

### 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.

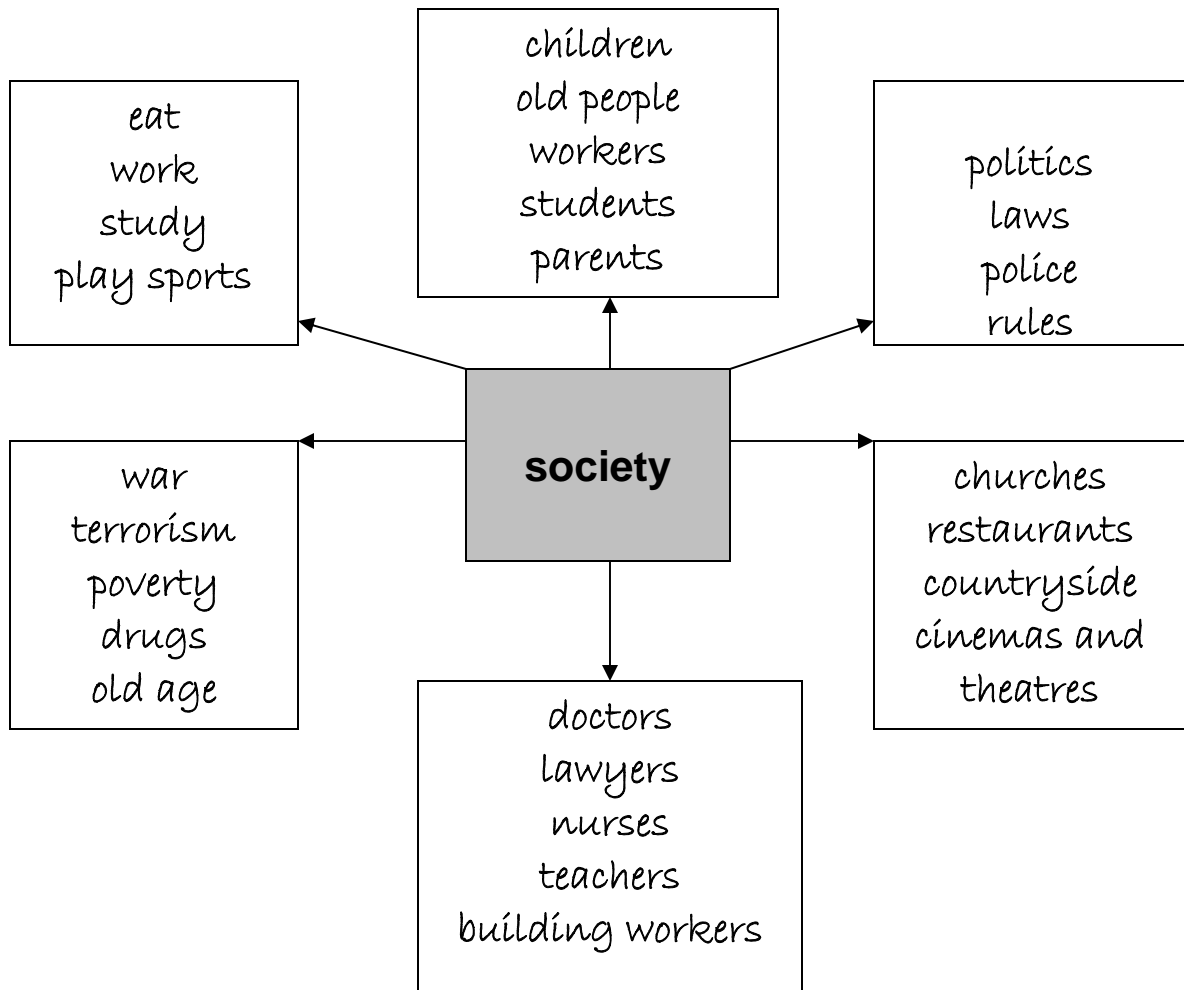
**Levels:** All

**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).

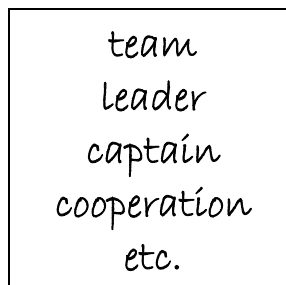
Two examples follow:

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

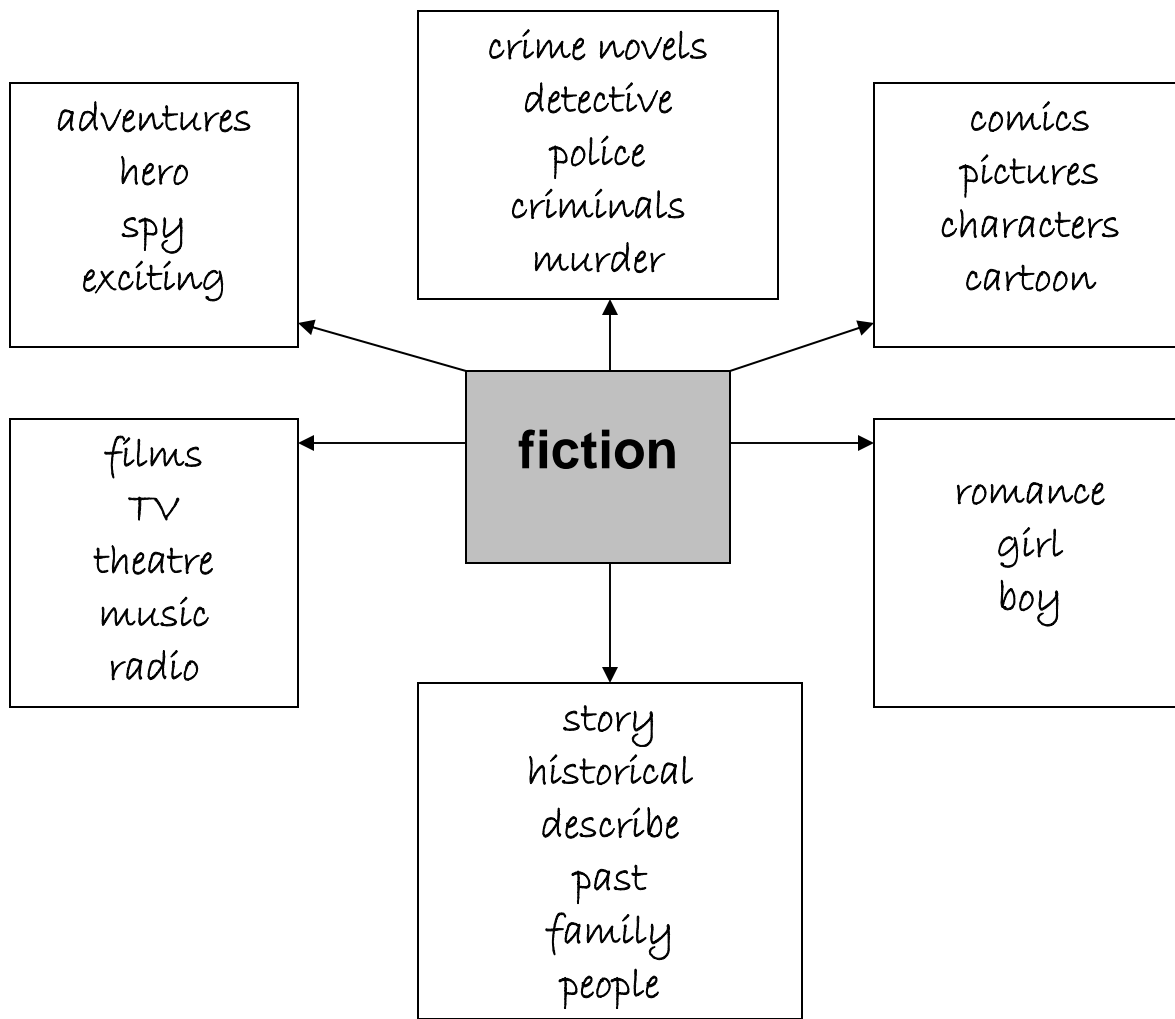


This example highlights different aspects of society as it is now. It includes the people, activities, problems, jobs, state structures and places that people frequent.

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.