

Chapter 5 Ten Unsuccessful Activities

Questions to consider before reading this chapter:

1. Can you think of a speaking activity (or class) that you taught or observed that did not go well? Briefly describe what happened. Why do you think the lesson was not good? In hindsight, what would you have done differently?
2. If you are doing a speaking activity that is not going well, what are your options? At what point do you think you should abandon the activity—if ever?

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After the chapter:

Activity 1. Identifying a Problem Activity in a Book

Choose a speaking or conversation book. Peruse the speaking tasks. Can you find activities in the book that are among the ten unsuccessful activities?

Activity 2. Identifying a Problem Activity in Your Class

Which of the ten unsuccessful activities have you had problems with? How did you solve the problem?

- Unsuccessful Activity 1. Presenting a Discussion Topic without Any Tasks
- Unsuccessful Activity 2. Using a Task Inappropriate for Students' Age
- Unsuccessful Activity 3. Using a Task Unsuitable for Students' Proficiency
- Unsuccessful Activity 4. Using Discussion Prompts that Can't Generate Discussion
- Unsuccessful Activity 5. Using a One-Way Task
- Unsuccessful Activity 6. Using a Problem-Solving Task with a Difficult Solution
- Unsuccessful Activity 7. Using a Task with Overly Complicated Instructions
- Unsuccessful Activity 8. Pretending that Checking Answers Is the Same as Discussing
- Unsuccessful Activity 9. Choosing an Inappropriate Topic for the Students
- Unsuccessful Activity 10. Using Videos Incorrectly as a Speaking Tool

Activity 3. Topics

In Chapter 1, you made a list of appropriate and inappropriate topics for speaking tasks. Review your lists to see if you still agree with them.

Activity 4. Videos

Many teachers use videos for speaking tasks, but the amount of speaking based on the video itself is usually limited. How often do you use videos in class? Have you ever used the video incorrectly?

Activity 5. When the Teacher Is the Problem

Sometimes an activity does not go well because of the teacher. Can you think of an activity that you observed that did not go well because of something the teacher did or did not do? Briefly describe what happened.

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Activity 6. Teacher Personality

Some teachers are better at conducting certain activities. (For example, some teachers like to use songs; others refuse to do anything with music.) Can you think of speaking activities that you like to do that might not be so easy for other teachers to do?