

Create Your Own Sporting Event

The topic of sports is a favorite of many students; this lesson plan helps students learn and use language associated with sports. In the final activity, students use their imaginations and language skills to create and describe their own sporting event.

The focus of this lesson is on speaking and listening, although several activities also have a written component. You should not feel obligated to do every activity in this lesson plan, but be sure to do enough scaffolding with the target language so that students are able to complete the final activity successfully.

Level: Intermediate

Focus: Discussion, group work, writing, presentation

Purpose: Students will become familiar with language related to sports, and they will be able to describe a sporting event, using appropriate language and structure.

Goal: Students will develop sports-related vocabulary, learn structures used with sports vocabulary in sentences, use language to describe someone playing a sport, and design and describe their own version of a sporting event.

Materials: Poster paper, whiteboard/blackboard and markers/chalk, markers or crayons, glue, pictures from magazines or newspapers of people engaged in sporting activities (if available)

Activity 1: Warm-up (15 minutes)

Goal: To think about and generate already-known sports vocabulary (activate schema)

1. Write the word *sports* on the board. Give students two minutes to think about this topic.
2. Have students form pairs or groups of three and brainstorm lists of words associated with sports. Encourage them to think of any words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs) related to this topic—for example, *ball* (noun), *fast* (adjective), *quickly* (adverb), *throw* (verb).
3. After five minutes, ask each pair/group to write their words on the board (if space allows), or elicit words from students and write them on the board.
4. When all groups have contributed, ask students to identify the types of words used: nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs. Categorize the words on the board (you might use colored chalk or markers to do this).
5. Focus on the nouns—specifically, names of sports. Ask students if they have had any experience with these sports. Encourage discussion by asking students questions such as:
 - Which sports have you played?
 - What sports have you seen on television?
 - What sports have you heard on the radio?

6. Tell the students that they are beginning a unit on sports that will culminate in a group project based on developing their own sporting event. Tell them that as they move through the activities they are to keep in mind the concept of a large sporting event, such as the Olympics, the World Cup tournament, or the Asian Games. To help students begin to imagine such an event, ask them questions such as these:
- Have you ever watched the Olympics (or a similar sporting event or tournament) on television?
 - Which sports do you most like to watch? Why?
 - Which sports are you least interested in watching? Why?
 - Are all sports open to both men and women? If not, why not?
 - In the recent past, what countries have hosted the Olympics or some other large sporting event? Have any nearby countries hosted a large sporting event?

Activity 2: Vocabulary Build (20 minutes)

Goal: To develop sports vocabulary

1. Elicit the names of more sports from students. If possible, use visuals. A good source of visuals for sports is www.mes-english.com/flashcards; another is www.esl-kids.com/flash-cards/flashcards.html. These web resources are free, and the websites have lots of additional puzzles, games, and activities.

If necessary, ask specific questions to elicit different sports:

- What sports are played in the summer?
- What sports are played in the fall?
- What sports are played in the winter?
- What sports do people play individually?
- What sports do people play in teams?
- What sports use water?
- What sports use balls?
- What sports do you need to wear special clothes for?

As students say them, write the names of the sports on the board. Try to have a minimum of 15–20 sports on the board. Here is a list of sports supported by flashcards from the above websites:

baseball	(American) football	tennis
golf	soccer (football)	rugby
basketball	gymnastics	cricket
ice hockey	field hockey	boxing
badminton	volleyball	swimming
Ping-Pong (table tennis)	judo	karate

You and your students may be able to think of many others.

2. Have students form small groups and ask them to list, in order, the most popular sports in their country. They should list at least three sports. Ask them why they think those particular sports are popular. Students should provide reasons (in complete sentences) for the popularity of these sports. For example, they could say, "Badminton is popular because it's easy to learn, anyone can play it, and the equipment isn't expensive."
3. Now ask students which sports are the least popular in their country. Have students, still in their small groups, rank the least popular sports. Again, they should mention at least three sports and give reasons why those sports are not popular in their country. For example, "Skiing isn't popular because there isn't enough snow in [name of the country], and the landscape is flat."
4. Tell students that one person from each group will present the list of most popular sports, and another student will present the list of least popular sports to the class, and the presenters will explain why their group chose those sports. Be sure that the students are prepared to justify their answers.
5. As a whole class, have students compare lists. Are the lists and the reasons the same? Different? Encourage students to discuss the similarities and differences in the lists and to defend the reasons they give for a sport's popularity or lack of popularity. You might ask a group with an unusual list to defend its choices to the rest of the class.

During the discussion and after you finish, leave the list of sports on the board.

Activity 3: Language Focus (60 minutes)

Goal: To practice the grammar associated with speaking or writing about sports, specifically using the correct verbs with different sports

1. On the board, draw the following chart:

Play	Do	Go

Explain to students that when people speak about sports in English, they use the above three verbs to describe the action: we *play* baseball, we *do* gymnastics, we *go* swimming, etc. Have students get into small groups. Then ask them to refer to the list of sports elicited in the previous activity and to categorize the sports according to the verb that is used with each sport. Tell students they can add other sports to their lists.

2. Elicit the categorization from the students. Here is what a sample chart could look like:

Play	Do	Go
baseball football golf basketball rugby badminton volleyball Ping-Pong (table tennis) cricket tennis	gymnastics judo karate yoga	ice skating skiing snowboarding hiking running jogging swimming

Ask students why each verb is used with some sports and not with others. (A quick answer is that *play* is often used with team sports or sports with more than one person playing, *do* is used for sports that are individual activities, and *go* is used for sports whose most common form is a gerund.)

3. Show a picture to the class of someone engaged in a sporting activity. (If you don't have a picture, use the board to draw a person doing something athletic.) Ask students what the person is doing.

Now you have two options. Your choice of Option 1 or Option 2 will depend on what you want your students to write about in the next step—a paragraph about sports or a paragraph that is more general.

Option 1 is to focus on sports. Ask sports-related questions about the person in the picture:

- Why does she like this sport?
- When did she begin playing this sport?
- How did she learn to play this sport?
- How often does she practice?

Write students' answers on the board.

Option 2 is to ask students to use their imagination to come up with more information about the person in the picture.

- Where does she live?
- What else does she like to do besides this sport?
- What kinds of food does she eat?
- What kind of music does she like?
- Does she like movies?
- Who is her favorite actor?
- Where does she go to school?
- What subjects does she like to study in school?

Write students' answers on the board.

For both Option 1 and Option 2, if the class has been practicing a particular tense or language structure, you can ask questions that will elicit that structure from the students. To practice the present simple tense, you could ask about the person's routine (for example, "How often does she play tennis?"). To practice the past tense, ask what sport the person played at a specific time in the past ("When did he swim?" or "What sport did he play yesterday?"). If the class is practicing the future tense, ask what the person will do after he or she has finished the sporting activity. If the class has been practicing the present perfect, ask what other sports the person might have done or played in the past or how long the person has played the sport shown in the picture. Here are examples of possible answers:

She *plays* tennis every day.

He *swam* yesterday.

After she *plays* volleyball, she *will do* her homework.

She *will do* gymnastics tomorrow.

He *has played* football for three years.

Note: If you have a picture of a famous athlete, you can elicit information about this particular person instead of drawing a picture on the board. Or, if you draw an athlete on the board, it might help to contextualize the activity if you or the class names the person on the board after a famous athlete your students know.

4. As a class, decide how the information you have generated could be used to write a paragraph about the athlete. Together, “write” a paragraph on the board about the person in the picture. (This is an optional step. If your students are familiar with writing paragraphs, they might not need the extra practice this class-writing task would give them. Later in this activity, students will write a paragraph either in pairs or individually, so you can decide whether this step is necessary.)
5. Distribute pictures of people engaged in sporting activities. (If no pictures are available, write the names of different sports on slips of paper, enough for each student in the class. It’s all right if more than one student gets the same sport. Ask students to draw a picture of a person doing or playing that sport. Give a quick time limit to keep students from putting too much effort into the drawing—that isn’t the point of the exercise. Then collect the pictures and redistribute them among students.)
6. Ask students to individually write a rough draft of a paragraph about the person in the picture they received. For example, if the picture shows someone playing soccer, the paragraph might include information about the person’s soccer team, likes and dislikes, habits, etc. Giving students sentence prompts can get them on the right track; examples include:

She likes to _____. [play football]

He doesn’t like to _____. [play in the rain]

She loves _____. [to play in the snow]

He hates _____. [being cold]

She never _____. [plays with her sister]

He always _____. [catches the ball]

Her team _____. [practices hard]

Another choice is to have students write the paragraphs in pairs, collaborating equally on the task.

7. If time permits, students should exchange papers for peer review work. Remind students to focus first on the ideas in the paragraph and then on mechanics (grammar, spelling, etc.). Tell students to pay particular attention to whether the verbs *play*, *do*, and *go*, when used with sporting activities, have been used correctly.
8. Optional: Have students revise their paragraphs as homework.

Activity 4: Create Your Own Sporting Event (approximately 100 minutes)

Goal: To use sports language to design and describe an original sporting event

1. Tell students (or remind them, if you have told them before) that they are going to create an idea for their own sporting event. Elicit names of sporting events that the students have heard of—for example, the Olympics, the World Cup tournament, the Asian Games, and the Special Olympics.
2. To clarify and contextualize this activity, students will listen to the text on a postcard sent by a girl attending a sporting event. If you have a postcard available, hold it up and ask students what it is. Ask, “When do people send postcards?” (People usually send postcards when they are on vacation, when they take a trip, etc.) Tell the students they are going to hear what a girl attending a sporting event has written to her parents.
3. Write the following pre-listening questions on the board:
 - Where is she?
 - What’s the weather like?
 - What sport does the girl like the most?
4. Read the following text:

Dear Mom and Dad,

Greetings from South Africa! The weather is beautiful here during the day, which I guess is normal since it's June, but it does get cold at night. I'm really enjoying my trip to the World Cup. The people here are very friendly. We're staying in a nice, clean hostel, and we have lots of different food to choose from: Indian, Dutch, and even Malaysian restaurants are everywhere! We can walk to most matches, or else we can take a bus if they are too far away. Over the next two weeks we'll get to see a lot of matches! I'm in heaven because, as you know, soccer is my all-time favorite sport.

See you soon!

Love,
Vicky

5. After students have listened to the text, have them quickly compare their answers to the pre-listening questions. Elicit answers from the whole class.
6. Draw the following chart on the board:

Where	
When	
What	
Accommodation	
Food	
Transportation	
Duration	

Ask students to draw the chart in their notebooks.

7. Read the text again. Ask students to take notes for each category, based on what they hear. Read the text at least twice.
8. Have students compare their charts. Elicit information from the whole class and write it in the chart on the board. Do not erase the filled-in chart, which might look something like this:

Where	South Africa
When	June
What	World Cup
Accommodation	hostel
Food	Indian, Dutch, Malaysian
Transportation	walking, bus
Duration	two weeks

9. Ask students, in groups, to identify the important factors that make a sporting event successful. After the groups brainstorm for a few minutes, elicit factors from the whole class and write them on the board. Factors should include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Type of event
 - Location and venue
 - Sports that are included
 - Amenities nearby
 - Season
 - Length of the event
 - Theme of the event (season, region, type of sports played)
 - Athletes (who they are, how many there are, where they are from, etc.)

Ask which factors were addressed in the postcard, looping back to the filled-in chart on the board.

10. Ask students, as a class, to decide which factors are most important to the success of a sporting event. Divide the class into groups and assign each group a factor. Ask each group to develop criteria, related to their factor, that make a sporting event successful. For example, if a group is assigned the factor “location and venue,” important criteria would include the size of the venue, accessibility of the location and venue, condition of the venue, and so on. Give groups five to ten minutes to develop their criteria.
11. Have each group present to the class its criteria for the factor it was assigned. Write all these criteria on a large sheet of paper to be posted on the classroom wall. Students will need to refer to these criteria for activities that follow.

The class has now developed a schematic for a successful sporting event.

12. (This is an optional activity for classes with access to the Internet.) With students in small groups, assign each group a sporting event to research on the Internet. Events could be those mentioned in Step 1 above or other events that are unique to your country or region. Tell students to work in groups to find out as much information about that particular event as they can; ask them to summarize their findings and then present them to the rest of the class.

13. Again divide the class into groups of four or five students. Explain that each group has been given the task of organizing a sporting event for their country. In their groups, they must do the following:
- a. Choose the theme or identity of their event: Is it a regional event? A seasonal event? An event based on a particular sport or sports? An event based on the kind of athletes who will be invited?
 - b. Choose a venue or venues.
 - c. Decide whether the event will focus on one sport or whether many sports will be played, and choose the sports that will be included.
 - d. Identify accommodations for athletes and spectators.
 - e. Specify the length of time the event will last.
 - f. Identify the time of year when the event will take place.
 - g. Incorporate a cultural aspect into the event (for example, a regional dance or exhibition of a sport that is not included in the competition).

Emphasize that the students should be able to justify each of their choices. It is not enough, for example, to say, “We want to include football because we like it.” A better answer would be, “We want to include football because it is a very popular sport, and we will get many spectators for football games.”

14. Tell students they are to design a poster, featuring both pictures and text, that best presents their sporting event. Posters should include artwork (hand-drawn pictures or pictures clipped from magazines or printed from the Internet—depending on what you decide and on the resources available) and language describing the various aspects (a through g listed in Step 13) of the sporting event.
15. Students will prepare to present their poster and ideas to a committee that will select the best sporting event to sponsor. Each member of the group must take part in the presentation—students can divide presentation tasks as they wish, but each member must present something. Each group will have a minimum of five minutes and a maximum of ten minutes for their presentation. (You may want to set a precise amount of time, such as seven minutes. The time limit will depend on the amount of time available, the number of groups, the students’ speaking ability, and other factors.) If necessary, assign students specific roles for the presentation: one student can present the introduction, another student can announce which sports will be played or give details about the one sport for a one-sport program, another student can describe the amenities for visitors, and so on.
16. Invite five or six students from another class, or several teachers, to come to your class. (You’ll have to arrange this in advance.) Explain that they are the “Sporting Committee.” They will hear a number of presentations on possible sporting events, and their job will be to select the sporting event that they feel is best. Show the committee members the schema of important criteria for successful

sporting events (developed in Step 11) and ask the committee to use these criteria as a guide when making a decision. Give the committee copies of the schema, if possible, and ask the committee to make notes on each presentation.

17. Each group presents its sporting event and poster.
18. After each group has presented, ask the committee to compare notes and choose the sporting event that is best for the country. Thank the committee and send them on their way.
19. After the committee has left, ask the students why they think the committee chose a particular sporting event. Once again, look at the criteria and identify how the winning event incorporated all the important elements, and how the winning group justified its choices. Ask whether the class as a whole agrees with the committee's decision. Take a quick vote to see which presentation students thought was best, first instructing students not to vote for their own group.
20. Ask students to compare the sporting events that the groups proposed. Guide the discussion with such questions as:
 - Which group has the most/least sports in their event?
 - Which group will have the most/least participants?
 - Which group will invite participants from the most countries?
 - Which group will have the most spectators attend their event? Why?
 - Which event will be the most expensive to host? Why?
 - Which event will be the least expensive? Why?
 - Which event would each student most like to attend, and why?

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