

# 1. Understanding and using the proficiency levels

## 1.1 What do the levels mean?

### Language support

Language support is delivered to students across three progressive levels, A1, A2 and B1.

A1 is the lowest level and is the first target for newly-arrived students with little or no English. When students achieve B1 level across all the skills of language, they are ready for full integration into mainstream learning.

Broadly speaking the Levels may be interpreted as follows:

<b>Level A1</b>	<b>Level A2</b>	<b>Level B1</b>
<i>Student has very basic proficiency which is limited to familiar words and phrases.</i>	<i>Student has some proficiency, generally related to areas of relevance and familiarity.</i>	<i>Student has competent proficiency and can understand and respond to clear speech on familiar topics.</i>
<i>Spoken interaction demands support from the other person and responses are simple, often single words or short phrases.</i>	<i>Can interact in simple and routine tasks on familiar topics</i>	<i>Student can connect phrases to tell a story or give an account.</i>
<i>Student can write short simple texts when provided with a model or other support.</i>	<i>Student can use a series of phrases or sentences to describe, explain etc.</i>	<i>Student can write simple connected text on a familiar topic.</i>
	<i>Student can write short notes and texts.</i>	

These levels relate to the first three levels of a six-point scale known as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (© Council of Europe see [www.coe.int/lang](http://www.coe.int/lang)).

### Assessment levels

The three levels used for language support are also used by the Department of Education and Science for assessing the proficiency of non-English-speaking students and may be found in the Assessment Kit distributed by the DES to all post-primary schools (2009).

## 1.2 Using the levels

### Level of activity

The level is indicated for each activity.

#### Level: All

Where *Level: All* is indicated, this means that the activity may be carried out by students across the range of proficiency (A1-B2) though, inevitably, the task will be carried out differently and have different outcomes.

Lower level students will work more slowly and require more teacher support. They should also be encouraged to access support themselves through use of dictionaries and textbooks.

Higher level students will work faster but will also be expected to demonstrate greater ability in the language – a larger range of vocabulary, more accuracy, more complex structures, ability to self correct and so on.

#### Level: A1 or A1/A2

Activities that specify these levels **may also be used** for students at **Level B1**. They can be very useful as short activities for higher level students, often as an introduction to a topic.

#### Level: A2/B1

Activities that specify these levels are **not suitable** for students at **Level A1**.

### Mixed level classes

In a mixed-level class, it is important to realize that higher-level students will complete learning activities faster and it is necessary to have extension activities for progression.

For example: *Completing text (Level A2/B1)*. This activity requires students to read a short piece of text and insert missing words which are provided in a Word Box. Students at A2 level may complete the first part of the activity while those at B1 level may proceed to carry out the second part which requires, for example, creating a short text or a number of sentences, labelling grammatical items, or learning about irregular verbs.

### Assessment and teaching

The assessment kit distributed by the Department of Education and Science uses the three levels that appear throughout these resources. This means that teachers, having identified the level of proficiency of a student by using the assessment kit, can find classroom materials to match the student's level of ability and learning targets.

## 2. Possible Activities for weaker students

(even before using the Language Support Activity Units)

### 2.1 The name game

The importance that a person attaches to his/her name should not be underestimated. When students come to a new country there can be a tendency to 'convert' the name to something that is pronounced more easily or to a name that is locally more familiar.

**PURPOSE:** To introduce students to one another and encourage them to 'break their silence'.

**METHOD:**

1. The teacher explains his/her name under the following headings:
  - *Name*
  - *Where does the name come from*
  - *Meaning of the name*
  - *Whether it has religious origin*
  - *Who chose the name*
  - *Other people in family called this name*
2. The teacher distributes a grid to students or makes a grid on the board and students write or dictate the information to the teacher

### 2.2 Class interview

**PURPOSE:** To get students to mingle in the classroom. Focus is on formulation of questions and answers; comprehension; organising and writing brief information; presenting information to class.



**METHOD:**

1. Teacher and students devise a simple interview to get basic information from one another. This can be reused as new students join the group.
2. Students learn how to ask questions like:
  - What is your name?*
  - Where are you from?*
  - Where do you live now?*
  - What age are you?*
  - Do you like school?*
3. Students are paired and interview one another (prompting as necessary)
4. Each student reports to the class about his/her interviewee

If one or two new students arrive after the others, the existing group can take turns asking the questions.

## 2.3 Class survey

The interview can also be turned into a class survey.

1. Every student talks to every other one in the group
2. The questionnaire is devised in advance by teacher and students
3. The results are reported to the class as a whole and marked up on the board to see how many responses have been received to each question
4. Typical questions for a survey:
  - What languages do you speak?*
  - What do you do at the weekend?*
  - What kind of music do you like?*
  - Do you like the weather in Ireland?*

It's important to try to avoid questions that will only elicit Yes No answers. The language learning benefit is gained in the formulation and comprehension of the questions and answers.

This activity can be made more challenging by the use of open questions like:

- What is (are) your favourite subject(s) in school?*
- Where do you like to go in your free time?*

## 2.4 Quiz

At the end of the week students can divide into teams. Each team selects a card and the other team must provide a full and accurate sentence using what is on the card. The teacher judges the accuracy of the sentence and corrects where necessary.

## 2.5 Using flash cards

'Flash cards' can be used to reinforce and consolidate newly-acquired vocabulary. These can be put on the wall in categories or at random. Cards may be used to confirm comprehension, check pronunciation or to break a communication barrier.

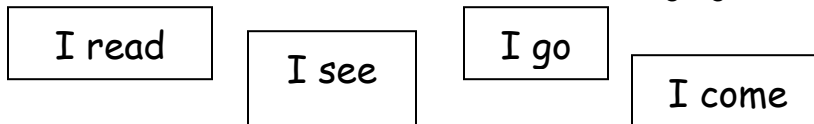
Students look at all the cards regularly and make sure that they remember the meaning/use of the vocabulary item.

**Students should be involved in making the cards and putting them up.**

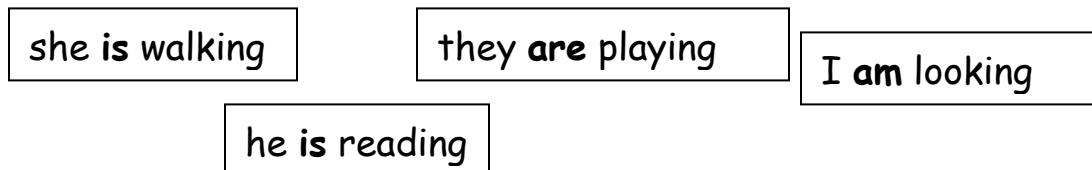
Cards may be based on **items of vocabulary** such as nouns or adjectives. For example the theme 'Items in the school':



They may also focus on **grammatical constructions**. For example, when discussing habitual actions, the relevant verbs and form can be highlighted:



When describing a picture, for example, the continuous form should be reinforced:



## 2.6 At school

This activity helps the teacher to understand more about you as a student.

Mark the pictures in the box below and write the names of the subjects.

Subjects I like:

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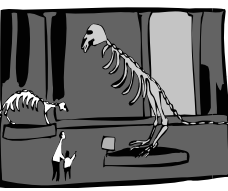



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At school, I don't like:

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art	I.T	science	business studies	
				
maths	music	English	geography	MTW
				
history	P.E. and sports	home economics	homework	

## School Subjects

m	h	j	l	t	y	j	p	d	h	e	y	m	v	g	b	n	s	y	h
g	b	i	o	l	o	g	y	h	k	i	m	u	s	i	c	p	o	j	s
c	h	n	m	h	r	f	d	s	v	j	n	u	i	l	m	d	e	q	r
f	j	I	r	i	s	h	k	p	l	w	o	o	d	w	o	r	k	s	c
v	n	h	m	s	r	f	g	F	r	e	n	c	h	a	h	b	n	m	k
l	h	e	d	g	e	o	g	r	a	p	h	y	f	h	n	j	m	k	e
d	f	g	n	m	k	l	o	p	h	s	v	g	b	n	j	m	t	h	e
f	g	j	G	e	r	m	a	n	h	n	m	k	l	o	p	f	g	b	d
e	f	g	s	d	v	c	h	i	s	t	o	r	y	a	b	h	n	k	m
g	b	m	k	e	c	o	m	p	u	t	e	r	s	t	u	d	i	e	s
x	b	n	m	k	j	y	c	h	e	m	i	s	t	r	y	s	h	b	n
m	e	g	v	r	e	l	i	g	i	o	n	a	f	v	b	k	m	i	p
n	m	a	t	h	s	s	t	h	x	n	m	a	r	t	g	j	m	k	p
f	b	h	m	k	l	d	e	v	h	b	n	j	m	d	s	w	q	c	e
t	s	t	j	h	o	m	e	e	c	o	n	o	m	i	c	s	m	b	h
n	c	e	t	s	b	s	c	i	e	n	c	e	s	v	b	n	h	m	c
e	g	n	j	y	s	c	n	u	j	n	g	l	s	x	b	t	u	g	i
o	p	h	y	s	i	c	s	s	t	r	f	b	n	u	o	m	g	s	c
f	t	e	r	n	j	m	o	p	E	n	g	l	i	s	h	m	s	h	b
n	u	e	n	c	t	h	n	o	p	l	i	k	m	g	y	h	t	s	r

Find the words: all words go from left to right →

Highlight the subjects that you are learning

biology

chemistry

French

music

geography

art

woodwork

science

Irish

physics

history

maths

home economics

computer studies

German

English

religion

## Rooms in the School

d	g	h	s	c	i	e	n	c	e	l	a	b	c	b	h	t	k	n	a
n	a	a	r	t	r	o	o	m	e	h	p	g	y	m	p	h	k	i	a
h	m	k	l	f	r	c	l	o	a	k	r	o	o	m	a	f	h	o	l
b	j	m	k	t	d	b	s	x	j	i	l	t	o	i	l	e	t	s	p
l	p	l	a	y	i	n	g	f	i	e	l	d	p	r	g	a	q	e	d
j	m	l	r	f	n	u	k	c	o	m	p	u	t	e	r	r	o	o	m
a	g	n	i	s	t	a	f	f	r	o	o	m	h	m	k	p	r	g	b
o	f	f	i	c	e	f	n	k	m	r	d	l	h	n	j	i	m	s	c
r	g	n	v	i	k	a	s	m	l	p	e	f	r	h	n	j	k	m	d
h	n	m	k	a	s	d	c	l	a	s	s	r	o	o	m	n	e	h	g
q	g	y	u	j	m	l	f	v	b	y	k	m	l	i	b	r	a	r	y
a	v	g	m	u	s	i	c	r	o	o	m	h	n	m	k	e	g	d	l
k	m	e	f	k	i	t	c	h	e	n	s	n	m	l	f	b	h	o	p
m	k	s	g	h	n	k	w	o	o	d	w	o	r	k	r	o	o	m	l
p	c	h	a	n	g	i	n	g	r	o	o	m	s	j	g	n	c	e	f
m	k	g	B	a	d	r	t	h	n	u	k	m	d	f	n	w	o	k	l

Find the words: all words go from left to right →

changing rooms

music room

kitchens

science lab

staff room

library

class room

woodwork room

gym

art room

cloak room

toilets

playing field

computer room

office



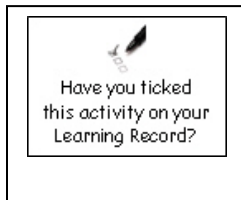
### 3. The Language Support Activity Units

#### 3.1 Making the best use of these units

- **Introduction** should ensure that students understand **what** they are doing and **why**. Many students will have some difficulty in understanding both the language in the activity and the instructions/purpose for carrying out the activity.
- You can create your **personal teaching resource** by printing these units in full and filing them by subject in a large ring binder.
- **Encourage students** to:
  - Bring the relevant **subject textbooks** to language support class. It does not matter if they have different textbooks as the activities in these units refer to vocabulary and other items that will be found in all subject textbooks. These units are based on curriculum materials.
  - Take some **responsibility for their own learning** programmes by:



Developing a **personal dictionary** for different subjects, topics, and other categories of language, on an on-going basis. This prompt is a reminder.



Recording what they have learnt on the **Learning Record**, which should be distributed at the start of each unit.



Keeping their own **files** with good examples of the work produced in language support for different subjects and topics. This file will be an invaluable **learning resource** in supporting mainstream learning.



Indicates that answers may be found at the end of the unit.

Don't forget that many of the activities in these units are suitable as **homework** tasks, for **self-study**, or for use in the **subject classroom** with the agreement of the subject teacher.

## Teachers' Notes to accompany the Language Support Activity Units

### **Record of Learning**

The Record of Learning is to be handed out with each Language Support Activity Unit. Students use this checklist to monitor their own work and to promote a feeling of progression. Students chose which box to tick/date according to how capable they feel:

- \* if you can do this with *a lot of help* (e.g. from your teacher) date the first box;
- \*\* if you can do it with *a little help* date the second box;
- \*\*\* if you can do it *on your own* date the last box.

We have also provided a **Record of Self-study** for students and you should bring it to your students' attention



### 3.2 Advising students

For the majority of non-English speaking students, the greatest challenge that they face in school is **accessing the subject learning** that is critical for their educational achievement.

This website is intended to support teachers in making subject learning more accessible to their students. Therefore it is presented by **subject and topic**.

The organisation of the units allows students, in turn, to **organise their learning** so that they can draw the best possible benefit from it.

#### Recommendations:

1. **Students should bring the relevant textbooks to language support class.**
2. **Students are encouraged to get a personal ring binder exclusively for their English language learning and divide it according to the subjects they are learning in the mainstream.**
3. **When introducing a new unit (topic) distribute:**
  - a. **Keyword list**
  - b. **Learning Record**
  - c. **Vocabulary File**
4. **Students should:**
  - **Use the Keyword List for reference when working on this unit**
  - **Record their progress through the unit on the Learning File**
  - **Gradually develop the Vocabulary File and, in addition, a personal dictionary with different categories of vocabulary.**
5. **Any other work produced for this unit should be filed after these.**
6. **Students should be encouraged to refer to their files when in mainstream learning or when doing homework.**

The following prompts are provided throughout the units to remind students.



Get your teacher to check this, then file it in your folder so you can use it in the future.



Have you ticked this activity on your Learning Record?



Check that all the keywords you used are in your personal dictionary.

### 3.3 Important classroom language

Make sure that your students are familiar with the following terms:

to look up	key words
to fill in	to give a short summary
to circle	main ideas
to tick	wordlist
to copy	clear
to find	simple
to record	short
to recognize	important
to describe	e.g.
to explain	i.e.

Now, note any other important language:

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### 3.4 Using a spidergram

Every unit in the English Language Support Project is based on a single curriculum topic. It is important to activate students' ideas and existing knowledge about the topic before beginning the exercises. When students are well prepared to meet the focus of their learning they are more confident and receptive.

This approach can be used with students at all levels. For those at A1 level the process will be slower, will result in less vocabulary, and will inevitably involve students in trying to 'find' words in English that they know in their home language.

#### Method

**Type of activity:** Whole class – each student should be able to contribute at his/her level.

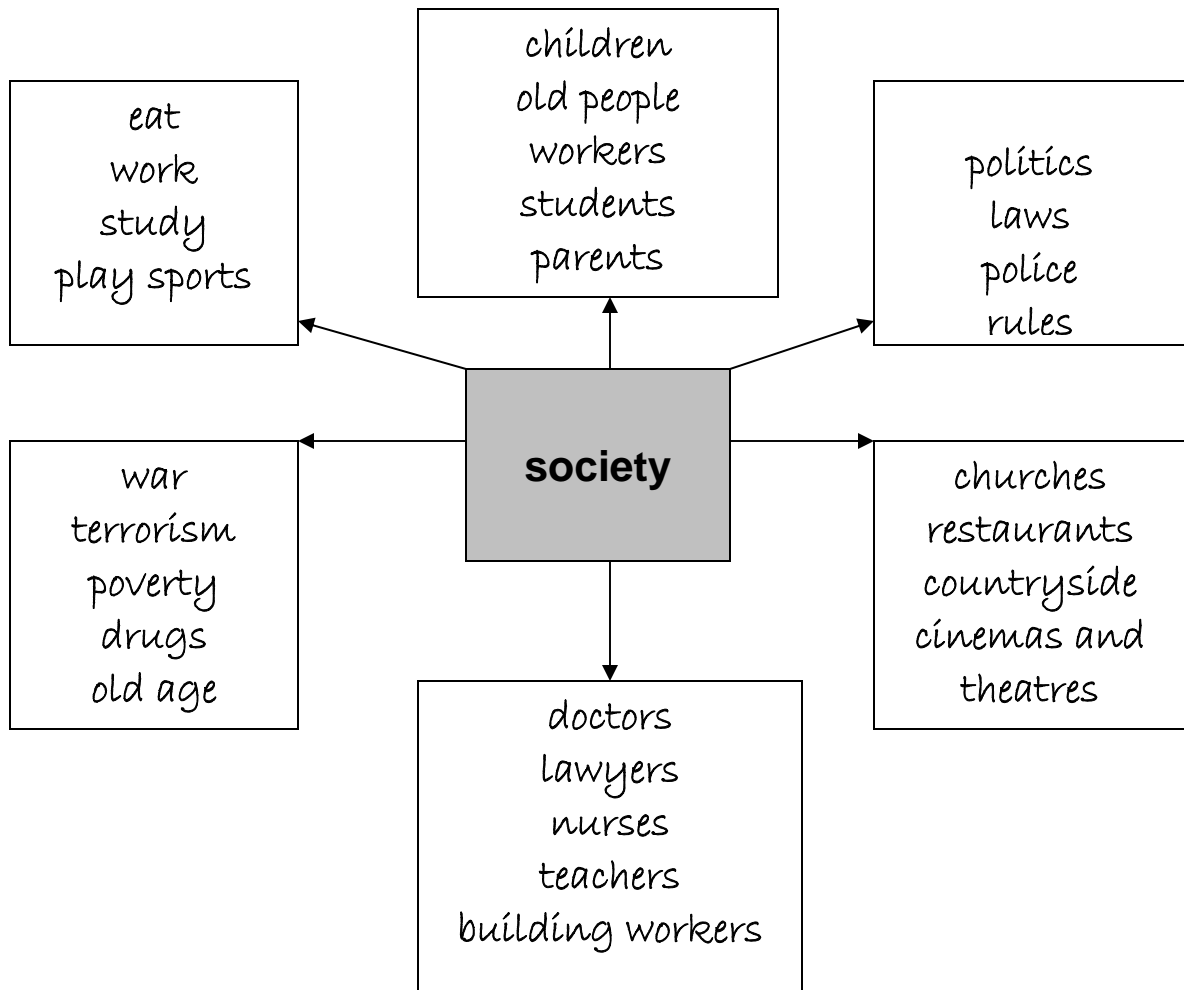
**Levels:** All

**Learning outcome:** Activating students' prior knowledge of the topic or introducing the topic if it is new to some students; providing the foundation for the exercises to follow.

1. **Draw a spidergram** (see next page for examples) on board or on a large sheet of paper.
2. Put a key **word or phrase** in the centre and ensure that everybody understands this word, ask for this word in students' home languages.
3. **Brainstorm** any ideas, words, phrases that students can produce, prompting as necessary (try to find a place for every suggestion even if it is not strictly relevant).
4. **Write these**, in categories if possible, in the surrounding circles until all ideas have been gathered.
5. Ensure that all **students understand** the vocabulary in the spidergram. They should be encouraged to use dictionaries.
6. Learners at levels **A1-A2** should create their own **vocabulary page** from the spidergram, either copying the one created in class, or organizing the vocabulary in the way that is most useful to them individually (table, list with translation into home language, using highlighter, short sentences or phrases etc).
7. Learners at level **B1** should work in pairs to **construct a short piece of text** using as much of the vocabulary as they can (e.g. 5 sentences).

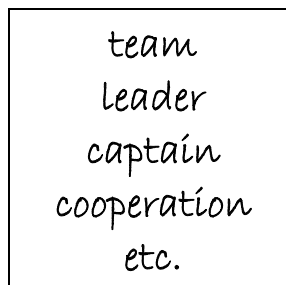
Two examples follow:

**Example 1: History: The Celts and the Iron Age**  
**What is 'society'?**

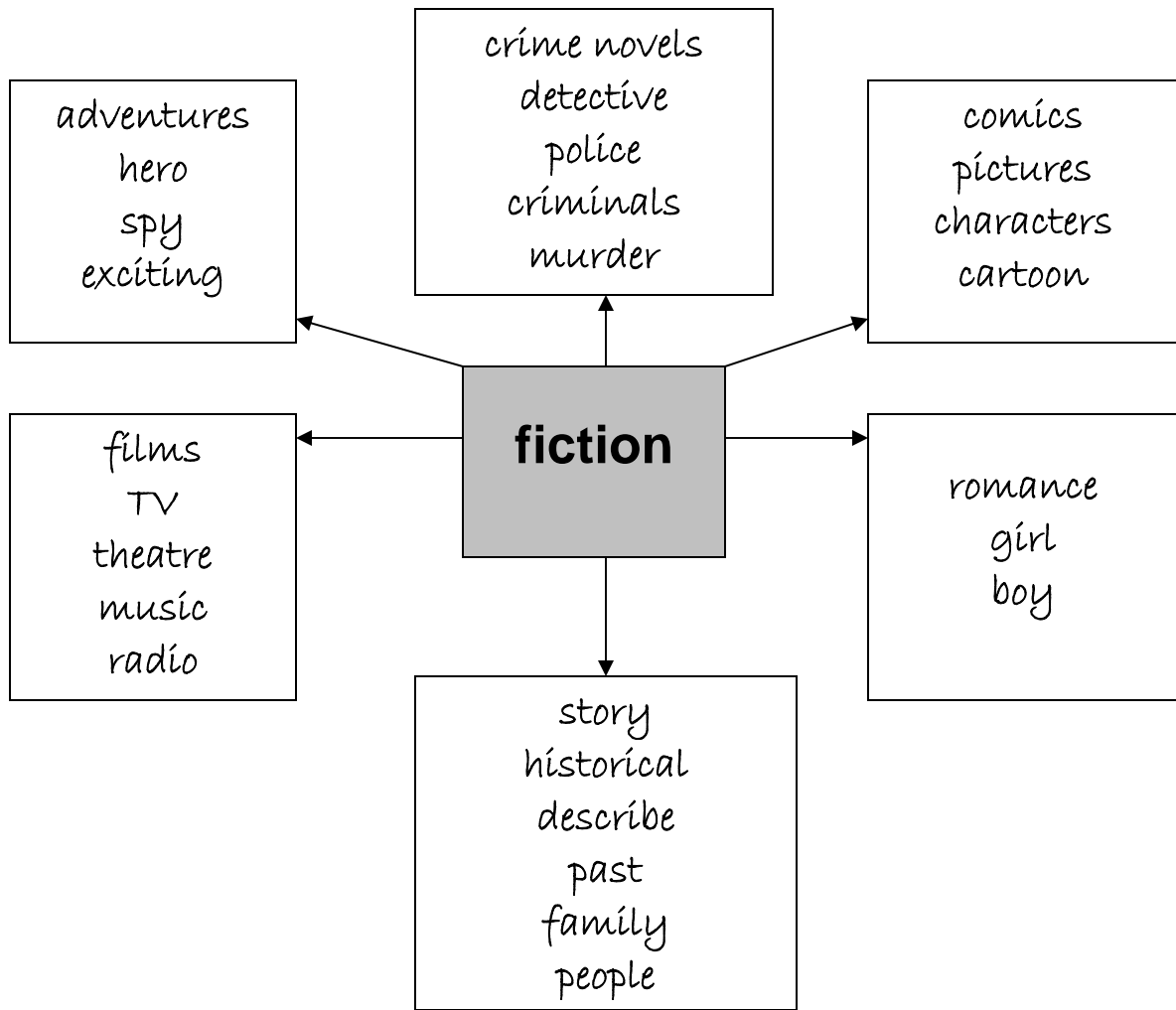


This example highlights different aspects of society as it is now. It includes the people, activities, problems, jobs, state structures and places that people frequent.

The content will vary according to the group of students. It is important to be flexible. For example, some students might have particular interests such as playing in a football team which, for them, is an example of society. Then another box might include:



**Example 2: English: The Study of Fiction and Novels**  
**What is 'fiction'?**



This example includes types of fiction such as adventure, historical, detective and romance as well as other media where fiction may be seen/heard – cinema, theatre, TV, radio. Music is included as an important element in presenting fiction through these media.

Students might also be encouraged to talk about the key aspects of a book or film that they liked giving details of the types of characters, events, climax etc.

### 3.5 Vocabulary file

#### Helping students to help themselves.

The pages that provide a Vocabulary File are fundamental to any student's **personal resource folder**.

These provide a ready-made means for students to work with and learn the critical key vocabulary for any topic.

These pages may be developed in language support sessions, but are equally suitable for self study or for work in the mainstream subject classroom.

Students should be encouraged to complete these pages. It is recommended that teachers would check students' entries. Then they should be filed towards the beginning of the file of work for each separate topic.

It is important to point out to students that this is a very useful resource for their other classes and they should look through their Vocabulary Files and use them generally to support their subject learning.

### 3.6 Working with words

#### Picture sentences

**Type of activity:** Pairs or individual

**Level:** These two activities are intended for students at level A1.

**Learning outcome:**

**Working with words** places the focus at word level. It introduces students to identifying key vocabulary which is related to a particular topic.

**Picture sentences** introduce basic sentence structures.

Both activities are followed by supplementary activities which draw on the language that students have just met in the main activity. These additional activities include, among others completing sentences using the range of vocabulary presented in the main activity; focusing on particular aspects of vocabulary such as articles, prefixes and so on; identifying irregular forms of plural or tenses; and structuring question forms.



### 3.7 Odd One Out Hidden Keywords Unscramble the letters

**Type of activity:** Pairs or individual

It is a good idea to organise activities in pairs as often as possible because the interaction between students encourages discussion and deeper exploration of the language.

**Levels:** A1, A2 and B1

*Odd One Out* and *Unscramble the letters* are specified for students at Levels A1 and A2. However, these are both suitable for Level B1 students who are likely to complete the exercises quickly.

*Hidden Keywords* may also be suitable for Level A1 students who are already familiar with working with keyword lists.

**Learning outcome:** The purpose of each activity is to encourage students to engage with the key vocabulary related to the unit under study. These activities make subject textbooks more accessible by ensuring that students develop familiarity with the key vocabulary which will appear in their books. This means that, when using textbooks in class or for homework, students can depend on meeting some familiar terms and so the challenge of curriculum learning is reduced.

**Supplementary activities:** *Hidden Keywords* and *Odd One Out* are both followed by a supplementary activity which provides practice in putting the vocabulary to use. These activities include, among others, categorising vocabulary and structuring sentences or text.

### 3.8 Grammar points

**Levels:** All

While aspects of grammar and structure are presented and highlighted throughout these materials, there are two dedicated grammar-based exercises in each unit.

The '**Grammar points**' draw on aspects of grammar or language use that have occurred, in particular, in the topic being studied. Therefore they are taken directly from the context of the subject and topic.

Activities that focus on grammar and language use include, among others, the use of prepositions; adjectives; adverbs; regular and irregular tenses; spelling changes in plural nouns; and key language in use.

### 3.9 Explaining prepositions

Students will constantly meet prepositions in speech, instructions from teachers, textbooks, signs in the school, and so on. They will need to understand them and use them accurately in their own responses and written work.

Prepositions may be divided into three basic categories. The following are commonly found in textbooks and curriculum literature:

**Prepositions (phrases) of place** – in, on, beside, under, below, above, near, opposite, between, behind, inside, outside, far from, in front of, next to.
















**Prepositions (phrases) of movement** – from, to, into, out of, up, down, over, under, round, along, across, through, past, onto, off.

**Prepositions (phrases) of time** – in, on, at, every day, this morning, yesterday, tomorrow, last week, next week/month, from \_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_ .

Prepositions are particularly important for students when writing text, including essays and examination answers.

It is easier for students to understand prepositions of place when explanations are illustrated. It's also a good idea to get students to create their own visual examples.

This shows how explanations may be made visual:

 behind	 in front	 on top of
 beside	 around	 to
 in	 between	 from
 under	 out	 off
 on	 through	 over

## 3.10 Alphaboxes

**Type of activity:** Individual.

Activity for final few minutes of class, homework or self study

**Levels:** A1 and A2

**Learning outcome:** Students engage with subject textbooks; learn to identify important vocabulary items; record vocabulary for their own use and ensure that they understand the vocabulary selected.

In addition, building a file of language-based work related to each subject topic provides a valuable personal resource to support mainstream subject learning.

### Method

1. Students use the relevant subject textbooks to find **one** word beginning with each of the letters of the alphabet and enter it in the appropriate box. (Note: It may not be possible to find a word corresponding to each letter.)
2. Students should focus on important keywords for the topic.
2. The page number on which they found the word should be noted in the box.
3. Students may also wish to insert a note to remind them of the meaning, or write the word in their mother tongue.
4. The sheet should be kept in the student's learning file in the appropriate section as it will provide ongoing support for mainstream subject learning.

### 3.11 Wordsearch

**Using the wordsearch activity to extend students' learning.**

#### **Level A1**

Students should write the vocabulary used in the wordsearch with a translation into their home languages.

**Method:**

1. Students draw 2 columns on a separate page
2. Working in pairs they find the vocabulary in the wordsearch
3. As each word is found in the wordsearch grid it should be written in the first column
4. When all words have been found in the wordsearch, students fill in the meaning in their home languages in the second column. (If students are working in pairs with the same home language, they can complete the exercise as a pair.

#### **Level A2**

**Method:**

1. Students working in pairs find the vocabulary in the wordsearch
2. Then each student selects 6 vocabulary items and creates sentences using these.

#### **Level B1**

**Method:**

1. Students carry out the task individually.
2. On completion of the wordsearch, each student writes a paragraph using as many of the words as possible, in combination with a textbook. The paragraph should be relevant to the topic.

## 3.12 Play Snap

**Level:** A1 and A2 (some activities may be suitable for students at Level B1).

**Type of activity:** Small groups or whole class.

**Purpose:** A double set of important key vocabulary is presented in each unit. The vocabulary is taken from the keyword list for the topic that is focused on in the unit.

Using 'snap' cards as a language-learning game provides a relaxing way of consolidating newly-learnt vocabulary while encouraging students to carry out challenging activities with the vocabulary.

**Methods:**

- 1 **Regular 'snap'** where students must identify when a pair of cards is put down. This is suitable for very low level learners and it develops word recognition. (Level A1)
- 2 **'Snap and say'** when a student calls snap then he or she must say the word that is on the card. The focus is on word identification and pronunciation. (Level A1)
- 3 **'Snap and say something'** when two identical cards follow each other the student calling 'snap' must explain what the word means. (Level A1-B1)
- 4 **'Snap and put in a phrase/sentence'** when two identical cards follow each other the student calling 'snap' must put the word into a phrase or sentence depending on level. (Level A2-B1)
- 5 **'Memory Game'** when all the cards are put face down on the table. Students take turns to reveal two cards. When they get a matching pair they keep the pair. The student with most pairs at the end is the winner. (Levels as above)

**Note:** The **Memory Game** may be made increasingly difficult in the same way as 'snap' above.

For students at Level B1 it would be possible to mix two or three topics in the cards. This would provide opportunities for identifying the topic or categorising the word.

### 3.13 Word pairs that cause confusion

There are many pairs or sets of words that can cause confusion for students. In some cases the words sound the same but have entirely different meanings, for example:

**aloud / allowed**

In other cases the spelling is similar and, when pronounced inaccurately, the words may sound the same, for example:

**of / off**

Other examples are: **know / no; there / their; where / were; throw / through / though; sum / some; sweet / suite; him / hymn; tree / three; which / witch; hour / our / are; see / sea; right (correct) / right (position) / write.**

It is important to draw attention to these as they arise in class.

#### Method

To raise students' awareness:

1. Draw attention to words that may cause confusion.
2. Get students to spell, read and say the words out loud.
3. Explain the difference in meaning between the words.
4. Get students to make a note of the words in a specific personal glossary which is kept for this purpose only.
5. Go round the class asking each student to give an example of how to use one of the pairs.
6. Either then or later, students write sample sentences to illustrate the difference in meaning between words.

Example: **of** or **off**

I had two glasses **of** water

I fell **off** the wall.



Get students to set up a special section in their personal dictionaries, so that they can record all such examples as they arise.

### **3.14 Follow-on activities for homework and the mainstream classroom**

There are activities throughout these materials which are suitable for self study or for lower level students to carry out while in a mainstream class (until they are capable of accessing the subject class fully). It's important to confirm that subject teachers are willing to allow students to do their own work in the classroom in the early stages following arrival in the school.

Students should have a dictionary available to them in order to carry out self study. In the early days this may be a translating dictionary which provides an explanation in the home language. Later on, from Level A2, it is recommended that students use a good Learners' Dictionary. The advantage of a Learners' Dictionary is that it provides examples of the language in use.

#### **Activities that are suitable for homework or self study include:**

- Vocabulary File
- Odd Man Out
- English Keywords
- Unscramble the letters
- Completing text
- Multiple choice
- Alphaboxes
- Word Search

**It is important, however, that work done outside the language support classroom should be corrected by the teacher so that it can be filed in an accurate form for future use by the student.**