

Communicative Task Types

Part 1. Below is a list of common communicative tasks often found in EFL books. As you read, note which ones you have done, observed, or read about.

Task type	Example activities
Guessing	<i>Ex. Twenty Questions, Describe and Guess, Mystery puzzles, Guessing card on your back</i>
Categorizing	<i>Ex. Putting words into groups (dangerous/not dangerous), Having Ss create (4) categories of their choice for a group of words, Dividing sentences in types</i>
Ranking	<i>Ex. Most _____ to least _____, Best/worst, (selecting) a winner, Choosing top (3) for _____</i>
Comparing/Making Connections	<i>Ex. Between two unlike objects, Things in common between two students, places, sports, Arguing which is better or more...</i>
Interpreting	<i>Ex. Speculating about a picture or headline, Creating a character based on picture, Imagining what happened before or after an event</i>
Problem Solving	<i>Ex. Dinner party seating plan, Desert Island survival kit, Giving advice</i>
Putting in Order	<i>Ex. Pictures, Sentences</i>
Sharing Personal Information	<i>Ex. Information gaps, Interviews, Secret agenda, Find someone who..., Surveys, Storytelling</i>
Sharing General Information	<i>Ex. What do you know about (your classmates), Trivia/Basic knowledge brainstorming and quizzes.</i>
Creative Project	<i>Ex. Make a brochure, Make/finish a story, Write a poem, Design a (room), Plan a (vacation), Create the perfect _____</i>
Role-play	<i>Ex. Doing an activity in role (reading an article as a detective), Functions (on the phone, at a restaurant), Situations resolving a conflict (neighbors, student/teacher), a role-play between two objects (a pair of scissors and a knife)</i>
Retell	<i>Ex. Read a story, take notes of key words and retell it own words. Retell from pictures</i>
Structured discussion	<i>Ex. Choose discussion questions, Conversation cafe</i>

Part 2. Look at the following tasks related to the topic “Jobs” and write down what type of task it is. You may find that two or more types might overlap.

Task Type	Task description	Comments
1.	Put the list of jobs into four groups. Decide what each group should be called.	
2.	Twenty questions. One student picks a job from the list, but don't tell the other students. The other students should try to guess the job, but can only ask “yes/no” questions.	
3.	Choose two jobs from the list that you'd most enjoy doing and two jobs that you'd least enjoy doing. Discuss your reasons with your partner.	
4.	Put the following sentences in order and explain why. Try changing the order. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>John was fired.</i> • <i>John got depressed</i> • <i>John's boss yelled at him</i> • <i>John started a new job</i> • <i>John started goofing off at work.</i> • <i>John thought about quitting.</i> • <i>Other employees talked about John behind his back.</i> 	
5.	Look at the picture of Susan who is a teacher (not shown here). What do you think happened before this?	
6.	Design the perfect language school. Imagine there are 10 teachers and 300 students. Don't worry about money!	
7.	Talk to your partner and find out what job you think s/he would like the most, but you can't ask them directly.	
8.	Maria is a 22 year old student from Brazil studying English in San Francisco. She can't speak English very well and needs to get a job. She's worried about finding something that lets her be creative. Give her some ideas.	
9.	Choose two jobs and find similarities between them. <i>Doctor, teacher, lawyer, delivery driver, computer programmer, factory worker, hair stylist, salesperson</i>	
10	A. You've been working at a hotel a long time and feel you deserve a raise. You have been doing a great job and are thinking about changing jobs. Talk to your boss. B. You're the manager and one of your employees is coming to talk to you. You think s/he is doing great and don't want to lose him/her. However, you don't have money to give a raise. Try to keep him/her.	
11	Brainstorm together in groups as much as you know about what a person needs to do to become a (different jobs). For example, what training does a doctor require.	
12.	Read the following Aesop's fable (ex. The Ant and the Grasshopper). Note five key words and put the story away. Now change partners, tell them your story and listen to theirs. You can look at your key words.	

Part 3:

Choose one topic and brainstorm different communicative tasks you could have your students do.

Ex. Travel, Family, Health, Current events, Politics, Money, etc

Part 4: Reflection questions

Which task types were new to you? What ideas for tasks did you get?

How can doing these types of communicative tasks help your learners? How can they help you teach?

What questions or issues related to communicative tasks are you thinking about?

Which tasks are you interested in trying with your students? How might you use them in a lesson?