



Class Fillers in the Online Classroom

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What is a filler activity? A short activity that engages and energize students. Fillers might come at any point in a lesson.

What is in a name?

- Warm-up: Starts the beginning of a lesson
- Lead-in: Introduces the content to be taught
- Filler: Comes between main parts of the lesson
- Cooler: Comes at the end of a lesson

Reasons to use fillers

1. Achieve linguistic aims
 - Can be used to review language
 - Can be used as a diagnostic to see what your students know or don't know about what you plan to teach (e.g., if you are not sure they know the passive voice, ask questions in the passive voice)
2. Improve classroom dynamics
 - Can energize students
 - Can help students become better acquainted with each other
3. Achieve classroom management needs
 - Fills time when an activity ends early
 - Provides a transition from one activity to another

What makes a good filler?

1. Appropriacy
 - Appropriate level of language (not beyond students' current level)
 - Appropriate topic
 - Appropriate for students' age
 - Appropriate for the course
 - Appropriate for the size of the class
2. Preparation
 - Not too difficult to prepare
3. Comfort
 - Does not make students feel uncomfortable

How long should a filler be? About 5-15 minutes for a one-hour class.



Activity 1: Quick bingo

Write down fifteen vocabulary words. Have each student choose five (in no specific order) and write them down. Randomly call out words. When a student has a word on their list, they mark it out. The student who crosses out all their words first wins.

Activity 2: Scrambled sentences

Give students a number of sentences to put in order. You can scramble a number of sentences, questions, or a short dialogue.

Example scrambled question: ever / you / to / have / an / place / interesting / traveled?
(Have you ever traveled to an interesting place?)

After students have unscrambled the sentences, they can work in pairs to ask and answer questions. (Variation: Dictate scrambled sentences.)

Variation: Have students unscramble words. Example: usohe / reostnm / tomuanin

Variation: Have students unscramble a dialogue:

A: What size are you?

B: Yes, I am looking for a shirt.

A: Can I help you?

B: Medium.

Activity 3: Listen and draw

Ask students to get a piece of paper. Have students draw what you dictate. Have students share their pictures with a partner/group.

Example:

Draw a house in the middle of the paper.

Draw a dog next to the house.

Draw a flower next to the dog.

Put a sun over the house.

Draw a girl next to the flower.

If time, students can then do a similar dictation with a partner.

Variation: Students take turns dictating a picture to a partner. The person who is drawing is not allowed to see the picture until it is complete.

Activity Four: Odd one out

Write sets of four vocabulary words with one that does not fit a group. Students choose the one that does not fit.

Example: banana, yellow, apple, lemon

Activity Five: How many words can you make?

Give students a fairly-long word, such as Thanksgiving. In groups or pairs, students write down as many words as they can using the letters of the word you have provided.

For example, from 'Thanksgiving,' you can make 'van' and 'thank.' Letters can only be used more than once if they occur more than once in the word provided.



Activity Six: Sentence starters

Give students a few starter sentences. It's best if all sentences start with 'I.'

Give students a few minutes to complete the sentences.

Put students in pairs or groups and have each student read their sentences.

Group members should ask questions naturally.

Example sentence starters:

I have never _____.

I want to _____.

I don't want to _____.

I will _____.

I hope _____.

Activity 7: Proverb/joke/riddle of the day

Bring in a proverb, joke, riddle, or expression and have your learners try to discern the meaning.

Example:

Proverb: Birds of a feather flock together.

Riddle: What kind of tree can you carry in your hand?

Answer: Palm

Joke: What can you catch but not throw?

Answer: A cold.

Activity 8: Categories

Give students a category and have them write down as many words as possible within a certain time frame (e.g., 1 minute; 30 seconds)

Things you find in a school.

Words that start with the letter C.

Things you find at a supermarket.

Activity 9: Guess what I did last weekend.

Have students ask you what you did last weekend/yesterday with Did you ___? questions.

Answer truthfully until students have found out what you did over the weekend. Have

students do the same activity with a partner. For more practice, have students change partners several times.

Variation: In groups, each student will make a sentence about what they did last weekend. I saw a movie. Then, other students will ask follow-up questions. What movie did you see? Was it interesting? Who were the main actors? Students take turns until each one has made a sentence and answered follow-up questions.

Activity 10: Picture show and tell

Show a picture from your phone and give a short description of it.

Have your students work in pairs or groups and describe pictures from their phones.