

# How Was Your Weekend?

**LEVEL:** Upper Beginner, Lower Intermediate, and above

**TIME REQUIRED:** 15–30 minutes

**GOALS:** To ask and answer small-talk questions about weekend activities

**MATERIALS:** Chalk and blackboard, or markers and whiteboard; strips of paper with weekend activities written on them (see Preparation section for details)

**OVERVIEW:** This activity is a kind of mingle. In a mingle, students move individually from classmate to classmate, usually with a question to ask or specific information to find. After talking to each other long enough to complete the task, the two students move on to other classmates and repeat the process.

Although mingles can be noisy and sometimes look disorganized, they typically have a specific language focus. In this activity, students practice asking classmates about their weekend activities. As they move from classmate to classmate, they use the targeted language structure over and over. At the same time, they also need to listen to their classmates' replies so they can react and respond appropriately.

**PREPARATION:**

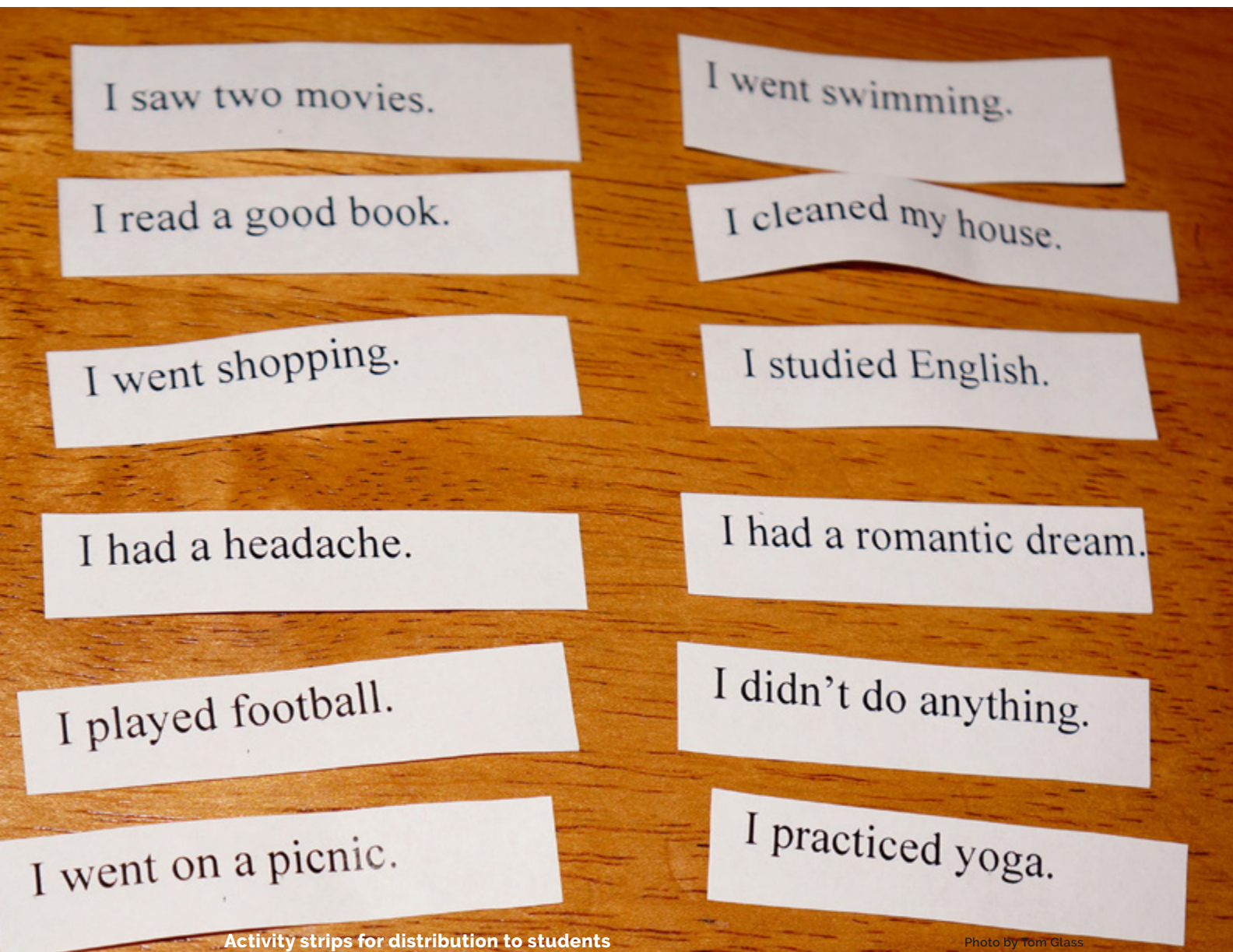
1. Create a list of activities that people might do on a weekend. The activities do not have to be realistic! Use your imagination to think of activities that would be fun for your students to talk about. For ideas, refer to the Weekend Activities list.

**Weekend Activities**

- |                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| I saw two movies.     | I studied English.      |
| I read a good book.   | I went to _____.        |
| I lost five dollars.  | I had a romantic dream. |
| I found five dollars. | I met _____.            |
| I went shopping.      | I didn't do anything.   |
| I had a headache.     | I practiced yoga.       |
| I played football.    | I went camping.         |
| I ate _____.          | I cooked _____.         |
| I cleaned my house.   | I hurt my finger.       |
| I went on a picnic.   | I danced.               |
| I baked two cakes.    | I went swimming.        |

Please feel free to adapt these activities to your teaching context. For example, you can change “I lost five dollars” and “I found five dollars” so that they mention your local currency. You can complete “I met \_\_\_\_\_” with the name of a popular singer or other celebrity whom students would be excited to meet. You can complete “I cooked \_\_\_\_\_” with an interesting kind of food, and “I went to \_\_\_\_\_” with the name of a place that your students like to visit. You can add your own activity ideas to the list as well, as appropriate for your students: *I flew in a helicopter. I sang on TV. I smiled a lot. I ran a marathon. I bought a new car.* Making the activities interesting will help students enjoy talking about them with their classmates.

Instead of strips of paper with the activities written on them, you can use photos showing weekend activities. See Variations near the end of the article for suggestions.



Activity strips for distribution to students

Photo by Tom Glass

**2.** Cut the activities list into small strips of paper, with one activity on each strip. You should prepare one strip for each student in your class. If you have a large class, make more than one set of activity strips and plan to divide your class into groups; prepare a set of strips for each group. The number of students in each group should not be more than the number of activity strips you have. In other words, if you have 15 activity strips, you should not have more than 15 students in any of the groups.

**3.** Prepare two extra strips of paper to use if you want to demonstrate the activity to the class. One strip could say, “I visited some friends.” The other strip could say, “I went to a birthday party.”

#### PROCEDURES:

**1.** Tell students that they will do an activity that gives them a chance to ask about each other’s weekend activities. Say, “You will talk to many of your classmates. But first, we will practice the question and answers you will use.”

**2.** Begin creating the How Was Your Weekend? chart by writing the question, “How was your weekend?” on the board. Tell students that this is a question people often ask when they see their friends on Monday—or whichever day follows the weekend. Tell students that people usually give a short greeting before asking this question: “Hi, [Name]. How was your weekend?” Tell students, “This is a friendly question. When people ask, ‘How was your weekend?’ they do not expect long answers.”

**3.** Tell students, “Usually, people answer this question with short answers. They tell about one thing they did, or one thing that happened, over the weekend.” Explain that people often answer this question with one or two sentences. The first sentence describes the weekend in general: *It was great.* The second sentence gives more detail: *I went to a birthday party.* Or *My cousins came to visit.*

**4.** On the board, continue developing the How Was Your Weekend? chart by writing possible responses to the question. If the weekend was good,

people often say, “It was great/exciting/wonderful.” You can ask students to suggest other words they could use in the sentence. If the weekend was not really good, but not bad either, people might say, “It was so-so.”

If the weekend was not so good, people respond by saying, “It was boring/pretty bad/terrible.” However, since the question “How was your weekend?” is part of a friendly exchange, people *usually* respond with a friendly answer focusing on something good that happened.

**5.** Tell students that now the person who asked, “How was your weekend?” must respond. If the other person had a good weekend, the questioner can answer with one of these sentences:

- “That sounds like fun.”
- “That sounds nice!”
- “Lucky you!”

If the other person’s weekend was so-so or not very good, the questioner can say,

### How Was Your Weekend?

A: “Hi, [Name]. How was your weekend?”		
B: If your weekend was good, you can say ...  “It was great.” “It was fantastic.” “It was wonderful.”  Then tell why.	B: If your weekend was neither good nor bad, you can say ...  “It was so-so.” “I didn’t do much.”  Then tell why.	B: If your weekend wasn’t good, you can say ...  “It was boring.” “It wasn’t very good.” “It was terrible.”  Then tell why.
A: “That sounds like fun!” “That sounds great!” “Lucky you!”	A: “That’s too bad.” “I’m sorry to hear that.”	

*Note:* Other responses are possible. You can ask your students to contribute suggestions.

- “That’s too bad.”
- “I’m sorry to hear that.”

6. Tell students they will get a chance to practice this question and these answers—but for this activity, they will not talk about what they really did over the weekend; instead, they will choose a piece of paper with an activity written on it. Hold up a strip of paper and say, “I know this is not what you really did over the weekend. But for the next ten minutes, we will pretend that this is what you did.”
7. Model an example of a conversation for the class. Choose a student to be your partner. Give the student the strip of paper that says, “I went to a birthday party.” Keep the strip of paper that says, “I visited some friends.” Hold up your paper and tell the class, “My piece of paper says, ‘I visited some friends.’” Ask your student/partner to read his or her strip to the class. Then model the conversation.

*With Upper Beginner students, the conversation might go something like this:*

YOU: Hi, [Student’s name]! How was your weekend?

STUDENT: It was great. I went to a birthday party.

YOU: That sounds like fun!

Have the student continue the conversation by asking you about your weekend:

STUDENT: How was your weekend?

YOU: It was fun. I visited some friends.

STUDENT: That sounds great!

The immediate goal should be for

students to (a) ask the question, (b) answer appropriately, and (c) react with an appropriate response.

(For a longer model conversation you can use with students at the Lower Intermediate level and above, see Extensions near the end of this article.)

8. Divide students into groups, if necessary.
9. Make sure everyone understands the activity. Tell students, “Everyone will get a piece of paper. Read the activity on the paper silently. Decide how you will answer the question, ‘How was your weekend?’ when your classmates ask you.”
10. Hand out the strips of paper to students. Give one set of activity strips to each group. Students should not look at the strips before choosing one. Add interest by putting the strips in a box or bowl and have students close their eyes when they pick their strips. They should read the activity on the strip to themselves, but they shouldn’t tell anyone else yet what the strip says.
11. Start the activity. Tell students to stand up. Then say, “When I say, ‘Begin,’ find a partner. Ask each other about your weekends. When you finish your conversation, find a new partner and have another conversation about your weekends. Keep talking to different people in your group and finding out what they did over the weekend!” Then say, “Begin!”
12. Stop the activity when students have had a chance to talk to most of the people in their group but before everyone has finished; you don’t want them to be bored.
13. Bring the whole class together. If you like, you can have a few students ask other students about their weekend activities. Encourage anyone in the class to ask follow-up questions.

You and the class can demonstrate the use and importance of follow-up questions like this: Suppose that when a student named Marie is asked about her weekend, she says, “It was great. I saw two movies.” Write “I saw two movies” on the board, and then ask the class, “What would you like to ask Marie about the movies?” Students might ask, “What movies did you see?” or “Where did you see them?” or “Who did you see them with?” or “Did you like them?” (Students at lower levels might simply ask, “What?” or “Where?” That’s fine; they are expressing their curiosity.) You can write these questions on the board if you want; you can also have Marie give pretend answers.

Do the same thing with other activities—write the student’s activity on the board, then elicit follow-up questions that students naturally want to ask about that activity. This is a good chance to bring students’ attention to the use of question words and an opportunity for students to engage further in natural communication.

## EXTENSIONS

### Lower Intermediate students

With students at the Lower Intermediate level and above, you can have them extend the conversation. The conversation should include the following parts:

- (a) greet the partner
- (b) ask the question
- (c) answer appropriately
- (d) react with an appropriate response
- (e) transition to the second partner asking the question and the first partner responding
- (f) take leave (say good-bye)

Students might also be able to ask follow-up questions about each other’s weekend activity.

A model conversation might be something like this:

STUDENT A: Hi, [Student B’s name]! How was your weekend?

STUDENT B: It was great. I went to a birthday party.

STUDENT A: That sounds like fun!

*At this point, you can elicit possible follow-up questions from the class if you want. Suggestions include “Whose birthday was it?” and “What did you do at the party?” Otherwise, the conversation continues:*

STUDENT B: Yes, it was. What about you? How was your weekend?

STUDENT A: It was good, too. I visited some friends.

STUDENT B: That sounds like fun.

*Again, you could elicit follow-up questions from the class. Suggestions include “Where do your friends live?” and “What did you and your friends do?” Otherwise, the conversation could continue:*

STUDENT A: Yes, it was.

STUDENT B: Well, I have to go now. Nice seeing you!

STUDENT A: Bye.

*You could elicit other things that friends might say when they part after a small-talk conversation. Suggestions include “See you,” “See you later,” “Take care,” and “Have a good one.” (“Have a good one” is a less formal way of saying, “Have a good day.”)*

### Future classes

The following Monday—or in the next class you have after a weekend—repeat the mingle, but this time have students ask one another about what they really did over the weekend.



Or let your students make up their own “pretend” activities.

After a break or vacation, students can mingle again and ask, “How was your break?” or “How was your vacation?”

## VARIATIONS

1. You can conduct this mingle using photos. Instead of preparing strips of paper, prepare photos showing possible weekend activities. The photos might show people swimming, camping, cooking, having a picnic, etc. In class, you might have to review the related vocabulary with the class and introduce new words as needed. Then distribute the photos to students. They will have to find a way to describe the activity (using the past tense)—so there is additional language practice involved when you use photos.

If you have a large class and not enough photos for everyone, that’s not a problem. Suppose you have 45 students but only 15 photos. Simply ask students to get together in mini-groups of three, and give each mini-group one photo. Together, the three students discuss the language they can use to talk about the activity shown in their photo. Then ask students in each mini-group to pick a color: red, blue, or yellow. Form three larger groups: the red group, the blue group, and the yellow group. After that, the How Was Your Weekend? mingle can begin, with each group having its own mingle.

2. When you use mingles, sometimes you can vary the activity by having students exchange strips of paper after their conversation. That is, Student A and Student B have a conversation based on the strips of paper they chose, but when they finish their conversation, Student A takes Student B’s strip of paper, and Student B takes Student A’s. Then they find new partners. Each person will then

have a new activity to talk about in his or her next conversation. Students keep exchanging strips of paper throughout the activity; they may get the same strip of paper two or three times! But exchanging the strips of paper in this way gives students a chance to talk about different activities—and use different language—instead of giving the same answer and describing the same activity to everyone they meet. (On the other hand, keeping the same strip of paper and giving the same answer in each conversation could increase students’ confidence as the activity progresses.)

## SCAFFOLDING

1. You might want to explain to students that the first person asks, “How was your weekend?” in a normal questioning tone, but when the second person asks the same question back, he or she will stress the word *your*: “How was *your* weekend?” The same kind of stress is used in the shorter question “How are you?” A person who is asked this question will often respond by saying, “I am fine, thank you. How are *you*?”
2. Students ought to know that they should ask, “How was your weekend?” to people they already know after not seeing them over the weekend. It would not be an appropriate question to ask someone they have never met before.
3. People often say “Thanks” or “Thank you” when they respond to the question “How was your weekend?” For example, they might say, “It was great; thank you!” or “It was fantastic; thanks!” Feel free to incorporate “Thanks” or “Thank you” into the chart and your model conversation if you want.

This activity was written by **Tom Glass**, Assistant Editor of *English Teaching Forum*.