

Giving instructions

Task

Look at the instructions above for a speaking activity and decide which is the most effective and why? What is wrong with the other sets of instructions?

A

Open Books page 3. Look exercise 4. Speak with partner. It good?

B

Ok, so I'd like you to do exercise 4 on page 3. Have a quick chinwag with your partner and jot down some of their ideas. Then we'll chat about the answers together.

C

Turn to page 3 and do exercise 4 with a partner. Spend about 5 minutes on this and write down your answers. Are you working alone or in pairs? How long have you got?

D

Let's do exercise 4 on page 3 in pairs. Does everyone understand?

Answers:

The instructions in A) are oversimplified and provide an unnatural model of English for the learners. The language in B) isn't appropriate as the teacher uses colloquial expressions, such as 'chinwag' and 'jot down'. Example D) includes the unhelpful question "Do you understand?" which will not necessarily give a true indication of whether the learners have understood the instructions, as they may respond positively to avoid embarrassment or to please the teacher. Many students do not want to admit that they have not understood what the teacher is saying in front of the rest of the class. Therefore, example C) is the most effective way to give instructions for the following reasons:

- Language is graded but not oversimplified
- The teacher gives a time limit
- The teacher reminds the learners to write down answers

The teacher checks that the learners know what to do by asking 2 checking questions.