



Straightforward

Second edition

What's more game

by Jim Scrivener

1. Write the first line of a story on the board. As a whole class, students take it in turns to add one new line to the story, each time starting with one of the linking expressions such as in addition, besides, what's more, as well as, and on top of that. For example: My 95-year-old grandma owns several motorbikes. In addition, she has two BMWs. What's more, she sometimes takes part in car races with them. As well as that, she still flies a plane. (Admittedly, having so many addition expressions one after the other, doesn't make for a very natural story – but it does provide useful oral practise!)
2. When the whole class has done one or two examples together, make pairs and get students to work on more.
3. You may need to remind students that their sentences must include additional information. Many students will make the mistake of using the functional expressions to introduce elaborations or explanations of things previously started rather than new information.



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Three-sentence stories

by Jim Scrivener

By the time students reach an intermediate level of English a lot of classroom writing work tends to be very long and complex. Students are often asked to take great care over things such as paragraphing, cohesive links, style and appropriacy. This is all very useful, but can also make writing seem like nothing more than a demanding chore, requiring great time and energy to do. There is also a case for keeping alive the fun of writing short, creative, interesting or amusing texts - especially if the tasks relate directly to a grammatical or lexical feature being studied. Here is an idea for a very concentrated small writing task to fulfil these goals.

1. Write up the following titles on the board: The Film Star's Mistake, The Island of Dinosaurs, The Collector, Trouble at the Airport.
2. Ask each student to prepare a three-sentence story about one of these titles. The story may only have three sentences (though there is no restriction on the length of a sentence as long as it's grammatically correct) and must tell a complete story with a beginning, middle and end.
3. Each of the three sentences must include a time adverbial (e.g. at the beginning, later on, to begin with, afterwards, after a while, in the end, initially, finally).
4. Allow time for students to think of and write their three-sentence story. When they have finished, they can meet up and share stories. Encourage them to read their story aloud to each other rather than just handing the text over.

Use this idea with many different grammatical or lexical items, e.g. specify the tenses that may be used in each sentence, or state six words, two of which must be used in each paragraph.

Here are two examples of three-sentence stories. You could read these out after students have written and read theirs, but be wary of reading these as examples or models before they do the task as they might discourage students' own creative ideas.

The Film Star's Mistake

Initially, he thought the fan only wanted his autograph, so he happily signed it. Afterwards, as she was walking away, he noticed how beautiful her hair was and he called her to come back. Eventually, they got married, but then got divorced and she is now two million dollars richer!

The Island of Dinosaurs

To begin with, they believed the whole place was completely uninhabited. But, after a while, they started to notice the giant footprints and hear its roars. In the end it found them and ate most of them for supper.



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Affix tennis

by Jim Scrivener

1. Write the following affixes on the board: *-al, -ary, -ful, -ous, -able, -ive, -ative, -y, -ible*.
2. Put students in pairs, A and B. A serves an affix (-al). B must return with a word e.g. *original*. A returns with another word e.g. *personal*, and so on until one student can't think of another adjective. The person who said the last word wins the point: 15-0. 'A' serves another affix, and another point is played. As in tennis, the winner is the first player to win four points, with a two point margin, so, at 40-40 (deuce) players continue to play until someone has a two point lead.
3. Theoretically, you could continue to play until someone wins a set. However, two or three games are probably enough. Students may serve the same affix more than once, but they can't play with the same words, so, if *-al* is served a second time, B can't say *original*.



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Noughts and Crosses

by Jim Scrivener

1. Play noughts and crosses with gerunds and infinitives. Draw a noughts and crosses table on the board and write nine verbs from the lesson in the squares. Divide a class into two teams, (the X team and the O team). The X team must choose a verb and challenge the O team to make a correct sentence, after conferring, they win the square. Of the O team produce an incorrect sentence, the X team win the square. Then the O team choose a verb and the X team must make a sentence. Continue until one team has won three squares to form a line vertically, horizontally or diagonally.
2. Alternatively, put students in pairs to play the game.
3. Here is an example of the game:

At the start of the game:

Might	Hope	Let
Avoid	Refuse	Deny
Can't	Agree	Can't stand

Team X have won.

X	O	Let
O	X	O
O	Agree	X



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Pelmanism

by Jim Scrivener

Pelmanism is a useful card game which helps students to recall grammatical or vocabulary items and their relationships to each other.

1. Prepare a pack of about 16-40 cards containing pairs of cards that go together, e.g. vocabulary items and illustrations; phrasal verbs; past simple verbs and infinitives; questions and replies, etc. If you have a very small class, you can use these cards with the whole group; otherwise prepare enough packs so that small groups can work with them.
2. Pelmanism is a basic memory game. The cards are laid out in a table so that the backs of all the cards are visible) but no-one knows what's on the other side).
3. Each player, one by one, turns over two cards attempting to reveal two that make a match. If they do this, they can keep the cards and have another turn. Otherwise, they turn the cards back (upside down again) in the same locations, and the next player has their turn. As the game goes on, students will have to try and remember which card was where. The winner is the player with the most cards at the end.



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Just a minute

by Jim Scrivener

This popular game helps students become more confident at speaking. The basic task is that students need to try and talk about a topic for a minute. The rules are that:

- Speakers must try and talk about a topic for a minute.
 - Speakers should not hesitate (i.e. have long pauses, ers or other hesitations).
 - Speakers must not repeat any words (except for those in the topic title they were given).
 - Speakers must not deviate too far from the topic.
1. Organize small groups (at least four people). Students appoint a speaker and a timer/judge - who will need to be able to time (e.g. using a digital watch).
 2. The judge sets the topic and asks the speaker to start. The speaker begins talking and the judge starts the 60 second countdown. The other players listen and try to spot one of the problems (hesitation, repetition or deviation). If they hear one, they call out 'challenge'. The speaker stops talking, the judge stops timing and the challenger says their challenge. If the judge agrees, then the challenger wins one point and takes over speaking about the topic - but only has to talk for the remaining time on the timer, e.g. 29 seconds. If the challenge is wrong, the original speaker gets one point, takes up the topic again and tries to finish their minute. Speaking and challenging continue until someone finishes the 60 seconds.
 3. The rules given here may be too demanding for many classes. Feel free to vary them as appropriate, e.g. repetition, allowing preparation time, shortening the time you have to speak, etc.

N.B

You can often listen to recordings of the actual radio show Just a minute on www.bbc.co.uk - select radio and the station BBC7 then find the listen again menu.



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Idiom stories

by Jim Scrivener

This is an alternative way of presenting new idioms (or vocabulary) to students. Before class, you need to prepare a single story that includes all the idioms you wish to work on. Don't worry too much about making a great story - just start trying to make use of the idioms and you'll probably find that a usable tale suggests itself. Here is an example:

When I was a student myself I was never very good at exams. I remember there was one exam - history - I was terrified of. I planned to start preparing for it three weeks before, but I kept dragging my feet. I just didn't start. I couldn't get cracking. Well, the days passed. Suddenly it was one day before the exam. I planned to get up bright and early at 5.30 and spend the whole day revising. My best friend phoned at 9.00 and we chatted for half an hour, but then I said 'Sorry but I must get cracking again' and I went back to my work. Then at midday, someone else in my class phoned me. He said he had seen the question paper and would tell me the questions if I paid him £10. I'll tell you the truth! I did think about it. It would have made the exam much easier! But I decided to play it safe and be honest. I'm glad I did! In the exam, I could answer most of the questions. In one essay, it took me a long time to get to the point - but generally my answers were OK. Well, I passed and I got a good mark. That was the high point of the term! Oh - and the boy who offered to sell me the questions - he failed. I guess his information wasn't perfect!

1. In class, read the story through once as written above. You could set a listening exercise to help focus students (e.g. What was I worried about?; What happened in the end?) When you have finished the story (and chatted about it if students are interested) say that you will tell it again - but, with some different language. Ask students to try and notice any items that are different between the two versions. Tell the story - but when you come to the underlined idioms say the definition instead of the idiom, e.g. . three weeks before but I kept delaying and avoiding starting
2. At the end, students may want to hear both versions again to help check. Alternatively, you could get feedback on changes.

Rationale

This is a good, simple and motivating way to work on vocabulary. It shows the students a lively example of the idioms used in context and it challenges them to remember items.

Applying the idea

Use this idea with other sets of idioms.



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Kim's game

by Jim Scrivener

Kim's Game is a traditional British party game. Before class you should prepare a tray of ten-twenty different objects (e.g. stapler, drawing pin, piece of paper, credit card, etc). Cover these items, for example with a cloth.

After explaining to students that this is a memory game remove the cloth and allow them two minutes to look and try to memorize all the items - after which they are hidden again under the cloth. Players must then try to remember and write a list of as many of the objects as possible.

The winner is the team that gets the longest list of correctly spelt items.



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The railway carriage game

by Jim Scrivener

1. Write out a number of slips of paper of some unusual (but not completely ridiculous) sentences. You will need at least one slip per student. Some examples:
 - You took it! You've stolen my newspaper! Where's my hat? I've lost my new green hat!
 - I've studied the history of this train line. It was built in 1940, you know. It's so hot in here! Bring me some water or I'll faint!
2. If possible, rearrange the seating so that students are sitting opposite each other (i.e. as in a railway carriage).
3. Hand out the sentence slips. Students must keep theirs totally secret. They should read their slip and memorize it exactly word for word.
4. Tell students how long the conversation will last (e.g. four minutes). Students should sit together in the "train carriage" as if they are strangers on a long journey together and start a conversation. Students can play themselves or roleplay any imaginary character they want.
5. Students should continue the conversation as naturally as possible. You can encourage them to include target vocabulary from the lesson (e.g. linkers such as that reminds me..., anyway, as I was saying..., by the way, etc.). At some point in the conversation they must say their sentence(s). Their aim is to do this so cleverly that nobody notices that they are saying what they had to say.
6. At the end, stop the conversations. Ask each student to write down what they think the original sentence given to each of their fellow travellers was.
7. If a student gets the gist of another traveller's original sentence correct, they get a point. Students also get points for each person in their carriage who did not spot their given sentence.



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Repeated anecdotes

by Jim Scrivener

This technique is useful for introducing new language items in the context of a story.

1. Write the target language on the board. Just leave them there; don't teach or explain them.
2. Introduce the characters of a story using photos or drawings.
3. Tell an anecdote.
4. When you get to a word just before one of the language items you want to present, pause and wait for students to call out the right item from the list on the board.
5. When they get it right, repeat that section of the story yourself with the correct item. Then continue with the rest of the story, pausing before each new item.
6. When you get to the end, start the story again and see if the students can say the right collocation faster. You may want to tell the story three or four times to give repeated practice. If you keep speeding up, students are unlikely to find this boring and may appreciate the challenge.

Here is an example story and some collocations on a friendship. Use a photo of two people to introduce the characters. The ^ symbol shows places to pause.

Collocations: oldest friends; got on well; good friends; similar backgrounds; a lot in common; see each other; keep in touch.

Story: I want to tell you about Bill. He works for a large computer company. The other person in the photo is Fred. He's one of Bill's ^ oldest friends. They first became ^ good friends when Bill bought a used car from Fred. They ^ got on well immediately because they came from ^ similar backgrounds, they had ^ a lot in common, and they both loved working with computers. Nowadays, they never ^ see each other, but they ^ keep in touch by email. The car, by the way, is still working!



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Yahroo!

by Jim Scrivener

Draw six columns on the board. Ask the class to call out any words that come to mind. Write these up randomly in the 6 columns, making sure that you get a good mixture.

Encourage the class to include small words (it, to, at, the, those, where, did etc) as well as nouns and verbs and adjectives. Continue until each column has at least 10 items in it. Learners now work in groups of four or five.

A student throws the dice and, depending which number comes up, chooses one word from that column on the board, which everyone in their group then writes down. The next player then throws and selects a word, and so on. Whenever someone in the group at the end of their turn thinks they can make a good English sentence using some or all of the listed words, they shout “Yaroo!” and declare their sentence. If the rest of the group agrees it’s a good sentence they get points for the number of words used. The used words are crossed off the list and the game continues.

The winner is the player with most points when the teacher calls time. You could then collect all the sentences on the board and check them. There could be a prize for the longest or most unusual sentence...



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The Wild Dictation

by Jim Scrivener

Dictate a numbered list of descriptions of words like this: “No. 1 the name of a male pop star; No.2 an adjective describing a person; No.3 a verb of movement; No.4 a kind of animal” etc. The learners should write down answers to these prompts e.g. “Justin Timberlake, angry, swim, kitten” etc.

When the lists are finished dictate a short story you have prepared - but with appropriate gaps (into which the learners will write their own previously chosen words) e.g. “A car drove up to the zoo and stopped suddenly and - No.1 - got out. He looked really - No. 2 - as he started to - No. 3 - towards the No. 4’s cage.” etc. You’ll get some very funny stories.

Don’t forget to prepare both the story and the list of word descriptions before the lesson.



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Instant film scripts

by Jim Scrivener

Most students enjoy watching a good movie - whether at the cinema or on TV. Here is an idea for making use of their interest and knowledge to create an unusual activity.

Ask your class if they can think of any spoken sentences that typically occur again and again in films - things such as “OK everybody. Put your hands up.” or “Oh darling. Don’t go!”.

Give students some thinking time to discuss possible answers in pairs then collect all their sentences on the board until you have a good number, taking the chance to correct mistakes and practise some exaggerated intonation.

Make groups with four or five students in them. Each group must now select some lines from the board and put them in an appropriate order to create a complete mini film scene. They cannot add extra words!

Each group should write down their dialogue, rehearse it and later perform their scene in front of the class.



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Wordline

by Jim Scrivener

Many teachers keep a word box full of items for recycling in future lessons. Try hanging up a word line instead. It could be slung across the top part of the board, it could be on an otherwise useless empty wall, or it could actually go across the room.

At the end of every lesson, add ten or so new items to the word line. In the next lesson, ask students to pick a few random words from the line to test themselves and others (e.g. translate it, put it into a sentence, use these 5 words in a story etc).