PART ONE: SOME GENERAL THOUGHTS

PROS

- specific & adaptable materials
- focuses /supports lesson planning
- all students get copies
- joy of creativity
- practice makes perfect
- no copyright issues

CONS

- time-consuming
- You think you’re not creative enough

THOUGHT PROCESSES THAT GO INTO CREATING AN ACTIVITY:

1. Many ESL beginners have limited prior education, so they need to learn how to “do school.” Examples: follow directions; move from speaking to writing; copy words from worksheets or cards; listen to classmates & teachers.

2. Pictures: Students understand without language.

3. Most (adult) students work with their hands, so tactile tasks feel natural.

4. Learning Modes: Most students are primarily either visually or aurally oriented, but all use both. Involving more senses strengthens retention.

5. The best activities use all 4 main skills. Moving from passive to active skills is natural.

6. Reinforcement is more effective and more fun than simple repetition.

7. The more times students have practiced the vocabulary, the more multi-sided the activity can be.

8. When students manipulate or complete their own learning material, they “own” it, so they can relate to it. Examples: matching cards; filling in missing letters, numbers or words; creating a map using oral instructions.

9. Pair work and group work: Students learn to help each other and practice independently of the teacher.

10. Setting up for success: how to plan so that every student feels successful? For example, have students practice with the picture cards just before doing a non-picture activity using the same vocabulary.

If you’re supplementing a textbook:

What’s MISSING from the book?
What’s UNCLEAR in the book?
What needs MORE PRACTICE?

Some mistakes I’ve learned from:

The print was too small or the cards were too small;
The visual was not clear;
Insufficient modeling of the activity;
Too many cards or instructions;
Underestimating the necessary time length.
CREATING & USING, p.2

PART TWO: Picture Cards

PICTURE CARDS: CREATING & USING (General)

Compare online clip art and picture dictionaries for the best examples: Literacy B Plus, Word by Word, Heinle, Oxford. Especially good: Many topics in Word by Word are presented in individual, separate pictures, e.g. Occupations, Community, Job Skills & Activities, Sports & Recreation. Check the newest editions for gender & race awareness.

Copy pictures onto cardstock, with each set of cards a different color to help you identify where a lost card belongs. Enlarge each picture until it’s almost ¼ the size of an 8.5 by 11” sheet of paper. The word is written below the picture (normally).

Use the pictures first to introduce the vocabulary (computer / OHP / document camera) and to practice on worksheets.

Group work is for reinforcement only. Students work together in groups of 3 or 4. One student in each group holds up the cards one by one so that all can see.

ALL CATEGORIES:
- Group work (3 – 4 students) is for reinforcement.
- Students take turns being the group leader.
- The group leader shows the cards one by one.
- Students look at the picture and pronounce the word below.
- Students spell the word while looking at it.
- When students already know these words well, the group leader can cover the words so that students can test their memories.
- Students review the picture cards before doing a non-picture activity with the same vocabulary, e.g. matching cards.

PICTURE CARDS: ACTIVITIES FOR INDIVIDUAL TOPICS

ELICITING: The students can learn how to elicit various types of responses by copying the teacher, so the group leaders can elicit the various types of responses described below.

TIME & DAILY ACTIVITIES:
1. Students can put all the cards in order to tell the story of a normal day: morning – wake up – get up – eat breakfast … noon – eat lunch, etc.
2. After we’ve learned sentences such as “I get up at 6:00”, hold up a card (“get up”) and elicit the whole sentence. Also elicit: “What time do you _____________?”
MONEY:
1. The dime card is marked both “a dime” and “10 cents.” Ask: “Two dimes – how much?” Or hold up the dime card and the nickel card together and ask: “One dime and one nickel – how much?”
2. Ask: “Cash – yes or no?” or “coin or bill?” with individual cards.

COMMUNITY:
1. Six terms end in station: fire/gas/police/BART/bus/train station. When one of these cards comes up, elicit the others. Ditto with video store, bookstore, drugstore, computer store.
2. Use any card to elicit the question, “Where’s the ______?” Then elicit an answer beginning with “It’s on ________.” (e.g. Mission Street)
3. Put 2 cards next to each other to elicit: “The ________ is next to the ________.”

OCCUPATIONS:
1. When the doctor card comes up, for example, elicit, “A doctor works in a hospital / clinic / doctor’s office.”
2. After we learn “I’m a / he’s a” / “she’s a,” elicit sentences using the cards that show real student jobs: “What do you do?” “I’m a construction worker.” “What does she do?” “She’s a cook.”

FOOD:
1. Use the card to elicit “I eat (OR drink) __________ for breakfast.” (OR lunch or dinner)
2. Practice “I like” and “I don’t like” with individual cards.
3. If the card shows a fruit (or vegetable or drink), elicit other examples of the same category.
4. Hold onto a card to combine with other cards. For example, when “soup” comes up, hold it until other suitable cards come up, to make “tomato / chicken / vegetable / fish soup.” Or use one such card to elicit combinations.

BODY PARTS & HEALTH:
1. Body Parts: Ask students to touch or point to that part.
2. Illnesses: You ask, or the group leader asks, “How are you?” The others in the group answer: “I have a ____________” (whatever the card shows: headache, fever, etc.)

CLOTHING & SHOPPING:
1. Article of Clothing Card + Colors: Hold up a card together with a piece of colored paper, e.g. blue, and elicit: “a blue shirt.” Hold up a different color and elicit, e.g. “a yellow shirt.”
2. Elicit: “How much is/ are the _____________ ?” Or students can say: “It’s cheap.” / “It’s on sale.” / “They’re expensive.”
PART THREE: Other Materials

MATCHING CARDS make great reinforcement. They can be divided words (super market), compound words (post office), phrasal verbs (wake up), phrases (eat lunch), times + activities, numbers + words, pictures + words, or whatever else your imagination can produce to help your students.

 Worksheets that can be completed only by using the matched cards are especially effective: Students match the cards first manually, then orally, then in writing.

LARGE ALPHABET CARDS + MONEY CARDS: We demonstrated this together.

STUDENT – STUDENT SPELLING DICTATION: Students work in pairs. Each one gets 5 or 6 words. Student A spells them orally while Student B writes them, and then vice versa. The teacher does not correct the mistakes; instead, s/he informs Student A which words Student B has misspelled. The students then help each other correct their mistakes.


REINFORCEMENT PICTURE WORKSHEETS after lots of picture card practice: The words are at the top of the page. Students write them under the correct pictures.

SCRAMBLED SENTENCES GAMES are great for practicing subject – verb – object word order. Use sentences already practiced orally.

BINGO GAMES: Students create their own bingo cards: They choose and write on a grid 9 words from your list of words on the board or screen. The student who wins gets a piece of candy (or fruit, etc.) and then has to call the words for the next game.

School Text Lined Font: Download it for free!

How to create BLANK LINES: Use the backward slash key, right below the backspace key, for a light middle line, and the hyphen key for a very dark middle line. To continue the line through an empty space between words, hit the backward slash key (or hyphen key) instead of the space bar.