

## Getting the most out of your coursebook – 10 Simple Activities

### Introduction

1. Stick large cards with numbers 0-6 around the room.
2. Students work in groups of 5 or 6.
3. Each table has a copy of the 3 coursebooks being used in this session (or photocopies).
4. The coursebooks are colour-coded.
5. Each group nominates a runner.
6. The teacher reads out one of the questions & the group discusses it.
7. When you hear the music come on, the runner moves to the card that that shows the number that answers the question for their group.

### Questions:

- How many of you are familiar with any of these coursebooks?
- How many of you have introduced the grammar point on Blue, page 38?
- How many of you watch the sport (or the event) in the pictures on Green, page 19?
- How many of you have done the activity at the bottom of Red, page 45?
- How many of your students use diagrams like those on Blue, page 73?
- How many of you have got famous people in your coursebook?

Blue	= Cutting Edge Intermediate
Green	= North Star Intermediate
Red	= American Headway 1

**Qu: How could you adapt this activity for your students and your coursebook?**

## 2. Speaking Activities

### Behind the Photo (Cutting Edge Int. p.52)

1. Dictate the following:
  - Name?
  - Age?
  - Job/Study?
  - Single/married?
  - Character / Temperament of person?
  - Where is he/she?
  - Views on men and women doing any job?
  - Reasons for being in this situation?
2. Now look at the picture on p.52.
3. Choose 1 of the people in the photographs and complete the profile.
4. Share your profiles with your group.

**Qu: What other questions could you use?**

### 3. Personalisation (an idea taken from a workshop given by Ken Wilson, IH London DOS Conference 2001)

This is a little bit of fun and a nice ice-breaker.

- Ask for a volunteer to come to the front of the class.
- Ask the student the following 4 questions and ask him/her to answer truthfully:
  1. **What's your name?**
  2. **Where do you come from?**
  3. **What do you do?**
  4. **Where do you live?**
- Now, ask the same questions again and this time the student should invent a new identity.
- After the student has created a new identity, the rest of the class can now ask the student questions to find out more.

### 4. Surveys & Interviews

These are simple student generated activities which can be used when adapting the North Star course books. The topic in this example is Extreme Sports from Unit 2 in North Star Building Skills for TOEFL iBT.

#### Procedure:

- Brainstorm extreme sports as a class, or in small groups
- (Optional) Show pictures of a selection of extreme sports such as: motocross, BMX, MTB, skateboarding, skydiving, bungee-jumping, snowboarding, skiing, etc.,
- Students make an interview/survey sheet with the extreme sports listed on the left.
- Along the top, the student draws 3 columns. See below:

	Me	1	2
<b>Skiing</b>			
<b>Snowboarding</b>			
<b>BMX</b>			
<b>MTB (Mountain Biking)</b>			
<b>Skateboarding</b>			
<b>Bungee-jumping</b>			

- Students complete the 'Me' column for themselves: sports they have tried (a tick ✓), would like to try (smiley ☺) and wouldn't like to try (a cross X).
- Elicit the questions students need to ask. **Have you ever tried...? Yes, I have. No, I haven't. When did you...? Would you like to try...? Yes, I would(n't). Why? Why not?**
- The students then interview 3 other members of the class/group.
- The group then plans a report by completing the following sentence stems:

*'All of us / Both of us have tried .....*

*'None of us / Neither of us have tried .....*

*'We'd all / both like to try / wouldn't like to try .....*

- The students can then regroup and report the results of their survey to the other students.

**Qu. What other topics could be used to generate similar surveys/speaking activities?  
Qu. Why is it a good idea to provide sentence stems for students to complete?**

## 6. Personalisation (Vocabulary review & speaking)

This can be used with vocabulary introduced during the lesson and if you have made flashcards then they can be used to personalise the material. This example is from *North Star Building Skills for TOEFL iBT, Unit 2: 'Extreme Sports'*, p.19. The students have made vocabulary cards and listened to a text making notes and writing phrases around the vocabulary items. To practise the vocabulary, the students interview each other personalising the vocabulary.

**Use the words in bold below to describe something that is true for you.**

1. I'm feeling a lot of **pressure** to do well in my classes because my parents expect me to get A's
2. My little brother is **obsessed** with baseball.
3. This **semester (term)** I am taking algebra.
4. Linda wasn't sure how to solve the math problem, but she decided to **give it a shot** anyway.
5. Jennifer did not study for 2 weeks. As a result, her grades began to **suffer**.
6. I **am sick of** watch**ing** TV ever night. Let's go dancing instead.

## 7. Listening Activities

### Pause and Predict (North Star Int. p.230)

1. Introduce the listening. The books says: "Listen to 2 students discussing a problem."
2. Books closed. The teacher plays the tape stopping periodically for students to guess the next word/phrase. (See tapescript.)
3. Students discuss the word/phrase in groups before sharing the answer.

**Qu. How could you make this activity more competitive?**

## 8. Spot the Mistakes (North Star Int. p.230)

1. The teacher reads out loud the text previously listened to, but occasionally says the wrong word.
2. Students shout out whenever they hear a "wrong" word, and say what the original word was. (This works well with particularly dull listening texts.)

**Qu. Have you ever tried doing an activity like this?**

## 9. Writing

### Study & Change (American Headway 1, p.21)

1. Write up the first line from, “The man with thirteen jobs”: “**Seamus McSporran is a very busy man.**”
2. Elicit words that could be changed to make the text more interesting. Replace the words with students’ suggestions.
3. Students complete the study & change for the 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph.
4. Students compare with other groups.
5. **Variation:** Blank out the text before students read. The students complete the text with any appropriate words.

### 10. Progress Check (Cutting Edge Int. p.16)

1. Split the class into pairs or groups.
2. Each pair chooses an exercise on p.16. (Groups should each do a different exercise.)
3. First do the exercise.
4. The student checks if the answers are correct and then writes 3-5 more questions following the same pattern as the exercise. E.g. word order for questions, missing auxiliary verbs, etc...
5. Stick the extended exercises around the room.
6. Groups have 5 mins at each ‘station’ to complete the exercises.
7. Students write their answers on a piece of paper with their group’s name on it and leave it in an envelope next to the exercise (or folded and pinned to the wall).
8. Students return to exercises they originally extended and correct the work in the envelopes. They should be prepared to provide explanations to other students about why their answers were wrong.

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## Why Adapt Coursebooks?

- Monotonous tasks
- Repetitive coursebook organisation (predictability)
- Tasks not challenging enough, or too challenging
- Tasks don't provide enough practice
- Tasks, or texts, contain material that doesn't need to be covered
- Tasks, or texts are not interesting, motivating, or competitive
- Methodology of the book is not suitable for the students
- Lack of visuals, colour etc... (E.g. North Star)
- Unclear instructions

**.... so let your imagination loose on your class.**