**Having fun with dialogues**

**<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/having-fun-dialogues>**

Many learners need controlled speaking practice. They can gain confidence in speaking through using scripted dialogues.

Sometimes these tasks can be repetitive in a main textbook or written with adults in mind. Here are ways to encourage them to make their own dialogues and to experiment with the language they know.

Using familiar dialogues/dialogues based on language recently studied.

If you use course book dialogues or similar conversations as a starting point this can give students:

* confidence - they do not have to strain to understand new items or words
* reinforcement - a chance to review and re use the functional language presented by their teacher.

It gives you:

* a useful source of material in an emergency. Lift a dialogue and then do something fun with it.
* a useful filler activity if you run out of ideas or suitable material.

Things to do with dialogues:

**1. Chop them up**

Jumble sentences and students have to reorder them within a time limit. Then use the dialogue for pronunciation practice or as a model to invent another.

* Mix up 2 short conversations and ask students to unscramble them. Students then choose one to perform.
* Put pieces of a dialogue on 5-8 slips of paper. Each student in the group reads their slip of paper without showing it to anyone. Ask students to decide if they might have a reply to a question, for example.
* Either place students in groups to pool their knowledge and write the dialogue. It doesn't have to be word perfect, just the meaning needs to come across.
* Or ask students to practice saying their "piece" with the tone they think appropriate (can cause laughter!).Then ask students to circulate and to say their bits. If they meet a person who seems to have a part of their sequence they can form a couple. Set a time limit and walk around listening. Decide when to stop the game and then put students in pairs, small groups or just do the task as a whole class: reconstruct what you think the dialogue is about. This can lead to different interpretations and lots of creative thinking to fill in gaps. Remind them that there is no right answer!

Play the above task with 2 line dialogues for even beginners after a few weeks of English. They enjoy finding their partner and then perform their piece which may be as simple as 'How are you Mr. Jones?' 'Oh, not too bad, and you?'

**2. Damage them**

* Create artificial raindrops/coffee spills or smudges in dialogues. It works best if you use a bigger print size than usual (18-20). Always have a top copy and a damaged one for yourself.
* Half blanked out words (like a slight tear down the side of the dialogue) encourages learners to guess from the context what is missing.
* Miss out key items in the dialogue which students need extra practice on, such as prepositions, auxiliaries etc. Ask students to insert the missing bits. Increase the level of difficulty by removing the spaces so they have to identify what and where items are missing.

**3. Dictate them**

Do not focus on dictating word for word but rather give students selective dictations which help to involve them in the content. It is a good technique to use if you are without a tape and tape recorder too.

* Students take notes of key words or key verbs the split classes into 2 with one half making notes on a specific aspect of the conversation and the other half noting down expressions or key words. Put students in pairs or small groups to reconstruct the dialogue and act it out.
* Read one side of the conversation and give them time to make notes of possible replies or words by the other person in the conversation. Emphasise that it is up to their imagination and there is no one correct answer. Then put students in pairs to work out a dialogue using their pooled notes.

**4. Add nonsense**

* Take out key words. Mix them up and put them back in the wrong places. Students will have fun making sense of it all. Challenge pairs or groups with a time limit.
* Misspell 5 items. Can students spot the mistakes? Give a time limit and focus on key items you want to revise.

**5. Ask them to create their own conversations**

* Based on a short story they read with you. Ask them to imagine a key conversation between characters in a specific part of the story. This gives them a framework.
* Based on a song: The singer is singing to a specific person. Imagine the conversation they have following the song.
* From an advert on video. Show a sound off video of an advert and ask students to brainstorm a dialogue and write the script in small groups. How does their script compare to the original?
* From a photo story (see teen magazines - also in your host country). Blank out the speech in the bubbles and ask them to be story writers for the lesson. The group with the best story win! They can pass around their versions and read each others.