

Activity Type

Speaking Activity:
matching, identifying,
responding to statements
and questions, writing
sentences (pair work)

Focus

Making excuses

Aim

To make excuses in
response to requests,
invitations and
accusations using a
variety of phrases.

Preparation

Make one copy of the two
worksheets for each pair
of students.

Level

Intermediate (B1)

Time

25 minutes

Introduction

In this making excuses activity, students make excuses in response to requests, invitations and accusations using a variety of phrases.

Procedure

Divide the students into pairs (Student A and B).

Give each student a corresponding worksheet.

First, students match requests, invitations and accusations with the correct excuses.

Exercise A - Answer key

1. j 2. e 3. a 4. i 5. b
6. c 7. h 8. d 9. g 10. f

Next, students underline the phrases from the first exercise that are used to make excuses.

Exercise B - Answer key

Sorry, I...
Oh, I would, but...
Sorry, I can't. I...
I'm sorry. I...
I'd be happy to, but...
I'd love to help, but...

Elicit other possible phrases for making excuses from the students, e.g. 'Actually, I can't right now because...'

After that, in pairs, students take it in turns to read out the requests, invitations and accusations listed to their partner who gives an excuse for each one.

Students then write their partner's excuse in the space provided.

Finally, review the excuses the students gave for each item as a class.

Student A

A. Match the requests, invitations and accusations with the correct excuses.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. You're late for class! | a. Sorry, I'm married. |
| 2. Can you mow the lawn? | b. Oh, I would, but I'm busy tomorrow. |
| 3. Would you like to go on a date with me? | c. Sorry, I can't. I'm allergic to animal fur. |
| 4. Could you help me carry these boxes? | d. I'm sorry. I couldn't find a mailbox. |
| 5. Would you like to meet me tomorrow? | e. I'd be happy to, but grass makes me sneeze. |
| 6. Can you brush the dog for me? | f. Sorry, I thought it was mine. |
| 7. You didn't hang up the clothes outside! | g. I'm sorry. I thought it was next week. |
| 8. You didn't mail the letter! | h. Sorry, I thought it was going to rain. |
| 9. You forgot my birthday! | i. I'd love to help, but I hurt my back. |
| 10. You've been using my toothbrush! | j. Sorry, my alarm didn't go off. |

B. Underline the phrases above that are used to make excuses.

C. In pairs, take it in turns to read out the requests, invitations and accusations below to your partner who makes an excuse for each one. Write their excuses in the spaces provided.

Requests, Invitations and Accusations

Excuses

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. You didn't water the plants. They're all dead! | ..... |
| 2. Would you like to go to the opera with me? | ..... |
| 3. You missed the last three English classes! | ..... |
| 4. You didn't eat the dinner I made for you! | ..... |
| 5. You broke the window with your ball! | ..... |
| 6. You ate all the biscuits! | ..... |
| 7. Can you give me a lift to work tomorrow? | ..... |
| 8. There's a hole in the shirt you borrowed. | ..... |
| 9. It's your turn to do the dishes. | ..... |
| 10. You've used all the hot water! | ..... |
| 11. Could you buy some milk from the shop? | ..... |
| 12. Can I borrow your phone? | ..... |

Student B
A. Match the requests, invitations and accusations with the correct excuses.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. You're late for class! | a. Sorry, I'm married. |
| 2. Can you mow the lawn? | b. Oh, I would, but I'm busy tomorrow. |
| 3. Would you like to go on a date with me? | c. Sorry, I can't. I'm allergic to animal fur. |
| 4. Could you help me carry these boxes? | d. I'm sorry. I couldn't find a mailbox. |
| 5. Would you like to meet me tomorrow? | e. I'd be happy to, but grass makes me sneeze. |
| 6. Can you brush the dog for me? | f. Sorry, I thought it was mine. |
| 7. You didn't hang up the clothes outside! | g. I'm sorry. I thought it was next week. |
| 8. You didn't mail the letter! | h. Sorry, I thought it was going to rain. |
| 9. You forgot my birthday! | i. I'd love to help, but I hurt my back. |
| 10. You've been using my toothbrush! | j. Sorry, my alarm didn't go off. |

B. Underline the phrases above that are used to make excuses.

C. In pairs, take it in turns to read out the requests, invitations and accusations below to your partner who makes an excuse for each one. Write their excuses in the spaces provided.

Requests, Invitations and Accusations
Excuses

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. You haven't made your bed yet! | ..... |
| 2. You borrowed my car without asking! | ..... |
| 3. You were supposed to do the ironing. | ..... |
| 4. You've left the kitchen in a mess! | ..... |
| 5. Can you help me carry this heavy suitcase? | ..... |
| 6. Would you like to go for a walk with me? | ..... |
| 7. You didn't pay the phone bill. | ..... |
| 8. You're two hours late! | ..... |
| 9. You didn't show up for work yesterday! | ..... |
| 10. Can you wash the car for me? | ..... |
| 11. Could you take the dog for a walk? | ..... |
| 12. Can I borrow some money? | ..... |