

How to Do “Gate-breaking” in Class

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Quite a few English teachers find it very difficult to design a specific activity to meet all students’ levels and, in the mean time, taking individual improvement into consideration. After several trials and errors, I finally came up with this idea of “Gate-breaking” in class, which can be easily carried out without causing the administration much trouble. Most of all, kids love it!

Two years ago in L.A., I spotted an interesting class activity called “Centers”. Teachers set up different working zones where various tasks are assigned to students. For example, in a reading center, 5-6 students have to read books with the same title and fill out worksheets, while other 5-6 students work on math or other writing tasks. This is considered more ideal for homeroom teachers to implement, because they have longer teaching hours and more subjects to teach. However, with a little bit adjustments, Subject teachers can also benefit from it.

First of all, divide your students into 6 groups. Each group has a leader to help other members. Then, remember to explain thoroughly to your students that this activity is time-limited, and will be monitored by you. According to your teaching materials, 6 major tasks can be designed and rearranged as follows: **Look and Say, Sound out the Words, Read the Sentences, Questions and Answers, Read the Passages, Spell the Words.**

- **Look and Say:** a set of flashcards, either with pictures or words, are ready for the leaders to hold up and show to other members.

Everyone has to take turns to name the words shown by the leaders.

- **Sound out the Words:** a set of flashcards with phonics rules are ready for the leaders to hold up and show to other members.

Everyone has to take turns to name the words shown by the leaders.

- **Read Sentences:** several sentences are chosen from students’ textbook and listed out for them to read aloud. Group leaders have to help members to complete this task individually.
- **Questions and Answers:** several questions are derived from the stories



or dialogues in students' textbooks. In order to complete this task, group leaders have to guide members to recall the details about the contents and give correct answers.

- **Read the Passages:** two major passages are selected from the review units in textbooks. Leaders have to help and guide members to read aloud all together slowly and clearly.



- **Spell the Words:** vocabulary words are chosen and listed out, and everyone has to do his best and spell out the target words.

“Gate-breaking” is very suitable not only for reviewing all the materials but also for orals. The major role of group leaders is to help and guide members to



finish tasks. To achieve this, teachers need to demonstrate and explain before hand to the leaders how to do it and why they have to do it. Usually advanced learners would love to take this responsibility to show you they are capable, and meanwhile lower achievers can take this chance to upgrade

and improve themselves. Thus, cooperative learning is gradually implemented into your classroom.

While “Gate-breaking” is ongoing, teachers need to walk around the classroom just to give out help in time or to correct distract behaviors. All in all, give it a try and you will find “Gate-breaking” is a possible way out to a multi-level language class. Have fun teaching!