

Appendix A:

Six types of task

This classification, which does not claim to be exhaustive, will help you generate a variety of tasks on whatever topic you have selected. For each type of task, it gives the outcome, broadly analyses the processes involved, then suggests some specific starting points and examples that you can adapt and build on.

Simple tasks may consist of one type only, such as listing; more complex tasks may incorporate two or more types, such as listing then comparing lists or listing then ranking. Problem solving may include listing, comparing and ranking.

After the starting points and examples, this classification also suggests follow-up tasks. All tasks involve speaking and listening. Many also entail reading and note-taking. All tasks can lead into a more formal oral or written presentation.

The task types classified here are introduced in Chapter 2. A more detailed breakdown of task types for use with texts can be found in Chapter 5, Section 4. Tasks specifically for beginners and young learners can be found in Chapter 8, Sections 2 and 5. Meta-communicative tasks, i.e. tasks that focus on language itself, are termed 'language analysis activities' in this book and are illustrated in Chapter 7.

1 Listing

Outcome	Completed list or draft mind map (see Focus 5).
Processes	Brainstorming, fact-finding
Starting points	Words, things, qualities, people, places, actions, job-related skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • international English words, e.g. in sport, in pop songs • things found in particular places, e.g. in the kitchen, on the beach • everyday things, e.g. that you carry with you or that you often forget or lose • qualities looked for in a product, e.g. a good pen, a stereo system • qualities needed for particular jobs, e.g. teaching, being prime minister • personal characteristics, e.g. of a TV celebrity, an astronaut • features of a place, e.g. a holiday resort, a language school, a sports complex • things you do to, e.g. prevent crime, plan a party, move house • ways of doing things, e.g. remembering new words, cooking rice, saving money • common questions, e.g. that guests ask hotel reception staff, that tourists ask tourist guides
Follow-up tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory challenge games (lists and sources can be hidden and students asked to recall as many items as possible in a specified time). • Ordering and sorting tasks (type 2) and comparing tasks (type 3) can be based on lists that students have made.

From: A Framework for Task-Based Learning
By: Jane Willis. Published by: Longman, 1996

2 Ordering and sorting

Outcome Set of information or data that has been ordered and sorted according to specified criteria

Processes:	Starting points	Sample tasks	Follow-up tasks
<p>Sequencing</p> <p>Jumbled lists/sets of instructions/texts/news reports</p>	<p>Ranking</p> <p>Personal experience of methods/things/features that can be sorted according to specific criteria/personal values</p>	<p>Put the days of the week into the correct order.</p> <p>Order the instructions for making an international phone call/the steps for doing a magic trick.</p> <p>Rewrite this news report putting the events into chronological order.</p>	<p>'Spot the missing item' – Students remove one item from a sequence, and read the list out for other pairs to spot it.</p>
<p>Categorising</p> <p>Headings/half-completed tables/charts followed by sets of statements, data from various sources</p>	<p>Agree on the best ways to learn a new language/travel between two places/pass a driving test.</p> <p>Rank these items in order of importance/interest/usefulness/value for money.</p>	<p>Group the statements under these headings: agree, disagree, undecided.</p> <p>Complete this chart/table with information from the text.</p>	<p>Students justify their decisions to the class, or give an oral presentation of their completed table or a section of it.</p>
<p>Classifying</p> <p>Everyday things or events, lists of items, words</p>	<p>How many ways can you find to classify the food you eat daily/the things you do at home/the things you read regularly/the countries in this list? Think of five ways to classify the clothes you wear/the animals in the picture.</p>	<p>Group the statements under these headings: find to classify the food you eat daily/the things you do at home/the things you read regularly/the countries in this list? Think of five ways to classify the clothes you wear/the animals in the picture.</p>	<p>'Odd one out' – Students make up sets of four or five similar items and add one that doesn't match. They exchange sets and see if other pairs can spot it.</p>

3 Comparing

Outcomes Vary according to the individual task goals, but could be the items appropriately matched or assembled, or the identification of similarities and/or differences.

Processes	Starting points	Sample tasks
<p>Matching</p> <p>Information from two different types of source (e.g. visuals and text) that can be matched in order to identify someone or something</p>	<p>Descriptions</p> <p>Listen to / read these descriptions of different people / places and identify which person / place is which.</p> <p>Narrative accounts</p> <p>Read / listen to these accounts, e.g. of a car accident, and say which of the four diagrams most accurately portrays what happened.</p> <p>Following instructions</p> <p>Match this text to the map or diagrams, e.g. to trace a route on a map, to complete a floor plan of a house, to assemble a model.</p>	<p>Compare, e.g. two characters in a TV series, reports of the same event from different newspapers.</p> <p>Compare your own version with the official or original version, e.g. compare your story ending with the original story, your solution with the one in the text.</p> <p>Compare ways of doing things in different towns or countries, e.g. funding the arts, making coffee, cooking rice.</p>
<p>Finding similarities</p> <p>Two or more sets of information on a common theme (from personal experience / visuals / texts) that can be compared to find similarities</p>	<p>Spot the differences, e.g. between two pictures, two story endings, two accounts of the same incident.</p> <p>Jigsaw viewing, e.g. contrast a film/video sequence with a written account containing factual errors. Half the class see the video, half read the text, then they come together to identify the factual errors.</p> <p>Contrast systems, e.g. of education in different countries, of lending libraries.</p>	<p>Findings differences</p> <p>Two or more sets of information on a common theme (from personal experience / visuals / texts) that can be contrasted to find differences</p>

Follow-up tasks

Students design parallel tasks based on their own data, or make their own changes to the original data

- e.g. after finding similarities in news reports, students bring in other current newspapers with parallel news items.
- e.g. after finding differences between pictures, students change three things in their picture, rewrite the text including different factual errors or three additions and play 'Spot the differences'.

4 Problem solving

Outcome Solution(s) to the problem, which can then be evaluated

Processes Analysing real or hypothetical situations, reasoning and decision making

Starting points

Short puzzles, logic problems

Real-life problems, personal experience, hypothetical issues

Sample tasks

- Cutting the cake
What is the minimum number of straight cuts you must make to divide a round cake into eight equal pieces?
- Crossing the river
An old lady wants to cross the river with a wolf, a goat, and a cabbage. She only has a small boat and can only take two things at a time with her. How does she do it?

- What advice would you give in response to this letter from an advice column?
Decide on the best two places – cheap but safe – for a young person travelling alone to stay in your capital city.
- Plan a dinner menu for overseas guests within a given fixed budget. (Other constraints, such as diet, can be added later to increase the challenge.)

Incomplete stories/poems/reports; visuals/snippets of audio or video recordings; concealed pictures, clue words for prediction and guessing games

Case studies with full background data, business and computer simulations

- Make up your own version of the missing section/ending of the story/report. Work out a possible story-line from these clue words/phrases/pictures/audio/video snippets. Fill the gaps in this text with appropriate phrases. Guess what's in this (covered up) picture/ (closed) bag.
- Aid for development (Offenders' family backgrounds to be initially withheld.)
Decide on three appropriate ways for your company/country to give aid to this developing country.
- Product testing
Play and report back on computer simulation games.

Follow-up tasks

Students do a comparing task, presenting, justifying and discussing their solutions for the class to vote on the best one(s).

5 Sharing personal experiences

Outcome Largely social and far less tangible than with other tasks. Sharing personal experiences is something we do very often in daily life: we may simply be passing the time of day, being sociable or entertaining or hoping to get to know others better. This kind of casual social talk can happen naturally during other task types and, because it is so common outside the classroom, should be encouraged.

Processes

Narrating, describing, exploring and explaining attitudes, opinions, reactions

Starting points

Anecdotes:

- on given themes, e.g. terrible journeys, silly accidents.
- about people, e.g. eccentric friends or relations, funny things done by children you know.
- about things you own(ed), e.g. a favourite toy, old shoes, memorable presents.

Personal reminiscences:

- about past routines and experiences, e.g. early school days, traditional festivals and celebrations, friends you used to spend time with.
- about single events you remember most clearly, e.g. moving house, visiting elderly relations, times of political/financial crisis.
- about past regrets, e.g. three things you most regret doing/not doing.

Attitudes, opinions, preferences:

- Find out what others think about films or TV programmes, personalities, current concerns and/or professional issues.
- Talk about your preferences and find people with similar ones, e.g. in leisure activities, places to shop, clothes.

Personal reactions:

- to situations, e.g. heights, frightening things, extremes of climate.
- What generally makes you, e.g. most annoyed, very happy, highly stressed, most relaxed.
- Quizzes, e.g. personality ones from quiz books.

Follow-up tasks

- Students select the funniest/most vivid/most memorable experience they have heard, tell the class and give reasons for their choice.
- Students tell another anecdote or personal story but it need not be true. Can the class guess whether it is true?
- Learners identify and summarise the reminiscences/opinions/reactions they found they shared with others.

6 Creative tasks

Outcome

End product which can be appreciated by a wider audience. Creative tasks tend to have more stages than the usual classroom tasks. They can involve out-of-class research and are often referred to as 'projects'.

Processes

Brainstorming, fact-finding, ordering and sorting, comparing, problem solving and many others

Starting points

Children's activities: done in small groups who then describe the process, e.g.

Sample tasks

- make a model, paint a picture, prepare snacks.
- do a science experiment, test and report on makes of colouring pens.
- take part in a dressing-up competition, put on a show for other groups.
- Write a poem, short story, song or play, based on a literary text students have read or arising out of a programme they have seen.
- Write diaries, e.g. for personal use, and/or to be read by the teacher but not by other students.

Follow-up tasks

- Other groups write a review of the end product.
 - Learners keep a diary describing their progress on the project, and what they learned, with an evaluation of their work.
 - Groups make a poster advertising their end product.
- NB: Many other types of task can be adapted for young learners.

- Plan visits to local places, e.g. airport to interview passengers, magazine or newspaper (one-off or regular issue).
- Produce a class magazine or newspaper (one-off or regular issue).
- Set up a display, e.g. on a local or topical issue or exhibition, e.g. of students' photographs.
- Design and write a leaflet, e.g. for visitors to the school or town, or an advert, e.g. for a local product/local product/entertainment.
- Design, produce and record a short programme on audio links, e.g. with twin towns overseas, overseas schools, research areas of interest on World Wide Web.
- Interview and email over three generations, eating/leisure habits play, changes in games they used to e.g. past customs, changes to their lives, inhabitants about Talk/write to older tourism opportunities, investigate local products/processes, tourist office to report on company premises to report on products/processes, e.g. past customs, changes to their lives, or an advert, e.g. for a local product/local product/entertainment.
- Design and write a leaflet, e.g. for visitors to the school or town, or an advert, e.g. for a local product/local product/entertainment.
- Design, produce and record a short programme on audio links, e.g. with twin towns overseas, overseas schools, research areas of interest on World Wide Web.