

Downloadable resource 17:

100 Language stems

This resource corresponds to **Chapter 21: Techniques for teaching low-level teens**.

Content

This resource contains over 100 language stems on 20 different topics. The stems can be used on their own, to help structure students' sentences, or in conjunction with 100 corresponding conversation questions (themselves a reduced version of **Downloadable resource 8**) which appear here after each set of stems.

Procedure

I normally use the language stems in blocks, covering one topic at a time. For this example let us imagine we have chosen to use the stems in section eight, on food. These are:

I'm particularly fond of...
I can't stand...
I'm allergic to...
When I eat out I often go for...
My all time favourite is...

The teacher makes a note of these stems before the lesson but boards only the first one and completes it for themselves, for example:

"I'm particularly fond of oranges with olive oil and salt on them."

The teacher then turns to the first student and says, '*I'm particularly fond of...?*' The nominated student repeats the stem and completes it with their own response. As students do this in turn, the teacher boards any responses where their help was needed or where an unusual, complex or interesting item of language has been used. When every student has made a sentence, we put up the next stem and continue.

Once we have filled the board up, we can ask students to write five things in their notebook about the topic that will involve them looking at the board, relocating their own language on it and maybe embellishing it, changing it or querying the teacher.

Finally, students can be paired up, given questions which correspond to the language stems and can then use the replies they have worked on as support.

Rationale

By using a system like the one above, we are bending input language around our students and at the same time giving them a push off by providing the start of the sentence, then boarding reformulated versions of their own contributions which they can take away and use.

Where students have so little language that they struggle in free speaking activities, we can use this system, working on their responses first then introducing the corresponding conversation questions, to enable them to interact with their partners in what is a well-rehearsed conversational situation.

The stems have not been finely graded. In everyday conversation we sometimes use quite complicated items. Low-level learners sometimes need the odd bit of higher-level language to convey even simple ideas successfully. I like the idea that we teach whatever it is that our language learners need but obviously there is little point in introducing language so grammatically complex that it will be difficult for them to retain, or lexis for which they do not have the supporting language to actually use in sentences.

1 Neighbourhood

Language stems

I live in a [+ adjective] neighbourhood.

There are [+ number or quantity] in my neighbourhood.

I get on [+ adverb] with my neighbours because...

I live [in the centre of town/on the outskirts/in a suburb, in a village].

I live ... minutes away from here [walking/by car/train/bus]

Question prompts

Think of three adjectives to describe your neighbourhood.

Are there any shops in your neighbourhood?

How well do you get on with your neighbours? Why? Why not?

Do you live in the centre of town?

How far from here do you live?

2 Family

Language stems

I get on with my... best.

I tend to clash with my...

I spend most time with my...

In terms of character, I am most like my...

In terms of appearance, I am most like my...

Question prompts

Who do you get on best with in your family?

Do you clash with anyone?

Who do you spend most time with?

In terms of character, who do you resemble?

In terms of appearance, who are you like?

3 My Room

Language stems

The walls are painted...

There are (paintings/posters) on the wall of...

I spend about... a day there when I'm not sleeping.

The furniture is [modern/traditional/from Ikea/brown/white...]

Next to my bed I have...

Question prompts

What colour is your room?
Have you got anything on the walls?
How much time do you spend in your room?
What's the furniture like?
What have you got next to your bed?

4 Self

Language stems

If I were an animal, I would be...
My favourite colour is... because...
I'm really into...
I can't stand...
In terms of character, I would describe myself as...

Question prompts

If you were an animal, what animal would you be?
What's your favourite colour? Why?
What are you really into?
Is there anything in this world you can't stand?
How would you describe yourself?

5 Friends

Language stems

My friends think that I'm...
I see my best friends...
When we get together we...
My friends are important because...
My oldest/newest friend is... I met him/her at...

Question prompts

How do your friends describe you?
When do you see your best friends?
What do you do when you get together with your friends?
Why are your friends important?
Who is your oldest/newest friend?

6 Animals

Language stems

I'm particularly fond of... [+ domestic animal]
I think... are the most beautiful wild animals because...
I don't like... much because...
I enjoy watching wildlife documentaries about...
In the future I might get a...

Question prompts

Do you have a favourite domestic animal?
Do you have a favourite wild animal?
Are there any animals you don't like?
Do you enjoy watching wildlife documentaries about any animals?
Will you get any pets when you've left home?

7 Early childhood

Language stems

I grew up in _____.
I was a quiet/difficult baby because...
I went to nursery/kindergarten in...
My favourite toy was a
I used to like [TV programme for little ones] because...

Question prompts

Where did you grow up?
Were you a quiet or a difficult baby?
Did you go to a nursery school or kindergarten?
What was your favourite toy when you were small?
What was your favourite TV programme when you were small?

8 Food

Language stems

I'm particularly fond of...
I can't stand...
I'm allergic to...
When I eat out I often go for...
My all-time favourite is...

Question prompts

Is there any food you are particularly fond of?
Is there any food you can't stand?
Are you allergic to any foods?
What food do you go for when you eat out?
What's your all-time favourite dish?

9 School

Language stems

I am in the [+year group].
I have been at my current school for...
I normally sit at the front/back/in the middle of my class because...
Personally, I think the best thing about my school is....
The worst thing about my school is....

Question prompts

Which year are you in?
How long have you been at your current school?
Where do you sit in class? Why?
What do you like most about your school?
What do you like least about it?

10 Music

Language stems

One of my favourite groups/singers is...
My favourite styles of music are...
I sometimes listen to songs in [+foreign language].
I listen to music when I'm...
I get my music from...

Question prompts

Do you have any favourite singers or groups?
What are your three favourite styles of music?
Do you ever listen to songs in other languages?
When do you normally listen to music?
Where do you get your music from?

11 Sport

Language stems

I enjoy... [+ sport] because...
I look forward to/don't look forward to PE classes at school because...
I think/don't think sport should be obligatory at school because...
I think... [+ sport] is very boring because...
My favourite sports celebrity is...

Question prompts

Which sport do you enjoy most?
Do you look forward to PE classes at school?
Do you think sport should be obligatory at school?
What is a very boring sport for you?
Who is your favourite sports celebrity?

12 English

Language stems

I use English outside of class to...
The last film or episode I saw in English was...
The easiest thing about English for me is...
The most difficult thing about English for me is...
My favourite English speaking celebrity is...

Question prompts

What do you use English for outside of class?
What was the last film or episode that you saw in English?
What's the easiest thing about English for you?
What's the most difficult thing about English for you?
Who is your favourite English speaking celebrity?

13 Internet

Language stems

I use the internet for...
The most annoying thing about the internet is...
The screensaver/background on my computer is...
I have/don't have my own laptop/PC/Mac/tablet.
The last thing I downloaded was...

Question prompts

What are 3 things you use the internet for?
What's the most annoying thing about the internet?
Do you have a screen saver/background photo on your computer?
Do you have your own laptop/PC/Mac/tablet?
What was the last thing you downloaded?

14 Programmes

Language stems

I'm watching... at the moment.
I sometimes watch... while I'm eating my lunch/dinner.
For me, the best series/film of all time is...
A film/series that gave me nightmares was...
I have watched... in its original English version and I found it...

Question prompts

Are you watching any series at the moment?
Do you ever watch TV while you eat your lunch or dinner?
For you, what's the best series/film of all time?
Has a film or series ever given you nightmares?
Do you ever watch any films in English in original version?

15 Future

Language stems

My biggest ambition is to...
In 15 years' time, I can see myself living in...
I'd like to study... at university.
I would like to be a... [+job] because...
This year, my priority is to...

Question prompts

What's your biggest ambition?

Where can you see yourself living in 15 years' time?

If possible, would you like to study at university? If so, what?

Do you have any idea about what job you would like to do?

What is your priority for this year?

16 Travel and holidays

Language stems

The most interesting place I have been to is... [+another country or city] because...

I spoke English when I was in... [+another country or city]

I like/don't like staying on campsites because...

The last time I missed a bus, train or plane was when...

My... [+family member] live/s in... [+country or city] and I visit/ed them... [+ time/adv freq]

Question prompts

What's the most interesting place you've ever been to?

Have you ever spoken English on holiday?

Do you like camping?

When was the last time you missed a bus, train or plane?

Do you have family in another country or city? If so, do you ever visit them?

17 Hobbies

Language stems

I'm keen on...

I spend [+ time] doing/playing/going [+hobby].

In the future, I would like to try...

The hobby connected to water that I like most is...

The most dangerous/expensive/artistic hobby that I have is...

Question prompts

What hobby are you keen on?

How much time do you spend on your favourite hobby?

Are there any hobbies you would like to try in the future?

Do you do any hobbies that are connected to water?

What is the most dangerous/expensive/artistic hobby that you have?

18 Weekends

Language stems

At the weekend, I normally get up at...

I prefer going out on a [Friday/Saturday/Sunday] night because...

If I have homework, I do it on a...

Last weekend I...

Next weekend I'm...

Question prompts

What time do you get up at the weekend?
Which night do you prefer to go out on - Friday, Saturday or Sunday?
If you have homework, when do you do it?
What did you do last weekend?
What are you going to do next weekend?

19 Telephones

Language stems

I've got a... [+phone]. Or// I haven't got a phone at the moment.
I want to get a... because...
I probably spend... actually talking on the phone each day.
I also use my phone for...
The best phone conversation I had last week was...

Question prompts

Have you got a phone at the moment?
What telephone would you like to get (next)?
How long do you spend actually talking on the phone each day?
Do you use your phone for anything else?
What was the best conversation that you had on your phone last week?

20 Routines

Language stems

On average, I get ... hours of sleep each night.
I am normally woken up by...
It usually takes me ... to get ready in the morning.
It takes me... to get to school (because...)
The part of the day that I look forward to most is...

Question prompts

How many hours sleep do you normally get each night?
Who or what normally wakes you up?
How long does it take you to get ready in a morning?
How long does it take you to get to school?
Which part of the day do you look forward to most?