

Peter's coloured balls

Level: All levels

Ages: all ages

Time 5 – 10 minutes

Materials: three coloured balls

Purpose: a bit of fun and an opportunity for newly-formed groups to get to know each other's names

I was introduced to this activity by Peter Scaratt who at that time was making the transition from a successful career in mainstream primary teaching to TESOL.

Using a ball for name games is something of a commonplace in TESOL methodology but this technique adds a fresh dimension to the standard activity.

Method:

Step one – the teacher gets the class standing in a circle and checks names round the group.

Step two – the group throw a ball randomly to each other and as each person catches the ball they announce their name.

Step three – the teacher interrupts the activity and asks the thrower now to announce the name of the person who is to receive the ball.

Step four – the teacher interrupts the activity again to give fresh instructions. The receiver is now to say Hello red ball (or whatever colour it is) as they receive the ball then name the next receiver then say Goodbye red ball as they throw it.

Step five – as soon as a decent rhythm has built up, the teacher quietly introduces a green ball somewhere in the circle and the activity continues with both balls.

Step six – as soon as a decent rhythm has built up again, the teacher quietly introduces a blue ball somewhere in the circle and the activity continues with all three balls.

Anticipated problems: At first sight this might not look like an appropriate activity for teenagers but it has proved surprisingly acceptable to all age groups. Typically it ends in chaos with balls bouncing around the room.