

Make the link

This is a more demanding speaking activity, suitable for intermediate-level learners and above, which you can use as a warmer or filler, or simply for a change of pace. No preparation of materials is required, as all the content comes from the learners themselves.

Task

- 1 Divide the board into two halves. Ask the learners to give you two letters of the alphabet and write one of the letters in the middle of each half of the board. Then ask them to give you nine or ten English words starting with each letter, and write these on the board as well. When you've finished, the board will look something like this:

bird bag bridge brilliant	umbrella undertaker unusual upset
broken B bear	underground U undo
bedroom banana ban bungee	underpants universe unnatural urge

- 2 Demonstrate the activity. Ask one of the learners to give you two of the words from the board, one from each letter group (e.g. *banana* and *underground*). You then need to think of a way in which the two words could be linked and explain your idea to the class. For example:

Well ... a few years ago, before I came here, I worked as a teacher in Bucharest. It's a really interesting city and one of the best things about it is that it has a really good underground system ... really fast, clean, really cheap as well. And at all the underground station there are loads of shops where you can buy different things ... chocolate, sandwiches, magazines, cigarettes. And one of the things I remember the most is that the food shops always had fruit outside and there would be loads of bananas. So when you walked into a metro station in Bucharest you would always see these big piles of yellow bananas. But unfortunately I don't like bananas very much, so I never bought any.

- 3 Now learners do the same: working in pairs, they take turns to choose two words from the board, which their partner then has to link together. Emphasise that there are lots of different ways of doing this – for example, by making a logical link or, as above, telling a story. Sometimes learners' explanations will be quite brief, sometimes they'll need to be longer and more complicated, depending on the words chosen.
- 4 After ten minutes or so, stop the activity and round off by putting the learners into new pairs and asking them to tell their new partners which of their previous partner's speeches they found the most creative. Finally, ask one or two learners the same question in open class.

Variations

- **Vocabulary revision.** Instead of Stage 1, simply put on the board a selection of vocabulary items from recent lessons which you'd like to revise.
- **Three-way links.** You can add to the level of challenge by working with three letters of the alphabet / sets of words rather than two.
- **Competition.** Have learners do the activity in groups of three rather than pairs. Learner A nominates two words. Learner B has a go at explaining the link, then Learner C has a go at explaining it in a different way. Learner A listens to both explanations and awards a point to whichever is the best. They take turns, with the aim of scoring as many points as they can. If you use this variation, make sure that there are 6, 9 or 12 pairs of words on the board and tell learners that they have to use up all the words, so that all three learners will get an equal number of turns.