

Being vague and being specific

COMMUNICATION

LEVEL
Intermediate

NUMBER
B1_3057X_EN

LANGUAGE
English

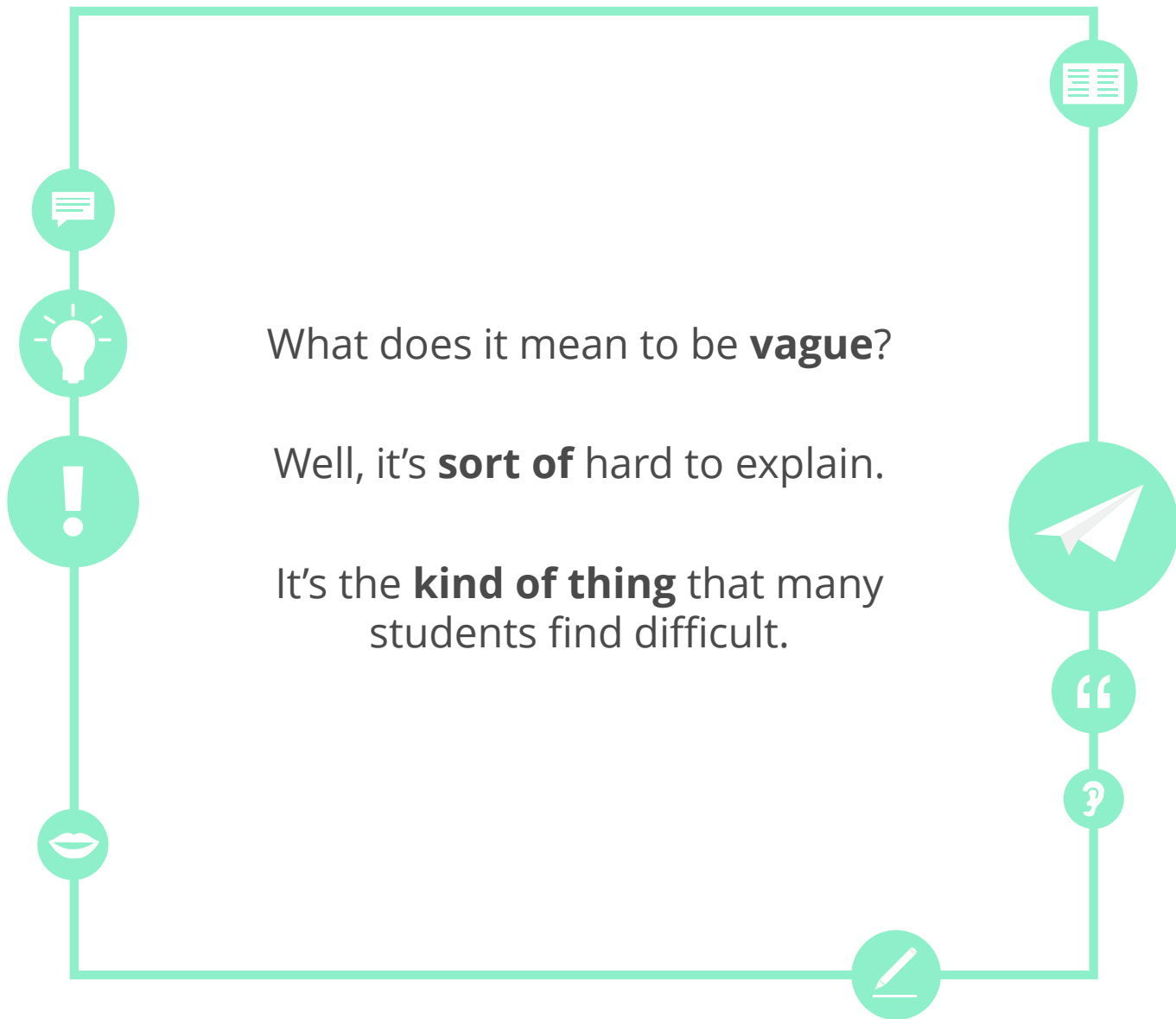




Goals

- Can use straightforward structures to be both vague and specific.
- Can identify and explain when it is acceptable to be vague and when it is not.







Preview and warm-up

- In today's lesson, you'll learn some structures to be **vague** and to be **specific**.
- Look at the sentences below. Which phrases are **vague** and which are **specific**?



Where I live is **more or less** in the city centre. It can be **kind of** noisy. The noise from the traffic, **in particular**, is a bit annoying. **On the whole**, though, I like where I live.



Using *kind of* and *sort of* to be vague

- We use *kind of* and *sort of* to make what we say **less direct** or **exact**.
- These phrases are common in **spoken English** but **too informal** for **most written communication**.
- *Kind of* and *sort of* can go before the **main verb**, **adjectives** and **nouns** in a sentence.



I **kind of** don't want to go to her party tonight.

Can you explain that again, please? I'm **sort of** confused.





Using *kind of* and *sort of* to be vague

- We also use *kind of* and *sort of* to describe something that **combines** different nouns.



It's a great film. It's a **kind of** action thriller.



Using *kind of* and *sort of* to be vague

- Here are some more examples.



I'm so sorry I'm late. I **sort of** overslept.

He was **kind of** disappointed that he didn't get a promotion.



I made a delicious drink yesterday. It was a **kind of** fruit smoothie.



Using *somewhat* to be vague



- We use *somewhat* instead of *kind of* and *sort of* in more formal situations.
- *Somewhat* can go before a **main verb** or an **adjective**, but **not** before a **noun**.
- We can also use *somewhat* at the **end of a sentence** to make it **less direct**.



I was *somewhat* impressed with your work this month.
I'd like to go for a run if the weather improves *somewhat*.



Add *sort of*, *kind of* or *somewhat* to these sentences

1. The book was interesting.



The book was **somewhat** interesting.

2. I'm tired as our journey was long.



3. He's worried about the meeting tomorrow.



4. My new car is a blue-green colour.



5. I find learning new vocabulary easy.





Using *kind of thing* and *sort of thing* to be vague

- We also use *kind of thing* and *sort of thing* to be **less exact** and **more vague**.
- We can add *that sort of thing* or *that kind of thing* to almost any sentence.
- *The kind of thing* and *the sort of thing* can also be used as the **subject** or **object** of a sentence.



She enjoys art and culture, **that sort of thing**.

Working in hospitality is the **kind of thing** I like.





Using *kinds of thing* and *sorts of thing* to be vague

- Here are some more examples. You can also replace **thing** with other **noun phrases**.



The **sort of things** I do in my free time are reading, running and cooking.

These are the **sorts of ideas** I can bring to the company.



On my gap year, I had lots of different **kinds of** positive experiences.



Vague and general phrases for more formal situations

- We often use **tend to** + **bare infinitive** to say something that is **generally true**.
- **On the whole** is a **prepositional phrase** that can **begin** or end **clauses**.
- We use these phrases to **introduce** a **general or vague statement** and to **summarise an argument**.



Young people **tend to be** more comfortable with technology.

On the whole, you did very well in the interview.





Vague and general phrases for more formal situations

- ***More or less*** is another useful phrase when you **don't want to be exact**.
- We use ***more or less*** after the verb ***to be***: *subject + to be + more or less*
- ***More or less*** comes **before** other verbs: *subject + more or less + verb*



We were **more or less** the only people at the conference.
I **more or less** know the answer to the question already.



Fill in the gaps

Jenny is preparing for a job interview. Fill in the gaps with the words that fit best.

1. I have wanted to work in the creative arts _____ since I was a teenager.
2. Because of the _____ skills and interests I have, this is the right career for me.
3. Although I am _____ new to graphic design, I have lots of potential.
4. My biggest weakness is that I _____ say yes to everything.
5. _____, I believe my qualifications make me the perfect candidate for the role.

a. kinds of

b. tend to

c. somewhat

d. on the whole

e. more or less



Use new vocabulary for being vague to comment generally on the following topics

your experience with
customer service at a
retail store

the value of learning a
language

the best place to go
on holiday

your opinion on social
media ad campaigns



Being specific

- Being **specific** means giving **detailed examples** and **information**.
- The phrases below will help you express things more **specifically**.
- You may need to be **specific** when talking about something **complex**.



We need to improve. **In particular**, our customer service is not good enough.

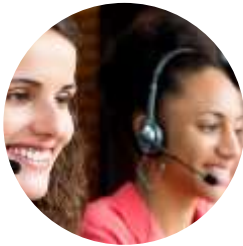
To be clear, I am happy with the team on the whole.





Being specific

- Here are more examples of being **specific** to express **logic** and **reason**.



We have many options. **For instance**, we could hire more customer service advisors.

I have many strengths, **such as** my postgraduate degree in computer science.



Due to our small budget, we will travel by rail and not by plane.



Being vague and specific in a job interview

1. more or less

2. sort of

3. for instance

4. to be clear



5. in particular

6. due to

7. on the whole

8. such as

a. What do you know about our charity. What do we do, _____?

c. The role involves data analysis. Is this the _____ work you are interested in?

e. _____, are you currently employed?

g. That's very good. We want the candidate to start _____ right away.

b. Your charity helps low-income households and, _____, I've heard great things about you.

d. Yes – data analysis _____ is an area I enjoy.

f. I haven't worked since last year _____ some personal issues, but I am now ready to get back to work.



Get specific

**Here are four statements.
Use phrases from the lesson to argue for or against these claims.**

I enjoy small parties much more than big ones.

Train travel is more enjoyable than air travel.

Tourists visit typical sights when they're visiting a city.

People work better in an office than at home.



Dictogloss

Your teacher is going to read to you. Write down what you hear them say.

Afterwards, identify examples of vague and specific language.



What do you think?

You just heard a report about the value of single-sex education. Reflect on what you heard and prepare a response. Use the points below to help you



1

First introduce your argument using vague language. Are you in favour or against single-sex schools?

2

Use specific language to offer more detail and back up your opinion.

3

Finish your argument by using vague language and concluding with a general statement about the topic.



Reflect on the goals

Go back to the second slide of the lesson and check if you have achieved all the goals of the lesson.

yes

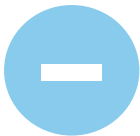
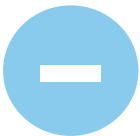
no





Reflect on this lesson

Think about everything you have seen in this lesson.
What were the most difficult activities or words? The easiest?



If you have time, go over
the most difficult slides again



Answer key

Activity p. 18

a. 3; b. 7; c. 2; d. 5; e. 4; f. 6; g. 1

Activity p. 15

1. e; 2. a; 3. c; 4. b; 5. d

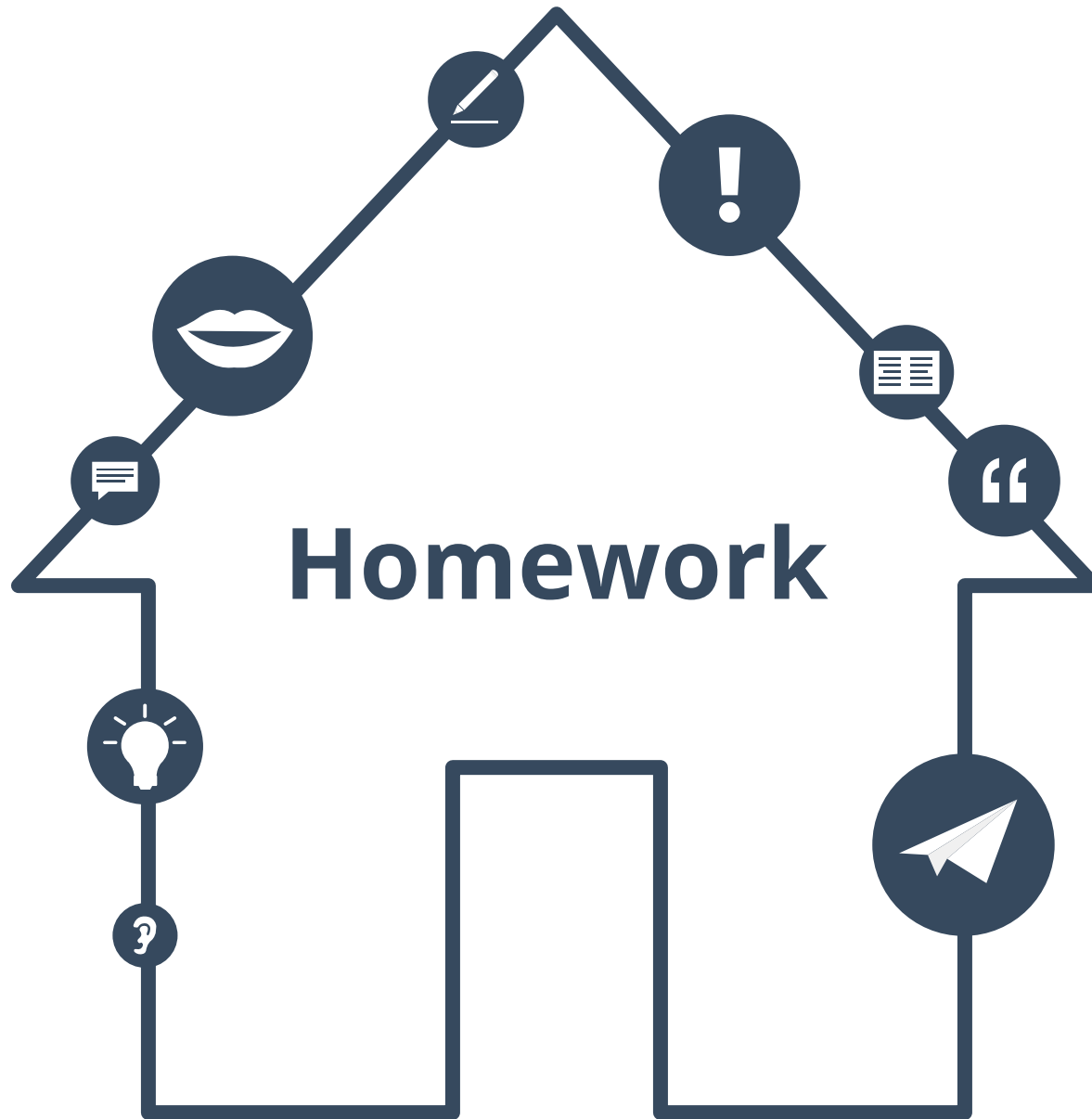
Activity p. 10: suggested answers

2. I'm tired as our journey was **sort of** long.
3. He's **somewhat** worried about the meeting tomorrow.
4. My new car is a **kind of** blue-green colour.
5. I find learning new vocabulary **kind of** easy.



Transcription

I believe that students **tend to** learn better when they are in single-sex settings. All girls or all boys schools **more or less** have happier, more high achieving students. **In particular**, these schools can be very beneficial for girls ages 10-15. They do better in maths and reading have **somewhat** higher levels of self-confidence and emotional strength. It is not only girls who **tend to** benefit. **To be clear**, many boys have higher test scores and more motivation in all boys schools as well. **On the whole**, this type of school can have a big impact during the very important years of 10-15.





Match each vague sentence (1-4) with the specific sentence that fits best

1. People tend to be happier when they work in a team.

2. On the whole, employees want more flexibility in their work life.

3. More or less everyone in our department takes a break for lunch.

4. Personal time and leisure time are somewhat important to work.

a. In particular, they want the option to work at home or to design their own schedule.

b. Indeed, 90% of the team says that they leave the office for lunch at least twice a week.

c. In other words, managers must realise that breaks, socialising, and flexibility are really important.

d. To be clear, they need social interaction to feel motivated and happy at work.



Write a response

Your manager has asked you for ideas on improving office parties, which are held twice a year. Respond to her using the vague and specific language below.

somewhat

to be clear

more or less

sort of

in particular

on the whole

Dear Lynne,

Thanks for asking me! I have thought about my ideas to improve our office parties.



Homework answer key

Homework Activity p.28
1.d; 2.a; 3.b; 4c



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