



Teacher Portfolio & Preparation Series

Writing Up Your Activity- Steps and Samples

It's good to keep write-ups of materials or activities you've developed or adapted in your teacher portfolio, particularly ones that illustrate aspects of your philosophy of teaching. If you go the extra step and get it published, even better! (Another item to add to your burgeoning CV!)

A write-up should have enough detail in it that another teacher could read it and carry it out just as you did. Typically, write-ups, particularly for publications, include the following:

Level: Beginning? Intermediate? Advanced?

Skill area(s): Listening? Speaking? Reading? Writing? Other?

Aims: What is the purpose or goal(s) of this activity? What should students learn or be able to do after they've completed the activity? (Does this activity illustrate some aspect of your philosophy of teaching or something you value as a teacher?)

Preparation time: How much time does it take to prepare this activity before class?
Are there any materials needed?

Activity time: How much class time does this activity typically take?

Procedure: Detailed step-by-step instructions for how to prepare for and carry out this activity.

Variations & notes: Are there any additional interesting ways or variations to do this activity? Do you have any suggested pre- or post-activities to go with it? Are there any important things teachers should know before they do this activity? Did you want to acknowledge anyone for help with developing this activity?

Author: Include a short professional blurb about yourself. You might want to include an email address, so that colleagues could contact you.

Some write-ups (especially when published in certain journals or newsletters or books) include an *introductory narrative* about the activity, often citing relevant literature related to what it tries to accomplish or giving more details about the goals of the activity. Some also include copies of the actual *materials* used during the activity.

"Even Monkeys Fall From Trees" - a cultural sharing and discussion activity using proverbs

Level: Intermediate+

Skill area(s): Listening and speaking (ESL class)



Aims:

- To provide an icebreaker which promotes cultural sharing
- To send the message that it is okay for students to use their L1 in class and recognize the beauty and diversity of a number of languages while tapping into some universal human experiences
- To practice and prepare for future classroom discussions and oral presentations

Preparation time: None

Activity time: Depends on the size of the class, but could take up an entire 50-minute class period

PROCEDURE:

- 1) Start by describing what proverbs are, giving some common or interesting examples in English and explaining what they mean and how they are used.
- 2) Give the students a few minutes to think of a proverb or common saying that they like or often use in their L1 (first or native language). Have them write it down on a piece of paper in their L1.
- 3) Break the class into different-country pairs and have them explain their proverbs to their partners (in English). This arrangement will allow for greater negotiation of meaning since the partners will not necessarily have shared cultural knowledge and will need to ask for clarification or give further explanations.
- 4) Afterwards, have all the students stand up, go to the board, and write their proverbs in their L1. This often provokes a lot of curious whispering from the audience especially when they see a writing system that may be unfamiliar to them as well as smiles of recognition as people see other proverbs from their own country.
- 5) From that point, the teacher selects one of the proverbs on the board and has the student who wrote it say it in his/her L1 and then explain its meaning (literal and figurative) to the audience. Because they have already practiced the explanation with a partner, speaking to the whole class often goes smoothly (a good strategy for future presentations). Often the other students will ask questions or comment how they have a similar expression in their own language. Step 5 is repeated until all the proverbs on the board have been explained.

Variations and notes:

- Steps 2 & 3 could be converted into an out-of-class freewriting activity that is followed up with Steps 4 & 5 in the next class.
- It can be followed up by further discussions of what proverbs reveal about the culture they come from, etc.
- This activity basically works for culturally heterogeneous classes.

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