

Information Gaps

Information gap activities are communicative teaching activities in which each student has a certain part of the information and the other student(s) has the other parts needed to complete a task. The students must share the information with the others in order to solve a problem, make a decision, or gather information on a topic.

This type of activity is excellent because it encourages students to each speak in the language they are learning in a semi-structured but natural (ie, not scripted) way. Because it is done among peers as pair or group work, it is more comfortable than speaking in front of the class.

Some examples of information gaps are described below to help you understand this concept.

Information gap with a schedule (gathering information to answer questions)

Each student has a schedule with different information missing, such as the soccer schedule shown in the VAULTT video, “Info Gap Activity.” Students must ask each other questions in order to fill in the missing information. After they have gathered all of that information, they complete a task with it, such as answering questions about the complete schedule.

Mystery information gap (solving a problem)

Students have to solve a crime story. Each student is given a paragraph with different information about the crime and the suspects. They have to study their piece of information and take notes. Then the teacher takes away the paragraph so the students don’t just read it out loud. The students then work together in a group and share their information and, putting it all together, solve the crime.

Decision information gap (making a decision)

Students are told they are part of a hiring committee. Each hiring committee is given a job description for the position they need to fill. Each student has the resume and cover letter of a different applicant. Each student has to study the information they have on their candidate, then orally summarize it to the group. The group then chooses the best person for the job.

Picture differences, or “Spot the differences”

Students work with a partner. Each student has a similar picture, but the pictures have different details missing, or other slight differences. The students must work together and describe their pictures to one another in order to make a list of all of the differences or missing details.

Reading Jigsaw

A reading text is divided into parts. Each student is given a part of the whole reading. Then students who read different parts of the text are put together in a group and required to ‘pool’ their information in order to piece the story together.