

Who Did What?

Levels

Beginning-intermediate

Aims

Practice the past tense in yes/no questions and affirmative and negative statements while completing a task

Class Time

15-20 minutes

Preparation Time

5 minutes

Resources

Paper
Chalkboard

This exercise stimulates use of regular and irregular forms of the past tense in yes/no questions and affirmative and negative statements as by-products of a guessing game.

Procedure

1. On a sheet of paper, make two columns. In the left column, write the names of seven people (e.g., Maria, Kumio). In the right column, write seven actions in the past tense (e.g., *wrote a letter to the teacher*, *played tennis with some friends*, *studied English all day yesterday*). Then draw lines connecting each of the seven people to one of the seven actions. The result should be seven complete sentences that are grammatical and make sense. (Try to avoid *his/her/their* so as to limit clues and thereby make the activity more challenging.)
2. Write the two columns (people and actions) on the board. Do not draw the lines connecting the parts of the seven sentences.
3. Explain to the students that you have seven sentences of who did what and that they have to ask yes/no questions to guess which person did which action. (You may have to demonstrate by drawing a few lines to create sample sentences. Erase these before you begin the actual practice.)
4. In this group demonstration, divide the class into two or three groups that will compete to solve the mystery. In turn, have a student from each group ask you questions such as *Did Kumio write a letter to the teacher?* or *Did Maria watch television last night?* If the answer is yes, then another student in the same group can ask the next question. If the answer is no, the turn passes to a student in another group. When a student guesses the statement (the person and the action), that group is awarded 1 point. Because there are seven questions, a tie score is impossible.

Caveats and Options

1. In Steps 1-3, the students practice questions in the past tense but do not have to practice affirmative or negative statement forms. For maximum language practice (both in terms of volume of language and variety of forms, i.e., question, affirmative, and negative forms), have the students work in groups of three. Students will need to make up their own original lists, in two copies: one with the lines (i.e., the answers) drawn in and another which the other two students can look at while they are asking questions. If the activity is done in this manner, it triples the amount of the target grammar structure that students have to use.
2. This kind of problem-solving activity elicits a far greater amount of the target grammar structure in a natural and pleasant way than most traditional fill-in-the-blank grammar exercises ever do.

Contributor

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