

## Effective Listening and Speaking Activities

When developing listening and speaking activities, teachers can conceptualize them in three distinct stages: before, during, and after listening. Activities before listening prepare students for the listening input in the presentation step of the lesson. The activities for during listening consist first of ways to make listening input comprehensible as the listening input is being presented. Then there are a number of “Listen and . . .” activities that give the teacher different ways to check comprehension both verbally and nonverbally. Finally, after-listening activities will be suggested, which are speaking activities that move from more controlled to more independent.

Here are some activities that can be incorporated into a listening and speaking lesson for young learners, which will be shown in the following section.

***Activities before Listening (Warm-Up Stage)*** Before the listening activity, prepare students for the activity by activating schemata, connecting the activity to their background knowledge, getting them to predict what they will be listening to, and introducing useful words and concepts.

### Examples of activities:

- Prepare students for listening by contextualizing and/or personalizing to make it more accessible and more realistic.
- Activate prior knowledge by showing pictures or realia (e.g., menu, movie schedule).
- Involve students in the specific topic by brainstorming what students know about it with a graphic organizer (e.g., word map, T-chart, listing).
- Review known vocabulary.
- Pre-teach unknown vocabulary.

To review and pre-teach vocabulary, teachers can use any of the following techniques to make the vocabulary items comprehensible:

- Use realia
- Use pictures
- Use flashcards
- Use facial expressions
- Mime/act out the item
- Draw on the board
- Define
- Translate
- Give examples of the item
- Personalize the item
- Give synonyms
- Give antonyms
- Use item in a sentence
- Help students examine morphemes to figure out the meaning and use of the item (e.g., review can be broken into “view” = to see and “re” = again)
- Tell what an item is not (e.g., a moose is not a person)

***Activities during Listening (Presentation Stage)*** While students are listening, be sure that they are actively listening by using visuals, such as pictures, facial expressions, body movement, asking them questions and eliciting answers, having them respond to the listening by doing, choosing, etc. Give them chances to understand the text through multiple exposures. Teachers should try to sequence the multiple exposures from easier to more challenging.

First is a list of ways a teacher can make listening input more comprehensible.

### Techniques for making input comprehensible:

- Use visual cues, like pictures and flashcards
- Use gestures and body movement
- Use realia
- Use graphic organizers (e.g., T-charts, Venn diagrams, mind maps, timelines)
- Translate difficult words (only when necessary)
- Give a definition, synonym, antonym
- Explain the word or expression
- Demonstrate
- Give an example
- Use item in a sentence
- Pronounce words clearly
- Speak slower (without distorting the natural flow)
- Repeat
- Rephrase
- Use shorter and simpler sentences and phrases
- Connect students to background knowledge

Below is a comprehensive list of listening activities. They are listed based on difficulty for students in terms of the following categories:

1. Students listen and show comprehension through action
2. Students listen and read and show comprehension through action
3. Students listen and show comprehension through production (speaking or writing)

1. **Students listen and show comprehension through action:** This is the least demanding on young learners because it does not require production, either oral or written.

- **Listen and point:** Students point to correct picture or object.
- **Listen and move:** Students respond by moving their body, i.e., Total Physical Response.
- **Listen and do:** Students complete a simple task, like putting a sticker or placing an object in the correct place.
- **Listen and raise your hand:** Teachers can cue students to raise their hand if they agree, then raise it if they disagree; or if a particular sound is heard, "Raise your hand when you hear th."

- **Listen and show your fingers:** Students can show the number of fingers to answer a question. For example, the teacher could ask, "How many animals are in the story?"
- **Listen and perform actions:** Students can perform or mime what they hear, such as animal movements, how to play sports, the steps for making a sandwich, etc.
- **Listen and follow directions:** The teacher may give instructions to close the door, turn lights off, turn the page, etc.
- **Listen and color:** The teacher gives students a picture of a boy. S/he gives instructions, such as "Color the hair brown. Color the shirt red. Color the pants blue."
- **Listen and draw:** Students listen to the teacher describe a picture of a house and have to draw it correctly. For example, the teacher might say, "There are two windows. One is on the left side. The other is on the right side. The door is in the middle."
- **Listen and make:** Students listen to the teacher explain how to make a paper plate mask with holes for the eyes and mouth.



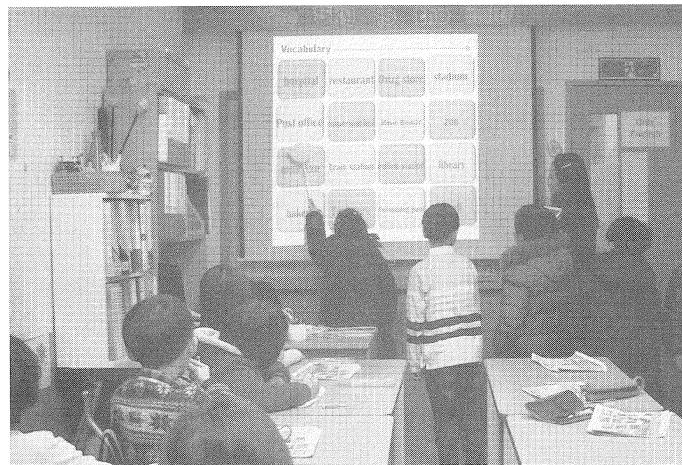
Renee Keith/Vetta Collection/iStockphoto.com

- **Listen and follow a map:** Students are given a map and draw a line on the map showing they can follow directions from point A to point B.
- **Listen and circle the correct picture:** Students are given pictures of the context of a dialog or story. They listen and circle the correct picture.
- **Listen and match:** Students can listen to a description and match it to the correct picture, person, place, object, etc.
- **Listen and sequence pictures in the correct order:** Students are given a series of pictures. The teacher could have large pictures on the board or a series of pictures on a handout. Students have to put the pictures in the correct order.
- **Listen and pick the next picture:** Students are given a choice of various pictures that show different endings of a story. They can choose the picture showing what they think happens next.

- **Listen and detect mistakes in a picture:** Students listen and pick out the mistakes in the picture that was described. For example, if the description is of a person, the teacher could say “The girl has brown hair” when the picture is of a girl with red hair.

2. **Students listen and read and show comprehension through action:** This is a bit more demanding for young learners because it requires some reading in addition to listening.

- **Listen and discriminate:** Students circle the correct word with minimal pairs presented, such as pin and pen.



Video still provided by Joan Kang Shin

*Students can also listen for a word and use a fly swatter to hit the correct word on the board. This makes the listening exercise more fun and active for YLs.*

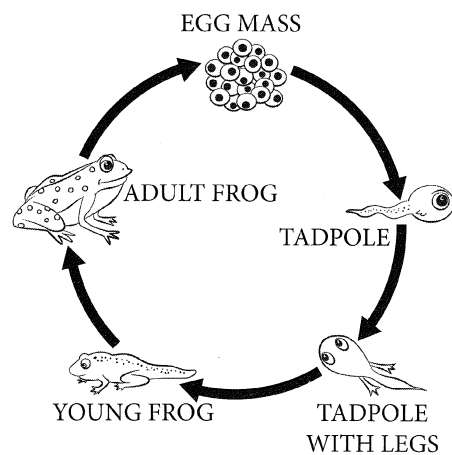
- **Listen and circle:** Students can circle the key words on a page of text or the correct word with a multiple choice.
- **Listen and sequence words or sentences:** The teacher can provide word cards or strips of sentences for students to put in the correct order on their desks.
- **Listen and detect mistakes in sentences:** Students can listen and detect mistakes in sentences provided on a handout or on the board.
- **Listen and mark multiple choice:** Students can answer a set of comprehension questions by choosing the correct answer in a set of multiple choice questions.
- **Listen and mark true or false:** Students can read (or listen to) a series of sentences and decide if they are true or false.
- **Listen and mark stress or intonation:** On a handout, students can mark the stressed words or syllables as they listen to the teacher or recording. For example, in a simple dialogue “Hello! How are you?” The stressed syllables can be marked like this:

[Stressed syllables]

/ /  
Hello! How are you?

3. **Students listen and show comprehension through production (oral or written):** This is the most demanding because it requires YLs to produce language in order to show their comprehension of the listening input.

- **Listen and repeat (orally):** This is a mechanical exercise in which the teacher says, "Repeat after me!" It can be used to practice pronunciation and is a good tool to correct errors through choral repetition
- **Listen and write (dictation):** This is a mechanical exercise in which the student has to write every word the teacher says on a piece of paper
- **Listen and translate information:** This is used to check comprehension and should not be used often in an EYL classroom.
- **Listen and label:** The teacher can give students a picture, and students have to label it correctly. For example, students could have a picture of a house and they have to listen and label the rooms correctly.
- **Listen and fill in the blanks:** The teacher could give the listening text with blanks in the text. If the text is a song, the students can listen to the song and write the missing words in the blanks.
- **Listen and complete a graphic organizer:** The teacher can give students a map, diagram, table, chart, etc. and have students fill it out to show comprehension. For example, the diagram could be of the life cycle of a frog.



- **Listen and fill out a form:** Students can listen to instructions and fill out a form with their personal information, such as registering for a library card or filling out the form at the doctor's office.

- **Listen and write true or false:** Students can listen to or read statements and write whether they are true or false. The teacher can also prompt students to take the false statements and change them to make them correct.
- **Listen and correct text with mistakes:** Students can correct a dialog with mistakes to show they understand what they listened to. In the example below, the mistakes are in italics.

Doctor: Hi, John. What's wrong?

John: I'm *great!* My throat feels *good*.

Doctor: Are you coughing a lot?

John: Yes, I am *laughing* a lot!

Doctor: You have a cold. Drink a lot of water, and take one *pillow* every day.

John: Thank you, doctor!

Doctor: You're welcome. Take care!

- **Listen and say/write responses:** Students say or write a response to the listening to show their comprehension, from a few words to extended discourse, depending on their level. The teacher can elicit the following kinds of responses orally or in writing:
  - **Key words:** Show recognition of the main vocabulary words.
  - **Specific information:** Pick out the most important information.
  - **Predict what happens next:** Express what will happen next or what the ending of the dialog or story will be.
  - **Main idea:** Express the main idea of the listening activity.
  - **Answer questions:** Answer comprehension questions with one word, phrases, or full sentences.
  - **Paraphrase:** Say it again in your own words.
  - **Summarize:** Say it again in your own words expressing, only the main idea.
  - **Converse:** Engage in a two-sided conversation.

Teachers can use these lists of different types of responses to plan a variety of listening activities that will check comprehension in multiple ways. There are different kinds of responses that can be used for learners with different learning styles and intelligences—for example, pictures for visual learners, graphic organizers for spatial learners, translating for linguistic learners, realia and miming for kinesthetic learners, and marking stress and intonation for auditory learners.

## ***Activities after Listening (Practice and Application Stages)***

After the listening activity, be sure to follow up with some comprehension checking activities, which can include the same types of activities mentioned above. In addition, the post-listening activities can flow smoothly into a speaking activity that practices the language learned in the listening activity. They can integrate listening with other skills as well. These activities will reinforce students' understanding of the text and new vocabulary and grammar by getting them to apply the new language through controlled, guided, and independent activities. Students can personalize the topic as well as apply the language to a real-life situation.

### **Examples of more controlled practice:**

- **Listen and repeat.**
- **Read aloud** to practice pronunciation (see Chapter 5).
- **Sing a fun song, say rhymes, chant or rap** as a whole class, small group, or individual to practice pronunciation, stress, and intonation.
- **Practice and/or dramatize a dialog with substitution:** Students practice and/or dramatize a dialog with blanks that require them to recreate parts of the dialog.
- **Use jokes:** Teachers can use jokes to liven up the classroom. Teachers can find different kinds of jokes for children at [www.ahajokes.com/kids\\_jokes.html](http://www.ahajokes.com/kids_jokes.html). One category of jokes that is fun for young language students is Knock Knock jokes.

#### **Example #1:**

A: Knock knock  
B: Who's there?  
A: Abe!  
B: Abe who?  
A: Abe C D E F G H . . . !

#### **Example #2:**

A: Knock knock  
B: Who's there?  
A: Banana  
B: Banana who?  
A: Knock knock  
B: Who's there?  
A: Banana  
B: Banana who?  
A: Knock knock  
B: Who's there?  
A: Orange

B: Orange who?

A: Orange you glad I didn't say banana?

- **Use riddles:** Teachers can use riddles to connect to content and have students make up their own. These are fun ways to practice questioning and answering. Wherever possible, teachers should find funny riddles that match the content for the day's lesson. More riddles can be found at <http://iteslj.org/c/jokes.html>.

**Examples:**

What has four legs but can't stand? **Answer:** A table or chair

What has two hands but can't clap? **Answer:** A clock

Which month has 28 days? **Answer:** All of them, of course!

What begins with T, ends with T and has T in it? **Answer:** A teapot

What word is spelled wrong in every dictionary in the world?

**Answer:** The word WRONG

- **Use tongue twisters:** Sentences that have words that begin with the same letter are great for practicing pronunciation. The following are some famous ones in English, but students can make up their own, too. More tongue twisters can be found at [www.funenglishgames.com](http://www.funenglishgames.com).

**Examples:**

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.

She sells seashells by the seashore.

How much wood could a woodchuck chuck, if a woodchuck could chuck wood?

- **Use language games:** Teachers can use different games to make practicing listening and speaking more fun and active. More games can be found at <http://iteslj.org/games>.

**Examples:**

**Running Dictation:** Students work in groups. One student runs to the teacher at the front of the classroom, listens to the teacher whisper the sentence, runs back to team, and dictates the sentence. The group has to work together to write the sentence. After every student has had a chance to dictate a sentence, the teacher goes over the sentences to see which group has the most sentences correct.

**Telephone:** Students work in groups. They can be grouped by the rows that they are sitting in or groups can stand in a line. The first student in the row or line goes to the front of the classroom, listens to the teacher whisper the sentence, runs back to the next person in line, and whispers the sentence. Each student in



Brand New Images/Getty Images

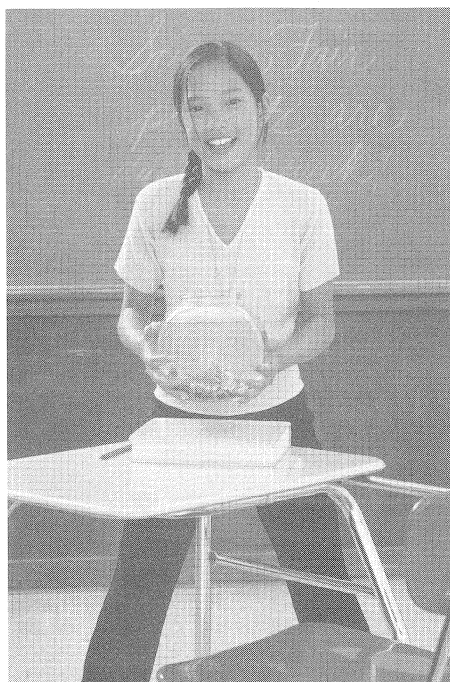
the row whispers the sentence to the next person until the last person hears the sentence. The last person writes the sentence or whispers the sentence to the teacher. The teacher reveals the original sentence and sees which team has communicated the correct sentence all the way down the row.

**Hot Seat:** Choose a student to be in the hot seat. That student sits on a chair with her/his back to the board. The teacher writes a word on the board (or prepares flashcards and sticks the word or picture on the board). Students have to describe the word without saying the word until the person in the hot seat says the word out loud. For example, if the word is “dog,” they can say “It is an animal” or “It is like Snoopy” or “You have it.” They can use the word in a sentence but substitute the word with a “blank.” For example, if the word is “dog” they can say, “The (blank) barks.”

### Examples of more independent activities:

- **Perform a role play or dialog:** Students can prepare and use realia or props to dramatize the dialog (e.g., doctor and patient, store clerk and customer, mother and child).
- **Perform real-life tasks:** Students can complete tasks that mirror real life (e.g., buying a movie or theater ticket ordering at a restaurant).
- **Interview a native speaker or someone from another country in English:** Students practice using English as an international language (e.g., the teacher can set up Skype pals with a class from another country).
- **Perform a play:** Students can perform a play or create a dramatization of a story they have read, i.e., Reader’s Theater (see Chapter 5).
- **Retell story after a storytelling:** Students can retell a story after they engage in a storytelling led by the teacher (see Chapter 6).

- **Show and tell:** Students bring in an object from home that is meaningful to them and present it to the group (e.g., the teacher prepares for a unit on toys, and asks students to bring in their favorite toy and describe it).



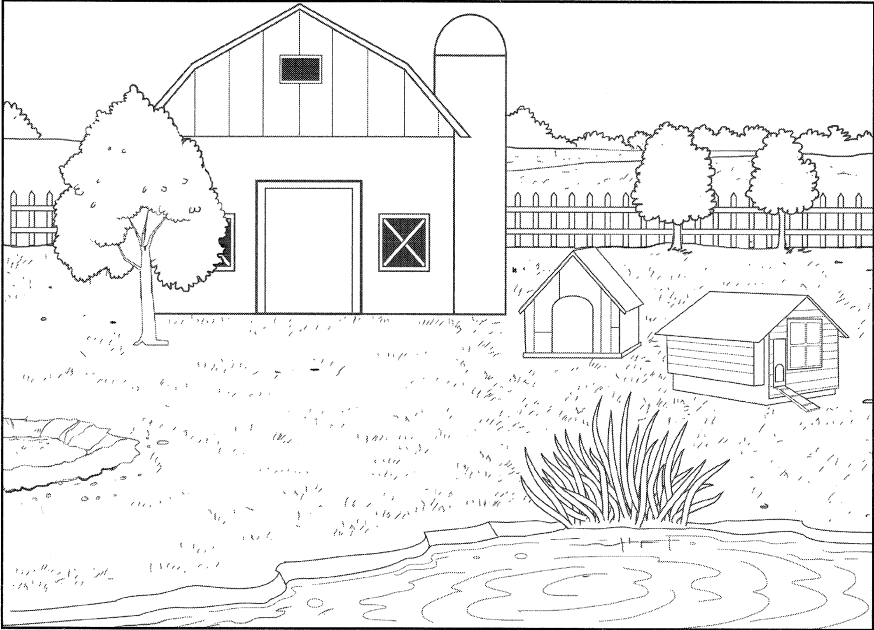
Jim Jordan Photography/Taxi/Getty Images

- **Presentation to the class that personalizes the lesson content:** Students prepare a presentation related to their real lives based on the lesson content. This can be done with pictures or a poster, such as a family tree poster to show the members of their family; a collage with pictures from magazines to tell about their favorite celebrity; a poster with a drawing of their home and neighborhood to tell about their home.
- **Pretend to be a TV presenter:** Students pretend to be a TV presenter to show how to play their favorite sport or game, demonstrate how to make their favorite food, do a weather forecast, etc.
- **Make a poster presentation:** Students create a poster for a movie advertisement, public service information, research about a country, etc. and present it to the class.
- **Discuss or do task in groups:** Students work together in small groups to discuss a topic or complete a task (e.g., planning a class party, recipe for making favorite food in home culture, favorite animal)
- **Do an information gap activity:** Students work in pairs to complete a task in which each student needs some information from the other student in order to complete the task.

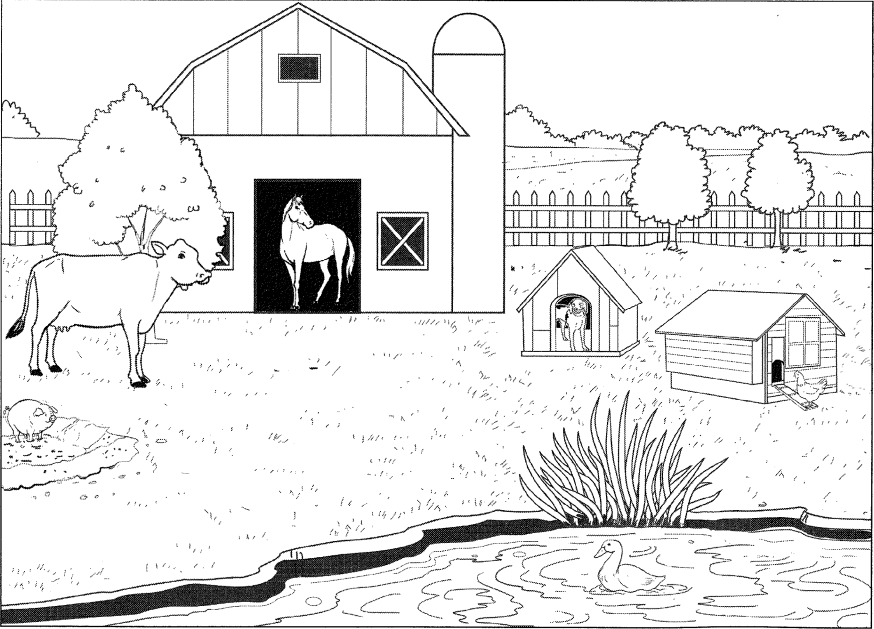
**Example:**

Give students two pictures of a farm. Student A has a farm with no animals. Student B has a farm with animals in different locations. Student A has to ask Student B questions to fill his farm with animals correctly.

**Student A**  
*What's in the \_\_\_\_\_?*







**Student B**  
*A (animal name) is in the \_\_\_\_\_.*



- Conduct a questionnaire or survey: Students are given a survey and have to go around the classroom and ask/answer questions with various classmates. In the following example, the students will survey the favorite class sport. After students ask all their classmates, they will count the total and determine which sport is the most popular.

**Example:**

<b>Survey of Favorite Class Sport</b> <b>Q: Do you like _____?</b> <b>A: Yes, I do. / No, I don't.</b>				
Name				
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

## Designing a Listening and Speaking Lesson

Here is a sample lesson plan for a listening and speaking lesson.

### Sample Lesson

#### *Fun with Farm Animals*

<b>Title:</b> <b>Fun with Farm Animals</b>	
Student profile	Grade 2, beginner level of English language proficiency
Skills to be emphasized	Listening and speaking

<b>Language</b>	<p>What is this? It's a . . . horse/cow/pig/duck/chicken/dog. Where is it? In the . . . barn/field/mud/pond/coop/house. Animal sounds: neigh, moo, oink oink, quack quack, bawk, ruff</p>
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify farm animals</li> <li>• Identify where animals live</li> </ul>
<b>Materials</b>	<p>Pictures of a farm Pictures of different farm animals Pictures of different locations on a farm Handouts with pictures of a farm and farm animals</p>
<b>Warm-up Before-listening Activities</b>	
<b>Review</b>	<p>"What did we learn last class?" Point to the calendar. Point to the pictures from the previous lesson. "Right! Pets." Review the animals: dog, cat, mouse, rabbit, parrot, house.</p>
<b>Capture their attention</b>	<p>"Look at this picture!" Show picture of a farm. "What is this? It's a farm. Today we will learn about . . . <b>farm</b> animals." Point to farm and point to animals. "Repeat after me, 'farm animals.'"</p>
<b>Connect to prior knowledge and experiences</b>	<p>"What sounds do these animals make?" Elicit the animal sounds from the native language.</p>
<b>Pre-teach new vocabulary</b>	<p><b>Word Time: Five Seconds Game</b> "What time is it? It's Word Time! Let's play the Five Seconds Game. You have 5 seconds to. . ."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Look:</b> Show one flashcard per second. "5-4-3-2-1!" Show flashcard of horse, cow, pig, duck, chicken.</li> <li>• <b>Listen and look:</b> Show one flashcard and say the word each second. "Horse! Cow! Pig! Duck! Chicken!"</li> <li>• <b>Listen and point:</b> Put the flashcards in a row on the board or wall in the same order left to right. "Now 5 seconds to listen and point to the picture. Fingers up! Go! Horse! Cow! Pig! Duck! Chicken!"</li> <li>• <b>Listen and repeat:</b> "Now 5 seconds to repeat after me. Go! Horse! Cow! Pig! Duck! Chicken!"</li> <li>• <b>Listen and point:</b> Put the picture cards on the board or wall in a different order. "Now 5 seconds to listen and point. Ready? Go! Horse! Cow! Pig! Duck! Chicken!"</li> </ul> <p>Play the game again to teach the location words.</p>

**Presentation**  
**During-listening Activities**

**Present text**

**Chant with Lap-Clap-Point-Clap**

The teacher points to each animal in its correct place on the farm and teaches the chant (see below).

**Listen and chant:**

Ready? (Lap-Clap)

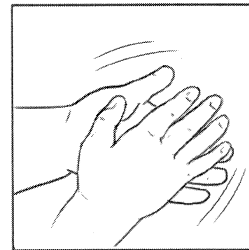
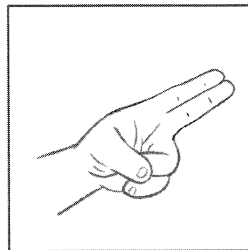
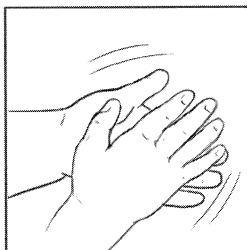
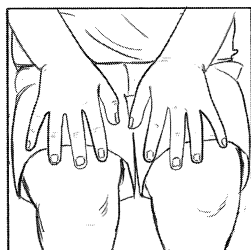
Go! (Point-Clap)

What is this? (Lap-Clap)

It's a . . . horse/cow/pig/duck/chicken/dog. (Point-Clap)

Where is it? (Lap-Clap)

In the . . . barn/field/mud/pond/coop/house (Point-Clap)



**Comprehension check**

**Q & A (Listen and respond)**

The teacher points to an animal and asks questions with the following responses:

T: What's in the barn?

Ss: It's a . . . horse.

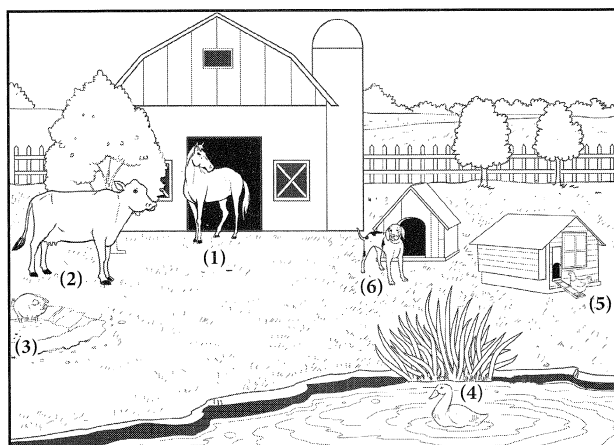
T: What does a horse say?

Ss: Neeeeeeigh!

**Practice**  
**After-listening Activities (Speaking activities)**

**Controlled pair work**

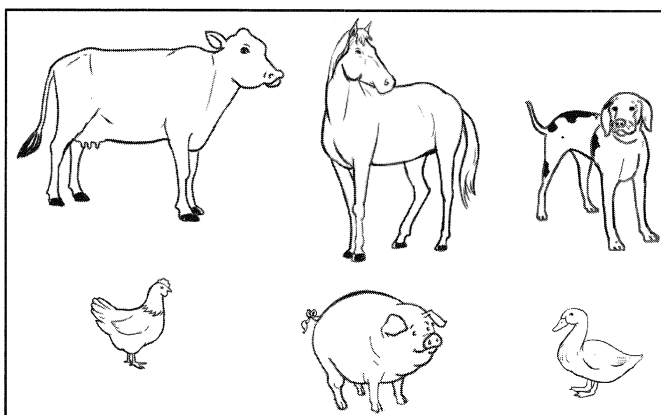
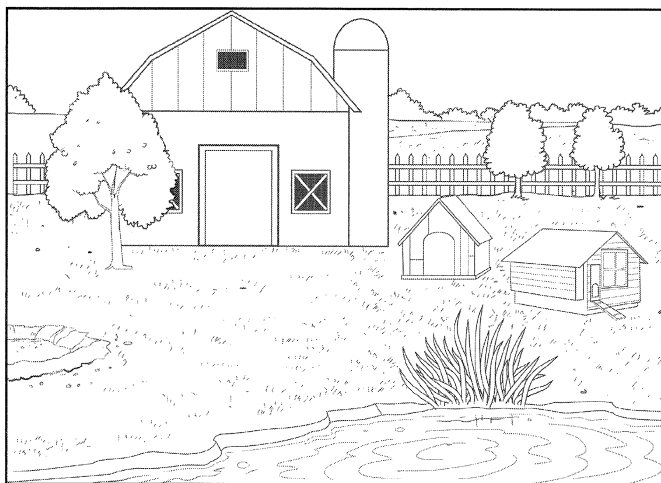
**Picture Perfect**



Students work in pairs to take turns asking "What is this?" and answering "It's a . . ." They are given a picture of a farm with the following animals on it which are numbered 1–6: (1) horse; (2) cow; (3) pig; (4) duck; (5) chicken; and (6) dog. When the teacher goes over the answers, she reviews the animal sounds, "A horse says, Neeeeeigh!" So the progression will be "What is this? A horse says, Neeeeeigh!"

**Guided practice**

**Silly Animals!**



Students work in pairs back to back. Student 1 puts the animals on the picture in any place (not the correct place). The horse could be in the mud, the cow in the house, the duck in the chicken coop, etc. The dialogue is:

S1: *What's in the mud?*

S2: *It's a horse!*

Both: *A horse says, "Neeeeeigh!"*

Then Student 1 has to make her/his picture match Student 2. At the end of the activity they compare pictures.

<b>Independent activity</b>	<p><b>That's not right!</b></p> <p>Tell students to give each animal a name that starts with the same letter, such as Harry Horse, Carol Cow, Peter Pig, Dorothy Duck, Chuck Chicken, and Donald Dog. Then students listen to the teacher dictate which animal goes in which location. The teacher will tell students to put the wrong animals in each place, like: "Put the dog in the barn. Put the duck in the mud. Put the horse in the house," etc. Then students will do a chant in pairs with their own animal names. When the animal is in the correct place, they will make the animal noise. For example,</p> <p>S1: <i>What's in the mud?</i>  S2: <i>It's Dorothy Duck.</i>  S1: <i>That's not right!</i>  S2: <i>What's in the mud?</i>  S1: <i>It's Peter Pig.</i>  S2: <i>Oink oink oink</i></p>
<b>Application</b>	
<b>Personalization</b>	<p><b>Role Play: I Live on a Farm</b></p> <p>Choose an animal and prepare a presentation about yourself as that animal. Be sure you make the animal sounds in between each sentence.</p> <p>"I am Chuck Chicken. Bawk bawk. I live on a farm. Bawk bawk. I am in the chicken coop. Bawk bawk!"</p>
<b>Assessment</b>	
<b>Monitoring activities</b>	<p>For each activity, the teacher will assess how well students are using the target language structures. The chant rhythm will ensure that the students build their fluency.</p>
<b>Assess for accuracy and give feedback</b>	<p>The next class, students will have their presentations prepared, and the teacher can assess both fluency and accuracy of the target language for this lesson and make any corrections through choral repetition and reviewing all the different chants.</p>
<b>Follow-up</b>	
<b>Homework</b>	<p>Finish preparing the role play I Live on a Farm at home (see above). The next class they will have to perform in front of the class.</p>
<b>Next class</b>	<p><b>Song: "Old MacDonald Had a Farm"</b></p> <p>Students are ready to learn "Old MacDonald Had a Farm."</p>