

11. Sentence Auction

Create a list of sentences, some correct and some with errors. The errors should be related to a language topic you're teaching or reviewing (e.g. articles, tenses or pronouns).

The number of sentences will depend on your students' abilities. 20 is a good number for intermediate students. If you have too few sentences then it will be harder to balance the correct and incorrect. The ratio of correct and incorrect is up to you, but it's a good idea to have more than 50% correct. Next to the list of sentences, draw three columns: Bid, win, lose.

You can set a limit for how much (imaginary) money they have to spend, or just let them have as much as they want. They need to discuss (in English) and decide whether any sentence is 100% reliable, in which case they can bid 100 dollars (or whatever unit you choose). If they're totally sure that it's incorrect (and they rarely are) they can put a "0" bid. If they're unsure, they can bid 20, 30, 40, based on how likely it is to be correct. (Having a limit on their total bid will make them decide more carefully.)

When all of their bids are written in, it's often a good idea to get pairs to swap their papers with other pairs for marking. Go through the sentences, discussing which are correct and why. Get individual students to explain what's right, what's wrong and why. For correct sentences, the bid amount is written in the "win" column. For incorrect sentences, it's written in the "lose" column. Both columns are totaled, and the "lose" total is subtracted from the "win" total. Papers are returned, and partners discuss (in English) how their bidding went.

This activity is most effective when the students work together as partners, reading and discussing the correctness of sentences. Students are encouraged to use English to discuss their strategies with their partner.

