How to run the activities

Step-by-step instructions, grouped by phase · companion to the E.P.I. Handbook

Modelling & awareness

Sentence builder read-aloud

Listening / Reading · first contact with the chunks

1. Project the sentence builder. Build a sentence from it and say it aloud twice.
2. Students point to, or write down, the chunks they heard.
3. Speed up and mix the order as they get it right.

Tip: Keep every sentence inside the grid so the input stays almost 100% understandable.

Mini-whiteboard translation

Listening / Writing · checking meaning

1. Say a target-language sentence made from the builder.
2. Students write the English meaning on mini-whiteboards and hold them up.
3. Scan the boards, then re-say the sentence so everyone hears it once more.

Right or wrong?

Listening · noticing sounds and forms

1. Say a word or chunk twice: once correctly, once with one sound or ending changed.
2. Students show 1 or 2 for the correct version.
3. Ask a volunteer what changed.

Tip: Use it to draw attention to a feature you want noticed (an ending, a tone, a silent letter).

Bingo

Listening · recognising chunks

1. Students pick six chunks from the builder and write them in a grid.
2. Read sentences that contain the chunks, in random order.
3. Students cross off what they hear; first full grid calls out and reads it back.

Echo and fade

Speaking · pronunciation with support

1. Say a chunk; the class repeats it.
2. Repeat with a pause of a few seconds before they answer.
3. Finally show only the English and let them produce it without your model.

Tip: The pause matters: repeating straight after you only proves short-term copying.

Odd one out

Reading · meaning and categories

1. Show groups of four chunks, one of which doesn't fit (by meaning or grammar).
2. Pairs pick the odd one and give a reason.

Match-up

Reading · form–meaning links

1. Two jumbled columns: target-language chunks and English meanings.
2. Students draw lines or number the pairs against the clock.

Missing letters

Writing · spelling and decoding

1. Give chunks with some letters (or characters/tone marks) removed, plus the English.
2. Students complete them, then check against the builder.

Anagrams

Reading / Writing · word recognition

1. Scramble the letters (or syllables) of key words from the builder.
2. Students rebuild each word and write the chunk it belongs to.

Receptive processing

Narrow reading

Reading · input flooding

1. Write 3–4 short texts that are almost identical, changing only a handful of details.
2. Set one task per text: find the target-language phrase, true/false, fill a grid.
3. Finish with questions that need all the texts, so students re-read the same chunks.

Tip: This is the workhorse of the receptive phase — the overlap is the point.

Narrow listening

Listening · input flooding

1. Record or read 3–4 short monologues built from the same chunks with details changed.
2. Students fill a grid (who / where / opinion) as they listen.
3. Play again at a slightly faster pace for checking.

True or false

Listening / Reading · quick comprehension

1. Make statements about a picture, text or recording.
2. Students show T or F; ask for the correction on the false ones.

Which picture?

Listening · meaning without English

1. Show 4–6 numbered pictures.
2. Describe one using the builder's chunks; students show the number.
3. Make descriptions differ by one detail as they improve.

Stand up, sit down

Listening · whole-class response

1. Give each half of the room a chunk or category.
2. Read a text; students stand when they hear theirs, sit when they hear it again.

Dictogloss

Listening / Writing · reconstruction

1. Read a short text at normal speed twice; students note key words only.
2. In pairs, they rebuild the text as closely as they can.
3. Show the original; pairs compare and correct.

Tip: Keep the text short (4–6 sentences) and almost entirely familiar.

Running dictation

Reading / Writing / Speaking · pair relay

1. Stick a short text on the wall away from desks.
2. One partner runs, memorises a chunk, returns and dictates it; the other writes.
3. Swap roles halfway. First accurate copy wins.

Find someone who

Speaking / Reading · structured mingling

1. Give each student a grid of prompts built from the chunks ("...has a dog").
2. Students circulate asking the question form and write a name for each yes.

Spot the difference

Reading · close reading

1. Give two versions of a text with about eight differences.
2. Pairs underline and translate each difference.

Fill the grid

Listening / Reading · information transfer

1. Prepare a table (name / place / opinion / reason).
2. Students complete it from a text or recording, then compare in pairs.

Structured production

Paired translation drill

Speaking · retrieval with a partner

1. Partners share a list of English sentences with target-language answers; only one sees the answers at a time.
2. A gives the English; B says it in the target language; A confirms or corrects.
3. Swap after ten sentences.

Tip: Students do the testing, so everyone speaks at once and you circulate.

Quick-fire translation

Speaking · speed of retrieval

1. Call out English chunks from the builder.
2. Students (or a named pair) answer in the target language as fast as possible.
3. Raise the pace and mix in older chunks.

Unjumble the sentence

Reading / Writing · word order

1. Give sentences with the words (or chunks) in the wrong order.
2. Students rewrite them correctly, then translate.
3. Harder: add one extra word that doesn't belong.

Faulty translation

Reading / Writing · checking meaning closely

1. Show target-language sentences with English translations that contain one or two errors.
2. Students find and fix the errors in the English.

Delayed dictation

Listening / Writing · holding language in memory

1. Say a familiar sentence once.
2. Wait 10 seconds (count, or say a distractor) before students write.
3. They write it from memory; reveal and check.

Text reconstruction

Reading / Writing · retrieval from cues

1. Show a short text, then hide it leaving only first letters or key words.
2. Students rewrite the full text from the cues.

Disappearing text

Speaking / Reading · fading support

1. Display a short text and read it aloud together.
2. Delete a few words each round; the class still reads the whole text.
3. Continue until most of the text has gone.

Translation grid

Writing · into the target language

1. Give a grid of English sentences that recombine the builder's chunks.
2. Students translate into the target language, first with the builder, then without.

Board games (Connect 4, noughts & crosses)

Speaking · game-based retrieval

1. Fill each square of the board with an English prompt.
2. To claim a square, a student must say the prompt correctly in the target language; the partner checks with the answer key.

Guided writing from a table

Writing · scaffolded output

1. Give a table of details (name, age, place, opinion).
2. Students write a short paragraph for each row using the chunks.
3. Then rewrite one paragraph as a different person.

EARS (expansion → spontaneity)

4-3-2 fluency talks

Speaking · fluency (P. Nation's 4/3/2 technique)

1. Each student talks on a familiar topic to a partner for 4 minutes.
2. Change partner: same talk in 3 minutes. Change again: 2 minutes.
3. Same content, less time, so retrieval gets faster.

Timed retell

Speaking · automaticity

1. A student retells a short text or picture story while a partner times it.
2. Repeat with a new partner, aiming to be faster without losing accuracy.

Describe a photo

Speaking · autonomy

1. Show a photo linked to the unit.
2. Students describe it for one minute using as many unit chunks as they can.
3. Partner counts the chunks used.

Information-gap task

Speaking / Reading · real communication

1. Give partners different halves of the same information (e.g. two timetables).
2. They ask and answer questions to complete their own sheet without showing it.

Role-play with a surprise question

Speaking · spontaneity

1. Pairs rehearse a short role-play built from the unit.
2. While they perform, you (or a third student) add one unplanned question they must answer.

Class debate

Speaking · opinions and reasons

1. Give a simple motion linked to the unit.
2. Groups prepare two arguments each with opinion + reason chunks, then present and respond.

Survey and report back

Speaking / Writing · using the language for a purpose

1. Students ask five classmates a question from the unit.
2. They write up the results in three sentences.

Listen and summarise in English

Listening · gist with less support

1. Play a slightly longer recording with some new language.
2. Students write a 3-sentence English summary.

Read and respond

Reading · extended reading

1. Give a longer text that recycles the unit plus some older language.
2. Students answer a few open questions and give their own opinion.

Guided then free writing

Writing · towards independence

1. Start from a model text and a planning frame.
2. Students write their own version, then a second piece without the frame.

Message exchange

Writing · interactive writing

1. Students write a short message to a partner using the unit.
2. The partner replies; continue for three rounds.

E.P.I. and the MARS-EARS cycle are the work of Dr Gianfranco Conti — The Language Gym (gianfrancoconti.com). Unofficial, independent guide; not affiliated with or endorsed by Dr Conti. Examples and activity write-ups are original.