

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

Bingo!

Level: Beginner and above

Time required: 15–30 minutes

Goal: To recognize and review vocabulary, grammar, or other language items within a game format

Materials: chalk and blackboard, or whiteboard and markers; paper and pencils or pens; blank cards or paper (to make Bingo cards); small objects to serve as game markers

Background:

Have you heard this children's song about a dog called Bingo?

*There was a farmer had a dog,
and Bingo was his name, o!
B – I – N – G – O! B – I – N – G – O!
B – I – N – G – O!
And Bingo was his name, o!*

(The “Bingo” song, lyrics, and illustrated posters are available at <http://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-childrens-songs/>.)

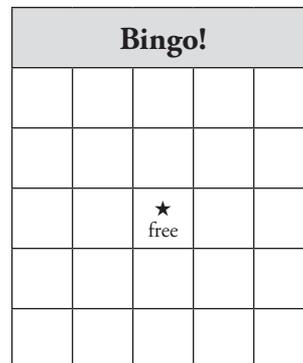
Bingo the dog shares his name with a game that offers options for students of any age or level to practice English. Use Bingo (the game) to review for quizzes or as a change of pace, reward, or closing activity.

Preparation:

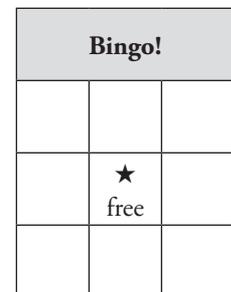
1. Create a language-content list of items to be reviewed during the game. The list can contain any words or terms your students have recently studied. It might contain anywhere from 8 to 25 items.
2. Prepare and copy blank Bingo cards, or help

students draw their own cards on a piece of paper. The number of Bingo cards you will need depends on whether students play individually or in small groups.

A Bingo card is a grid containing an equal number of rows and columns. The grid's center square is usually a “free space” marked with a star and the word *free*. Cards should be big enough for students to be able to write a few words in each blank square in the grid.



Blank 5-by-5 Bingo card



Blank 3-by-3 Bingo card

A 3-by-3 grid holds 8 language items, a 4-by-4 grid holds 15 items, and a 5-by-5 grid holds 24 items. When you create Bingo cards, choose a grid with a number of blank squares equal to or smaller than the number of items in the language-content list. For example, if your vocabulary list has 17 items, use a 4-by-4 grid (15 items) or a 3-by-3 grid (8 items).

Learner age and level can also influence the grid size you choose. Younger or less advanced learners may find smaller grids easier to use.

3. Collect small objects such as dried beans, buttons, or small stones for students to use to mark

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squares on the cards during the game. Each 5-by-5 grid requires 25 of these game markers; smaller grids require fewer markers. You can collect markers from students at the end of play and reuse them.

Procedures:

1. Decide whether the class will play as individuals or in teams; team play may be more practical in large classes. If you use teams, create groups of up to five students to share a Bingo card. Team members will take turns placing markers on the card and help each other in case someone overlooks an item.

2. Ask volunteers to distribute game markers and a blank Bingo card to each student or team while you write the vocabulary list on the board. If students are making their own cards, provide instructions for how to draw the Bingo grid.

3. Tell students to write a different item from the vocabulary list in each square. Tell them to mix up the order of the words, which can be placed in any order. If the vocabulary list contains more items than the number of squares on the card, explain to the students that they don't have to use every item from the list. Tell students not to write in the free space.

4. Explain the Bingo game sequence to students:

- First, students place a marker on the free space.
- The teacher provides definitions for vocabulary items one at a time.
- If students see the item on their card that matches the teacher's definition, they put a marker on that item. Students should not say the word out loud.
- The goal is for students to "have Bingo" or "get Bingo" by marking 3, 4, or 5 (depending on the grid size) squares in a straight line on their card. The straight line can be horizontal, diagonal, or vertical and might include the free space, as shown in this Bingo card containing language content related to dogs:

Bingo!				
paw	sniff	bark	shaggy	guide dog
sheep dog	fetch	bone	wag	leash
pet	puppy	★ free	tail	coat
fur	spots	collar	breed	guard dog
kennel	sled dog	training	mutt	adopt

Ways to "get Bingo": A vertical, horizontal, or diagonal line of five squares

- A student who marks a line of words across the card should raise his or her hand and shout "Bingo!" (Students playing as a team can shout and raise their hands together.) The student(s) should then read the words aloud for the teacher to confirm.
- The first student or team that has Bingo is the winner. If the first "winner" has made an error, the game continues until another student or team has Bingo. *Note:* More than one student or team can have Bingo at the same time, resulting in two or more winners.

5. To begin play, select any word from the vocabulary list at random and give its definition. Don't say the word itself. For example, you might say "a dog's foot" for *paw*. Repeat the definition more than once if needed. You can mime, draw pictures on the board, or use gestures as part of the definitions you provide. Give students a moment to place their markers and then select the next word. Keep track of the words you define by checking them off on a list that students can't see.

6. When a student or team shouts "Bingo!" confirm that the items are on the list of words you have called. To reinforce understanding of vocabulary items, pause to review the definitions or ask the student or team to provide definitions for each

word in the Bingo line. Once Bingo is confirmed, you might consider offering winners a small prize, such as an extra-credit point on a vocabulary quiz, or including their names on a Bingo Champions list displayed in the classroom.

7. If you have time, tell students to remove their markers and exchange cards with a neighbor to start a new game.

Variations

Students will have to create a different bingo card for each language-content list described below.

Beginner: Create a language-content list of basic items such as letters, numbers, or introductory vocabulary items. Call out the exact items from the list. For example, if you're using numbers, say "seven" for students to mark 7 on their cards. This variation can improve students' listening and symbol-recognition skills.

Creating cards with pictures to match the list items is another option for this level. You can also prepare slips of paper with the items written or drawn on them, then have students take

turns selecting a slip of paper and calling out the vocabulary item to the class as the other students mark their cards.

Verb Forms: Fill the list with examples of a verb form your class is studying. If the target form is irregular past-tense verbs, the list might contain *went, sold, did, flew, swam*, etc. Prompt students with the base verb or a fill-in-the-blank sentence. For instance, prompt students to mark *went* by saying the base verb "go" or "Yesterday I _____ to the library."

Contractions: Create a list of contractions such as *he'd, they'll, and doesn't*, then prompt students by saying the full forms. For instance, prompt students to mark *he'd* by saying "he would." You can also reverse the content so that students' cards contain the full forms while you call out the contractions.

Synonyms/Antonyms: Create a list of items with clear synonyms or opposites. In Synonyms Bingo, you can call out "large" to prompt students to mark *big*. In Antonyms Bingo, call out "boring" to prompt students to mark *exciting*.

A Man's Best Friend

Level: Upper Beginner to Intermediate

Time required: 50 minutes

Goals: To practice vocabulary and listening skills related to dog and friendship themes; to write and present a personalized paragraph describing a friend (human or animal)

Materials: chalk and blackboard, or whiteboard and markers; paper and pencils or pens

Procedures:

1. Tell students they are going to listen to a story called "A Man's Best Friend." Write *best friend* on the board. If students don't know this term, explain that a *best friend* is a person's closest or most important friend. Tell students that the best friend in the story is a dog named Maggie. Ask

students if they are surprised that the best friend is a dog and, if so, to explain why.

2. Prepare students to listen by presenting the dog-related vocabulary from the story: *bark, pet* (verb), *play fetch, tail, and wag*. Tell students that a dog *barks* when it uses its voice. A person *pets* an animal by gently stroking or patting it. *Playing fetch* is a game in which a person throws a ball or another object, and a dog runs to pick it up and bring it back. The long, thin body part connected to a dog's back is its *tail*; dogs *wag* (move) their tails back and forth when they are happy or excited.

Support vocabulary explanations with gestures, drawings on the board, or sounds to suit your students' level and learning styles. Write each term on the board after you explain it.

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3. Read “A Man’s Best Friend” aloud, adjusting your reading speed to your students’ proficiency level.

A Man’s Best Friend

Sam lives on a farm with his family and many animals. Sam has a brown dog named Maggie. Maggie works on the farm with Sam every day. Maggie helps Sam move the sheep and goats to different places on the farm. She protects Sam’s family, too. Maggie barks loudly if she sees a stranger close to the farmhouse. She is very friendly to Sam’s children. They like to pet Maggie and play fetch with her.

Farm work is difficult, but Maggie is always glad to be with Sam. Every time Maggie sees Sam, she happily wags her tail. Sam says, “Maggie, come!” and the dog quickly runs to help. Maggie stays close to Sam at work and at home. Sam thinks Maggie is an important part of his life. He says, “A dog is a man’s best friend.”

4. Write “A dog is a man’s best friend” on the board. Explain that this saying is used to describe the relationship some people have with the helpful, friendly dogs that work and live with them. Even though dogs are not human, some people think of them as good friends.

5. Put students into pairs. Tell them that they are going to listen to the story again and that each pair should write a list of reasons why Maggie is like a friend to Sam.

6. Read the story again. Pause to allow the pairs to work together after the first paragraph, and give them time to finalize their lists after the second paragraph.

7. Ask several pairs to share reasons from their lists. Write the responses on the board. Prompt students with questions about the text if they need assistance. For example, you might ask, “What does Maggie do when she sees Sam? Why does she do that?”

8. Ask student pairs to discuss other qualities of good friends, either animal or human. Give an example, such as “a friend helps me with prob-

lems” or “a friend is a good listener,” to help students get started. After a few minutes, ask pairs to share their ideas with the class. Write student ideas on the board. If students have difficulty providing responses, ask prompting questions such as, “Can a friend make you laugh?” When students say “yes,” write *can make you laugh* or *funny* on the board. You may wish to present adjectives, such as *loyal* or *honest*, that are often used to describe best friends.

9. Tell the class you are pretending to be Sam from the story. Ask your students to help you write a paragraph about your friend Maggie. Prompt students to supply information from the story to help you create sentences similar to the example below. Write the paragraph on the board. For example, you might write the following:

My best friend is Maggie. She is a brown dog. Maggie is my friend because she keeps my family safe. She likes to work with me every day.

10. Tell students that they will write a paragraph about a friend, either a person or an animal. Ask students to spend a minute choosing a friend to write about and thinking silently about that friend. Then explain that students’ paragraphs should include the friend’s name, describe him or her, and give at least two reasons why the person or animal is their friend. If students need help providing reasons, refer them to the list of friend qualities that the class created in Steps 7 and 8. If students need additional support to develop a paragraph, write the following framework on the board. Ask students to fill in the missing information.

*My friend’s name is _____ (name).
She/He is _____ (describe your friend). _____ (friend’s name) is my friend because _____ (reason 1) and _____ (reason 2).*

11. Monitor and assist students as they write their paragraphs.

12. When students have finished writing, create groups of four or five students. Ask students to share their work by describing their friends to each other.

Variation

Instead of orally presenting paragraphs, group members can interview each other about their friends. Before the interviews begin, model or elicit the types of questions an interviewer might ask. Write a few example questions on the board if needed.

Then ask one volunteer in each group to be the first interviewer. The interviewer asks the person to his or her left questions such as:

- What is your friend's name?
- What does your friend look like?
- What do you like to do with your friend?
- Why is this person or animal your friend?

When the first interview is over, the interviewee becomes the interviewer of the next person to the left. Repeat this process until everyone in the group has been interviewed.

Getting Out of the Doghouse

Level: Intermediate and above

Time required: 30 minutes

Goals: To use creativity and problem-solving skills; to use a dog-related idiom appropriately in writing and orally

Materials: chalk and blackboard, or whiteboard and markers; paper and pencils or pens; blank cards

Preparation: Prepare blank cards or small pieces of paper. During the activity, each group of four students will need eight cards. On the cards, students will write situations that could cause someone *to be in the doghouse*, an idiom that means “to be in trouble or to have caused someone to become annoyed or upset with you.”

Procedures:

1. Write *to be in the doghouse* on the board and tell the class that this phrase is an idiom. Poll the class by asking those who think the idiom has a positive meaning to raise their hands; then ask those who think the meaning is negative to raise their hands. Ask a few students to explain their opinions about the idiom's connotation.

2. Write the following sentences on the board:

I'm in the doghouse because I've been late to class twice this week.

She'll be in the doghouse until she apologizes for yelling at her brother.

Tell students to read the example sentences and then turn to a neighbor to discuss what they think the idiom means.

3. Ask for volunteers to share their ideas about the idiom's meaning. To refine students' understanding, you might ask concept-checking questions such as:

- Did the people who are in the doghouse behave badly?
- Is somebody angry or upset with the people in the doghouse?
- Do you think the people in the doghouse are in trouble—are they being punished?

4. Explain that this idiom is based on the fact that in many places, people have dogs as pets that live both inside and outside the house. Some people build a small shelter or “doghouse” outside to protect their dogs from bad weather or strong sun. Pet dogs love to be close to their owners, so if a dog misbehaves, an owner might send the dog away to the doghouse for a short time as punishment. Explain that the idiom *to be in the doghouse* is used to describe situations when people have gotten into trouble by making someone upset or annoyed, or by doing something they shouldn't.

5. As a class, brainstorm a list of situations that cause people to get into this type of trouble. Write the ideas on the board. If needed, provide examples that are appropriate to the students' daily lives, such as *you forgot you were supposed to meet*

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your friend after class, you didn't do your homework, or your cell phone rang during English class. Try to develop 8 to 10 ideas together; write situations using simple-past-tense verbs.

6. Put students into groups of four. Pass out eight blank cards to each group. Tell groups to write a different situation on each card. Ask the groups to pick six “getting into trouble” situations from the list on the board and then develop two more situations on their own. When groups have written eight situations on the cards, tell the groups to mix the cards up and put them face down on a desk or table.

7. Explain that when someone is in the doghouse, he or she usually wants to *get out of the doghouse* or *be out of the doghouse*. Tell the students they are going to have to use their problem-solving skills to figure out how to “get out of the doghouse” for each situation listed on their group’s cards.

8. To model the process, write an example on the board, such as, “You forgot to clean your room after you mother asked you to, and now you’re in the doghouse! What are you going to do?” Ask a volunteer to read the situation and question. Demonstrate an answer for the group, or pick a volunteer to demonstrate. An answer might be, “I want to get out of the doghouse! I’m going to clean my room as soon as I get home!” or “To get out of the doghouse, I am going to clean my room right away and apologize to my mom.” If necessary, write “To get out of the doghouse, I’m going to ... ” on the board to let students know that their responses can begin with this phrase.

9. Tell students to follow this pattern using their group’s situation cards. The groups of four should split into two pairs, each taking four situation cards. The first student in each pair picks a card and substitutes the underlined portion from the example on the board with the card’s situation (“You _____, and now you’re in the doghouse! What are you going to do?”). The partner will answer, pick a new card, and present the next situation. After finishing the first four cards, the pairs in each group should exchange situation cards. The activity can continue until groups complete all eight cards or a designated amount of time has passed.

10. To complete the activity, ask the pairs in each group to come back together to discuss their responses. The four group members can then select the funniest, most creative, or most effective “getting out of the doghouse” situation response to share with the whole class. If time allows, you might have groups select one of their own situations and ask a classmate to explain how he or she would get out of the doghouse in that situation.

Extension

Ask students to write a short story based on an event from their lives or on a fictional situation like one of those used in the activity. Ask students to include details about the troublesome situation that causes the main character to be in the doghouse. What does he or she do to try to get out of the doghouse, and how do others react? Does the person get out of the doghouse? Why or why not?

Variation: Chain Story

This variation requires a watch, clock, or timer. Put students in groups of three. Tell students that each group will work together for about 15 minutes to create three different stories about “being in the doghouse.” Explain that for five minutes, each student will each write a few sentences describing a situation in which someone ends up in the doghouse. When time is up, each student will pass the partial story to the group member on his or her left. For the next five minutes, students will continue writing the stories by describing what the main character does to try to get out of the doghouse. When time is up, students will pass their papers to the left again. For the final five minutes, each student will conclude the co-authored story by explaining whether or not the person gets out of the doghouse and why. When they are finished, group members should sit together and take turns reading aloud their three chain stories, which are often quite funny.

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