

14B Hot topics

Activity type: Speaking – Discussion – Groups

Aim: To practise discussing and giving opinions on current issues

Language: Discussing issues / Expressing opinions – Use any time after 14.3.

Preparation: Make one copy of the worksheet for each group of four or five learners.

Time: 15–20 minutes

- 1 Ask learners what they think ‘hot topic’ means and give them an example from the news at the moment. Explain, if necessary, that it’s a current topic people are interested in and that causes a lot of discussion (and perhaps disagreement).
- 2 Elicit ten hot topics learners know of. (For more reticent groups, perhaps suggest some common issues and invite learners to add to the list). Emphasise that learners are not required to give their opinions, but only to identify that something is an issue of importance. Write topics on the board as learners identify them.
- 3 Divide learners into groups of four or five. In their groups, learners rank the issues and write them according to the ranked order in the boxes on the worksheet, starting from ‘hottest’ (i.e. most controversial) to ‘coolest’ (least controversial). Once again, ensure they are not focusing on issues particularly important to them personally, but, objectively, on issues widely regarded as hot topics.
- 4 Gather whole-class feedback to decide which are the hottest topics (and, if appropriate and time allows, compare between countries and cultures, finding out which topics are of importance in learners’ own countries, and which are less current).
- 5 Each group now takes one issue and establishes the two (or more) opposing points of view which were aired. Emphasise again that learners are not expected to give their personal opinions but simply to reflect what different parties think. Each group presents their findings to the class, either orally or in a poster presentation, if materials are available.

Extension

- With the class, choose a new issue (not one on which learners have strong opinions). On the board, write a statement that expresses a point of view on the issue identified. For example, if the issue is pollution in towns and cities, you might write: *Cars should be banned from all city centres*. Explain that the class is going to debate the issue. Divide the class into two groups, one group ‘for’ the proposal, one ‘against’. Note that learners should not be expressing their own opinions, but should take sides in a formal debate. Remind them that this is a kind of role play and that, in their role, they may need to argue for or against what they personally believe. Learners will need sufficient time to prepare. You or a nominated learner should act as chair, ensuring that each group gets adequate opportunity to air their views.
- Learners choose one of the topics originally identified and write a short essay, setting out their personal opinions.

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