

INFORMATION GAPS: DRAWING DICTATION

This week's activity is an information gap designed for pairs. The activity involves giving directions, asking for clarification, practicing vocabulary, and drawing. Students will draw their "dream home" and then describe the image to a partner who can't see the picture. The partners must listen to the description and ask follow-up questions as they try to reproduce a drawing of the other person's dream home. This activity can be considered an information gap because the student describing the image has the information the other student needs to successfully complete the task.

LEVEL

Lower intermediate and above; see the Variations section for ideas that are appropriate for beginners and above

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Speaking functions: giving instructions, asking for clarification, describing a picture or scene

Vocabulary: exterior parts of a house and the surrounding area, shapes, sizes, colors

Grammar: imperative statements, clarification questions, prepositions of location, comparative adjectives (e.g., "No, the front door is bigger than the one in your picture.")

GOALS

During this activity, students will:

- Review and practice prepositions of location and vocabulary related to the exterior parts of a house and the surrounding outdoor areas as they describe a dream house to a partner
- Ask for clarification about instructions they receive from their partner

MATERIALS

- Teacher:
 - Whiteboard, chalkboard, or large pieces of paper posted on the wall
 - Markers or chalk
- Students:
 - Pencils and erasers, markers, crayons, or colored pencils
 - Blank paper

PROCEDURES

1. Draw a big rectangle on the board to represent a sheet of paper. Then use your “paper” to draw an exterior view of your dream home while you do a think aloud for the class:
 - Tell students this picture represents your dream home, the house you would live in if you could live anywhere and you could spend as much money as you wanted.
 - Your dream home can have as many features as you want. As you draw, name parts of the house or elicit the vocabulary items from the students (example: “I want lots of sunlight in my dream house...[draw four big windows]...hmm, can anyone tell me the vocabulary word for these [point at the windows]?”)
 - Consider adding some outside features to your house, such as a driveway, a swimming pool, a sun in the sky, or trees, bushes, and flowers.
 - Don’t worry: you don’t have to be an amazing artist! A simple line drawing is fine.
2. Once your picture is done, elicit additional vocabulary items related to parts of a house and the outdoor areas near a house. List these items on the board.
3. Tell students they are each going to draw their own dream home and then describe it to a partner who won’t be able to see the picture.
4. Depending on your students’ level, at this point, you may want to use your sample drawing to review language functions needed to complete the task, such as:
 - **Locations on a piece of paper:** *in the top center of the paper, on the bottom left side, in the corner, in the middle*
 - **Prepositions of location:** *above, next to, to the left of*
 - **Giving directions with imperatives:** *Draw a square. Add a triangle on top for the roof.*
 - **Comparisons:** *The front door needs to be smaller.*
 - **Asking for clarification:** *Is this the right size/shape? Like this?*
5. Tell students to draw their dream house on a blank sheet of paper. If desired, depending on the amount of time you are allocating for the task, students can add color to their pictures. Tell students that they can make their houses as simple or as fancy as they want, but they will need to be able to explain the house’s parts and where they are located to a partner.
6. Circulate as students draw. Answer questions about any house-related vocabulary while students work, or encourage them to use dictionaries to look up any unknown terms.
7. Put students in pairs. Tell them not to show their original pictures to their partners. Have students sit so the describing student can shield his/her paper from the drawing student’s view. Describing students should be able to see the drawing students’ work; describing students will provide clarifications and answer questions about the new drawing while their partner works.
8. Tell the drawing students to draw what their partners describe in pencil. They may need to make corrections as they receive/ask for clarification from their partner, so they should have an eraser. After the describing partner thinks the new picture is fairly close to the original, he or she can give the drawing student information about adding color to the picture, if desired.
9. Circulate as student pairs work together. Remind students not to show each other their original pictures, if needed, and offer support as required.
10. After each pair finishes, they should switch roles with the drawing student now describing his/her picture to the partner.
11. Once both students have had a chance to draw, ask the pairs to compare the new drawings to the original pictures and describe the similarities and differences they see.
12. To close the activity, you can conduct a whole-class debrief to review any challenging vocabulary or language function items. Ask a few pairs to share and describe their drawings.

VARIATIONS

Procedure Variations

For a faster version of the activity that doesn't focus on asking for/giving clarification, have students sit back-to-back as they describe and draw. The pictures will likely have many more differences with this approach, which can make students laugh as they compare the results! The lack of similarity can provide a rich opportunity to practice comparative adjectives as students evaluate and describe how the pictures differ.

Content Variations

These procedures used a “dream house” theme, but teachers can adapt the activity to use other themes that suit their language and content objectives. Here are few ideas for how to vary the focus of a picture dictation information gap. Students will draw, describe, discuss, and recreate:

Drawing Content	Language Focus	Notes
Combinations of basic shapes (a red triangle next to a black circle with two different- sized colored squares inside, etc.)	Vocabulary: shape, colors, sizes, location words; prepositions of location (above, next to, on top of, inside)	Great for beginner-level students! As an extension activity, students can switch partners after drawing, taking their pictures with them; then students can point to items and orally quiz their new partners about the vocabulary items they see, or the new partners can write 3-4 “There is... /There are...” sentences describing the drawing.
An imaginary alien, robot, or monster	Vocabulary: body parts, colors, sizes, appearance adjectives; prepositions of location	Encourages students to use their imagination as they draw and practice vocabulary items; students can develop a description of the alien/monster/robot and the things it can do/likes to do as part of a speaking or writing extension activity
An ideal vacation scene	Describing a scene (people, places, buildings, scenery)	Students get to personalize their scene; they can explain why this would be their favorite vacation spot or plan what they would pack for a vacation to this location as part of a speaking or writing extension activity
Their favorite location in their hometown	Describing a scene (people, places, buildings, scenery)	Students talk about a place that is personally meaningful while giving instructions and

		providing clarification; students can explain why this place is important to them in a speaking or writing extension activity
An animal in its habitat	Describing a scene (animals, plants, places); science vocabulary	A fun review activity for a science/biology lesson; animals can be assigned by the teacher or chosen by students – students must recall specific content details they learned about their animal when drawing the scene and giving instructions to their partner. Students can use their dictation drawing to illustrate a short report they write about their animal after the activity.

INFORMATION GAP TIP OF THE WEEK – EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

You don't want information gap activities to be isolated items stuck in your lessons, right? How can you connect these activities to other parts of your lesson? Be sure to consider the importance of good sequencing and flow when planning your lessons by linking information gaps to previously taught content. Information gaps can be a fun and motivating way to recycle and review this material.

Also, look for ways to create logical extension activities that relate to the information gap activities. Extension activities allow students opportunities to reengage with the language and content from a slightly different angle, perhaps in a way that requires more advanced or complex skills. These follow-on extension activities may involve other language skills or interaction patterns (individual, group, or whole-class work) and can be assigned for in-class completion or homework. See the Content Variation chart above for a few suggestions on how you can extend drawing dictation information gap activities.