

INFORMATION GAPS: GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS AND ORAL CLUES

This week's information gap is designed for groups of three students. Each student in the group has a unique set of information related to people's schedules; students cannot show each other their clues. The group members must discuss the information orally and record the details on a graphic organizer in order to reach a shared solution about how three people spent their weekends. You can adapt this activity for groups of two or four students by modifying the number of clue sets you supply.

Graphic organizers associated with this type of information gap activity can be formatted as charts or grids. This activity uses a chart. In the Variations section, two other activity examples demonstrate how to use grids to capture information that is orally shared among group mates or partners.

LEVEL

Lower intermediate and above

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Speaking/listening functions: sharing and recording details

Vocabulary: weekend/free-time activities, schedules

Grammar: prepositions in time phrases (*in the morning*, *at 5:00pm*, *on Saturday*)

GOALS

During this activity, students will:

- Orally share clues about three people's schedules and use a chart to record each person's complete weekend schedule
- Review and practice the use of prepositions in time phrases

MATERIALS

- Teacher:
 - Whiteboard, chalkboard, or large pieces of paper posted on the wall
 - Markers or chalk
 - Answer Key – Schedules (.pdf)
 - Scissors
 - Digital or overhead projector (optional)
- Students:
 - Pencils and erasers
 - Blank paper
 - Set of clues, cut up into three parts: Person A, B, and C (.pdf)

PREPARATION

- Print out/copy and cut up sets of clues, enough copies so that each group of three has a set
- Prepare to display the script text seen in Step 3 on the board. Use a projector, if available, or write the text on the board in advance and cover it with a large piece of paper.

PROCEDURES

1. Draw a chart on the board with four boxes, like this:

Saturday
Morning (before 12:00 pm) -
Afternoon (between 12:00 pm and 6:00 pm) -
Evening (after 6:00 pm) -

2. Tell students you are going to describe part of your weekend. Ask them to listen for information about what you did at different times during the day (morning, afternoon, and evening).
3. Read the following script twice. "I did a lot of things on Saturday. First, I woke up at 8:00. I ate breakfast and went for a walk in the morning. Next, I ate lunch at 1:30 with my friends at Charlie's Restaurant. Then, in the evening, I went shopping for new clothes. I went to a concert at 9:00. Then I came home and went to bed. What a busy day!" (Note: You can also create a short personalized description of your weekend activities; if you create your own script, be sure to include a mix of *on*, *in*, and *at* time phrases.)
4. Ask student volunteers to supply the missing information and fill out the chart on the board. Read the script again to help students complete the chart if needed:

Saturday
Morning (before 12:00 pm) - woke up, ate breakfast, went for a walk
Afternoon (between 12:00 pm and 6:00 pm) - ate lunch at Charlie's restaurant
Evening (after 6:00 pm) - went shopping, went to a concert, came home, went to bed

5. To review prepositions and time phrases, display the script text on the board. Underline prepositions in the time phrases and ask students about how each is used (example: "Which preposition do we use with days of the week/dates? With specific times like *1:00pm*? With times of day like *evening*?"): "I did a lot of things on Saturday. First, I woke up at 8:00. I ate breakfast and went for a walk in the morning. Next, I ate lunch at 1:30 with my friends at Charlie's Restaurant. Then, in the evening, I went shopping for new clothes. I went to a concert at 9:00. Then I came home and went to bed. What a busy day!"

6. Put students in groups of three; ask them to count off “A, B, C” in each group. Tell students they will work together to recreate the weekend schedules of three people: Patty, Sam, and Karen (Note: You can substitute local names, if desired). Person A is in charge of finding out about Patty’s schedule, Person B will ask about and record details about Sam’s schedule, and Person C will find out Karen’s schedule.
7. Guide the students through the process of drawing a chart similar to the one you used in your example at the beginning of the activity. Each person’s chart should have two columns, one for each day of the weekend. For example, Person A’s chart would look like this (Note: re-label the weekend days in accordance with your local observances, if needed):

Patty’s Weekend Schedule

Saturday	Sunday
Morning (before 12:00 pm) -	Morning (before 12:00 pm) -
Afternoon (between 12:00 pm and 6:00 pm) -	Afternoon (between 12:00 pm and 6:00 pm) -
Evening (after 6:00 pm) -	Evening (after 6:00 pm) -

8. Ask student volunteers to pass out a set of clues to each group. Ask students to each take one clue sheet, A, B, or C, from the set. Tell students to put their clue sheets face down on their desks.
9. Explain that each person will have a set of clues about Patty, Sam, and Karen’s schedules. Students cannot show their information to their group mates; they must orally share the information and use their charts to record their assigned person’s schedule.
10. Ask students to turn over their clue sheets. Explain that before the group begins working together, each person must first complete the missing information on their clue sheet by adding in the appropriate prepositions for the time phrases. Give students a few minutes to fill in the missing prepositions.
11. Explain that Person A should ask his/her group mates about Patty’s schedule and record the information on his/her chart. Give or elicit examples of questions that Person A might ask: “Who knows what Patty did on Saturday morning? What did Patty do in the afternoon?” All group members should consult their clue sheets for information to help Person A complete Patty’s schedule. While students share information, their group mates should listen carefully to the prepositions in the time phrases used and suggest corrections if needed. For example, if Person B says “Patty played soccer on 2:00,” the other group mates should correct the preposition.
12. Once Person A has finished asking questions and recording details about Patty’s schedule, Person B and Person C should repeat the process to collect information about Sam and Karen’s schedules.
13. While students work, monitor their progress, make notes about any challenges students have with prepositions in time phrases, and offer support as needed. Ensure students aren’t showing each other their clues sheets.
14. Since groups will finish the activity at different rates, you can set up an “answer checking” station with a few copies of the answer key at the front of the room. When a group finishes, they can come to the station together and check their answers. You can man the station as students check their answers, or you can let them independently check their work. If they

missed any information, they can return to their seats to discuss the source of the problem(s). Students who complete the task satisfactorily can move on to another pre-designated task (starting a homework assignment, reading silently, etc.) while the remaining groups work on the information gap.

15. To close the activity, conduct a brief whole-class review to reinforce concepts from the activity and to address any common errors you observed while students worked in groups.

VARIATIONS – INFORMATION GAPS WITH GRIDS

In this information gap activity, students used charts to record information needed to complete the task. Other information gaps with oral clues use grids to capture details. See the activities below for examples of “oral clue - grid” information gaps:

- [Try This: Listening and Logic](#) (2015) by Heather Benucci: In this information gap activity, students solve logic puzzles using a grid that helps them keep track of information in the puzzle’s clues, use the process of elimination, and make inferences that will lead them to the puzzle’s solution.
- [Tools for Activating Materials and Tasks in the English Language Classroom](#) (2009 – see p. 6, “Grids Galore” Activity) by Rick Rosenberg: In this activity, students use grids to track answers related to grammar and vocabulary questions.

INFORMATION GAP TIP OF THE WEEK – DELAYED FEEDBACK AND ERROR TREATMENT

Since information gaps are usually student-centered and fluency-focused activities, teachers take on the role of observer and facilitator. In this facilitator role, teachers should generally avoid interrupting students during speaking activities to allow them to negotiate meaning with their peers. To ensure accuracy is addressed at some point, however, teachers can make notes about the language errors they observe while monitoring student progress. Use some example student errors to conduct a delayed feedback session, either directly after the fluency-focused activity or during a subsequent class period. For example, you can list anonymous examples of actual student errors on the board or on a worksheet and ask students to spot and correct the problems. You can also use your notes on student mistakes to identify error trends and define topics you want to cover during remedial instruction or in activities that recycle the problematic content.