

# 1 TEACHING BEYOND THE TEXTBOOK

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- Textbook speaking exercises are often used to practice a language feature
- They don't reflect natural speech between fluent speakers
- Communication is secondary
- Prosody, body language, gesture, pragmatics are often neglected

# 2 ACTIVITIES TO TEACH NATURAL SPEAKING

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## 1. Intonation with Attitude

**Objective:** To draw students' attention to how we use prosody (intonation, tone, volume, rhythm) as well as body language and gesture to make meaning. To practice using these communication tools effectively.

a. Introduce a high-frequency sentence or expression, one that can have different meanings depending on tone and context. For example,

*What are you doing here?  
I really like you.  
Have you ever done this before?*

b. Elicit or share a list of emotions and attitudes, leveled to your students' vocabulary (sad, angry, happy, sarcastic, reluctant, bored, frustrated)

c. Students take turns saying the line with an emotion while other students guess the emotion.

d. Draw attention to how we express emotion and attitude with our voices and bodies. Also discuss how the meaning changes depending on how it's said.

d. Extend by having students write short roleplays around a particular reading on the line, thinking about a natural context and how others would react.



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## 2. Advice Alley

**Objective:** To help students use grammar the way fluent speakers do. To practice using modal verbs of advice in natural spoken English.



a. Suggest or elicit some problems that your students face. Ideally these should be realistic dilemmas appropriate for your students' ages and lives, in the form of:

*My friend wants to borrow my favorite video game  
My parents want me to study medicine, but I prefer the arts.  
My friend wants me to go to a party at a sketchy club.*

b. Have each student pick a dilemma and add details to make the situation feel real.

c. Students form two groups (face-to-face this can be 2 lines, online this can be 2 groups). One group is the **should** group. They present reasons why the person **should** do it. The other group is the **shouldn't** group. They present reasons why the person **shouldn't** do it. They are not required to use should/shouldn't but naturally in giving advice, they will tend to use modal verbs to give advice, speculate, and hedge.

d. Each student takes turns presenting a problem, and alternating going from group to group to get advice.

e. At the end, the student says which decision they made and a piece of advice they thought particularly persuasive. Then the student joins one group, and new student presents a new problem.



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### 3. Improv Storytelling

**Objective:** To build confidence in speaking, to focus on fluency, to help students think about constructing a narrative.

a. Have students stand up and tell a story. You can do this in various ways such as have students tell a group story where everyone adds 2 sentences, or name a topic and have students tell a story on it.

b. Discuss why it can be hard to tell a story on the spot.

c. Put students in pairs with a Student A and student B. Hand out the role cards below. They must not show their cards to each other!

<p>Student A: Your partner is going tell you a story, but you must ask yes/no questions to learn about the story. Afterward, tell the story to the class.</p>	<p>Student B: Your partner thinks you are going to tell a story. They will ask questions that you can answer.</p> <p>If the question ends in a consonant, say yes. If the question ends in a vowel, say no.</p>
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d. Have students follow the directions. Student A asks questions and Student B answers as directed. You can direct Student B to say nothing more than yes or no, or allow them to add a few details. E.g.



A: *Are there aliens?*  
 B: *Yes, there are green aliens from Mars!*  
 A: *Do the aliens have antenna?*  
 B: *No, but they do have four eyes!*

e. After a set time, have Student A retell the story as best they understood it. Once they've done that, reveal the directions. Discuss where the story came from. Who was the author? What does this mean for the concept of creativity?

f. Even after students know the secret, they can still use the method to write stories. Have students switch roles and create another story!



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#### 4. Sketch Analysis

**Objective:** Draw students' attention to how context determines how we speak in different situations. To help students employ and understand the use of pragmatics and prosody in realistic situations.

a. Present a sketch or scene from a play, e.g.

A: *Ummm...*  
 B: *What's wrong?*  
 A: *Well, I need to tell you something, and I want you to promise not to get mad.*  
 B: *Uh-oh. What did you do?*  
 A: *Do you promise?*  
 B: *I can't promise unless you tell me!*  
 A: *Uh, it's about your car.*  
 B: *Oh no! What happened?*  
 A: *Well, I was leaving Ali's house, and my foot just kind of slipped off the brake. And uhm, I sort of hit the gate in front of Ali's house.*  
 B: *What? How bad's the damage?*

b. Have students read it cold first, then discuss in pairs what they think the context and relationship is. What do they know about these people? What do both speakers want and how are they trying to get it. Remember there's no one right answer. Then ask them to act out the script (with intonation, body language, emotion, etc...) based on their assumptions.



*e.g. A is a teenage kid who is very sorry and scared B will be angry. He wants B to forgive him. B is the kid's father and he is absolutely furious. He wants A to compensate for the damages and is disappointed his child is so careless*

- c. Students can discuss why different pairs read the scene so differently and talk about prosody.
- d. Now introduce the pragmatic goal, in this case confessing or breaking bad news. Discuss useful language and strategies we use for that goal and how it changes based on the situation and stakes. You can also do grammar and vocab work.
- e. Finally have student use what they've learned to roleplay a new situation with a similar pragmatic goal.



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