

This section presents two stand-alone language learning activities related to the theme of summer. Each activity is designed for students at the proficiency level indicated.

Summer Vacation Comics

Level: Upper Beginner/Lower Intermediate

Time required: 60–75 minutes

Goals: To become familiar with vocabulary related to vacation locations, foods, and activities; to practice expressing wants and wishes by using “want to”

Materials: chalk and chalkboard, or markers and whiteboard; large pieces of paper for comic posters; colored pencils or crayons

Background: Summer is hot in most parts of the United States. Schools close, and many people take family vacations. Some travel, while others participate in leisure activities in their hometowns. During summer vacations, people might play sports, sightsee, go on walks, or read books. They go on picnics in parks or on beaches and eat summer treats, including ice cream and fresh fruit.

Preparation:

1. Establish three stations for brainstorming vocabulary. These can be sections of a whiteboard or chalkboard, or large pieces of paper posted around the classroom. Label these stations 1, 2, and 3. Assign a vacation vocabulary topic to each station: Station 1 = vacation locations, Station 2 = vacation foods, Station 3 = vacation activities.

2. To create comic grids for the second part of the activity, use one large piece of paper for each group of 3–5 students. On each piece of paper, draw two perpendicular lines to form four boxes,

which students will use to draw their comics. (Alternatively, groups can make their own grids by drawing lines on their paper during the lesson.)

Procedures:

1. Write the word *vacation* on the board. Ask students if they have ever been on a vacation or fun family trip. Create interest and activate students’ background knowledge by asking several students to share information in response to your questions: “Where did you go on vacation? When did you go on vacation? What did you do on vacation? What foods did you eat on vacation?” Write students’ ideas on the board. (If your students are not familiar with the concept of “being on vacation,” you may want to present information from the Background section in an interactive, level-appropriate way.)

2. Tell students they are going to plan their own vacations, but first they need to review and prepare vocabulary to talk about vacations.

3. Divide the class into three groups by having students count off from 1 to 3. Ask students to move to the station matching their group number. Have groups choose one person to be a recorder who will write down the group’s ideas.

4. Tell the groups they will have two minutes for a timed brainstorm; they will write down as many words for their topic—locations, foods, or activities—as possible. (You can adjust the time based on the students’ level; lower-level students may

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need less time.) Remind students that all ideas are acceptable during brainstorming. Recorders will write the group's list on their section of the board or on a large sheet of paper. Start the brainstorm and circulate among the groups. If groups have problems coming up with ideas, provide prompts ("Do you eat hot food or cold food in summer?") or mime (pretend to read or swim).

5. When time is up, have groups rotate to the next station. At the new station, students review the first group's list, help each other with the meaning of unknown items, and add their own ideas with another timed brainstorm. Groups rotate once more to brainstorm at the final stations.

If a rotating brainstorming session is impractical in your classroom, have groups stay at one station and generate as many words as possible within the time limit. Review the three lists with the whole class and address any unfamiliar items, as previously described. Ask the class to contribute more items to each list.

6. After students return to their seats, address any remaining vocabulary questions. Alternatively, the student who brainstormed the item in question can explain it using words, gestures, or a drawing. Display the three vocabulary lists during the next part of the activity.

7. Tell students they will make a comic that explains their vacation plans in pictures and in words. Provide an example on the board: draw a comic grid, then draw three people in the upper left box. (Don't worry! You don't have to be a wonderful artist. If you don't want to draw, ask student volunteers to draw for you.) Ask students, "What are their names?" Write a caption based on the students' response: "Hi. We are Maria, Dimitri, and Tareq." Next, ask the class where they want to go on vacation. Pick one response and draw something that represents the location in the upper right box; write a caption under the picture: "We want to go to the beach for vacation." Complete the last two boxes, one for vacation foods and one for activities; make sure the captions use the "We want to _____ (on vacation)" structure.

When the comic is complete, ask the class to come up with a title, such as "Our Vacation" or "Summer Vacation."

8. Highlight the "want to" form by asking students if they notice anything that is the same in the last three captions. Underline *want to* in each caption. If necessary, ask concept-checking questions about the meaning of "want to." Finally, elicit or supply the question forms associated with the last three captions: "Where do you want to go? What foods do you want to eat? What do you want to do?" Write each question on the board next to the corresponding box.

9. Divide the class into groups of 3–5 students. Distribute comic grids (or large pieces of paper, if groups will create their own grids) and colored pencils or crayons. If necessary, provide instructions on how to create the grids.

10. Tell the class they will plan imaginary vacations: students can go anywhere they want, choose foods to eat, and pick activities to enjoy. Using the vocabulary lists created earlier in the activity, groups should discuss options and agree on a vacation plan. Groups will illustrate their plan using the comic grids and make captions for each box, following the pattern in the model comic. You can provide partial captions to support less proficient students. For example, the caption in the first box introducing the group might read: "Hi. We are _____ (names)." The other captions might be:

- "We want to go to _____ (place)."
- "We want to eat _____ (foods)."
- "We want to _____ (activities)."

11. Have groups share their vacation plans. If your classroom space allows, create stations around the room and send two groups to each station. (If you have limited space, have groups present to the groups sitting close to them.) Each group will present its vacation comic to the other. After both groups at each station have shared, one group will

remain at the station while the other group rotates to another station. Continue the rotation to give groups several chances to present and listen; ask a different person to speak for the group each time. Circulate to monitor students' output and provide assistance. If you want, at the end of the activity you can ask one or two groups with unique plans to present their comic to the whole class.

You can also turn the presentations into interactive conversations or interviews. Have the "audience" group ask the presenting group about their comic: "Where do you want to go on vacation? What do you want to do on vacation? What foods do you want to eat on vacation?" (Writing these questions on the board as part of the model comic will assist lower-level students.)

12. Display the comics in the classroom. Besides showcasing students' work, you can use the posters as visual aids when reviewing vocabulary items in future lessons.

Variation

To limit the focus to one or two categories of vacation vocabulary, reduce the number of boxes in the comic or have students draw multiple frames related to the selected category or categories. For example, students might draw one frame showing their group in a vacation location and three frames representing activities they want to do during their trip.

Create Your Own Flag

Level: Intermediate

Time required: 90 minutes

Goals: To create and describe a flag reflecting personal qualities; to gain an understanding of symbols; to practice making comparisons

Materials: colored pens, pencils, markers, or crayons; blank paper for each student; your country's flag or a photo of it; copies of the reading (optional), survey forms (optional)

Preparation: Do some research on your nation's flag—what do the colors and symbols mean? Have the flag or a picture of the flag in class.

Procedures:

1. Tell students they are going to design personal flags—their own flags—but that first, you want them to think about symbols by looking at the flags of two countries: your own country and the United States. Explain that a symbol can be anything (e.g., a picture, word, color, shape, ani-

mal) that represents—or *symbolizes*—something else. For example, birds often represent freedom because they can fly, and green often represents nature because many plants are green. But symbols and their meanings can vary between countries and cultures.

2. Divide students into groups of three or four. Show your country's flag to the class. Write on the board the following questions for group discussion:

- What are the main colors of the flag?
- What things can you count on this flag?
- What symbols are on the flag? What meanings do the symbols have?
- What does this flag mean to you?
- Do you like this flag?

Give groups time to discuss. Monitor groups and provide vocabulary, if needed. Have each group select one student to be the spokesperson. After each group has discussed the questions, bring groups to the whole class and have each spokesperson share what his or her group discussed.

3. Write the passage below on the board or, with students back in their groups, pass out copies of the passage to each group and read the selection to the whole class. Have students read along and circle unfamiliar words.

The United States has many symbols. The most famous is probably the flag. The American flag has 13 red and white stripes. It also has 50 white stars on a blue background in the upper left-hand corner. The stars represent the 50 states. The colors of the flag have meaning, too. Red is a symbol of bravery, blue is a symbol of justice, and white is a symbol of purity. Americans celebrate Flag Day on June 14 each year. On that day, many people fly flags in front of their homes or hold small flags when they go to parades.

After students read the selection as a group, provide vocabulary instruction as needed. Ask basic comprehension questions:

- What colors are in the American flag?
- How many stripes are there?
- How many stars are there?
- What do the stars represent?

4. Have groups compare your country's flag to the American flag. Give them a few minutes to list ways that the flags are similar (the same or nearly the same). Then give them time to list ways that the flags are different. Students can consider any details, including symbols.

5. Depending on your students' level, groups can report their similarities and differences to the whole class in phrases, or they can report by using full sentences. Here are examples:

- The flags are similar because both flags are/have _____.
- The flags are different because our flag is/has _____, but the American flag is/has _____.

6. Write the following words on the board: *likes*,

dislikes, *hopes*, *beliefs*. Discuss these words with the class. Make sure students understand them before continuing.

7. Tell students they are going to design flags to reflect their own likes, dislikes, hopes, and beliefs.

Provide questions to guide students:

- How old are you?
- How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- Where do you live?
- What is the best thing you have ever done?
- What activities do you like to do?
- Do you have animals or pets? What kind? What are their names?
- What do you like to eat?
- What are some things you are good at doing?
- What is a strong belief that you have?
- What do you hope to be in the future?
- Where would you like to go in the future?

Have students brainstorm their answers individually. Then have students discuss their answers with their groups.

8. Hand out white paper and markers or colored pencils. Tell students they will design their own flags, using symbols of their hopes, beliefs, likes, and dislikes. (Students can include one, some, or all of these, as they choose.) Students decide on the color(s) and symbols to use for their flags.

9. When students finish, have them write about their flags on the back of the paper. If necessary, guide your students by having them complete sentence starters:

- The best thing I have ever done is _____.
- My flag represents my interest in _____.
- I used the color _____ because _____.
- My flag has a picture of _____ because _____.
- My flag shows my hopes, which are _____ and _____.
- I drew _____ because _____.

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- One symbol on my flag is _____. It means _____.
- I like my flag because _____.

10. Have students show their flags to the members of their groups and have each student describe his or her flag to the group by using the suggested sentence starters, if necessary.

11. Have students pair off and compare each other's flags by adapting the sentence structures they used to compare the country flags in Step 5.

12. Post the flags around the room. Make sure students' names are on the front.

13. Hand out a survey form to each group, or have groups create their own forms. Students will use the forms to record observations about the flags. (The Sample Survey Form has space to record details of only three flags; you can make it longer to provide space for details of additional flags.)

With your class, decide on details to include on the survey forms. (For younger or lower-level learners, write out the details ahead of time, with several examples.) Details could be the main color(s), the number or meanings of symbols, and the feeling or mood of the flag. (You or your students might have other suggestions.) Then, assign each group to do an "art walk" and observe the flags while group members take turns writing details on the survey form. Remind students that they are not evaluating their classmates' flags; they are observing details in the flags.

Sample Survey Form

Name of flag artist	Detail #1: _____	Detail #2: _____	Detail #3: _____

14. Once groups have walked the gallery, they can discuss the results of the survey. Write these sentence starters on the board:

- All of the flags have _____.
- Most of the flags have _____.
- About half of the flags have _____.

Have groups complete and discuss the sentences, using their survey forms. Monitor the discussions and help students with vocabulary. After groups have finished their discussions, ask groups to summarize what they observed on the art walk or to choose their most interesting observation, then report to the whole class.

Extension

After students complete their personal flags, they can work together to design a class flag that represents collective hopes, beliefs, likes, and dislikes. They can hang this flag in the front of the room for the remainder of the school year.

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