



# Merriam-Webster's Advanced Learner's English Dictionary

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES USING THE LEARNER'S DICTIONARY

### ▶ ALPHABET SCRAMBLE

Write a scrambled list of words on the board. Students copy the words in alphabetical order. They use their dictionaries to check their answers.

### ▶ ASKING WH- QUESTIONS

Groups look through their dictionaries, choose five words, and write a wh-question about each. For example: *Who uses a \_\_\_? What is the British word for a \_\_\_? Why do people use \_\_\_? Where can you find a \_\_\_? When do people say \_\_\_?* They swap their list of questions with another group and answer the questions on the list they receive.

### ▶ BRAINSTORMING VOCABULARY

Choose an illustration showing nouns in a particular vocabulary field, e.g., **camping**. Put students in pairs or groups. Ask: *What items of camping equipment can you name?* Pairs or groups work together, writing their lists and then comparing the lists with the dictionary illustration.

### ▶ COMPLETING COLLOCATIONS

Give students a list consisting of 4 or 5 common words (nouns, verbs or adjectives, or a combination of these). Students work in pairs and think of three words that typically occur with each of the words in the list. They check their answers in the dictionary.

### ▶ THE DICTIONARY GAME

Choose a word you think no student will be able to define. Say and spell it for the class. Each student (or group of students) writes a made-up definition. The teacher writes the real definition. The teacher reads all definitions aloud. Students vote for the correct definition after a second read-through. Students get points if (a) someone votes for their definition, or (b) they vote for the correct definition.

### ▶ GUESS AND CHECK

Students read a text through for general meaning, and then they read it again, circling the underlined words

and phrases they already know, and guessing the meanings of those they don't. They use dictionaries to check answers.

### ▶ THE MEMORY GAME

Students study a picture section of the dictionary related to the topic of the lesson for a specified amount of time (e.g., one minute) and memorize as many words as they can. Then they close their dictionaries and write down as many words as they can remember.

### ▶ NOUN + NOUN

Students link nouns in one list to nouns in another to make common expressions using "of," e.g., *cost of living*. They use their dictionaries to check answers.

### ▶ PERSONAL EXAMPLES

Choose 5–10 words from a current lesson or other source. Students look up each word in their dictionaries, reading the definitions and the examples. They make up their own example sentence for each word, including their own names or references to themselves.

### ▶ PERSONAL QUESTIONS

Pairs of students choose a dictionary page they find interesting. They take turns choosing headwords and asking their partner questions using the selected words, e.g., *Do you like calypso music? Have you ever eaten a calzone?*

### ▶ PREDICTING HEADWORDS

One student in a group chooses a page in the dictionary and tells the group the guide words, e.g., **cane–canopy**. Group members brainstorm to see how many headwords they can think of that fall between the two guide words. They write down their suggestions, and then consult the dictionary to check the words on their lists. How many headwords are on the page? Which group got the most? Which words did they omit?

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## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES USING THE LEARNER'S DICTIONARY, *continued*

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### ▶ **READ MY LIPS**

Students work in groups. Everyone opens to the same page. Students take turns silently mouthing the pronunciation of one of the headwords on the page. Group members guess which words they "hear."

### ▶ **SPELL CHECK**

Distribute a list of common but frequently misspelled words, some spelled correctly, and some incorrectly. Students work in pairs or threes and look up words as necessary.

### ▶ **STORY TIME**

Students working in pairs or groups choose 4–5 example sentences from the dictionary and use the sentences to make up a story or dialogue. They read their stories or act out their dialogues for the class.

### ▶ **SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

Distribute a list of symbols and abbreviations used in the students' dictionary. Students answer these questions: *What does each one mean? Is there a list of symbols and abbreviations in your dictionary? Find examples of each. With what words are they used?*

### ▶ **WHAT COMES NEXT?**

Give students 4–8 groups of adjectives frequently used with a particular noun, e.g., **wild, educated,**

**good, lucky.** Pairs of students study the words and suggest a noun (or nouns) that can be used with each group. They look in the dictionary to confirm answers.

### ▶ **WHAT'S THE WORD?**

Students work in groups. One student opens the dictionary and reads out the definition of a headword the group should know. Examples can be read aloud, with the word "blank" substituted for the key word. Group members try to guess the word. After each correct guess, the dictionary is passed to another student.

### ▶ **WORD CHAINS**

Choose a word that will lead to a large vocabulary set. Write it on the board. Students look up the word in their dictionaries, choose a word in the definition, and look that word up. They continue in this way, writing down each word they look up, until they have looked up a specified number (e.g. 10 or 12) words.

### ▶ **WORD COMBINATIONS**

Distribute a worksheet with two lists, each made up of 6–10 words and phrases (A and B) that can be combined to make collocations and common word combinations. Students work in pairs, matching words from List A with ones from List B to create logical combinations. They use dictionaries to check answers.

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### FOR MORE ACTIVITY IDEAS, SEE:

- ▶ Thornbury, Scott (2002) *How to Teach Vocabulary* (London: Pearson).
- ▶ Leaney, Cindy (2007) *Dictionary Activities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

- ▶ Morgan, John and Mario Rinvolucri (2004) *Vocabulary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- ▶ Wright, Jon (1998) *Dictionaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

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