

Give Me Some Advice

This is an idea I first used successfully in ESOL classes, but it crosses over well into E2E (Entry to Employment) and other adult learning programmes.

I have taken it from a book that I have written and published myself:

'58 quick activities that don't need a photocopier'.

If you'd like to know more about this book or to get a copy, please contact me at the email address below.

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Main Curriculum References

Actual references covered will depend on the learner group and how the resource is used.

Reading the problems

Rs/E3.2 Use explicit and implicit knowledge of different types of word, of word order and of possible plausible meanings, to help decode unfamiliar words and predict meaning.

Writing down possible solutions (if checked by tutor for grammar and spelling)

Ws/E3.1 L1.1 write in complete sentences

Ws/E3.2 L1.2 L2.2 use correct basic grammar, e.g. appropriate verb tense, subject-verb agreement

Ws/E3.3 L1.3 L2.4 use punctuation correctly, e.g. capital letters, full stops, question marks

Ws/L2.3 use pronouns so that their meaning is clear

Ww/E3.1 L1.1 L2.1 spell words correctly

Responding to / summarising the advice given

SLlr/E3.5 listen to and respond appropriately to other points of view

SLlr/L2.4 respond to criticism and criticise constructively

SLc/E3.1 speak clearly to be heard and understood using appropriate clarity, speed and phrasing

SLc/L1.1 speak clearly in a way which suits the situation

SLc/L2.1 speak clearly and confidently in a way which suits the situation

SLc/L1.4 present information and ideas in a logical sequence and include detail and develop ideas where appropriate

SLc/L2.4 present information & ideas in a logical sequence and provide further detail and development to clarify or confirm understanding

Give me some advice

This activity has its origins in humanistic teaching, and will work best once students have got to know each other a little bit. It gives everyone the chance to offer each other advice, but as the advice is all written rather than spoken it is non-threatening and gets the quieter students just as involved as the more confident ones.

1. Set the scene.

Ask 'if you have a problem, or something you'd like to change about your life, who do you go to for help in doing this?' Elicit some answers (agony aunt, family etc.), sticking on the fact that we can ask our friends/colleagues for help. Explain that as a group you are now going to give each other some advice on things you'd like to change about your lives. If there are any groans at this point, reassure students that the activity will not be embarrassing for anyone as it will mainly involve writing rather than speaking. Also, the problems need not be personal ones – they may instead relate to an individual's career or education.

2. Hand one blank piece of A4 paper to each student.

Ask each student to write two things on the paper that they'd like to change in their life, one at the top of the paper and one in the middle. Show an example. With ESOL students, I have given examples like 'I want to meet more English-speaking people', whereas with E2E I have used issues more relevant to them, e.g. 'I want to get a job on a construction site', 'I want to do a public service course at college'.

Students may also want to write something more personal to them, e.g. 'I want to give up smoking', 'I want to be more confident when speaking to people'. Make it clear, though, that the problem doesn't have to be personal one – it can be anything they would like to change in their lives.

3. Once everyone has thought of two things, the papers are folded in half and given to the tutor, who mixes them up and hands one to each student. If anyone gets their own paper back, swap again.

4. Students then read the problems in front of them and write down one piece of good advice to help with each problem. Once this is done papers are swapped again and the process is repeated. Keep swapping until everyone has had a chance to advise everyone else (Obviously with a very big group this would not be possible so set a limit, e.g. write advice for five people).

5. Once everyone has advised other people, students get their own papers back and read through the advice. Unless you think it inappropriate, ask some students to comment on the advice they've been given, choosing the best and worst advice they've received.

The tutor's role in all of this:

- I've usually tried to combine several roles when running this activity. On one hand I'm a controller, checking that papers are getting swapped around often enough and that everyone knows what to do.
- I'm also an assessor; as I circulate, I pick up on bad spellings/grammar and attempt to get students to self-correct.
- Finally, I also try to be an active participant. I add my own A4 paper with problems to the activity, which has the effect of levelling the playing field and also giving students extra motivation in that they may be able to help out their tutor!