

Intro-bits

These English-only card cues are meant to provide for game-like review and spot-checking of previously learned self-introductory speeches. Our set of forty cards is divided into groups of ten, with the usual graduating colors corresponding to difficulty. The first two groups (pink and yellow) review introductory sentences previously learned in the Speak 'n Sit activity, and are aimed at students who will be able to read or 'read at' the card-printed words. The third (blue) group contains information-eliciting prompts slightly beyond that which students will have practiced in previous self introductions. And the final (green) group will be new learning for most students, and is most appropriate for adults.



Included in the package are homework-appropriate mini-reading and writing sheet challenges. Aside from the general merits of practicing these secondary language skills, they will help students retain the vocabulary and statements previously only orally practiced, or via this activity learned. Also, the homework series (which should be initiated in class) offers an opportunity to teach (or re-teach) and enforce strict penmanship standards.

The cards and homework sheets are a hybrid of speaking prompts, including personal info-seeking cues typically found on immigration and other official forms. Students should find extra satisfaction in managing to (silently) decipher their own cards without printed translation.

Suggested Procedure for Use (ideally with at least three students)

1. Select the cards you wish to use for a given class. There is no prohibition of mixing card colors but it would usually be best to start off with only some or all of the pinks, even for higher level students.
2. Do not show any card faces, but write on the board any words that students might be unable to read or understand. Typical candidates: "age," "living place," "ability," "school grade," and maybe other words that they'd recognize aurally and can say, but aren't used to seeing in print. Using a mixture of translation, ideally elicited from the students, and teacher-supplied synonymous expressions, decode these cues as you deem necessary.
3. Ask them, as a group, what time it is. The first to correctly answer will be

unexpectedly awarded use of the stopwatch.

4. Tell students that this is to be an all-class team joint effort to achieve the fastest time they can to finish (i.e., for the last one to succeed and sit). Asking one student to shuffle the cards (under the table) is a cute fun-increasing option.
5. Fan out a number of cards (backs toward students) which will correspond to or exceed the number of those present (usually all ten cards of the same color). Each student selects e.g. one card at random.
6. Allow students to briefly look at their cards, read silently, and resolve incomprehension or doubt by showing and conferring with one-another (Japanese use permitted), teacher clarifying if necessary.
7. Have your timekeeper start the stopwatch. (You should have a plastic encased 'Intro-bit' sheet in front of you with target statements identified by card color and number—so you will know what a stymied student is supposed to say.)
8. Starting at one end of your student line:
 - Have the first say, e.g.: “Card number 6!” But, oops! Student #1 isn’t smiling or making eye contact. Tell him so, and quickly indicate it’s the next student’s turn.
 - Student #2, unready, stalls. Too slow!
 - Quickly tell student #3 it’s her turn. She smiles and says “Card number 8. My favorite color ees...” You say: “My favorite color is...”
 - Go to the next student, who is ready, smiles, gets her sentence right and asks: “May I sit down?”¹ (Yes, she may.) Or, you may simply say “Good,” which means she may sit without asking to.
 - The rest begin getting their act together as you continue quickly in turn with those still standing. You may solicit help from others, especially sitting students when a speaker errs, or they should learn to volunteer, since it’s a team time effort. But if help isn’t quickly forthcoming, offer the correction yourself. Until there is only one student standing, any correction must be remembered until the rotation allows them another chance.

¹ Note “sit down” is comprised of two words; they are not to be run together and pronounced as, e.g., “May I seedown?” One would think that most native English speaking teachers would immediately correct such an utterance and require retry clarity before granting permission. Sadly, one would be wrong.

9. As soon as the last student has sat, ask the timekeeper to “Stop the stopwatch!”
10. Write the reported minutes and seconds on the board. Praise and challenge to beat the best time or cumulative time in next week’s class, or in a second try in the same class.
11. Just before doing the activity the following week, remind them of their previous time, which they will try to beat. (Do not facilitate their doing so, however, by any lowering of countenance, readiness, smoothness, pronunciation or intonation standards.)

The number of times advisable to play the “game” in a given class depends on student number. Generally the first time, you will want to do the activity twice or no more than thrice with any class size. Here is a rough guideline to consider following from the third class onward.

8 to 10 students: Once per class

6 or 7: Once or twice

4 or 5: Twice

2 or 3: Thrice

A solitary student: Have student stand and speed through a set of ten as fast as possible, speaking naturally. (She or he will turn over each card from a face-down deck.) Be strict about pronunciation correction (requiring full repeats) while the stopwatch runs. Record the time. Thereafter they will be trying to beat their previous time.

How often should this activity be done?

- A. Not at all if students haven’t, at an earlier date, learned to stand and properly introduce themselves with a 9th rank required minimum number of statements.
- B. Ditto if they can’t yet at least “read at” the cue words or if their performance is so poor that they clearly need to review and redo complete self-introducing speeches.
- C. For the rest, in a minimum of three to four successive classes including the kick-off one. After that, repetition and advancing to yellow and beyond is at the teacher’s discretion.

What about just starting with yellow, blue or green cards?

Could be done with higher level students, but we suggest starting no higher than yellow with most school students, and no higher than a blue card start

even with advanced adults.

How about mixing card colors for one activity or leaving one or more cards out of the mix at a particular time or for a particular class?

No problem. Just keep track of what you've done. Remember that this is a hit and miss review, as is. It will take several times played before all are exposed to most cards.

What if students draw the same card as they had the last time or two?

Instruct them to switch with each other when that happens.

Homework Worksheets

Have students work sequentially through the worksheets that correspond to the card colors done in class. Do at least part of the first in class, to confirm how it's to be done and to show the students how high (insanely high) your "pencilmanship" standards will be. Much erasing and rewriting will be done unless they have already been squared away by a caring, no-nonsense teacher. Once such a standard has been established, future reading of student efforts should be a pleasure to the eye with only minor corrections needed.

These homework papers do not require—and indeed do not give space for—the full statements made in class. The information expected is the same minimum as would usually be entered on a form questionnaire. These papers only take minutes to fill in (at home) and a quite short and decreasing amount of time to correct in class. They are the low-fat icing on these cupcakes.

"Intro-bit" Homework

Full name: _____

Meaning of name(s): _____

Parents' birthplaces: _____

Mother's maiden name: _____

Teacher's OK