

WRITING AND ACTING TO REVIEW

Sometimes, reviewing material or lessons, especially for a test, can be monotonous for both teachers and learners. Often we rely on drills, worksheets, and question sessions to clarify and reinforce lessons learned; however, reviewing material can be fun when paired with creative activities. In this week's Teacher's Corner, we'll show you how to combine a review lesson with the fun and creativity of writing and acting out short plays. In this activity, learners will write and perform a play that reviews a chosen topic or lesson. The benefits of this technique are threefold: learners are invested in the review session because they work together to plan the review session; the writing and performance support multiple learning styles that further reinforce the material for review; and the creative nature of the activity gives learners a new medium in which to use and practice language learned.

For additional ideas and activities for using drama and plays in the classroom, see the webinar [Introduction to Reader's Theater for EFL Classrooms](#) and the text [Design for Drama: Short Plays from American Literature](#) on the American English website.

LEVEL

Intermediate and above

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Writing, Reading, and Speaking

GOALS

During this activity, students will:

- Prepare the script for a short play or skit that reviews one of the units/lessons learned in class

- Practice and present the play to the class
- Watch and/or listen to plays to identify three things learned from each performance

MATERIALS

- Paper and pencils for students
- Any materials for crafting, such as markers, crayons, fabric, and paper for making costumes or masks
- Template in Appendix A

PREPARATION

- Identify the lessons or units that you want students to review
 - Prepare a sign-up sheet so groups can choose the lesson/unit they prefer
 - Alternatively, write each lesson/unit on pieces of paper and have groups draw at random
- Make copies of template in Appendix A (1 per group) or write the template on the board for students to use as a model for writing their play

PROCEDURE

1. Explain to learners that they are going to write a short play (sometimes called a skit) and perform it for their classmates.
 - a. Each play will focus on a lesson/unit that they have worked on earlier in the term. For example, if you and your students studied simple present tense and family vocabulary, then one group will choose or be assigned simple present tense as the theme of their play and another group might choose or be assigned the topic of family vocabulary.
2. Put learners into groups. If you haven't made the groups before class, put students into groups of between four to six students.
 - a. One way to group students is to have students count off. When you have 20 students, give each student a number from 1 to 5. All of the students given

the number 1 work together, students with the number 2 are in a group, and so on. This creates five groups of four students each.

3. Once students are in groups, ask each group to choose a topic from the list or have them draw a topic at random.
4. Before students begin working on their play, explain and/or write the following guidelines on the board.
 - a. Tell learners that everyone in their group will have a role in the play. This means every student will speak at some point. Use the template (Appendix A) to help students plan and write their play. You can also have students give you the completed templates at the end of the activity as part of their assignment.
 - b. Each play should be about 10 minutes long.
 - c. Plays are stories made up of speaking (dialogue), so students should prepare what each character will say by writing a script. They do not need to memorize their scripts but should have them written and available if they need them during the performance.
 - d. Using their own creativity, they must write the play so that it retells and reviews the topic they've been given. For example, if their topic is family vocabulary, they can write a play about a family. The story of the family can be about anything the students choose as long as they use family vocabulary throughout the play.
5. Give students 5 to 7 minutes to brainstorm and discuss ideas in their groups.
6. Bring all of the students back together and have each group report to the class what they discussed. Answer any questions the students have about the project.
7. Have students return to their groups to plan, write, and practice their plays.

- a. Remember to circulate as students work. Offer feedback on their plans, and make sure that each group member will have a role.
8. Have groups come to the board and sign up for a performance time. This can simply be choosing if they want to perform first, second, third, or even last.
9. Provide any available art materials to students so that they can make costumes, signs, or props to use in their plays. Give them time to create with the materials and also practice their play.
10. Before the plays begin, tell learners that during each play they will have to write down three things that the play teaches them. If paper is not available, have the audience discuss, in small groups, three things they learned when each performance is over.

VARIATIONS

Depending on the language level of the learners, the activity can be adapted to fit their abilities.

- For lower-level learners: Learners wear nametags with the names of their characters. Learners can write their dialogue with very short sentences. Remember, the goal is for learners to practice their writing and speaking skills using the target language. For example, if the topic is family vocabulary, then have each member of the group choose a family member as a character. For the dialogue of the script, each learner writes (and during “performance” time, says) two sentences about his/her own character and two sentences about other characters, such as, “Hi, I’m Jake. I am the youngest son in the family. She is my mom. She cooks dinner for us every night.” This gives beginning learners a manageable framework in which they can plan and perform.
- More advanced learners can write a more involved script that has their characters interacting with one another.

APPENDIX A

Title of Play	
Characters	
Where does the play take place?	
When does the play take place?	
Script: Write what each person will say in the story	