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## GET MOVING! HOW TO GET LEARNERS OUT OF THEIR SEATS

By Simon Mumford

Movement is an important element in learning for a large proportion of our learners. Apparently, for about 37%, it is their preferred learning style, and almost all learners will benefit from getting up and moving about at some point in the lesson. Even in the most 'static' classroom, with fixed desks, it is still possible to get learners moving, even if only standing up and moving around on the spot, and most teaching rooms can accommodate more movement than many of us usually incorporate into our lessons. It is largely a case of will and creativity on the part of the teacher.

Although there is obviously some overlap, the basic types of activity I am suggesting to get learners up and moving fall into three categories:

- Process Activities
- Mingles
- Role-plays

The following activities have proved successful in my own classes with a range of learners at different language levels. Most can be adapted to suit other classes.

### PROCESS ACTIVITIES

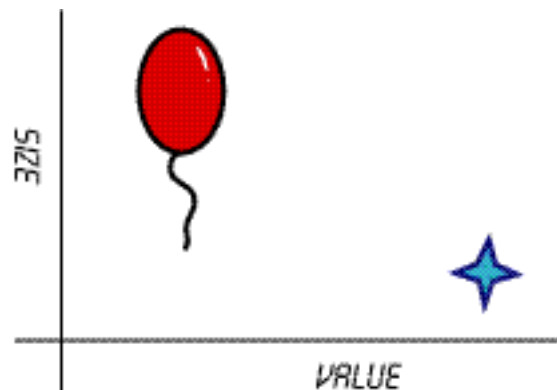
What I call 'process' activities are those in which learners move as an integral part of the language learning process e.g. they move to a certain part of the room to represent a word, or they rush to touch something in response to a cue from the teacher.

#### Word Graph

Write about 15 - 20 words you want to teach / revise on the board. These should be concrete nouns (e.g. car, diamond, balloon), and it is worth checking that the words are suitable for this activity.

Draw a graph on the board and label the axes 'size' and 'value'. Choose one of the words and plot it on the graph. The word 'diamond' for example, will be well up on the value axis, but near the bottom of the size axis.

Next, clear the classroom floor as much as possible. Tell the class that the graph has been transferred to the floor, and show everyone where the axes are e.g. along two walls of the classroom, at right angles. Stand somewhere on the graph and ask which of the words you have already dealt with they think is represented by your position. Learners look at the list of words and try to work out which word you represent.



Get two or three volunteers to choose words and represent them on the graph for others to guess.

When the words have been guessed, elicit comparisons from the class such as "a car is bigger than a diamond", "a diamond is worth more / is more expensive than a flower." This should be clear from the relative positions of the words on the graph.

Finally, give each learner a different word on a piece of paper, and tell them to find their places on the graph. They make comparisons with their words and the words of the learners who are standing near them.

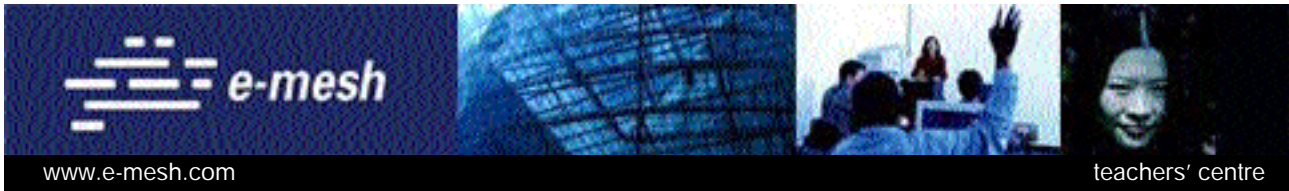
A variation of this activity is to have different labels for the axes e.g. useful / dangerous, beautiful / unusual.

#### Word Profiles

Write a list of words that you want learners to learn or revise on the board, and ask everyone to read them aloud.

Divide the class into teams of five learners, with each team sitting in a row.

The first learner chooses a word from the list, writes it on a piece of paper, and passes it to the second learner, who turns the paper over and writes the number of syllables in the word. The third learner marks the stressed syllable (eg Ooo for 'wonderful' or oOo for 'computer'). The fourth learner writes the part of speech (noun, verb, adjective etc). The fifth learner compares the profile of the word with the list on the board and has to guess which word it is. He turns the paper over and if it is the



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right answer the first learner moves up to the end, everyone moves up one place, and the learner who was formerly second chooses a new word. If the answer is wrong, the same learner must try a new word.

If the activity is organised as a race, the winning team is the first one to get back to their starting positions.

### Word Hunt

Give three cards containing three target words (one on each card) to each pair of learners. They invent a sentence including the three words, and write it out on a piece of paper, leaving three blanks in the places of the three words. They also write their names on the paper.

The teacher collects all the sentences and cards, and redistributes the sentences to different pairs. While pairs are discussing what they think the missing words are, the teacher spreads the word cards around the room on desks and chairs. Then the pairs move around to check or find 'their' missing words.

Finally, learners write in the missing words and take them back to the original writers for checking.

## MINGLES

These activities aim to get all the learners moving and interacting with one another, with the aim of giving them a lot of oral practice with different people in a short time.

### New Words for Old

Learners take a piece of paper and write a word that they know but that they think few other learners will know. On the back of the paper they write the meaning. They mingle and show each other their words, and explain their meanings.

Learners then swap papers and make new pairs to 'teach' each other these new words. The meanings are on the back of the paper, but this should be used as a last resort - as far as possible explanations should be given from memory. Everyone should exchange papers at least four or five times.

At the end, everyone writes down all the words and meanings they can remember.

### Full Circle

Write the words you want to practise with their meanings on the board. Tell half the class their job is to remember all the words and meanings.

Meanwhile, give the other learners one of the words each and tell them to write a question that will elicit that word e.g. towel - What do you use to dry yourself after a bath?

Learners then stand in concentric circles - one circle within another. An inner circle of half the learners with questions faces outward, and an equal number of learners in the outer circle faces inwards. The inner circle learners ask their questions and the outer circle learners answer.

Then all the learners on the outside move round one place to answer another question. Continue this procedure until all have had the chance to answer all questions.

### Guess Who?

Half the class stands in a line facing the wall with their eyes closed. The learners from the other half of the class each stand behind a 'blind' learner. The 'seeing' learner starts a conversation, or asks questions, and the 'blind' learner tries to guess who is talking by listening carefully to their voice. The speaker can make things more difficult by disguising their voice and giving false information.

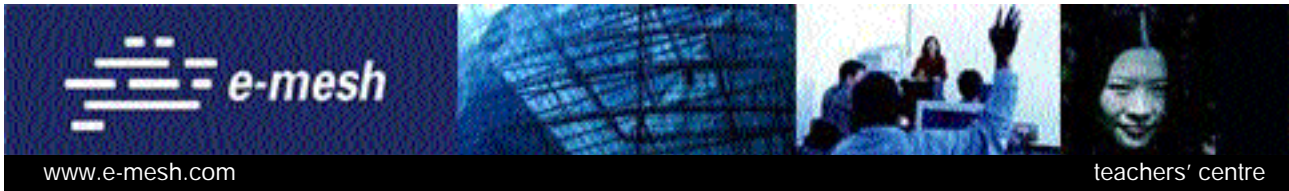
The learners can either have a general conversation (with both learners speaking), or they could be given a particular topic to discuss. After a minute or two the teacher gives the signal to stop. The 'blind' learners guess their partner's identity and then the 'seeing' learners move several places along the line and start again with a different partner. Continue for five or six exchanges before 'blind' and 'seeing' learners change roles.

### Silent Questions

Instead of asking each other questions (orally), learners mingle and show written questions and answers. If you want to practise the Past Simple tense, for example, give learners two pieces of paper each, and on one they write two questions (one on each side of the paper) beginning 'Did you ...?' On the other piece of paper they write 'Yes I did' on one side, and on the other 'No I didn't'. Learners mingle, show each other their questions and respond by showing the appropriate answer. This is a completely silent activity and good for calming down a restless class.

## ROLE-PLAYS

Here the classroom becomes a different place and represents a setting for a role-play to take place.



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### Guided Tour

The classroom becomes a tourist attraction e.g. a town or museum.

Split the class into four groups. One learner in each group is a 'tour guide' who shows the others (the 'tourists') around. (I used this as a post-reading activity. We had read an article about a village that was a local tourist attraction, and the 'tour' was of the different places in that village.) Other possibilities could be someone who knows the school showing around those who are new, or a learner showing the attractions of his / her hometown to those who do not know it.

Explain that there are four things to see in this place, one at each corner of the room. A different group starts in each corner, and they move to a new location every few minutes when you give the signal. The guides' job is to tell the tourists about the place they are visiting and the tourists can ask questions.

### Family Visits

In this activity, learners move from group to group. Before you begin the activity, discuss reasons why people go to each other's homes and give them some phrases to use e.g. 'I was just passing', 'I came to borrow .../ I'm returning your ...', 'I just came to wish you (happy birthday).' You could also provide some phrases for leave-taking such as 'I really must be going', 'Is that the time?' or 'Sorry, I can't stay.'

Put learners in groups of four and, in different parts of the classroom, arrange groups of four chairs. Each group of learners represents a family in their home. The aim is for all the members of a family to visit each of the other families. Give the family members roles (e.g. mother, father, son, and daughter) and nominate one to stay at home, and be the host / hostess. They have two minutes to decide on a fact or a piece of family news to tell visitors or the people they visit.

The learners go to other families, giving reasons for their visit, and are invited to sit down by the host / hostess. After a few minutes of conversation, they make their excuses, leave and go to visit another family. In order to relieve the person staying at home, one returns after two visits, one after four and one after six (or whatever numbers work for your class.)

At the end, ask different groups which fact or piece of news they found out about other families.

### Three Dimensions

You will need a picture of a room - the bigger the picture

the better. Stick it where everyone can see it clearly, and do some work on describing it. Draw a plan of the room on the board and add furniture to any space not covered by the original picture. Tell the learners that the classroom has become this room, and explain where things in the picture are e.g. 'The window is here, where you can see the whiteboard.'

Once established, the room can be used for several purposes, depending on the language level of the learners. In pairs, Beginners could simply walk around the room describing it; Intermediate learners could role-play guests and admiring visitors talking about the things in the room as they walk around smelling flowers, taking books out of the book case, looking at the pictures on the wall, and so on; Advanced learners could be interior designers, discussing how they are going to change the room: 'This fireplace will have to go !'

Many of these ideas can easily be adapted to take account of the different language levels and different situations, or maybe they will just be the spur for you to make up activities of your own. But remember! Activities should be just that - Active!

Simon Mumford is an English teacher at the Aegean University, Izmir, Turkey, and a Director of Studies at an Embassy CES Summer School in London. He is a regular presenter at the Izmir British Council Teachers' Centre.