

Homework Club Activity Ideas

This is a list of ideas for practical activities and resources that may be useful in a homework club setting. Tutors are invited to take these as suggestions that can be modified to suit students' needs and academic ability. The level of understanding has been used here as a guide only. Individual students may have varying levels of comprehension and will benefit from a broad range of activities. With all of the activities, providing pictures or photos to illustrate particular words or concepts will assist EAL students in their understanding.

Foundation

TOOLS	DESCRIPTION	
Dictionaries	Use dictionaries to introduce new vocabulary. Remember to give students context of any new words by providing a definition or by using it in a sentence.	
Talking Books	Are available from libraries on tapes and CDs, and can be found online on various websites. You can also find books with visual aids on YouTube.	
Visual Aids	Use visual aids to help students gain context of new words. If you are learning about animals, have visual representations alongside the written word. I.e. have a picture of a cow with the word 'cow' next to it.	
Word Lists	Examples include vocabulary lists, consonant or phonic (sound/symbol) groups. These can be built up and added to as students learn new words and can be displayed or stored.	
ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	SKILL DEVELOPMENT
Appropriate language for different situations	Students may be unfamiliar with appropriate language to use in varying circumstances. Role-play the different ways we might greet a friend, a teacher, or police officer, for example.	Language development and thinking skills
Aural cloze	A cloze or fill-the-gap exercise with a focus on listening. Read a text aloud but leave out some words for the student to provide.	Listening and writing skills, vocabulary development

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Buddy reading (or pair reading)	A student reading to another student. Ask two students to read out loud together.	Reading and listening skills, language, and vocabulary development
Concentration	This is a pairs matching game where a series of cards are placed face down. Those playing, take turns at turning two of the cards over, trying to match the cards of the same action. As students turn over the cards, encourage them to say what action is being performed. The person with the most pairs of cards at the end of the game is the winner. This could be used to help students understanding of a variety of topics, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opposite words e.g., 'day' matches with 'night' • Numbers e.g., '3+5' matches with '8' 	Language development and understanding, vocabulary, thinking skills
Finish the sentence	Somebody starts a sentence then each person in the game after that adds another word(s). For example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person 1: "On the weekend, I like to..." • Person 2: "play soccer" • Person 3: "visit my friends" 	Speaking and listening skills
Guess the sound	Make a recording of everyday sounds and find accompanying pictures. Students have to match the picture with the sound they hear.	Reasoning and deducing skills, listening, visual and aural connections
Listen and draw	Picture dictation can be used to help students focus on language, for example colour, size, shape, prepositions, topic words (e.g. draw a red triangle at the top of a page, draw a blue circle next to it).	Vocabulary, listening, drawing skills
Listen and follow instructions	Examples include following a route on a plan or a map.	Listening and language/vocabulary skills
Listen and repeat	This can be useful for practicing particular words and sounds. It can be made into a game such as "Secret message" where students whisper a	Vocabulary, phonics, peer-to-peer learning

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	message to each other which is passed through a line of people.	
Minimal pairs	A listening activity in which students listen to the word and identify it from a pair of similar words and their matching pictures (e.g. cap or cup).	Listening, vocabulary, phonics and word grouping
Monster cloze	The tutor writes down the title of the text. The remainder of the text is represented by gaps. The students guess the missing word and the tutor writes any correct words into the gaps until the text is complete. Sufficient background information to the text type and topic is needed with such an activity.	Reasoning and deducing skills, understanding text types and related language, specific vocabulary
Nuances and subtleties of text	Role-play the difference between a command and request, for example.	Speaking skills, understanding language and tone
Odd one out	Play a game where you have a series of short lists where the student can circle the "odd" word out in the list. For example: Big, Small, Large, Huge Wet, Dry, Splash, Water Broccoli, Carrots, Ice-cream, Potatoes	Understanding groupings of words and differentiating between synonyms and antonyms
Opposite lists	Encourage students to create an opposites list using words, drawings or magazine cut outs of images.	Developing understanding of words and their opposites
Red elbow	A simple game to practice and reinforce colours and body parts. When directed the students follow the instructions. For example, for 'Red elbow', the students put their elbow on something red.	Vocabulary skills, particularly body parts and colours
Rhythm and intonation	Use poems and chants and have students tap the rhythm to provide practice. English is a highly rhythmic language and a lack of rhythm can affect the intelligibility of the speech. Role play and discuss how intonation affects the meaning of the same words (e.g., friendly vs sarcastic)	Rhythm, intonation and speaking skills

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	Singing songs can help with the rhythm of spoken English too.	
Sentence reconstruction	After cutting up a sentence into words, the student reconstructs the sentence. The student may need to match the words to a model of the sentence initially. As this student progresses, this could be done with paragraphs of text.	Grammar and word positioning, reasoning and deducing skills
Sequencing cards	This involves sequencing jumbled text or picture cards into the correct order.	Sequencing and reading skills
Shopping lists	Compile a list of different items you might purchase at different shops. You could use images or drawings of these items as a visual aid. Then create a list of possible shops and ask students to decide which shop would be the best place to purchase these items from. For example: Shopping list: Loaf of bread, Medicine, Hammer List of shops: Chemist, Bakery, Hardware shop	Vocabulary work, reasoning and deducing skills
Simon says	A listening activity to follow verbal instructions. If the tutor says Simon Says (e.g. 'Simon says put your hands on our head'), the students need to follow the instructions. If the tutor doesn't say Simon Says (e.g. 'hands on knees'), the students need to ignore the instructions to continue to be in the game.	Listening, vocabulary of body parts
What did you see?	A group of objects or pictures is placed on a table in front of the students, and then covered. Students are asked to recall the objects in order and to see how many they can remember.	Memory and vocabulary
Who/what am I?	Students need to guess who or what the person is, using only yes/no questions.	Reasoning, deducing and questioning skills
Vanishing cloze	The tutor writes a text and then erases one word at a time. The students read the text filling in the missing word. This	Reading and memory skills

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	process is continued until the text disappears altogether and the student is 'reading' from memory.	
Listening to stories	Have a tutor read a book read to a student while they look at the accompanying pictures or photos. This is a good way to develop students' English skills. If student is not interested in listening to a book be read, then simply discuss the photos and illustrations.	Listening and association of words and pictures
Charades	Using action cards have students pick a card and then act out the action while other students try and guess what it is.	Understanding of action words
Matching signs and symbols	Students match the symbol with the sign, or match the word with the symbol or illustration. For example, the symbol/illustration for public toilet with the word bathroom.	Reading skills and understanding of symbols and images

Developing

TOOLS	DESCRIPTION	
Brainstorming	Is used with a group to generate as many ideas as possible and encourage creative thinking. All suggestions are accepted. Write the name of a topic you wish to explore on a piece of paper or white board. Everyone then suggests ideas or associated words to write down.	
Sketch to stretch – isn't this an activity?	An activity which involves listening to and retelling a story. The tutor reads a story to the student and then directs him/her to divide a paper into three parts. In the first section the student draws or writes what happened at the beginning of the story, in the last section they draw what happened at the end of the story, and then in the middle section they draw what happened in between.	
Structured overviews	Frameworks which show the relationship between ideas within a topic. These are usually arranged hierarchically. They can	

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	be used to help students understand a text or build up a piece of writing.	
Sunshine wheels	Used to brainstorm ideas. The main topic is written into the middle circle and the arms (or rays) on the outside are used to record student responses.	
Step by step demonstrations	Stair steps can be used by the tutor to plan their instructions or demonstrations or by students to think about the steps that they need to take to reach a goal.	
Story map	A pictorial outline of a story, similar to a flow chart with simple illustrations. The student listens to a story and draws linking pictures which map the events in the story. It can be used as a before writing or after reading activity and can be used to focus on the story's characters, setting, storyline and conclusion.	
Timelines	Can be used to represent events and personal histories as well as characters' lives and events in texts, alongside supporting understanding of tenses.	
Y - Chart	This is a brainstorming technique where students can explore what an item looks, sounds and feels like. Draw a Y in the middle of a piece of paper. This creates three separate sections. In one section, write the words, "looks like". This is where you will brainstorm ideas of what the item looks like. In another section write, "sounds like." Then in the final section, write the words "feels like." Encourage students to explore a variety of descriptive words and be creative.	
ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	SKILLS
Bundling	An activity in which students write statements about a topic on paper strips and then group all the related statements together. These groups of statements are expanded to form paragraphs with an emphasis on using language which links ideas into a cohesive piece of writing.	Writing and language development

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Changing certain text types into others, i.e. turning instructions into recounts	A focus on changes in the structure of the language, such as from present to past tense forms (e.g. 'turn around' changes to 'we turned around').	Text types, associated language, different tenses, writing skills
Describe and arrange	A picture sequencing activity in which each student describes their picture to a group who then arrange themselves in the correct order of events.	Speaking, ordering and reasoning skills
Dictogloss	An activity where the tutor reads a short text twice. First the students listen. During the second reading they take notes, focusing on key words. In groups, they reconstruct the text. It is best done after brainstorming the topic, preferably from a picture stimulus.	Listening, writing, language skills
Directed reading and thinking activity (DRTA)	An activity where the tutor asks the students to predict what the text will be about based on the images and title of the text. Then direct the student to read a section of the text to check his/her predictions.	Prediction, association, reasoning, deduction, and reading skills
Innovating on text	An activity basing a new text on the structure of the original text. For example, Ask students to re-write a well-known song or poem using their own words eg, 'Old McDonald had a farm' changes to 'Old McDonald had a zoo'.	Writing and language development
Innovating on the ending	An activity changing the ending of a text.	Writing skills
Inquiry and elimination	Where students need to guess an object/picture using only yes/no questions. Examples include Yes or No Game and Celebrity Heads.	Reasoning and deducing skills
Read and draw	An activity in which students follow written instructions to draw a picture.	Listening and drawing skills
Read and find the difference	Pairs of students are given texts which are similar but have a number of different words and phrases. The students read the texts to one another and then identify the	Reading and listening skills. Development of tone and preferred language

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	differences. They can then discuss which words or phrases work better and why.	
Reader questions	Students are presented with a title or a picture relating to a text. They are then encouraged to form questions which they would like to be answered. They look for the answers to these questions when they read the text.	Inquiry development, writing skills, reading skills
Reader's theatre	A follow up reading activity for a group of students. Each student is given a copy of the text. One student can be the narrator and the dialogue is distributed between the students. The students rehearse and practice their roles before performing.	Speaking, reading and performance development
Sentence expansion	An activity to make sentences more interesting that requires modelling and practice. For example, the sentence 'The dog barked' can be expanded to 'The small white dog barked loudly at the car'.	Language and vocabulary development
The alibi game	A pair of students work together to prepare an alibi for the evening. One of the pair presents it to a group. The partner waits away from the group and is later questioned by the group who try to pick up any inconsistencies.	Writing, planning, speaking skills
Written Cloze	A written text where some words are deleted. For example, Cover some words in a text and ask students to fill in the gap (e.g. 'The dog _____ to the park').	Reasoning and deducing skills, reading, and writing skills

Advanced

TOOLS	DESCRIPTION	
Concept map	A group of words clustered around a central topic which shows the relationships between ideas or concepts. It represents a student's understanding of the topic and can be used to organise information.	
Flow charts	Can be used to sequence ideas, procedures, or events. They can be used to plan, or they can represent a timeline or final action plan.	

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Visual Scaffolds / Writing Frame	Visual scaffolds show how different text types are organised and support reading comprehension and writing tasks. They contain some structure words appropriate to the text types and help students to gather and organise their thoughts by providing a framework for recording ideas. It is important to model how to use a visual scaffold/writing frame. Start by doing a shared writing activity using it, and then use it for an independent writing activity. See Tutor Tips Videos: Reading / Writing.	
Mind maps	These are diagrams drawn on blank paper that visually record students' thinking and understanding of a topic. Information can be recorded as words or images. The central image on a mind map depicts its topic or issue. From the centre, coloured stems emerge which reflect the components of the topic. Beginning with a stem, students draw a series of branches that show the interrelationship and connections between the ideas.	
Venn diagrams	Venn diagrams help make comparisons. Similarities are shown in the overlapping area and differences are shown in the areas that do not overlap.	
ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	SKILLS
Fact and Opinion	An activity in which the student reads a number of statements and identifies whether they are facts or opinions. The statements can then be grouped accordingly.	Reading, reasoning and deducing, understanding tone and indicating language
Rank ordering activities	These activities involve students expressing opinions and ranking them on a scale of 1–10 or whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree.	Synthesising opinions based in information
Word search	Create a word search for students to do, illustrated if possible. Initially words should be horizontal and vertical, as students advance words can also be added diagonally.	Vocabulary, spelling, and reading skills

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Useful Websites

WHOWHAT	WEBSITE
Department of Education EAL resources and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/support/diversity/eal/Pages/ealresources.aspx
Twinkl EAL resources and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.twinkl.com.au/resources/inclusion-teaching-resources/eal-inclusion-teaching-resources
TeachStarter EAL resources and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.teachstarter.com/au/teaching-resource-collection/eal-d/
Language and Multicultural Education Resource Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/multicultural/Pages/lmerc.aspx
The Smith Family Tutor Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.thesmithfamily.com.au/programs/previous/home-tutor-scheme/tutor-resources