

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

## H-O-R-S-E

**Level:** Beginner through Advanced

**Time required:** 10 minutes (or more)

**Goal:** To practice spelling in a fun and interactive way

**Background:** H-O-R-S-E is a popular game in which players practice shooting a basketball. We have adapted this game for the English classroom.

**Preparation:** Keep a list of words your class has studied; add to the list each time your class learns a new word. Keep this list on a large piece of paper where students can always see it. Students can also keep their own lists in their notebooks. You can play the H-O-R-S-E activity anytime you have a few extra minutes in class and want to review vocabulary and spelling.

### Procedures:

1. Put students in groups of about 5. Have each group stand in a circle.
2. In each group, have students count off (from 1 to 5, if the groups have 5 students); tell students to remember their numbers.
3. Have Student 1 stand facing away from the list of words.
4. Call out one of the vocabulary words so all groups can hear you.
5. Have Student 1 in each group spell the word (quietly, so that the other groups don't hear).
6. Have the other students find the word on the list and check whether Student 1 has spelled the word correctly or incorrectly.
7. If Student 1 spells the word incorrectly, he or she receives an "H." If Student 1 spells the word correctly, he or she does not receive a letter.
8. Rotate so that Student 2 (then Students 3, 4, and 5) gets a chance to spell a word in the same way. Continue rotating.
9. Each time a student spells a word incorrectly, that student gets an additional letter (first H, then O, then R, then S, then E). Once a student has five letters (H-O-R-S-E), that student is "out." The student should stay in the circle and help check other students' spelling but will no longer spell words.
10. When all the students in the group except one have gotten H-O-R-S-E, the remaining student is the winner of the group.

### Variations

1. Have students write words from the list on small pieces of paper or cards (one word per card). In groups, have Student 2 pick a card and say the word on it, and Student 1 should try to spell the word. Student 2 and the rest of the group determine whether the word is spelled correctly. Rotate so that all students have a turn picking a card and spelling (Student 3 picks a card, and Student 2 spells the word; Student 4 picks a card, and Student 3 spells the word; and so on).
2. Instead of having students spell the words, have students give the definitions of the vocabulary words. The rest of the group determines whether the definition is correct. If it is not, the student will receive a letter (see rules above).
3. Have your students pick a new name for the activity—so that instead of spelling H-O-R-S-E when

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they give incorrect answers, they spell another word with three, four, or five letters: perhaps B-I-R-D or C-A-T or some other word that is relevant to the lesson topic or is fun for the students.

**Note:** If you do not have enough time to continue playing until there is only one student left in each group, the student in each group with the fewest letters is the winner.

# Horse Play

**Level:** Intermediate to Advanced

**Time required:** About 30 minutes to introduce the idioms and to have students prepare skits; time for performances will vary depending on class size.

**Goals:** To understand the concept of idioms; to understand and apply the meanings of idioms related to horses; to create and perform a skit

**Preparation:** Each group should have a piece of paper, cut or torn into smaller pieces. Each group should have as many small pieces of paper as there are groups in the class.

### Procedures:

1. Write the idioms (in “Horse Idioms”) in a list on the board. Then, in another list, write the meanings of the idioms in random order. Feel free to add idioms or use different lists.
2. Have students work in pairs to try to match each idiom with its definition.
3. Ask students to share their answers. Discuss the idioms and their meanings with the class to ensure comprehension.
4. Put students in groups of about 5. Each group should come up with a team name. Assign each group one of the idioms (this must be done secretly—perhaps you can give each group a piece of paper with one of the idioms written on it). It is okay if more than one group has the same idiom.
5. Give students about 15 minutes to create a skit that illustrates the idiom. Tell students that other groups will try to guess which idiom they are acting out, so they *cannot* say the idiom in

their skit! Make sure students understand that the skits should demonstrate the idiomatic meaning, not the literal meaning (for example, in a skit to illustrate “put the cart before the horse,” students should not show a cart being before a horse but instead should demonstrate a situation when one might use this expression). In fact, you might make a rule that the skits should not include horses at all.

Each skit should be approximately a minute long.

6. One group performs its skit. The rest of the class watches and listens, then tries to determine which idiom is being presented. When the skit is over, each group discusses the skit and decides which idiom was being presented. One of the group members writes that idiom on a piece of paper, along with their team name.
7. Collect the pieces of paper and summarize the results. You might tally the results on the board as you read each piece of paper (or have a student do it). For example, perhaps two groups thought the idiom was “a horse of a different color” and three groups thought the idiom was “beat a dead horse.”
8. Ask some or all of the groups to share why they thought the idiom they picked was the one represented in the skit. After the discussion is finished, ask members of the group that performed the skit to say which idiom they were presenting and to explain (if that is not yet obvious).
9. Repeat Steps 6 through 8, giving each group an opportunity to present its skit.

### Variation

To use the activity as a writing exercise, go over the idioms as in Steps 1 through 3, but then ask

groups, pairs, or individual students to write a scenario (rather than prepare a skit) that illustrates the idiom—without mentioning the idiom

directly. Have the writer(s) of each scenario read it to the class or to a larger group, and have other students guess which idiom is being illustrated.

### Horse Idioms

<p>a horse of a different color</p>	<p><b>Meaning:</b> The situation is completely different than the one that was expected, or two things that are being compared are quite different.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> “I thought they wanted me to sing in front of 10 people. It turns out 200 people will be at the concert. That’s a horse of a different color.”</p>
<p>beat a dead horse</p>	<p><b>Meaning:</b> To continue doing or discussing something, even though it has already been tried or discussed and the situation will probably not change</p> <p><b>Example:</b> “Sarah asked her dad 10 times if she could stay out past midnight, but the answer was always no. She was really beating a dead horse.”</p>
<p>You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink.</p>	<p><b>Meaning:</b> You can offer something to someone (advice, opportunities, etc.), but you cannot make the person take it.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> “My friend was looking for a job, and I told her about an open position in my office. She didn’t apply for it, though. You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink.”</p>
<p>straight from the horse’s mouth</p>	<p><b>Meaning:</b> From the most direct source</p> <p><b>Example:</b> “Someone told me that John became a pilot even though he is scared of airplanes. But I won’t believe that until I get it straight from the horse’s mouth.”</p>
<p>put the cart before the horse</p>	<p><b>Meaning:</b> Do things in the wrong (illogical) order</p> <p><b>Example:</b> “She bought a car before she even got her driver’s license. I’d say that’s putting the cart before the horse.”</p>

# Hall of Heroes: Stories of Perseverance

**Level:** Intermediate to Advanced

**Time required:** About 20 minutes to introduce and assign the topic; 20 minutes to review drafts; 20 minutes or more for students to comment on stories and respond to comments

**Goals:** To introduce the concepts of heroes and perseverance; to give students the opportunity to write and share their work; to give students the opportunity to ask questions and make comments in a written format

**Preparation:** Find a wall space in your classroom or school for this project.

**Materials:** Students will need a blank piece of paper (regular or poster size) and possibly a photograph.

## Procedures:

### Part 1: Writing Stories of Perseverance

1. Discuss the word *hero* with the class. Ask students to share what they think it means. What are the qualities of a hero? Ask them to name some heroes that they know and explain why those people are heroes. Ask students if they think an animal can be a hero. Why or why not? What qualities should an animal have in order to be considered a hero?

2. Read “Seabiscuit: An Unlikely Hero” to the class. If necessary, read it more than once to ensure comprehension.

#### Seabiscuit: An Unlikely Hero

Seabiscuit was a horse born in 1933. Although Seabiscuit was bred to be a racehorse, he turned out to be smaller than most racehorses and spent a lot of time sleeping and eating. Seabiscuit’s owners were not impressed with him and sold

him for a very low price. Seabiscuit’s new owner and trainer believed in him and led him to run 89 races and win 33 times. Seabiscuit even suffered an injury that no one believed he would recover from, but he came back to win more races. Seabiscuit’s unlikely success was inspiring to Americans during a very difficult time in the United States, the Great Depression. There are many books and even a popular film, called *Seabiscuit*, about the life of Seabiscuit.

3. Discuss the word *perseverance* with the class. Ask students to share what they think it means and give examples of perseverance. You might have to explain that people show perseverance when they keep trying to do something despite difficulties or obstacles. (The verb form is *persevere*.)

Ask students to explain how Seabiscuit demonstrated perseverance. Answers might be that he returned from an injury and that he succeeded despite his small size.

4. Let students know they will be writing about a hero (person or animal). They will write one paragraph about their hero; the paragraph should include examples showing how the hero demonstrated perseverance. (You can decide whether to ask the students to write more than one paragraph.)

Students should find a picture or image or draw a picture to go with the story. Depending on resources available to students, you might make including the picture optional.

5. Ask students to get into pairs and brainstorm ideas for selecting their heroes.

6. In class or for homework, have students write the first draft of the story about their hero. If necessary, you can reread “Seabiscuit: An Unlikely Hero” as an example.

Students should write a title for the story. If students have a photo or drawing, they should write a caption of one or two sentences describing it. For example, a caption for a photo showing Seabiscuit winning a race might read, “Seabiscuit wins an important race after recovering from a severe injury. Seabiscuit became an American hero during the Great Depression.”

7. When students have finished the drafts of their stories, prepare them for revision by using one or more of these options:

- a. Have students work in pairs to give each other suggestions on improving their stories. Students might ask questions about missing information or parts that aren't clear. If possible, they can suggest corrections on grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Then each student should write his or her second draft.
- b. Depending on the size of the class, you can have students turn in their papers to you; you should highlight errors (but do not correct them), and the student must correct the errors and write the second draft.
- c. Have students turn in their papers to you. You can make suggestions and corrections on each, and the student writes the second draft. (This is optional. It is okay to have writing on the wall that hasn't been “corrected” by you but displays the students' best efforts.)

8. The final draft should have the title, short story, picture, and caption on one page.

### **Part 2: Creating a Hall of Heroes**

1. Find a wall space in your classroom or school. It could be one wall in the classroom, all the walls, or a hallway in the school. You might want to make a sign that labels the space “Hall of Heroes.”

2. Have each student put his or her hero paper on the designated wall. Each hero paper should also have a blank piece of paper underneath (or students should have sticky notes) for other students to write comments on.

3. Let students know that they will be reading each other's hero stories and making comments and asking questions. To prepare students, go over examples of questions and comments they might make. Ask the class for suggestions as well.

Suggestions for questions:

- Why did you select this hero?
- What's your favorite thing about your hero?

Suggestions for comments:

- I enjoyed reading about your hero. My favorite thing about your hero is ... .
- Your hero is similar to my hero because ... .
- Your hero is different from mine because ... .

Students might also ask for more information about a specific event in the hero's life; the student who wrote the story may have to do research to find the answer.

4. Give students about 10 minutes to read at least two hero stories and to write at least one comment or question about each.

5. Give students about 5 minutes to go back to their own hero story and respond to the comments. If they don't know the answer to one of the questions, they can look for the answer after school and respond the next day.

6. Let students know they can visit the Hall of Heroes anytime before or after class. If possible, you can designate short periods of time in class for students to visit as well.

### **Variations**

1. Have students present their stories to the class. Other students can ask questions about the hero after each presentation.

2. Have students work in pairs or groups to create their hero story.

3. After students create their hero stories, have students work in pairs to interview each other about their heroes.

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### Extensions

1. Have each student read his or her hero story to the class. As students listen to the stories, they should write a list of the characteristics of heroes. Once all the stories have been read, students form small groups and discuss the common characteristics of heroes. These characteristics can then be shared with the whole class and discussed.
2. Have students write or tell stories showing how they have demonstrated perseverance.

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