

Worksheet Activity: Telling About an Unusual Event

For this activity you will tell a story about some unusual event or activity in the local area where you live or study English, or a story about your own personal experience. This can be a real event that actually happened, or you can make up a story. Look at the sample story, then discuss your own stories of unusual, surprising, or interesting experiences.

Sample Storytelling Conversation

A: Hey, a funny thing happened at the corner coffee shop last week.

B: Yeah? So what happened?

A: Well, see, they were filming part of a movie down the block for a couple of days.

B: Uh-huh,

A: It was some big Hollywood movie, but nobody around here knew what the movie was about.

B: Yeah,

A: So Jim is working at the coffee shop¹,

B: Uh-huh,

A: And Leonardo DiCaprio comes in and sits down to have a coffee.

B: Really?

A: Yeah, just by himself.

B: Wow, that's amazing.

A: Only Jim serves him the coffee and never even recognized him.

¹ Students and teachers should briefly discuss the fact that English speakers often use the present tense to tell stories that happened in the past, especially in informal situations where they want to add a dramatic effect or vividness to their oral story telling.

B: Oh no, and nobody told him?

A: Nobody said a word. And he was mad after because he would have asked for an autograph.

B: Oh no. That's really funny.

I. Preparing to speak: unusual events

This formula provides a useful structure for practice. This is only one way it might happen in a real life conversation, among many variations. Use this formula as a kind of outline and write notes about something you remember, or it may be easier to make up a fictional story to tell your partner. Look at the formula to help you organize your story.

Formula:

Phase 1:

Pre Telling

Guess what? A funny thing happened the other day. Did you hear what happened?

Go-ahead

What? Tell me. Oh, what happened?

Phase 2:

Set the scene or situation (you can make up a situation near your school or local area)

There was a ___ [street festival public appearance by ___ big event sudden rain storm]

Ongoing responses to explanation

uh huh, right, yeah, oh.

Phase 3:

Announce surprising event

[use your own words]

News-marker

Really? Oh really? No kidding.

Phase 4:

Tell about surprising event

and then after that suddenly as a result before you knew it

Ongoing responses to telling--include assessments where appropriate

uh huh, right, yeah, oh. really? great. cool. fantastic. amazing, awesome

Talking With a Partner

Take turns. First one partner should be the teller and the other should be the listener who gives short responses (such as *uh-huh, mm-hm, yeah, right, oh, really*) and assessments (such as *good, great, cool, fantastic, excellent, interesting*). Listen carefully, use responders appropriately, and try to include variety to show your interest. Then change roles; the listener should become the teller, and the first teller should become the responder.

Reporting to the Class

After this task, briefly report to the class. Each partner tells the class what he or she heard that was most surprising or most interesting, and whether it was true or a made-up (imagined) event.

Reflection and Discussion Questions

What is most fun or interesting about using English responders? What problems did you have, or what do you find challenging about using or understanding English responders?