

Typical characteristics of warmers

- 1 They should probably be short, and maybe fast (e.g. done 'against the clock' or as a race)
- 2 They are probably interactive, in pairs or groups.
- 3 They may be possibly competitive.
- 4 They should probably be fun, or enjoyable for the students.
- 5 They should get students starting to think in English.
- 6 They will probably get students speaking (and, coupled with other elements above, may end up being noisy)
- 7 They will probably raise energy levels. They may involve movement. And so they may make students over-excited.

Example warmers:

The Three Letter Game

Give the class three letters, e.g. RTN. The students have to make as many words as possible containing all three letters, but in any order, and not necessarily starting with any of the three letters given. E.g. return, natural, unnatural, written...

Alphabet cards

- 1) Distribute the cards between the students. Then dictate a word and students, if they think they have a letter in your word, come out to the front of the class. Then they organize themselves to spell the word to the rest of the class. The rest of the class have to say if they think the word is spelled correctly.
- 2) Category scramble. Students stand in a circle. The cards are scattered randomly on the floor. You give a category of words, e.g. countries. The students have to scramble quickly and find a letter for a word in your category starting with that letter. So, if it's countries, they could pick up A for Austria, or D for Denmark. The last person to pick up a card loses a life. If you pick up a card, but then can't make a word, you also lose a life.

Running (or wall) dictations

You put a text or maybe a list of words on a wall outside your classroom. The students work in pairs. One of them stays in the classroom with pen and paper. The other has to go outside, read the text or words, memorise them and then run back into the classroom to dictate the text or words to their partner. You can make it into a race. The students can check their work by taking the text from the wall and checking their text against the original.

Typical characteristics of coolers

- 1 They may well be done individually, with no interaction.
- 2 They may involve concentration.
- 3 They should get students thinking in English.
- 4 they may well practise listening and/or writing.
- 5 They may be quiet or silent
- 6 They may be slow and have a calming effect on students

Example coolers:

Opposite Dictations

Dictate a simple text/story. For example:

‘There was an old woman who lived in a beautiful old house. She had five black cats and a dog. She loved playing chess and drinking tea.’

The students write down the opposite of this, but make it clear that the opposite can be interpreted any way they like: ‘an old woman’ could be ‘a young girl’, ‘an old man’, ‘a young man’... There is no right or wrong answer. When you finish, students compare stories. Then they try to re-create together the actual words that you dictated.

Empty grids

You can find empty grids in many places, for example:

<http://www.studenthandouts.com/Assortment-01/Graphic-Organizers/Blank-Word-Search-Puzzle-Grid.html>

Students can use the grids to make their own word searches or crosswords, recycling vocabulary you have taught them.

Column dictations

Draw columns on the board and dictate words. Students write the words in the correct column. So, for example, have two columns: DO/MAKE. Dictate words which go with either one or the other (e.g. homework, a favour, the washing...). Students write individually, but then compare in pairs. Get a volunteer to write their answers on the board and then correct as a whole class.

You can do the same for lexical sets (e.g. TRANSPORT – LAND/SEA/AIR).

Or you can do word stress (e.g. Oo/oO/Ooo). So ‘happy’ goes in the first column and ‘comfortable’ in the third.

Opinion Dictations

Dictate statements such as ‘Life would be impossible without my mobile phone’ and the students copy it in the column which corresponds with their opinion: I AGREE/ I DISAGREE/IT DEPENDS. When you finish dictating statements, students compare answers in pairs or groups and then feed back to the class.

How do warmers and coolers affect lesson planning?

You can take any lesson plan and think about each stage – will this stage have a warming or cooling effect on the students?

Look at this lesson. The interaction, pace, length of the stages, and emphasis on silent reading and writing suggest that this is going to be a very chilly lesson! Ideally, every lesson will have a balance of warming and cooling activities, to keep the students interested but focused.

The Mushroom Salad Lesson Plan

Stage 1:

Present eight new words for food

Time: 10 minutes

Interaction: T → sts

Stage 2:

Students read instructions on how to make a mushroom salad. Read and put in the correct order.

Time: 20 minutes

Interaction: Sts individually

Stage 3:

Correct by reading aloud the instructions in the correct order.

Time: 5 minutes

Interaction: T → Sts

Stage 4:

Students write similar instructions for a different type of salad using words and expressions from the mushroom salad text.

Time: 25 minutes

Interaction: Sts individually

What can we learn about lesson planning for teenagers in general?

- 1 The material needs to be relevant and interesting for students (some topics may be ‘cold’, but some can be too ‘hot’!)
- 2 Aim for a variety of skills work. Speaking will tend to raise energy. Listening and writing may have a calming effect.
- 3 Aim for a variety of interaction. One argument for including pairwork in every lesson is precisely for the warming effect of keeping students ‘awake’.
- 4 Pace and timing are critical for maintaining interest but also focus.
- 5 Have activities for fast-finishers – the students who get bored and disrupt the class because they have nothing to do.