

## Part VII: Nonverbal Stimuli



# Introduction

If you enjoy using music, videos, pictures, or real-life objects to stimulate the class, you will find ideas here. Although most contributors take it for granted that teachers will provide all these materials, involving students in collecting them increases their commitment to the lesson planning. Some of the materials suggested can be part of a collection stored and shared by several teachers.

# Hit Parade

## **Levels**

Intermediate +

## **Types**

General English

## **Aims**

Express opinions, likes,  
and dislikes  
Compare cultures  
through music  
Class Time  
30–45 minutes

## **Preparation Time**

Minimal

## **Resources**

Audiotape or CD player  
Three or four of your  
favorite songs in English  
on audiotape or CD  
One favorite song from  
the student's culture on  
audiotape or CD

**M**usic in the language class is a way of finding out about preferences of students from different cultures. It helps students relax and think.

## Procedure

1. Give students a brief introductory statement about music and culture. Tell them you are going to play part of one of your favorite songs.
2. First summarize the story line of the song and then play a short (1 minute) clip.
3. Have students rate the song on a scale of 1 to 10 (use Olympic style voting cards if you think it would be appropriate).
4. Finally, ask the students to bring a sample of their favorite song (melody and lyrics) for the next class period. Tell them they need to think about the story line of the song and encourage them to select a song that they consider typical for their age group in their culture.
5. Have students provide a synopsis of the story line in English.
6. Ask the class to rate the songs and discuss cultural values (relationships, feelings) that appear in the song. Raters should be prepared to justify their ratings; that is, they should give valid explanations for low ratings in order not to offend classmates.

## Caveats and Options

1. This activity can be used without rating the songs (i.e., only a discussion of values, symbols, and relationships). If you use ratings, you might opt for *I loved it*, *I liked it*, *It was okay*, and so on, so as not to offend students.
2. A written reaction (perhaps a newspaper critics' column) would be an interesting follow-up or journal activity.

Contributor

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# Street Signs

## **Levels**

Beginning (especially students who do not use the Roman alphabet)

## **Types**

Community class

## **Aims**

Relate signs to services  
Become familiar with a new neighborhood

## **Class Time**

5–10 minutes

## **Preparation Time**

None, if you are familiar with the neighborhood

## **Resources**

Community

The world around them gives students many example of language that can remain a mystery. This activity tries to resolve the problem.

## Procedure

1. Draw a few signs on the board that students will recognize from their neighborhood (e.g., *Joe's Restaurant*). Ask a few questions, such as, *What is this? What does it say?* and *Where is it?* Then ask students about other stores and signs in the area. Have a few students write examples of signs on the board. Check for spelling, and help students with proper names.
2. For homework, tell students to wander around their neighborhoods and record 10 signs.
3. The next day, ask students to write on the board one or two examples of signs they found. The class can help with spelling and sense-making.

## Caveats and Options

1. You could divide the class into groups and ask each group to find 10 examples of a particular type of sign, for example: traffic, restaurants, clothing, shoes, furniture, or public announcements.
2. This activity could lead in many directions: role plays; what kinds of services each sign suggests (e.g., *What happens in a barber shop?*, *What can you buy at a drugstore?*); idiomatic expressions for more advanced students (e.g., a hair stylist's shop called *Curl Up and Dye*); or students could develop a local shopping/tour guide by designing a map.

## Contributor

3. I have used this activity in our very ethnically diverse neighborhood by asking students to find examples of store names in different languages (e.g., Korean, Chinese, Thai, Greek, Persian), which I use to lead into a topic on immigration.

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# Put the Piano Here

## **Levels**

Beginning

## **Types**

Twice weekly classes for new immigrants

## **Aims**

Practice giving instructions and making requests

## **Class Time**

40 minutes

## **Preparation Time**

30 minutes

## **Resources**

Handout  
Pictures of household furniture and appliances cut from old magazines or advertising flyers

New immigrants often have to wait months for the arrival of their belongings. This activity prepares them with basic skills to instruct movers unloading their belongings.

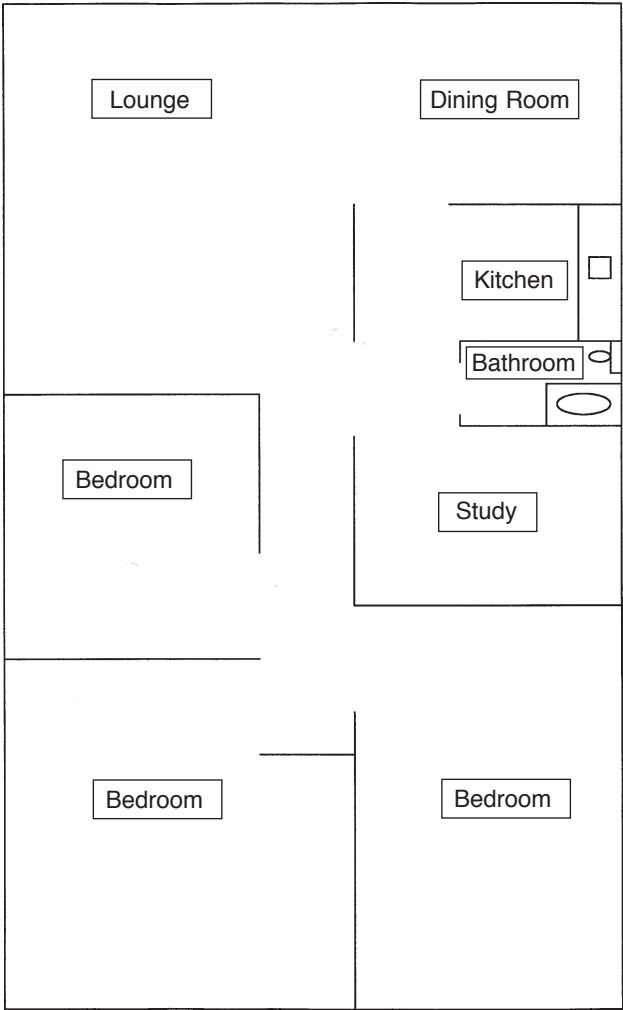
## **Procedure**

1. Divide class into groups of two or four.
2. Give each group a handout of a house plan and some pictures of household furniture and appliances.
3. Ask students to imagine that their housepack has arrived and the movers are at the door.
4. Have students take turns at being the homeowner and the mover. Groups of four may have two homeowners (e.g., husband and wife) and two movers working at the same time, but everyone should have a turn at being the homeowner.
5. Have the movers start by holding up a picture and asking, "Where would you like this?" The homeowners must instruct the movers to put the furniture or appliance in a particular place in the house (based on the plan provided).

## **Caveats and Options**

1. This activity should be used in conjunction with or following lessons on giving instructions and or making requests.
2. Students should have prior knowledge of the names of rooms, furniture, and appliances in a typical modern home. However, some unusual items may make good conversation.

Appendix:  
Sample  
House Plan



Contributor

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# Using Pictures and Games

## **Levels**

Low intermediate +

## **Types**

Revolving admissions in adult community education setting

## **Aims**

Review a particular grammar structure using a series of pictures from any textbook with a story line  
Create and roleplay dialogues based on a scene

## **Class Time**

50 minutes

## **Preparation Time**

1 hour

## **Resources**

Transparencies of textbook pictures containing objective terminology  
Overhead projector (OHP)  
Picture worksheet for labeling  
Picture and text cloze worksheets  
Jigsaw picture and question mark cards  
Picture card(s) with several characters for dialogue and roleplay activities

Students attending community classes are usually looking for daily survival language skills. The following activities, based on daily occurrences, are used to get students with different levels of proficiency to practice the same vocabulary and skills at each of their levels.

## **Procedure**

1. Tell the students the topic of the lesson (e.g., automobiles and accidents) and explain to them that they are first going to do a whole-class activities and then work in groups.
2. Give low intermediate-level students a worksheet with the pictures or drawings to label for that lesson. This worksheet can later be used to help students complete other activities and to study.
3. Put the pictures on the OHP one at a time.
4. Ask students to name all of the objects they see in the pictures. If there is more than one word to describe an object, see if the students know them (e.g., *automobile: auto, car, vehicle*).
5. Label all the objects in the pictures on the transparencies for the low intermediate-level students to copy.
6. Divide the class into groups according to their level of proficiency. Assign roles to each of the students in the group (e.g., timekeeper, scribe, speaker).
7. Give low intermediate group(s) the vocabulary cloze exercise worksheet that you have prepared. Have the students complete the worksheet individually and then discuss their answers. If they are practicing a particular verb tense, give them that cloze worksheet instead. They can complete both or rewrite the vocabulary cloze using the verb tense that you want them to review.

## Caveats and Options

8. Give the high intermediate-level group(s) the jigsaw picture with one or two question mark cards. Have them put the pictures in order. Have each group write a short paragraph for each of the pictures, making sure to use the verb tense that is being studied or reviewed and the correct connectives to give continuity to the story.
  9. Give the advanced-level group(s) the picture with several characters. Have them imagine the dialogue taking place. The perspective to take can be assigned (e.g., *You just witnessed an accident and the police are questioning you*, or *You were just involved in an accident and the police are questioning you*) or free. Once they have finished creating their dialogues, have the group(s) roleplay them for the rest of the class.
1. Instead of using picture stories you can also use comic strips with the dialogues deleted. You can also use these to have the students practice writing dialogues.
  2. For whole-class oral descriptions, you can prepare some questions to ask in case students need prodding but make sure to use some of the objective terms in the questions. For example:
    - What do you see in this picture?
    - Which automobile is on the left side of the road?
    - Which auto is in the right lane?
  3. One variation for high intermediate- or advanced-level students is to set the example on how to ask the questions about what is contained in the picture and then let the students devise and ask their own questions while you monitor the structure of the questions and write them on the board.
  4. This activity is also for high intermediate- and advanced-level students and can be done as a whole class or in smaller groups. Have a student pick a picture and orally describe what is in the picture. The other groups of students have all the pictures spread out in front of them. They listen to the description and wait until the student is finished. At that time they get 30 seconds to choose a picture and raise it for the rest of the class to see. The person who selects the correct picture first gets to describe the next one. If the students are working in

## References and Further Reading

## Contributor

groups, the group that gets the correct picture first selects a representative to describe the next picture.

5. If you are using cartoon or comic strips that only have two or three pictures, have each student write a paragraph for a picture and as a group they have to join them together.

Wright, A. (1984). *1000 pictures for teachers to copy*. New York: Longman Addison Wesley.

Wright, A. (1989). *Pictures for language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wright, A. (1990). *Visual materials for the language teacher*. New York: Longman.

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# Anne of Green Gables Gets Their Attention

## **Levels**

Any

## **Types**

University

## **Aims**

Improve class participation and motivation  
Build vocabulary  
Improve listening and speaking

## **Class Time**

1-1½ hours for approximately 12-15 weeks

## **Preparation Time**

1-1½ hours per class

## **Resources**

Video of *Anne of Green Gables* (Parts 1 and 2)

## **Caveats and Options**

Because *Anne of Green Gables* is a well known and popular story in Japan, the video may make a good basis for a variety of classroom activities there and elsewhere.

## **Procedure**

1. Give the students a vocabulary exercise (e.g., matching exercise).
  2. Practice pronunciation.
  3. Have students complete the handout for homework so that they are familiar with the vocabulary for the following week.
  4. Go over the assigned vocabulary exercise. Have students write the matching words and phrases on the board. Go over it one more time before watching the video.
  5. Give students a sequencing exercise.
  6. Ask individual students to read a sentence from their handout giving the class the opportunity to ask about vocabulary they don't understand. Use an example from the story to explain vocabulary items.
  7. Have students put these sentences in order while or after they watch the video.
  8. Play about 20 minutes of the video. (The video is divided into 20-minute segments.)
  9. When they finish watching the video, ask for the order of events in the handout.
  10. Hand out a new vocabulary exercise for the following week.
- 
1. There is a lot of vocabulary for students to learn, so choose vocabulary judiciously. Some of the language in *Anne of Green Gables* is old-fashioned.

## References and Further Reading

2. You can have students choose an incident from the story, write a short introduction and the dialogue, and present a short skit. Students can also make up discussion questions to go with their skit.
  3. Students can give each other dictations. Put students into two groups and divide the vocabulary list into two columns, A and B. Give one group Column A vocabulary and the other Column B. Have students take turns dictating to each other. This gives them more practice with the vocabulary and the opportunity to practice helpful classroom language such as, *How do you spell \_\_\_\_\_?* *Please repeat that.*
  4. Once students are comfortable with each other and the weekly format has been established, assign a section of the video (about 20 minutes) to a group of students. They can make up the vocabulary exercise, write the sequencing activity for the following week, or make up their own exercises and activities. They might even want to present a unit to the class.
  5. Students can test each other on vocabulary. Follow Murphey's (1994/1995) suggestions for setting up a peer testing activity that maximizes students' use of real language. It is very helpful for them to be able to use examples from the story to explain their vocabulary rather than simply giving a one-word equivalent for each vocabulary item.
  6. You can use other film versions of books that interest the class.
- Murphey, T. (1994/1995, Winter). Tests: Learning through negotiated interaction. *TESOL Journal*, pp. 12-16.

## Contributor

*Moir Izatt is currently teaching English Conversation in Japan. In Canada, she taught ESL and wrote educational materials. She is interested in learner motivation, learner-centered teaching, and learner-made materials.*

# Learning Proverbs Through Pictures

## **Levels**

Advanced

## **Types**

General English

## **Aims**

Understand the meaning of selected proverbs and use them appropriately in context

## **Class Time**

10–15 minutes

## **Preparation Time**

Minimal

## **Resources**

Overhead transparency with illustration of proverb  
Overhead projector (OHP)

## Caveats and Options

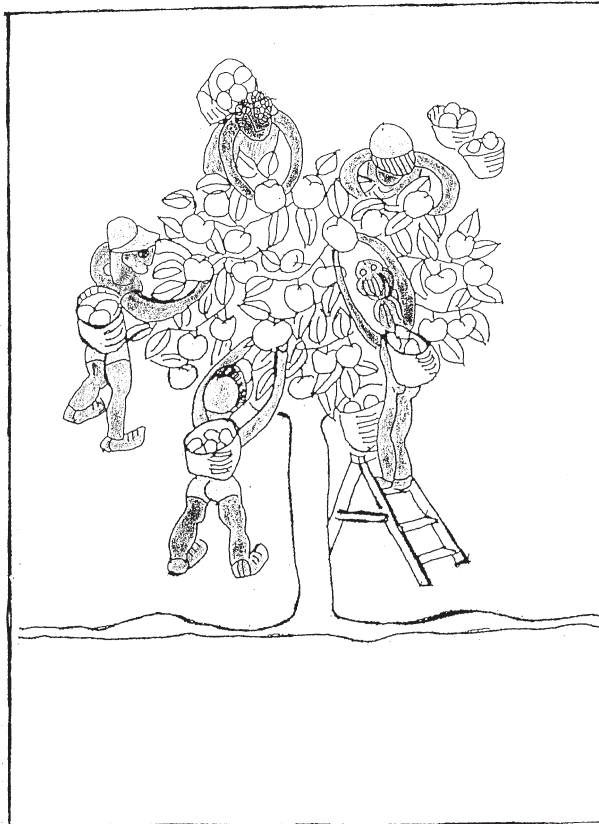
Explanations of proverbs in ESOL classes too often start from an explanation of the literal meaning together with a visual that focuses on illustrating the words literally. This can confuse learners and prevent them from understanding the metaphorical meaning and the application of the proverb in other contexts, especially when the words are obscure and the context culturally specific. If students are introduced to the concept first, then the idea of the proverb can be conveyed and appropriate contexts explored.

## Procedure

1. Display the picture of the proverb on the OHP.
  2. Elicit information from the class about the content of the picture. For example:
    - *What are the people in the picture doing?* (Working, picking apples.)
    - *Why is more than one person doing this work?* (Work gets done more quickly, work is easier.)
    - *They are all helping each other. What is another expression for offering to help someone?* (Lend a hand.)
    - *So we can say lots of people helping makes the work easier. There's a proverb to express this idea: Many hands make light work.*
  3. Have students think of a different example or story from experience to illustrate the proverb and discuss these examples in pairs.
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1. Students may enjoy making comparisons with proverbs of similar meaning in their own language, for example *to kill two birds with one stone* is *to hit two flies with one swipe* in German.

## Appendix: Many Hands Make Light Work

2. Students should be encouraged to write out their example stories without using the proverb. The stories can be distributed around the class for students to read and identify the proverbs they illustrate.
3. The drawings can be passed around the class for students to discuss and identify the proverbs they illustrate.



## Contributors

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# I Don't Think That's Funny

## **Levels**

High beginning

## **Types**

Listening and speaking classes, particularly EFL classes

## **Aims**

Practice accurate, detailed description  
Listen closely  
Achieve a consensus through speaking and listening  
Gain an understanding of Western concepts of humor

## **Class Time**

5–10 minutes

## **Preparation Time**

5 minutes

## **Resources**

Comic strip, photocopied, mounted on card, and cut into frames

## **Contributor**

The interpretation of humor is culture specific. With careful choice of examples, this task can show students some differences from one culture to another.

## **Procedure**

1. Divide the class into groups so that the size of each group corresponds to the number of the frames in the comic strip.
2. Explain that every student will have one frame to describe to their group without showing the frame to anyone else. Warn that they may have to describe their picture more than once. Explain that, through listening, they must work out the correct order of the frames.
3. Distribute the comic strip frames and let the students begin.
4. Have the students place their frames face up in the order they think is correct, once the group has agreed on an order. After this, allow them to correct any mistakes they find once they can see all the frames.
5. Be prepared to explain the humor of the comic strip.

## **Caveats and Options**

1. The best strips to choose are usually those with a minimum of words and simple language rather than slang or unusual contractions.
2. A particular idea, such as the nature of a pun, may be introduced or reinforced through this activity.
3. Be aware that what may be an appropriate subject for humor in one culture may in fact be offensive in another. Exercise common sense.

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# Cleansing the Gates of Perception

## **Levels**

Intermediate +

## **Types**

Private language schools

## **Aims**

Prepare for an evening lesson by relaxing and stimulating creativity

## **Class Time**

10 minutes

## **Preparation Time**

1 hour

## **Resources**

Music audiotape  
Five pictures

Many working adults following English language courses are obliged to attend evening classes. These students often arrive at class tired and tense after a hard day of work. They may find it difficult to relax and concentrate on the lesson. It is important that adult working students get into a more relaxed and receptive state of mind before the lesson proper begins. The following activity stimulates the senses in a pleasant, interesting, and nondemanding way. It acts as a creative and imaginative transition between the working day and the language lesson.

## Procedure

1. Play an audiotape of three different and contrasting kinds of music, for example: a moody jazz piece, a Gregorian Chant, and some evocative Indian sitar music.
2. Display five pictures either on the board, around the room, or on an overhead projector. The pictures should be large enough for all students to see clearly. The pictures should be varied and as different from each other as possible, for example: a nighttime cityscape, a camel train crossing the desert, an eagle in flight, a mountain, and the Mona Lisa.
3. Ask students to listen to the music and, as they are listening, to match each of the three pieces of music with one of the pictures. Tell students that the matching is a matter of personal choice. There is no right or wrong answer. Instruct students not to write anything down.
4. Play the first piece of music again and ask students to share with the person sitting next to them which picture the music evoked for them. Repeat this procedure for the other two musical extracts. You may want to tell the class which picture the music evoked for you and give some reasons. Invite students to do the same.

## Caveats and Options

1. You may ask the students to decide which musical extract they liked best and to share this with the person sitting next to them.
2. You can substitute plain colors for the pictures, for example, different squares of green, red, gold, black, and yellow cardboard. The students then have to match the music with the color.
3. You can substitute shapes for the pictures, for example, circles, stars, squares, pyramids, and oblongs. The students then have to match the music with the shapes.

## Contributor

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# Tell Me a Story

## **Levels**

High intermediate

## **Types**

Private language school;  
general language class

## **Aims**

Create a cooperative  
story recycling  
adjective/adverb  
combinations, past  
tenses, and linking  
words

## **Class Time**

50–60 minutes

## **Preparation Time**

10 minutes

## **Resources**

Picture prompts  
Board outline

This activity provides a meaningful context for the integration of several pieces of language and provides a cooperative setting for the same. The task itself is controlled, and this is important for the management of a diverse but functionally related body of text.

## Procedure

1. Begin by reviewing linking expressions for time (e.g., *as soon as*, *while*) and other functions (e.g., *since*, *therefore*, *too*). Do this with a variety of sentence starters and an oral or written response. Include a broad sample of past tenses (past simple, past continuous, past perfect simple, and past perfect continuous) in these and check tense and aspect coordination.
2. Show three distantly related pictures to pairs of students (or groups of three) and ask them to imagine a likely story line connecting them. While they are doing this, put up on the board the outline (see Appendix) of the story framework and elements you want them to use.
3. Ask them to begin working together on their story incorporating the language you have highlighted. Have each student contribute equally and monitor each other for spelling and grammar.

## Caveats and Options

1. The activity presupposes previous study of past tenses, linking words, and adjective/adverb combinations.

## Appendix: Story Framework and Elements

## Contributor

2. If possible, have students compose their story on a word processor, so that on-the-spot corrections and monitoring are made easier. The final product can go into the school magazine.
3. This exercise is particularly useful for students whose written expression is limited.

## References and Further Reading

Hadfield, C., & Hadfield, J. (1990). *Writing games*. Surrey, England: Nelson.

### Linking Words

Time: *as soon as, until, before, while, after, as, by the time, since*

Logical connectors: *because, although, however, so, as well as, as, too, therefore*

### Past Tenses

Past simple: to talk about actions and situations completed in a definite time in the past

Past continuous: to talk about a particular action or event in progress when another event took place (past simple)

Past Perfect Simple: to talk about events that happened before a specific time in the past (past tense)

Past Perfect Continuous: to talk about a long period of time in the past before another specific time in the past (past simple)

### Adverbs of degree (to modify adjectives)

*extremely, rather, incredibly, quite, really, a bit, fairly*

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# Talking About Gifts

## **Levels**

Intermediate

## **Types**

Conversation classes

## **Aims**

Practice speaking skills  
Promote friendship  
through gift-giving

## **Class Time**

1–2 hours, depending  
on number of students  
in a class

## **Preparation Time**

1–2 hours

## **Resources**

Catalogues showing  
some unusual gifts (e.g.,  
a letter opener, a  
musical timer)  
Scissors, envelopes,  
color markers  
Holiday music tape  
Handout

A great many natural talks can be generated by asking students to share with one another their private experiences and personal opinions about something simple and practical, such as gifts.

## Procedure

1. Start with a “show and tell” of a gift you have recently received to encourage students to talk about their own gifts.
2. Hand out the list (see Appendix) and ask students to practice reading it several times until they can use the expressions in their own sentences freely.
3. Hand out catalogues so that students can choose gifts for themselves and then cut the pictures out. Ask them not to tell anyone what they have chosen.
4. Tell students to find a partner and choose gifts for each other. Ask them to exchange gifts and explain reasons for their choices.
5. Ask the finished pairs to join another pair and select gifts for the rest of the class. Tell them to put the cut-out pictures of gifts in separate envelopes, one for each student and address the envelopes, for example:

12/20/96  
To: Ms Peiya Gu  
Best Wishes From  
Group 3

6. Turn on lively music. Ask each student to take a few envelopes with them and let the whole class walk about giving gifts to their classmates.

## Caveats and Options

## References and Further Reading

1. This activity is best done before holidays, for example Christmas and New Year. Students may enjoy bringing in real gifts next day and sharing their stories about these gifts, followed by continued talks about various cultural implications of gifts and giving in later classes.

Nolasco, R., & Arthur, L. (1990). *Conversation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brown, G., & Yule, G. (1983). *Teaching the spoken language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## Appendix: List of Useful Expressions and Their Functions

1. The most recent gift I have received is . . . (describing)
2. I got that (from whom, when, where, how, why) . . .
3. I wish I could have a/an/some . . . (expressing a future intention)
4. I have selected . . . for myself/you because . . . (explaining)
5. I suggest we give . . . a/an/some . . . because . . . (giving one's opinion)
6. This is for you. I hope you like it. We thought you could use it for/when . . . (giving a gift)
7. Thank you! It's beautiful/terrific/. . . It's just what I wanted/needed. I really love/like/need it. (accepting a gift and giving thanks)
8. You're welcome. I'm glad you like it. (accepting thanks)

## Contributor

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