

PRIMARY GRAMMAR BOX

**Grammar games and activities
for younger learners**

**Caroline Nixon
and Michael Tomlinson**



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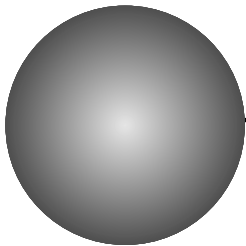
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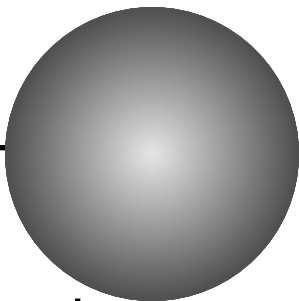
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For Pauline and Eric Nixon with much love and gratitude. CN
To Shirley and Neville Tomlinson who started it all off. MT.

PRIMARY GRAMMAR BOX

Map of the book



| Activity title | Grammar focus | Activity type | Time | Logistics |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|-------|--------------------------|
| Level 1: Starting off (age approximately 7-8) | | | | |
| 1.1 Noun Bingo | Articles <i>a/an</i> | Listening game | 20 | Whole class |
| 1.2 Card drills | <i>He is, she is, (they are)</i> | Communication activity | 45 | Whole class/ pairs |
| 1.3 Fashion parade | Plurals, clothes | Information transfer | 40 | Pairs |
| 1.4 Broken sentences | Be + determiner | Matching | 20-30 | Individual |
| 1.5 Hide and seek | Be, house | Information gap | 20-30 | Pairs |
| 1.6 The animal train | <i>There's</i> | Word order activity | 20-30 | Individual |
| 1.7 Sentence scramble | Be, simple syntax | Sentence formation | 40 | Small group |
| 1.8 Peter Potato Face | <i>Has got</i> , parts of the face | Make and do, information transfer | 60 | Individual/pairs |
| 1.9 Animal jumble | Possessive 's, <i>has got</i> , animals | Make and do, game | 60 | Individual/pairs |
| 1.10 Toys | <i>Have got</i> , <i>has got</i> | Information gap | 20-30 | Pairs |
| 1.11 What's the time? | Time | Make and do | 60 | Individual/pairs |
| 1.12 Look what we can do! | Can | Class survey | 45 | Small group/ whole class |
| 1.13 What's happening? | Present continuous | Picture dictation | 30-40 | Whole class/pairs |
| 1.14 My new kitten | Present continuous | Matching | 30 | Individual |
| 1.15 Pairs of squares 1 | Possessive determiners, present continuous | Colour matching | 30 | Individual |



PRIMARY GRAMMAR BOX

Map of the book

| Activity title | Grammar focus | | Activity type | Time | Logistics |
|---|---|--|-----------------------|-------|------------------------|
| Level 2: Moving on (age approximately 9–10) | | | | | |
| 2.1 Food and drink dominoes | Countable/uncountable nouns | | Matching | 20–30 | Small group |
| 2.2 The Brillmobile | Can, has got | | Reading comprehension | 45 | Individual |
| 2.3 Action charades | Imperatives, present continuous, possessive determiners | | Game | 30–40 | Whole class |
| 2.4 Story jigsaw | Simple syntax, punctuation | | Reading and matching | 45 | Individual |
| 2.5 Pairs of squares 2 | Possessive determiners and pronouns | | Colour matching | 20–30 | Individual |
| 2.6 A question of taste | Like, food | | Survey | 45 | Pairs/individual/group |
| 2.7 Johnny's birthday list | Want, present simple | | Question and answer | 30 | Individual |
| 2.8 Present Bingo | Present simple | | Listening game | 30–40 | Whole class |
| 2.9 Where are they sitting? | Daily routine, time, prepositions | | Cognitive puzzle | 30 | Individual |
| 2.10 You read, I write | Present simple and continuous | | Text dictation | 30 | Pairs |
| 2.11 Sentence walkabout | Present simple and continuous | | Matching | 30–45 | Whole class |
| 2.12 What do we use? | Purpose clause (infinitive) | | Game | 40 | Small group |
| 2.13 Where were they? | Past simple | | Information gap | 20 | Pairs |
| 2.14 Party time | Past of be and have | | Cognitive puzzle | 30–40 | Individual |
| 2.15 Grammagram | Parts of speech | | Classification | 30 | Individual |

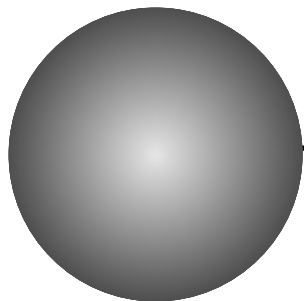
Map of the book



| Activity title | Grammar focus | Activity type | Time | Logistics |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|--------------------------------|
| Level 3: Flying high (age approximately 11–12) | | | | |
| 3.1 Did he or didn't he? | Past simple, short answers | Information gap | 20–30 | Pairs |
| 3.2 Three friends | Comparative and superlative | Read and draw | 30 | Individual |
| 3.3 A–Z | Verbs, nouns, adjectives | Board game | 30 | Small group |
| 3.4 The Bingo habit | Present simple, adverbs | Listening game | 30–40 | Whole class |
| 3.5 What are they going to do? | Going to future | Describing pictures | 40 | Individual/whole class |
| 3.6 Comparatively correct | Comparatives and superlatives | Error correction | 30 | Individual |
| 3.7 Weather report | Weather verbs, adjectives and nouns | Parts of speech classification | 30 | Individual |
| 3.8 Irregular verb checklist | Past simple irregular verbs | Self-study | 30 | Individual |
| 3.9 Who went where? | Complex questions, past simple | Information gap | 30 | Pairs |
| 3.10 Broken words | Past simple irregular verbs | Matching | 30 | Individual |
| 3.11 Exhilarating auxiliaries | Auxiliaries, short answers | Matching and writing | 30 | Whole class/ pairs/ individual |
| 3.12 Grammingle | Parts of speech | Classification | 30 | Whole class |
| 3.13 Read all about it! | Past simple and continuous | Writing | 45 | Individual |
| 3.14 Film frenzy | Past simple irregular verbs | Cognitive puzzle | 30–40 | Individual |
| 3.15 King Arthur | Discourse | Reading | 45 | Small group |

Crosswords

| Activity title | Grammar focus | Level | Time | Logistics |
|-------------------------------------|---|-------|------|------------|
| 1 Plurals | Plural nouns | 1–2 | 30 | Individual |
| 2 I, me, my ... | Personal pronouns and determiners | 2–3 | 30 | Individual |
| 3 A day in the life ... | Present simple | 2–3 | 30 | Individual |
| 4 Adjectives | Adjectives | 2–3 | 30 | Individual |
| 5 Parts of speech | Verbs, adjectives, nouns and prepositions | 3 | 30 | Individual |
| 6 Past simple half crossword | Past simple | 2–3 | 30 | Pairwork |
| 7 Irregular past | Past simple irregular verbs | 2–3 | 30 | Individual |
| 8 Mixed tenses | Present and past | 3 | 30 | Individual |



PRIMARY GRAMMAR BOX

Introduction

What is *Primary Grammar Box*?

Primary Grammar Box is a resource book of supplementary activities for the teaching of grammar to younger learners (7–12 years approximately), containing photocopiable worksheets. By ‘grammar’ we mean that we are more interested in the function of words as part of sentence structure than solely in their individual meaning.

The book is appropriate for beginner and pre-intermediate level pupils and covers most of the grammar found in courses of these levels and the Cambridge Young Learners Tests (UCLES).

The book includes 53 photocopiable games and activities from 20 to 60 minutes’ duration, complete with teacher’s notes and extension activities for further language practice. It is divided into four sections: three sections of extended activity types grouped according to pupils’ levels and ages, and a section of crosswords.

The intention here is to provide enjoyable activities which will make both teaching and learning fun, while exploiting younger children’s innate capacity to assimilate new information. To this end, the book adopts a non-technical approach and aims to be accessible to native and non-native teachers of English. While there is a selection of activities appropriate to different teaching and learning styles (visual, audio and bodily-kinaesthetic), the emphasis in most of them is on developing reading and writing skills for younger pupils and consolidating grammatical knowledge in older ones.

The activities are of different lengths, ranging from 20-minute gap-fillers through to ‘make and do’ activities that may occupy the greater part of the lesson. There are task-based activities, where pupils use English as the vehicle to find the answer to a task or problem without necessarily thinking consciously about the language they are using. This challenge can be highly stimulating for the younger learner. Emphasis has been placed upon the use of puzzles and games, quite simply because they are fun to do. Apart from linguistically-based puzzles and games, cognitive puzzles have also been included. These are especially useful in that they combine language skills with mathematical reasoning, thus exploiting both left and right hemispheres of the brain and making the learning process more complete.

Some of the activities incorporate an element of competition, which can be highly motivating for younger learners as it leads them to use grammatical structures more enthusiastically and increases their desire to do so correctly.

The material encourages the fomentation of learner training, stimulating deductive reasoning and classification skills. This

manifests itself in a variety of activities which variously encourage autonomy, cooperation and social skills which are so important for the development of younger learners.

Who is *Primary Grammar Box* for?

Age range

The book has been divided into three levels within the 7–12-year age range. Within each level we have tried to bear in mind the specific needs of each age group. The needs of those seven-year olds who cannot yet read or write confidently contrast sharply with those of 11–12-year olds who need a more challenging type of activity. For each activity, we suggest the age range for which it is suitable. However, these ages are intended only as a guide, as children’s capacity to do any particular activity will depend largely on their first language, cultural background and the length of time they have been learning English. In all cases, teachers are the best judges of their pupils’ ability to carry out an activity successfully, irrespective of their age. The time it takes to do an activity will also vary with the age and ability of the pupils. The amount of time we recommend for each activity should be taken to be the most that a class at the younger age range would need.

The activities intended for children under ten do not overtly teach grammar, as young children cannot be expected to understand isolated grammatical terms and concepts, but rather learn linguistic structures unconsciously through practising them within a meaningful context. By the age of ten, however, children have lost much of their capacity to learn ‘unconsciously’, which is what enables them to learn at a much faster rate and to absorb new information without questioning it. Our objective, therefore, is to lead younger learners towards an awareness of sentence structure and syntax in a fun and dynamic way, so that they are able to reproduce these spontaneously and intuitively. Slightly older learners will develop a feel for English through activities that encourage an analysis of the mechanics of the language. For the older learners, there are activities that include a gentle introduction to grammar and grammatical terms to prepare the ground for a greater understanding at a later stage. This development can be seen more clearly as learners progress from simple sentences to more complicated discourse.

Level

We have organised the activities in *Primary Grammar Box* into three levels. This is intended as a guide to the language abilities pupils will need in order to do the activities. These levels do not refer to any wider EFL standards.

Introduction



| Level | Section | Approximate age | Skills | Grammar content |
|-------|--------------|-----------------|---|---|
| 1 | Starting off | 7–8 | Controlled reading, writing and communication | <i>be, have, can, there is/are</i> , imperative, present continuous, determiners, pronouns, time |
| 2 | Moving on | 9–10 | Reading, writing, controlled communication, classification of simple parts of speech Emerging cognitive skills for language learning | present simple, <i>like, want</i> , daily routine, time, prepositions, possessive pronouns, purpose clauses, past simple (<i>be, have</i>), parts of speech |
| 3 | Flying high | 11–12 | Reading, writing, communication Developing cognitive skills for language learning | past simple (irregular verbs), past continuous, <i>going to</i> future, comparative and superlative adjectives, adverbs of frequency, auxiliaries, parts of speech, discourse |

When to use *Primary Grammar Box*

The activities can be used as extra material to back up a coursebook. We suggest they should be used for revision and reinforcement, rather than as an introductory presentation to a new grammar structure. The activities are ideal for teachers who work without a coursebook. They can be used on those days when it is not a good idea to start a new topic: the day before a bank holiday, days of high absenteeism due to bouts of illness or extra-curricular activities, etc. They are useful for teachers who have to stand in when the class teacher is absent.

Using *Primary Grammar Box* – tips for teachers

The following suggestions are based on our own experience in the classroom. They are by no means definitive and aim simply to give a few teaching ideas to less experienced teachers.

Drilling

- We have found this technique especially useful when pre-teaching or revising an area of grammar before going on to the practical part of the activity, where the structure will be used and exploited in a more natural way.
- Drilling is an ideal complement to more liberal activity types, and vice versa. We feel that both techniques are equally valid as teaching strategies and that neither should exclude the other.
- Drilling can be done individually or collectively. We suggest that it should initially be carried out collectively, and once pupils understand the mechanism, proceed to drill individually. Before carrying out a drill, it is important to establish the context, to ensure that pupils understand the meaning of the sentences. This can be done through the use of mime, pictures or flashcards. The prompt for

each drill can then be presented either visually (simple pictures, flashcards or gestures) or, verbally, e.g.

TEACHER: *He can swim. Repeat.*

PUPILS: *He can swim.*

TEACHER: *They*

PUPILS: *They can swim.*

TEACHER: *She*

PUPILS: *She can swim.*

- Once the various subject pronouns have been practised, you can include different verbs and the negative form in random order for pupils to change different parts of information in each sentence.

Preparation

- The most important thing with any kind of task is to make sure that the pupils have been well prepared beforehand, that they know all the words they will need and that they understand the object of the exercise. Equipping your pupils properly with the necessary linguistic tools to enable them to carry out a task successfully will ensure that it is a challenging and enjoyable one for all. Without the necessary preparation, learners may have a negative learning experience, which will cause them to lose confidence and become frustrated with an activity that, quite simply, they have not got the capacity to do.
- Before starting any activity, demonstrate it. For pairwork activities, choose an individual pupil to help you. Do the first question of the pairwork task with the pupil for the class to get the idea.
- When you divide the class into pairs or groups, point to each pupil and say, e.g. *A–B, A–B, A–B*, so they are in no doubt as to what their role is. Try to give simple clear instructions in English. Say, e.g. *As ask the question and Bs answer the question: A–B, A–B, A–B. Then Bs ask the question and As answer the question: B–A, B–A, B–A.*



- Always bring a few extra photocopies of the worksheet to avoid tears if any children do it wrong and want to start again.

Classroom dynamics

- Try to move around the classroom while explaining or doing the activities, circulating among your pupils. In this way you project an air of confidence, of being in command and of being more accessible to pupils. Moving around the classroom also enables you more effectively to supervise and monitor pupils who may need more attention at times. Movement in the classroom tends to hold pupils’ attention better and makes the class more lively and dynamic.
- In the same way that it is a good idea for teachers to move around, it is also advisable to move the pupils around occasionally. By periodically changing seating arrangements, you can help group dynamics and break up potentially disruptive groups. For example, weaker pupils could be put next to stronger ones, and more hardworking pupils next to disruptive ones. Pupils might benefit from working with children they may not usually associate with.
- When forming pairs or groups, we suggest that, whenever possible, pupils just move their chairs. For groupwork, they can bring their chairs around one or two tables, allowing them an easy environment for discussion and written production. For pairwork, they can position their two chairs to face each other. This allows a more realistic eye-to-eye communication situation. This change of seating prepares them for the oral work they are about to begin.
- Certain activities in this book can be used to divide the class into random pairs in a more dynamic way. Give pupils a card and ask them to move around the classroom to find their partner. The activities that lend themselves to this are: 1.2 Card drills, 1.3 Fashion parade, 1.4 Broken sentences, 1.14 My new kitten, 1.15 Pairs of squares 1, 2.5 Pairs of squares 2, 2.12 What do we use?, 3.8 Irregular verb checklist and 3.10 Broken words.

Noise

- Some activities, especially those that involve pupils speaking and moving around in the classroom, will generate a lot of excitement. In the book we use the symbol below to indicate this type of activity. When children are excited, they tend to be very noisy and may even lapse into their first language to talk about or discuss some aspect of the activity. Although it can be difficult to get used to at first,



noise in the classroom is tolerable if it is related directly to the activity and is an expression of interest or enthusiasm for the task in hand. Regardless of which language they use, if children are sufficiently stimulated by an activity to want to talk about it, then this can only be interpreted as a positive response. You must ensure, however, that only English is used for the completion of specific communication tasks.

Teaching and learning

- Encourage pupils to use their own resources to try to solve a task. Try to guide pupils towards finding the right answers, rather than supplying them yourself, even if this means allowing them to make mistakes. Making mistakes is a vital part of the learning process, so when pupils are asked to invent their own sentences, stories, etc. we should not expect these to be perfect. Sometimes accuracy must be forfeited for the sake of creativity and enthusiastic participation.
- Many of the extension activities include ideas for fast finishers. These can be given to those pupils who need an extra task to keep them occupied while the rest of the class finish the main activity. In activities where it is necessary to prepare material, these pupils can be kept busy helping the teacher with cutting out, collecting in and cleaning up.
- Try to avoid the immediate repetition of an activity simply because it has worked well in class and your pupils have enjoyed it. If you do this, the novelty will quickly wear off and children will become bored. Save it for a later occasion and they will come back to it with fresh enthusiasm.

Competition

- An element of competition can make many children try harder. However, while a competition can be a good incentive for an otherwise lazy pupil, it can sometimes be demotivating for a less able but ordinarily hardworking one. It is a good idea to balance competitions with other activities to be able to reward or praise individuals according to their different needs and performances.
- Competitions can also lead to a lot of noise and overenthusiasm in the classroom. Any discipline problems can, however, be curbed by keeping a running total of points on the board and deducting points for shouting out the answer or rowdiness.

Display

- Pupils find it extremely motivating to have their work displayed and will generally strive to produce work to the best of their ability if they know it is going to be seen by others. So try to arrange to display pupils’ work around the classroom or school whenever possible.

Introduction



Portfolios

- As parents and carers are taking a growing interest in their children’s learning, making personal folders is the perfect way for pupils to take their work home so they can show off what they have learnt in their English lessons. The completed worksheets in *Primary Grammar Box* are ideal for including in such a personalised portfolio.

- In the same way, it is a good idea to photocopy different sets of the same game onto different coloured card and laminate them with adhesive plastic. These can then be stored for easy retrieval at short notice at a later date.

Caroline Nixon and Michael Tomlinson, Murcia 2003

Storage of material

- To make the flashcards more attractive and appealing to younger learners, it is a good idea to enlarge them, colour them in and laminate them with protective adhesive plastic. In this way you will always have them ready for future use.