

Pair drills

A **pair drill** is an effective and enjoyable way of practising a dialogue. It helps learners to develop more fluent and accurate pronunciation and memorise useful expressions. It can be used as a follow-up to the more traditional techniques of choral and individual drilling.

- 1 Learners have been introduced to a dialogue including some useful expressions, which you now want them to practise. For example, this dialogue includes expressions for getting information about a place:

A Where's the nearest bus stop?
B It's on Station Road.
A What's the best way to get there?
B Oh, you can walk.
A How far is it?
B About half a kilometre.

English Unlimited Elementary, Unit 9

Write or display the dialogue on the board.

- 2 Start with some simple choral drilling. Say the lines yourself and ask the learners to listen and repeat after you. Then you can continue by pointing at the lines on the board while the learners say them. For more advice on basic drilling techniques, see the Teaching Tip on **Drilling**.
- 3 Now you're ready to start the pair drill. Put learners in pairs and ask them to practise the dialogue together, several times (the more the better!). At this stage, they can simply read from the board.
- 4 Learner A closes their eyes or turns their chairs so that they can't see the board. Pairs continue practising, but now Learner A has to perform from memory (with the occasional prompt from Learner B if required).
- 5 As and Bs swap roles: now Learner B has to close their eyes or look away and remember their lines, while Learner A can look at the board and provide assistance as necessary.
- 6 Remove the dialogue from the board. Now both Learners A and B perform the whole dialogue from memory.
- 7 Make new A / B pairs. Again, learners have to perform the dialogue from memory, this time with a new partner.

Variations

- You can add an element of competition at Stage 3 by challenging pairs to perform the dialogue as many times as possible within a given time, e.g. two minutes.
- As a written follow-up to the above procedure, have learners work in pairs to reconstruct the dialogue in their notebooks (or work as a class to reconstruct the dialogue on the board).