

Reading Teaching Ideas

Ideas for Using a Real Text in an ESL Classroom

Choose a real text – or let your students find one. Why a REAL text? A real text uses real English that is intended to communicate with native speakers. A course book text uses English that has been carefully crafted by a professional writer to communicate with ESL students. Which is more authentic? The text should be suitable for your learners in terms of: interest, level, and content, and contain enough information to allow you to create questions and activities.

Different Kinds of Question:

As an example, let's use this photo of a notice found at an English building site:



While planning the lesson you should identify:

- the main topic of the text *building site safety*
- the purpose of the text *to explain the rules for working on the building site*
- the context of the text *attached to a fence at a building site*
- the key vocabulary – words and phrases that you think will be unfamiliar or new for your learners *e.g. hard hat, unauthorised, personnel, strictly, forbidden, etc.*
- the key grammar – tenses, forms, and other constructions that you think will be unfamiliar or new for your learners *imperative form; modal verbs*
- potential pronunciation pitfalls *e.g. visibility* or teaching points *e.g. why use colour coding and images?*

Next, create different kinds of question based on the real text. See question types with examples below. You could do this before the class, or ask your learners to do it (as homework or during the class).

- True, false, or unknown statements:
 - a) You could find this sign on a building site. *true*
 - b) This notice was put up by the local council. *unknown*
- Gap-fill sentences:
 - a) Workers should wear _____. *hard hats*
 - b) _____ must not play on site. *Children*
- Multiple choice questions:
 - i) People have to... a) purchase, b) wear, c) take off protective footwear. *b)*
 - ii) This notice concerns site a) behaviour, b) activity, c) safety. *c)*
- Matching activity:
 - 1. All visitors must report a) not climb the scaffolding
 - 2. Unauthorised personnel must b) to site office *1. b) 2. a)*
- Order / reorder activity:

Put the following vocabulary words into alphabetical order: site office, site safety, high visibility jackets, hard hats, scaffolding, warning, unauthorised entry, accidents *accidents, hard hats, high visibility jackets,*

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scaffolding, site office, site safety, unauthorised entry, warning

- Jumbled sentences:

must accidents reported be immediately all. *All accidents must be reported immediately.*
this is strictly entry site unauthorised forbidden to. *Unauthorised entry to this site is strictly forbidden.*
- Sorting into groups:

Group the information according to whether each statement is aimed at: a) just people who work on the site **8**, b) just people who do not work on the site **1, 4, 5, 10**, c) everybody **2, 3, 6, 7, 9**.
- Comprehension questions (have a definite answer):

Who created this notice? *Aspect Group Services*
What kind of clothing should be worn? *Hard hats, high visibility jackets, and protective footwear*
- Discussion questions (open questions – opinion, no single answer):

Have you ever worked on a building site? Tell me about it.
What do you think would happen if workers disobeyed the rules on this notice?
- Agree or disagree statements (agree or disagree, then give reasons – opinion, no single answer):

Working on a building site would be great fun.
Too many rules can be restrictive to the work environment.
- Different Kinds of Activity:

Activities for practicing lexis (vocabulary):

 - check highlighted vocabulary words, e.g. hard hats
 - focus on language features, e.g. adjectives, idioms, phrasal verbs, synonyms, functions, etc.
 - transformation: write a sentence in your own words so it has the same meaning (paraphrase)
 - rewrite the text in a different genre
 - summarise the text (in x words) – text reduction
 - translate the text into learners' L1 or another language

Activities for practicing grammar:

 - focus on the grammar used, e.g. tenses
 - transform sentences into different tenses
 - sentence blocks
 - correct an incorrect version of the text
 - look for verb, noun, adjective, adverb collocations
 - test a partner on aspects of the text
- Activities for practicing speaking:
 - reading race
 - oral Q&A – practice affirmative, negative, and question forms
 - focus on pronunciation: read out loud, work on Clear Alphabet (phonetic) spellings
 - focus on vowel / consonant sounds
 - identify spelling and sound rules; identify suffixes and compound nouns
 - identify word stress, then sentence stress, then features of connected speech
 - create a free practice activity based on the topic, e.g. role play, improvisation, project, debate, etc.
 - discussion – compare the text and its purpose / context etc. with the equivalents in your country.
- Activities for practicing listening:
 - listen for specific information, e.g. gap-fill and multiple choice questions
 - listen and make notes
 - listen and write (part of) the text word for word (dictation)
 - watch a video connected to the topic and answer questions, e.g. gap-fill and multiple choice

More ideas for using a real text: <https://purlandtraining.com/you-are-the-course-book-lesson-plans/text/>