

No Pens Day Wednesday



Keep your pens and pencils in their cases – and start talking and listening. Students won't be doing any writing on this special education day – *No Pens Day Wednesday*.

Now in its fourth year, *No Pens Day Wednesday* gives teachers the opportunity to encourage students to leave their pens in their pencil cases and concentrate on speaking and listening activities and to make talking a priority in schools and homes. Its original aim was to focus on children and young people who have speech, language and communication needs and their families, but its net has now been spread wider to incorporate *all* school children.

No Pens Day Wednesday arose from the National Year of Communication in 2011, also known as the *Hello* campaign. This campaign was initiated by the Communication Trust founded in 2007, a coalition of nearly 50 voluntary and community organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication. With their collective knowledge and areas of expertise the trust supports and raises awareness of children with speech, language and communication needs. For example, they provide information for parents about what helps children up to the age of five to talk and listen. They also offer plenty of information for teachers to help children with communication needs in early years education. This focus on early years education is of great importance, as good spoken language skills are strong predictors of later academic success.

This year *No Pens Day Wednesday* is on 15 October and already more than 2,500 schools have registered their interest in becoming involved.

So put your pens and pencils away and get talking!

To find out more about *No Pens Day Wednesday*, click [here](#).

And if you would like to use *No Pens Day Wednesday* (even if your lesson is on a Monday, Tuesday, Thursday or Friday!) as a topic in your class from A1 upwards, then we have provided you with a range of activities. You'll find them in the following **Teacher's notes**.

Teacher's notes

With each activity, explain *No Pens Day Wednesday* and how its purpose is to encourage conversation and listening in the classroom.

You can choose whether you do all of the activities, just parts of them or perhaps spread them over two lessons.

Get in line!

(level A1 upwards, 15+ mins)

- Clear some space in the classroom so that all students can stand up in a line.
- Explain that they are going to do some speaking activities which require them to get into alphabetical or numerical order.
- Ask students to stand up and tell them they should get into alphabetical order of first names, 'A' at the left and 'Z' at the right. Urge the students to only speak English in order to find their place in the line.
- Ask them to say their names so you can check they are in the right alphabetical order.
- Now do the ranking with their family names. And check.
- Now try names of the streets where they live. And check again.
- You can then do any of the following rankings, but make sure you check their rankings by asking them to speak when they are all in order:
 - numerical order of their house numbers;
 - birthdays, January 1 at one end and December 31 at the other end;
 - distance from the present location to where they were born;
 - year their mother was born;
 - number of first cousins (children of parents' siblings);
 - number of capital cities they have visited;
 - number of addresses they have lived at;
 - the first four digits of their home telephone number.

Yes and no!

(level A1 upwards, 15+ mins)

- Make sure that there is space in the classroom so that all students can move into two groups.
- Allocate one side of the room as 'YES' and the other side as 'NO'.
- Tell students you are going to ask them a series of questions and they should respond by moving to the 'YES' or 'NO' side of the room.
- Ask the first question: *Do you like football?*
- Students move to the appropriate side of the room.
- When they are in their groups encourage some discussion (*When did you last watch a game?, Do you like other sports?, What sports do you like doing?*) for one minute (or more) before asking the next question.
- Follow the same procedure with each other question. Encourage a short discussion when they are in their 'yes' and 'no' groups.
Possible questions could be:
 - *Do you like asparagus?*
 - *Do you hate beer?*
 - *Do you eat chocolate every day?*
 - *Do you live more than 100km from your birthplace?*
 - *Have you ever been to Berlin?*
 - *Do you do your homework every week?*
 - *Have you got a dog?*
 - *Can you speak any more languages?*
 - *Have you been to the cinema in the last month?*
- Encourage students to think of their own questions to ask the class.

Something special

(level A2.2 upwards, 45+ mins - depending on number of students)

In the week before No Pens Day Wednesday:

Ask students to bring in something with a special memory to the following week's lesson. They are going to talk about their object to the whole class. Tell them to think about three questions: *What is it? Where is it from? Why is it important?* The object should not be too valuable or too fragile to be handled by the other students. Photographs, small (sturdy) ornaments, shells, cloths are all good ideas. Be careful, too, that the objects do not hold such deep emotional significance that could cause the student to become upset when he/she talks about it. Make sure you bring something in yourself, so that you can model the exercise.

On No Pens Day Wednesday:

- This activity works best in a circle, so you may need to move the tables and chairs.
- As a model for the activity, introduce your object and tell the students what it is, where it is from, and why it is important to you. Pass it round so the students can see it and touch it. Encourage any questions.
- Then it's the students' turn. Allow about five minutes talk per student, but be flexible with any student who wants to take more time. And help the weaker students who may need more support from you.
- When everyone has finished do a round-up of the objects: *What did (Maria) bring? Where is it from? Why is it important to her?* and so on.

Picture appeal

(level A2.2 upwards, 30+ mins)

- Bring in a selection of pictures taken from a range of magazines. For example: deserted/crowded beaches, town centres, mountains, skiing, football, shops, discos, living rooms, gardens, offices, schools, bedrooms, kitchens, streets, cars.
- Give five or six pictures (or more if possible) to each pair of students.
- Tell them they are going to discuss the pictures together.
- Ask them first of all to talk about what they can see in each picture.
- Ask each student to choose the picture he/she likes best.
- In their pairs, students explain to each other why they like the picture they have chosen.
- Then each pair should tell the next pair of students.
- If you have time, you could do the final part of this activity as a mingle: students show each other their favourite picture and explain why they like it.