

Headlines

Recounting recent events in our lives

Think about it

Unplugged classes thrive on the stuff of everyday life. Why not take this detail and transform it into headline news – complete with interview questions from the class?

Get it ready

Write on a large piece of paper a ‘headline’ that summarises – and exaggerates – a recent event in your life. For example: *Shopping disaster, Weekend traffic horror, Tennis triumph.*

Set it up

Display the headline, and invite the class to ask you questions to get the gist of your story.

Tell the class that you want them to think of a story from *their lives*, and to write a headline for it. They should come and show you their headline before you start the activity, and you will help with language as needed.

Let it run

- The students write on a piece of paper their own headline in large, legible script.
- Half the class stand in a large circle around the room, holding their headlines so that these are clearly visible. The other half (the ‘interviewers’) form a second circle, inside the first one. Everyone positions themselves opposite one of the people who is holding a headline. They then ask them questions about it. You listen, and help with language.
- After a minute or so, you call out *Change!*, and the interviewers move clockwise so as to face the next headline, and begin asking questions again. This process is repeated until all the interviewers have interacted with all the headlines.
- Make any general comments that will help people as they continue the activity: these might relate to question forms, for example, or to vocabulary that is causing problems.
- The roles are then reversed: those who were doing the interviewing now stand with their own headlines and are themselves interviewed.

Round it off

Some of the most interesting stories can be reported back to the whole class. Ask people which story they enjoyed hearing about most, and why.

Follow-up

People write the story behind their own headline for homework.

My very special guest

Interviewing a visitor

Think about it

Your colleagues may be less famous than the celebrities in coursebooks, and may not hit the headlines, but they can be just as interesting for your class to talk to. They also have one big advantage over the stars: they can appear in person in the room!

Get it ready

Ask a teaching colleague, or someone else who works in the school, if they will come into your class and be interviewed (in English, though they don’t have to be a very fluent speaker).

Set it up

Tell your class who is coming, and brainstorm some questions before the visit.

Write the questions on the board, and invite improvements. Make and explain adjustments of your own, as required.

Practise the questions, focusing on intonation and relevant features of connected speech, as appropriate.

Let it run

- When your colleague arrives, the class ask their questions. You encourage people to ask follow-up questions, depending on what the visitor says, and join in yourself.
- Your guest is invited to ask the class some questions in return.
- You make notes, help with language and generally encourage.

Round it off

When your guest has left, the class revisit and discuss the answers given to the questions they were asked.

Highlight and discuss any language points you noted during the question-and-answer session with your colleague.

Follow-up

Working in pairs or small groups, people write up the interview as if they were reporting it for a school magazine, local magazine or website.

Variation

If you are friendly with someone who works near the school – someone who runs a café or a bookshop, for example – you could repeat the activity with them. This will suggest a whole new range of questions. The guest doesn’t need to be a fluent speaker, nor even to speak English: the class can write the questions in English and hold the interview in their first language, before translating the visitor’s answers back into English.