white with a dark blue border and rounded corners.

**What other topics or grammar points would work
for this Internet Scavenger Hunt?**

Activity 5: Convince Me

Students will be able to use superlatives to persuade the teacher/a classmate to take them up on their suggestion.

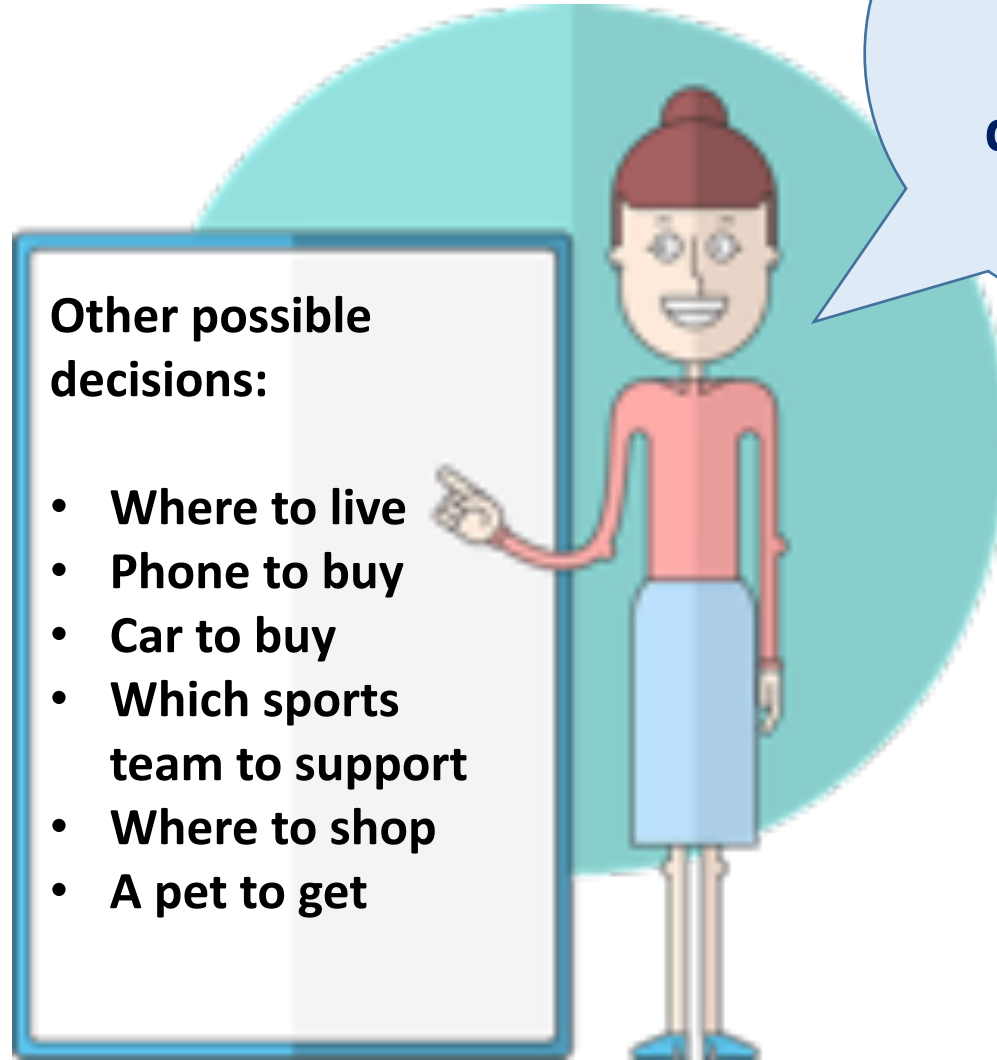
Name of Activity	Convince Me
Level	Beginner
Grammar Focus	Superlatives
Vocab Focus	Activities, attractions
Materials	Whiteboard
Interaction	Small group “debate”
Time	25-30 minutes

Step 1: Ask students for their input.

Other possible decisions:

- **Where to live**
- **Phone to buy**
- **Car to buy**
- **Which sports team to support**
- **Where to shop**
- **A pet to get**

I'm planning on taking a vacation, but I haven't decided where to go.



Step 2: Brainstorm with students useful adjectives they can use and/or categories to talk about.

Adjectives:

beautiful
expensive/cheap
nice/friendly
best
delicious

Categories:

food
shopping
activities
safety
people



Step 3: In groups of four, students pick a city and/or country to write about.

Step 4: Individually, they write five sentences about the place.

Step 5: They combine their sentences into a list of ten, prioritizing and correcting.

The Grand Bazaar is one of the largest markets in the world.

Istanbul has the most delicious food.



Step 6: Groups take turns sharing sentences in a debate style, and the teacher decides where to go.

Large Class option: two groups present to another group for a vote, rather than the teacher.

Step 7: Recap:

Students listen to each group presentation and pick a place to go.

Extension: They research the place and create a travel plan using *be going to* to talk about their itinerary.



LEARN

Link



Enjoy



Anchor

Repeat and Reflect



Novelty





Recap and References

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Which activity are you most excited to try?

- **Rumor Mill**
- **Where was it made?**
- **Fun Facts**
- **Internet Scavenger Hunt**
- **Convince Me**

References

Harris, M. (2019, June 14). 6 Tricks to Make Learning Sticky! Retrieved June 15, 2020, from <https://www.learnersedge.com/blog/6-tricks-to-make-learning-sticky>

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