

Preparing for speaking tests with the dictionary

Introduction

Preparing a short talk may be something that your students find daunting, but by taking them through several short stages, this lesson shows them that with support from the dictionary they can approach the task systematically. They watch a model, plan and structure their talk, find the relevant vocabulary resources, and practise.

Procedure

- Aim:** to use the resources in the dictionary to help plan and practise a short talk
- Timing:** 1 hour
- Resources:** *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 10th edition* (book, app or website)
1 worksheet per student
computer and screen to display *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* website (recommended, but not essential)

Preparation

- Make copies of the worksheet for each student.
- Ensure that each student can see a copy of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 10th edition* either in print or digitally. If possible, set up a computer and screen.

Activity

Warm-up (4 mins)

To introduce the topic, put the expression 'it's the best thing since sliced bread' on the board and ask the class what they think it means. Check the dictionary definition with them if necessary. Then elicit possible reasons why people might think sliced bread is a great invention. Ask them whether they can think of other things that are actually much more important inventions – things that have made the world a much better place. Write a few suggestions on the board. Explain that you want each of them to prepare a three-minute talk on 'the best invention ever', and that they are going to use the dictionary to help them.

Brainstorming (10 mins)

First they should decide what their choice would be of 'the best invention'. Give them five minutes to tell their neighbour their ideas and remind them that they will need to be able to explain their reasons for their choice. After the five minutes, they should write down their invention and two or three reasons why they have chosen it.

Planning the talk – analysing a model and collecting useful language (20 mins)

Explain that preparing a talk is similar to writing an essay in that you need a clear structure and some expressions that will help your audience follow your argument. If you have access to the digital version of the dictionary, show the class the video 'Talking about a topic' from the Exam Speaking section of the iSpeaker. If the class is only using the print dictionaries, ask them to read the talk on page ST2. When they have seen or read the talk for the first time, ask them to identify the different sections. This talk is about a place, but the structure of the talk can be similar to any where you have to choose something and give reasons for your choice. Notice how the speaker explains what her favourite place is, describes it, gives reasons why she likes it, but then concludes by saying why in fact she prefers not to live there.

Ask the students to find the phrases that give reasons and those that express preferences (the green and the pink highlights in the book). Point out the **Express yourself** box on the opposite page or online and remind the class that there are notes like this throughout the dictionary (look at **why** and **prefer** for more useful expressions). Ask them to write down on the worksheet the phrases they think will be most useful for their talk.

Gathering topic vocabulary and checking the pronunciation (10 mins)

Now ask the students to make a note of some of the specific words that they think will be useful when they talk about their chosen invention. Ask them whether they are sure of how to pronounce them. Get them to check in the dictionary – they can either look at the transcription of the pronunciation in the book or listen to the word being pronounced on the digital versions of the dictionary.

Preparing the talk notes (5 mins)

Next the students should note a basic framework for their talk, which could be something along the lines of 'introduction/3 reasons/conclusion', with brief notes as in the 'During the exam' box on page ST3.

Practice in pairs (6 mins)

Ask the group to work in pairs to say their mini-presentation to each other. Move around the groups monitoring pronunciation as well as content.

Pronunciation drilling (5 mins)

If you notice a particular sound that is causing difficulty in communication, use it during the next phase of the lesson as an example of how the students can use the iSpeaker to focus on individual sounds. For example, show them the video for /θ/ and let them practise the sounds and words modelled there. Remind them that they can record their own attempts if they would like to do some individual practice on this.

Alternatively, focus on the language of correcting yourself so that students know that they need not get stuck if they make a mistake when they are giving their talk. Look at page ST3 and the note at **correct** in the dictionary.

Follow-up

For homework, you might want the students to practise their talk and be ready to give it in front of the class next lesson, or, if they are already quite experienced in this sort of task, set them a different topic to prepare in the same way as this lesson.

Worksheet

The best invention in the world

Expressions for giving my opinion

Expressions for justifying my choice

My favourite invention _____

Reasons

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Useful words

Words to practise saying

Sounds to practise saying