



# Homework as a cornerstone of students' learning process

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# 'Homework, groanwork, Put it down and moanwork.'

- What is homework?
- The role of homework

# Focus on homework

## **Homework Excuses**

- Level     Pre-intermediate and above
- Time     In class   45-50 minutes (optional)  
            Homework   30-40 minutes
- Aims     To show the students that the teacher knows all  
            of the homework excuses already!

# Focus on homework

## **Homework Excuses**

### Procedure

1. Put the students into pairs and ask them to think of the worst excuse they have ever given to a teacher for not doing their homework.
2. Ask the students to recount these excuses to the whole class.

# Focus on homework

## **Homework Excuses**

3. For homework, ask the students to think of the best excuse ever. They should write it down and bring it to the next class.
4. Collect and correct the work.
5. In the following lesson, hold the 'Best Excuse Oscar' award ceremony. Ask the students to say their best excuses in front of the whole class. If they are particularly brave, they can act out giving excuse to a teacher, using their best dramatic skills. Decide on the best, and then give the student an 'Oscar'.

# Homework Excuses

- I didn't do it because I spent all night doing the previous night's homework.
- I skipped it to spite you and your authority.
- I have a life.
- It wasn't challenging enough.
- It was too challenging.
- I just ... didn't feel like it.
- My cat pissed on it thinking it was a newspaper that we put down for her.
- I'm failing anyway, so what's the point?

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# Homework Excuses

- We had homework?
- The bus seat was too wet to finish it this morning.
- History repeats itself. I didn't do my homework last week.
- I couldn't find a writing utensil.
- I didn't finish copying it yet.
- It is absent.
- It is on vacation.

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# Focus on lexis

## Use it!

- Level Elementary and above (the level is determined by the lexical items you use for the activity)
- Time In class 10-15 minutes  
Homework 40 minutes+
- Aims To ensure that students use language from the class and gain confidence in speaking English.



# Use it!

## Preparation

Choose a list of idiomatic expressions for the students to focus on, and write these on slips of paper. There should be one for each student in class.

## Procedure

1. At the end of a lesson, give each student an idiomatic expression on a slip of paper. Ask them to find out the meaning of the expression for homework, and to use the idiom in a conversation with another learner of English. Remind them that they need to consider the formality or informality of the language and in which context it is used.

See the examples for lexical items that can be used.

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# Use it!

2. Ask students to note down the responses they receive when they use the expressions.
3. During the next lesson, the students should tell each other the responses they received. For example, 'What's up?' the response may be: 'Nothing, just chillin.'

# Match the expressions with the day

- Level Pre-intermediate and above
- Time In class 15-20 minutes  
Homework 50 minutes +
- Aims To review set expressions that are used on certain occasions in various subjects; to provide an opportunity for students to find out about other cultures and to express information about their own.

# Match the expressions with the day

## Preparation

Find out the national holidays and special festivals that the students celebrate. Copy a list of English expressions connected with festivals and holidays that you'd like the students to use in their homework activity. (The example shows common Western festivals, but the students may be asked to focus on British or US days as a way of learning about other cultures.)

## Procedure

1. List the months of the year on the board, asking the students to help you, and then ask them to think of special days in the year.
2. Listen to the students' feedback, and write down their suggestions under the correct month.

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# Match the expressions with the day

3. For homework, hand out your list of expressions and ask the students to find out when these phrases would be said.
4. In the next lesson, go over the students' answers at the beginning of the class.

## Follow-up

Ask students to think of a special day in their own culture. Ask them to write about that special day and translate the expressions they might use on that day. Collect the work and display it on the classroom walls. Allow time during lessons for the students to read the work.

# Match the expressions with the day

## Variation

Give higher-level students this questionnaire on set expressions to complete at home. In the following lesson, go over the answers with the students and ask them to discuss the differences between what you say in English and what you say in their own languages. (See the questionnaire).

# Oxymorons

- Level Upper-intermediate and above
- Time In class 15 minutes +  
Homework 60 minutes +
- Aim To present oxymorons to students, to add interesting lexical items to the students' vocabulary and to motivate the students with interesting words and expressions.

# Oxymorons

## Procedure

1. At the end of a lesson, ask the students whether they know what an oxymoron is. If they don't, put a few examples on the board (see the list). And ask the students to try to work out what the definition of an oxymoron is. Ask the students for their answers, and then explain that it is a contradiction in terms.
2. For homework, ask the students to find more examples of oxymorons. (This is useful for ideas to do with vocabulary, including oxymorons: **[www.fun-with-words.com](http://www.fun-with-words.com)**)
3. In the next lesson, ask the students to exchange their oxymorons (with meanings) with other students in the class as a warm-up.



# Focus on Language

## **Colour the text**

- Level Elementary and above
- Time In class 15 minutes  
Homework 10-15 minutes
- Aims To review various tenses in a memorable way.  
This may help students who find visual techniques effective when learning.

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# Colour the text

## Preparation

Find a suitable text using various tenses (see the example).

## Procedure

1. Give out the text at the end of the class. Tell the students that they are going to colour-code the text. For example, ask them to colour the present tenses in red, the past tenses in blue, and the future tenses in green. Work through an example in class.
2. In the following lesson, collect the texts and check whether the students have identified the structures correctly. This is especially useful if you want to check that students have understood what you have taught.

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# Colour the text

## Variation

You could ask more advanced students to make the code a little more complicated: definite articles in yellow, indefinite articles in purple, countable nouns in pink, uncountable nouns in grey, conjunctions in orange, and so on.

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# Focus on language

## Quiz

- Level Intermediate and above
- Time In class 10 minutes  
Homework 15 minutes+
- Aims To review various tenses in a fun way and engage students in thinking about the language, as well as using it.

# Focus on language

## Quiz

### Preparation

Photocopy a quiz sheet for each student in class. (See the example)

### Procedure

1. At the end of a lesson, hand out a quiz sheet to each student and ask them to complete it at home.
2. Discuss the answers in the following lesson.

### Follow-up

Ask the students to write their own quiz questions; collect them in and then either set them in class or redistribute them for further homework.

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# Focus on language **Quiz**

Variation

*Fun with English*

This is a good exercise for the last lesson with an advanced group. Make it competitive by seeing which group manages to answer the most questions correctly. If you are short of time, only do the first part (questions 1-9).

See the handout!

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# Focus on writing **Industrial tribunal (writing a letter)**

- Level Intermediate and above
- Time In class 15-20 minutes  
Homework 60 minutes+
- Aims To encourage students to write letters in English, developing their letter-writing skills especially as to letter format.

## Materials

Photocopy the situations like the ones on the handout to use as an example.

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# Focus on writing

## **Industrial tribunal**

### Procedure

1. Start the activity by explaining to the students what an industrial tribunal is (a court of justice whose job is to deal with cases related to work).
2. Ask students to read all four situations without discussing them. Tell students that the four people believe they have been unfairly dismissed by their employer.

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# Focus on writing

## **Industrial tribunal**

3. Students then imagine that they are members of a jury whose job is to decide :
  - a. what the real motivation for the dismissals were
  - b. whether they really have been unfairly dismissed and
  - c. if so what kind of compensation should be given to them.

# Focus on writing

## **Industrial tribunal**

4. For homework, ask the students to choose one of the four people and write a letter of complaint to their ex-boss. Students should try and justify what they did and why they should be reinstated.
5. In the following lesson, collect the work, correct it and then, in the next lesson, allow the students time to read their letters.

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# Focus on receptive skills

## **Song lyrics**

- Level Upper-intermediate and above
- Time In class 15-20 minutes  
Homework 30-50 minutes
- Aims To encourage students to listen to songs in English; they will also practise their writing skills as they will answer in complete sentences or will have to fill in the missing words; to practise the ability to listen for detail.

# Song lyrics

## Materials

A song on disc and the means to play it.

## Preparation

Copy out the lyrics of a song which you can play in class.

## Procedure

1. Give the students the lyrics, and dictate questions to be answered. Ask the students for homework to read the lyrics and answer the questions.

# Song lyrics

## Examples

- What type of music do you think it is?
  - Who is singing?
  - What is he or she singing about?
  - Is it happy or sad?
  - Where is the song set?
  - Has something just happened?
  - Is something about to happen?
2. When the students are back in class, ask them to compare their answers with each other. Collect their answers and play the song to them.

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# Song lyrics

## Variation

1. At the end of a lesson, tell the students that you would like them to choose a song in English and transcribe the lyrics for homework. They should bring the transcribed lyrics to show you and the other students.
2. In order to check the lyrics, either borrow the music or look up the lyrics on the Internet.
3. Use the songs in class for varying listening tasks.

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**THANK YOU!**

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