

Grammar Huddles

Teachers' Notes

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Who can do this lesson?

This lesson was designed for teenagers but can be adapted for younger learners and adults.

Minimum English proficiency is B1

Resources

This lesson is materials light but some resources are needed.

Access to self-study materials is essential, this can be paper-based or online. Also, some tools will be needed for product creation (e.g. poster).

Timings

The timings for this lesson are very flexible. The original amount of time allocated for this approach was 3 hours but this can be spread over several lessons and/or parts can be set as homework. Alternatively, you could reduce the overall lesson length, by adapting it.

Why use Grammar Huddles?

Whether you are teaching teenagers or adults, grammar lessons can often be disengaging and too focused on the presentation of the grammar and controlled practice. This lesson approach was devised with the very idea of trying to get a class of teenagers engaged in learning grammar in a stuffy room on their summer holidays. All the uncontrollable elements (weather and reason for being in class) were against us and so dramatic ideas had to be tested to get their interest.

The typical PPP (Presentations, Production and Practice) grammar lesson is often weighed down by the presentation stage that is usually teacher lead. Whilst the PPP approach is useful and can ensure large classes are learning together, it does not offer opportunity for students to make decisions about their learning pathways and have practice at setting their own goals.

Overview

In a nutshell, the students, working in small groups, choose the grammar focus they wish to learn. Then they are trained to investigate and present their grammar to their classmates through a presentation and/or poster. Throughout the process the students are provided with opportunities to engage in controlled practice, revise the form and create contextualised examples of the grammar point. Extension activities can be given which can include roleplay and/or storytelling to reinforce.

Throughout the process, the teacher is the facilitator and guide; the students are the teachers.

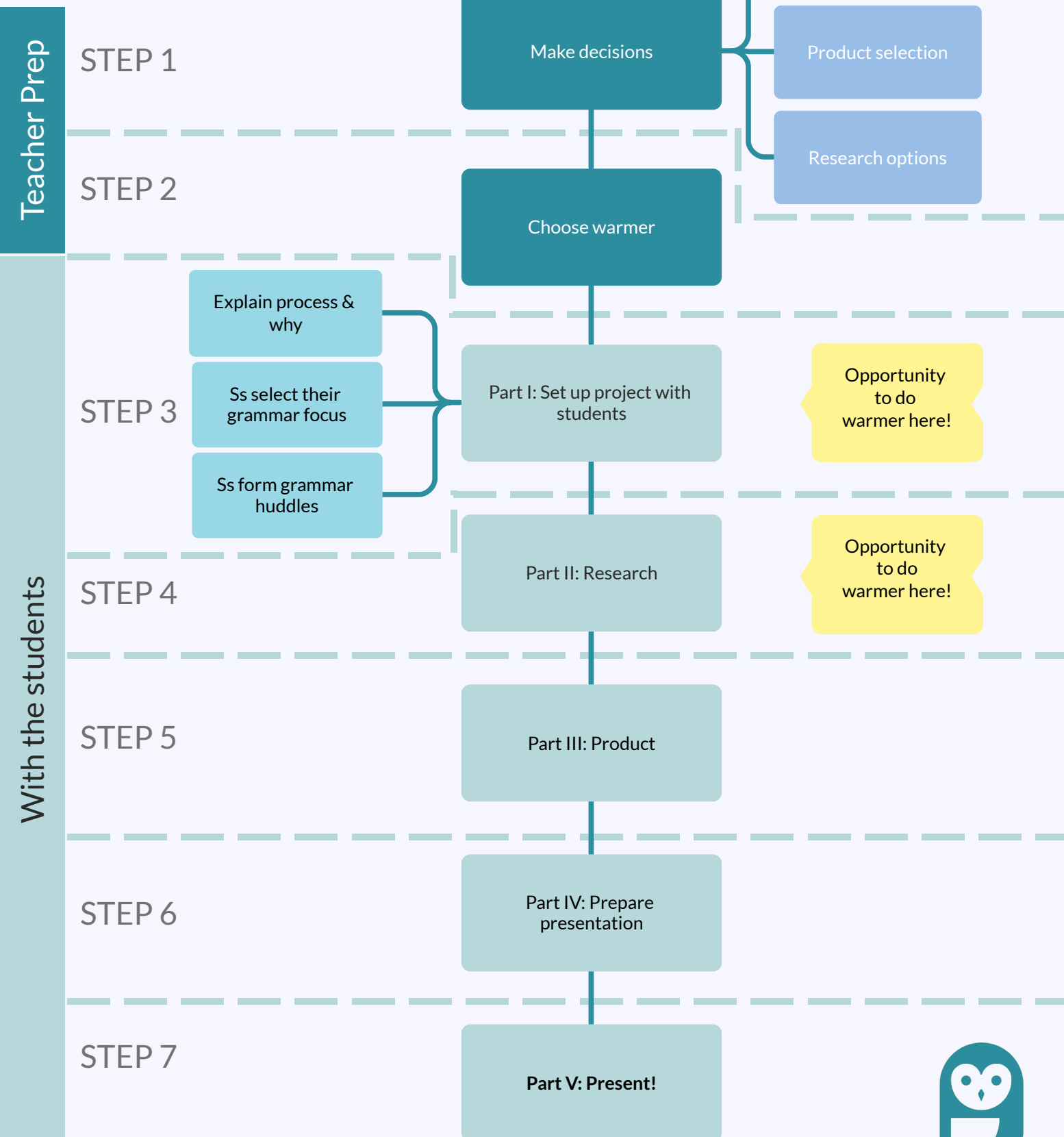
Main Principles

The approach of Grammar Huddles is inspired by 3 key principles:

1. Students are at different learning points
2. Students need to develop skills for life-long learning
3. Learners are more engaged when lessons are focused on student-driven content.

Grammar Huddles

PROCESS MAP





Step 1: Make decision

Firstly, you will need to think about your context: students, class dynamic & you as a teacher. In the first step you will make 3 decisions on how you will conduct the stages of the lesson that will be based on the 3 criteria.

Decision 1: Selecting the grammar

Thinking about your context, either you or your students will choose the grammar they will be studying during the lesson. How much choice you give your students will depend on the level of control over their learning you can/want to give them (see diagram 1). Here are some guiding questions:

- Ss - Are your Ss at different learning stages in their grammar knowledge?
- Class - Does your class need to cover a lot of grammar in their course?
- You - Do you need to control the grammar that they study? (Possible reasons could be class management or syllabus/curriculum requirements)

Decision 2: Selecting the research material

Now repeat the decision-making process from decision 1, but this time for selecting the research materials (see diagram 2). Here are some guiding questions:

- Ss - Can your Ss complete their own independent research?
- Class - Can you Ss work in groups and keep focused?
- You - Can you monitor Ss whilst they work in groups?

Decision 3: Choosing the product

Finally, choose the product(s) you want your Ss to produce after the research stage. Here are some guiding questions:

- Ss - Do your Ss show motivation towards being creative?
- Class - Can your class focus on a process with minimal class management?
- You - Does your context support creative learning opportunities or are there demands to provide evidence of traditional teaching methods?

Other decisions you will need to make, if you haven't already, are related to the learning aims you will set for your class. There are a wide variety of aims you could focus on. For some ideas, go to the 'Learning Aims' page.

Step 2: Choose warmer

The last main decision you need to make is choosing your warmer. The purpose of the warmer is to provide an opportunity for the entire class to focus on the structure of the English language in more general terms. This focus will help Ss identify foundational parts of the language in a community.

Diagram 1: Selecting the grammar

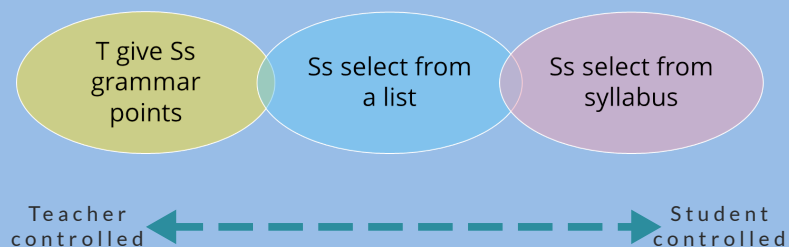
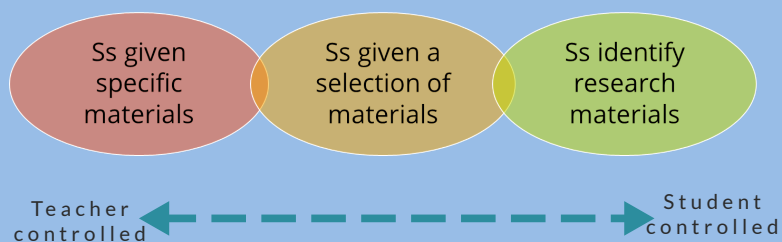


Diagram 2: Selecting the research material



Diagrams 1 & 2 are showing a spectrum of control either you or the students will have when choosing the grammar focus and research materials.

GET
STARTED

GO TO 'PRODUCT IDEAS' PAGE

Turn to this page for ideas on what types of product and extra tips.

GET
STARTED

GO TO 'WARMER IDEAS' PAGE

If you don't have an idea for a warmer, this page has a few to get you started.



Step 3: Part I - Setting up the project

This step is about setting up the project with your students. It is important that you & your students know what is expected in the process and why. Also, by setting expectations for both yourself and students will help everyone keep on track and meet the learning aims.

ACTION: Selecting the grammar

Depending on the level of control you have given the students, you will let them choose the grammar focus or give them their grammar focus.

ACTION: Get into grammar huddles

Now Ss get into their huddles (groups). This can be done in a variety of ways but some things to consider are:

- Amount of space in classroom
- Dealing with fixed table layouts
- Breakout rooms for online lessons

Once in their huddles, the Ss will need to focus on 1 grammar point as a team. This might be straightforward as they have already created huddles according to grammar focus. Or it may require some extra time to decide. 'ACTION: Ss explain why' activity could be used as a tool for Ss to choose the grammar focus as a team.

ACTION: Ss explain why

This part of the process is for Ss to explain why they want or need to study the particular grammar point they are focusing on. It is helpful for you to listen carefully here as you will be identify motivating factors your Ss have identified. It is also good practice for the Ss to identify how these small chunks of learning apply to their language goals.

If the Ss find this activity difficult, completing it as a class with you providing probing questions can help train the Ss for future Grammar Huddles.

Step 4: Part II - Research

At this step, the Ss will take control of the learning & you will become the guide, facilitator & monitor.

You may need to complete this part on a different day to 'Part I' as, depending on the amount of control you have given to your Ss regarding selecting the content for research, you may need to prepare some research materials for them.

Also, if the Ss are to find their own resources, then this will take more time & you will need to monitor the content they are selecting to ensure it is appropriate for them.

The Ss work as a team (in their huddles) and discuss the grammar focus, their understanding & either complete the controlled practice as a team or individually. They then review their answers together.

Ways you can group your students:



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GO TO 'RESOURCES IDEAS' PAGE

You will need to give your Ss access to materials that cover certain learning criteria, see this page for more details.



Your role as a Teacher

- Monitoring
- Asking CCQs
- Asking Ss to provide own examples
- Answer Ss' questions
- Checking their work



Step 5: Part III - Making the product

Part III is when the Ss aim to make the learning their own (personalised).

In their huddles, the Ss decide how they are going to demonstrate their understanding of the grammar focus.

You should have already explained to the Ss what they will be creating (Step 4 - Part I), but the beginning of this part is usually the ideal time to discuss the product in more detail & give them a criteria for the product.

For Ss doing this for the first time, it is suggested not to focus too much on asking your Ss to personalise or be creative with their product/presentations, unless you feel your Ss would be able to manage it.

You will monitor the huddles & facilitate their learning as they go through the process.

NOTE: it is important to carefully monitor the creation of their posters for accuracy.

Step 6: Part IV - Preparing presentation

Part IV can either be set as homework or completed during class time.

The first time the Ss do this, it could be beneficial to provide a simple presentation framework. However, once the Ss are trained in this, you can change many aspects of the framework to make it more challenging, creative and/or personalised.

Example: Ss work in their huddles to organise and practice their presentations.

Step 7: Part V - Presentations

The final part of grammar huddles is the presentation step. This is where all the learning comes together & other Ss can find out what other huddles in their class have been working on.

Depending on the dynamic of your class & your time constraints, you may want each huddle to present to the whole class or you might ask them to present to another huddle (thus cutting the time significantly). However, it is worth noting that if you ask Ss to present to another huddle, you will not be able to assess the Ss at this stage as you will not be able to see them all.

Regardless of the presentation organisation, you may want to check your Ss are listening to each other. See listening form for a simple but effective way to keep Ss engaged. Also, there are additional benefits of using a 'listening form'.

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GO TO 'PRODUCT IDEAS' PAGE

Ideas for what products your Ss could create and criteria to set can be found on this page.

GET
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GO TO 'PRESENTATION FRAMEWORK & LISTENING FORM' PAGE

This page has details on presentation criteria, a rubric and listening forms.

GET
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GO TO 'PRESENTATION FRAMEWORK & LISTENING FORM' PAGE

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Resources ideas

The key to choosing the resources for the research stage is for the Ss to be provided with a clear explanation of the grammar focus & have access to practice exercises.

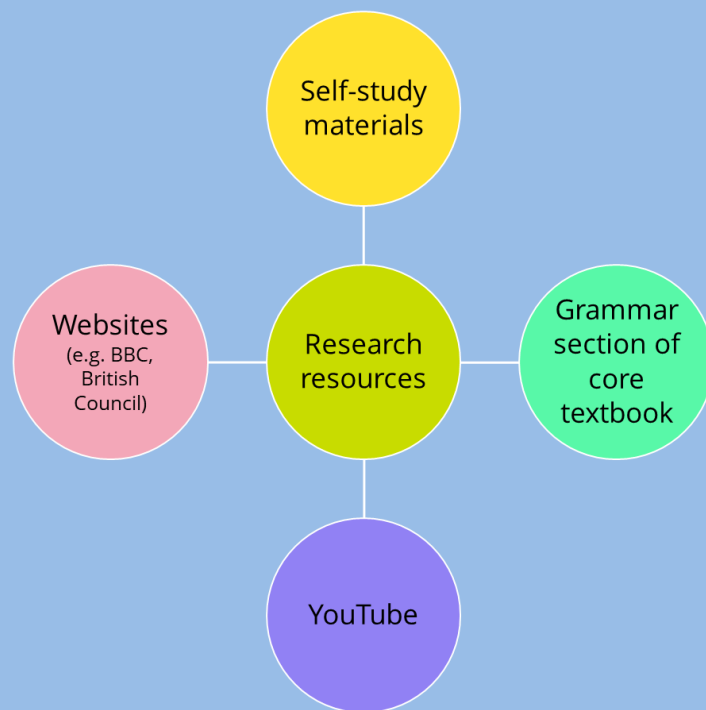
For experienced teachers, you may feel that using a combination of resources is better for your Ss. If this is the case, try to train your Ss to find the resources under your guidance as it is good training for their lifelong learning skills.

Example:

- T directs students to BBC Learning English website.
- Ss search the website for their grammar focus.
- Ss complete the explanation activity on the website (e.g. watch the video) and then discuss in huddle.
- T directs Ss to grammar exercises in their core textbook to complete as a team, i.e. Ss do not complete the exercises on BBC website.

Materials selected should include:

- i. Explanation of grammar focus
- ii. Examples of grammar focus
- iii. Examples of form/structure
- iv. Examples of pronunciation (if applicable)
- v. Some exercises to complete controlled practice



Product ideas

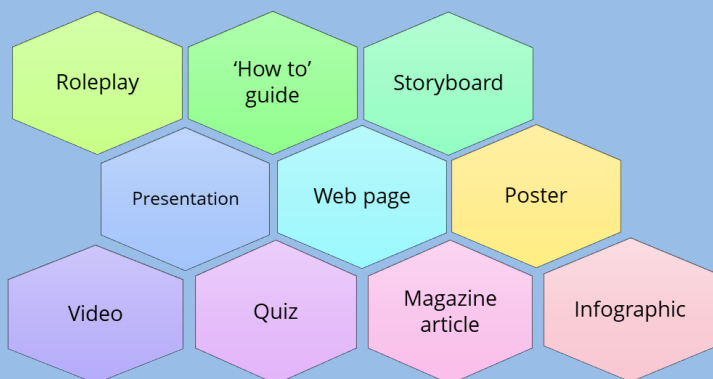
There is an array of product options for your Ss to do.

For first-time users of Grammar Huddles, it is suggested to keep the product simple as there will be learner training required for the entire process. But if the Grammar Huddle is repeated with the same class, then the product can become more creative and/or complex.

Some of the products listed are not suitable for all types of students. For example, a storyboard is most likely not appropriate for adults but is suitable for young learners.

You can use the presentation format in all types of Grammar Huddles, in addition to creating another product. The presentation is a great way to encourage Ss to learn from each other & share their work to foster a community of learning. Also, the presentation can be used to assess Ss.

Setting criteria for the product is intrinsic to the Ss' ability to achieve the task.



Example criteria for poster

- Provide a context
- Show form/structure
- Give rules
- Provide example sentences
- Pronunciation (if applicable)



Presentation Framework

In order to provide your Ss with the understanding they need in order to create an effective presentation, here is a list of questions you could board to guide them through the process.

Here is a basic list of questions that you could adapt (according to your Ss level and needs):

- Who is your audience?
 - What does your audience need to know?
- How are you going to begin the presentation?
 - How are you going to introduce your team/huddle?
 - Are you going to explain what the presentation is about?
- How are you going to explain the grammar focus?
 - Do you all speak?
 - Do you give examples?
 - Are you going to show the form/structure?
 - Do you give an example of the pronunciation?
- How are you going to finish the presentation?
 - Are you going to summarise your grammar focus?
 - Are you going to say 'thank you for listening'?
 - Are you going to invite people to ask questions?

Additional questions for greater challenge:

- How can you clearly explain your grammar focus?
 - Do you need tools to help you? E.g. a whiteboard, poster, roleplay to show grammar in action.
- How are the audience going to join in?
 - Will you ask them questions?
 - Will you ask for a volunteer? What would the volunteer do? Is it easy for them?
 - Will you quiz the audience?
 - Will you ask the audience to play a game?
- How are you going to keep your audience engaged?
 - Tell a joke
 - Tell a story
 - Give creative/funny examples sentences
 - Act out examples
 - Ask questions to the audience
 - Make a rhyme or acronym to help the audience remember information
 - Use images
 - Add a game

Listening form

Ss can complete a listening form at the end of each presentation in their huddles or individually. To save paper, it is recommended to complete the forms as a team.

NOTE: You might want to show this form to your Ss before they prepare the presentation.

On the last page of this document, you will find a photocopyable listening form you can use with your students.

If you want to adapt the form for this class, go to www.eltsspecialist.com where you will be able to find a downloadable word format version.

Other items you could include on the form are:

- Did you find the presentation helpful? Why?
- What would you have changed in the presentation?
- Write down 1-3 questions for the presenters.

The image shows a template for a 'Grammar Huddles' listening form. It features the title 'Grammar Huddles' and the subtitle 'LISTENING FORM' at the top left, with an owl logo on the right. The form consists of four sections, each with a header and a large text area for responses:

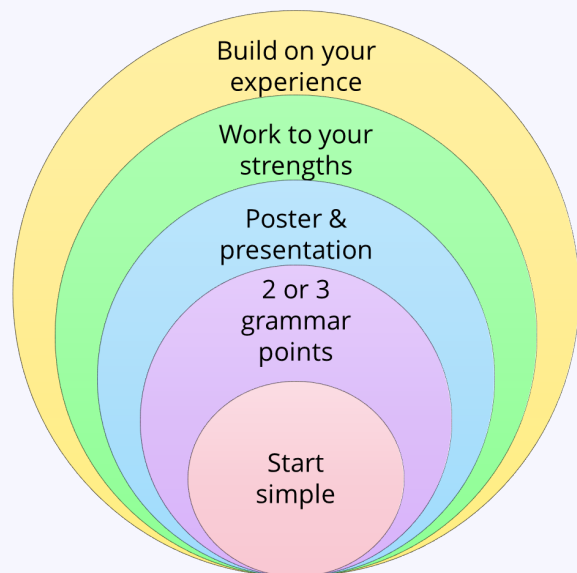
- What is the grammar focus?**
- What is the form/structure of the grammar focus?**
- Write down an example sentence from the presentation.**
- What did you like about the presentation? Do you have any questions?**

Grammar Huddles

Tips & Adaptation



Tips for the teacher



Tips for getting Ss on board



Adapting Grammar Huddles

This document has been written in the most generic form possible, as every teacher is working in different contexts & every class is unique. Regardless of how you conduct Grammar Huddles, you will need to adapt it according to your teaching style, your learners and your overall context. Therefore, to help you make your decisions, here is a short list of questions to help you consider different aspects whilst you adapt Grammar Huddles. The questions have been organised into 3 main categories to help you efficiently sift through the questions that might be relevant to you most.

Young learners	Teenagers	Adults
What type of activities do your Ss enjoy?	What are the dynamic of your class? (Studious, heads-down, loud, chatty, collaborative, independant thinkers, demanding)	What are the dynamic of your class? (Studious, heads-down, loud, chatty, collaborative, independant thinkers, demanding)
Do you need justify your teaching to parents/management?	Do you need to assess your Ss?	Do you need to assess your Ss?
Do your Ss follow grammar forms well?	Do you need to justify your teaching to parents/Ss/management?	Do you need to justify your teaching to Ss/management?
Do you need to stagger instruction more so with this group of Ss?	Do your Ss enjor grammar lessons?	Do your Ss enjor grammar lessons?
Do the Ss stay on task with minimal management?	Do your Ss prefer certain types of lessons? (Speaking, listening, writing, reading, projects, CLIL, pronunciation, grammar etc)	Do your Ss prefer certain types of lessons? (Speaking, listening, writing, reading, projects, CLIL, pronunciation, grammar etc)
Do you have any SEND Ss?	Are your Ss motivated to learn English?	Are your Ss more serious or want to have a bit of fun?
Do your Ss speak in their own language & is this permitted in your context?	Do you Ss have specific & clearly defined language goal?	Do your Ss understand that they need to work hard to learn?
Do your Ss value a creative activity?	What type of evidence of learning are you required to provide & how frequently?	How busy are your Ss? (Personally & professionally)
Do you Ss enjoy short drawing activities & is this permitted in your context?		Are their English studies something they have to do for work?
What type of evidence of learning are you required to provide & how frequently?		What type of evidence of learning are you required to provide & how frequently?

Grammar Huddles



WARMER IDEAS

Grammar review

1. Divide class into small groups.
2. Board a table with 3 columns: Subject, Verb and Object.
3. Elicit vocabulary from Ss to fill the columns.
4. Now Ss make sentences out of the vocabulary using a range of tenses/structures.
(Teams get points for: correct grammar, humour, originality and extra detail)

Prepositions

1. Divide class into teams.
2. Ss are given 1 minute to think of as many prepositions as possible in their teams.
3. Now board the following: *Write 5 sentences with the preposition*
4. In teams Ss write 5 correct sentences as fast as possible.
5. The first group to finish shouts 'FINISHED' and game is paused while team reads out sentences.
6. If there is an error, all the class can continue to write/correct their sentences.
7. This continues until 1 team has 5 correct sentences.

Word class

1. Divide class into groups.
2. Board a table with 7 columns: Noun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb, Preposition, Pronoun, Article.
3. Give all Ss a list of words (same list for each team) and a different coloured board pen per team.
4. Ss race each other to put the words into the correct columns on the board.
(If a word is already in the column then the team cannot add it again, but if they disagree with the choice of column, they can add the word to a different one)

Word order

1. In small groups, Ss are given 10 small pieces of paper.
2. Each S in the team will write 1 word on each piece of paper: student A - a list of animals or types of people (e.g. mum, dad, uncle, friend etc), student B - verbs, student C - nouns & student D - adjectives.
3. Ss take it in turns to place 1 word on the table and then as a team they create the sentence.
4. Process is repeated for all cards.

Word families

1. Board 5 to 7 words, e.g. think, get, go, know & mean.
2. In teams, Ss try to write down as many words that they know in the word families.
3. Give 1-2 minutes per word.
 - This can be turned into a game, the team with the most correct words wins.
 - To make it more challenging, Ss have to create a sentence for each word to receive extra points.

Grammar Huddles



LEARNING AIMS



LEARNING AIMS & 'CAN DO' STATEMENTS

Pick and choose from the 'can do' statements according to your students' learning needs.



GOAL

These 'can do' statements have been derived from the CEFR but have been reworked so that they are appropriate for B1-C2 levels.

You can adapt the 'can do' statements or use your own, depending on what your students need.



TIPS

Choose 2-4 'can do' statements in your first Grammar Huddles lesson. Once you become familiar with the process and the students are trained, you can increase the number of 'can do' statements.

UNDERSTANDING MAIN PRINCIPLES OF GRAMMAR FOCUS

I can understand...

- the main principles of the grammar focus.
- why my grammar focus is used in English.
- the form/structure of my grammar focus.

CONTROLLED PRODUCTION

I can accurately produce my grammar focus in controlled...

- spoken practice.
- written practice.

FREER PRODUCTION

I can use my grammar focus with some/complete accuracy when...

- communicating with others.
 - presenting my product.
- I can use my grammar focus...
- in the correct contexts.
 - for the correct linguistic function.

NOTICING

I can identify...

- my grammar focus in text & listening.
- why my grammar focus is used in a particular context.

DEVELOPING LIFELONG LEARNING SKILLS

I can...

- understand why I am learning this grammar focus for me.
- present my grammar knowledge in a clear way.
- explain my grammar focus (with help from peers) to my peers.
- work with my peers to develop our understanding of the English language.
- help my peers with their learning.
- complete my own research to learn about my grammar focus.
- apply my grammar focus to my own personal contexts.

Grammar Huddles



LISTENING FORM

What is the grammar focus?

What is the form/structure of the grammar focus?

Write down an example sentence from the presentation.

What did you like about the presentation? Do you have any questions?