

ETpedia

Materials Writing

500 ideas for creating
English language materials

Authors:
Lindsay Clandfield
and John Hughes

10
Years of
ETpedia

2024 marks the 10-year anniversary of the launch of *ETpedia*! In that time, 6500 practical tips and ideas have been shared across 12 different titles. Each title in the *ETpedia* series is divided into units containing 10 bite-sized tips and ideas to give you real practical help with planning and preparing for your lessons. To celebrate the 10-year anniversary, we are sharing 10 collections of ideas across 2024!

Here, you can explore 10 practical ideas from *ETpedia Materials Writing*, which aims to support and aid writers, teachers and students in creating English materials in one complete reference guide. Enjoy 10 ideas from across the book below!

10 Ideas

Unit: **10** types of gap-fill questions in texts

Idea 3. Words in brackets

This type of exercise is especially useful when you want the students to practise making tense changes or changes to the form of a word (eg adjective to noun).

Write the verbs in brackets in the passive form.

It is (1)_____ (say) that democracy began in Ancient Greece where people first had the right to vote on how they were (2)_____ (govern). In fact, only certain men were (3)_____ (allow) to vote but, after the Greeks, other civilisations also developed their own forms of democracy.

Answers: (1) said, (2) governed, (3) allowed

Unit: 10 types of categorisation exercise

Idea 9. Students decide

Put the words into three groups. You decide the groups. Be prepared to explain your answers.

carrot mushroom bean tomato coffee onion orange milk juice

Possible answer: vegetables, fruit, drinks

Unit: 10 tips on writing and recording your listening dialogues

Idea 7. Add filler sounds and filler words

Sounds like ummm, errr and uhhh are very common in real speech. They are sometimes called 'hesitation devices', as they give the speaker time to think. We also use discourse markers like *so*, *anyway* and *well* a lot in spoken English. If you are writing a dialogue for levels above beginner, sprinkle some of these into your dialogue. Even very low-level students could benefit from hearing one or two. See how the original dialogue above is enhanced by these filler words and sounds.

Mary: Hello, umm, are you John?

John: Yes, I am. Are you Susan?

Mary: Er, no. No, I'm not. I'm Mary. Susan is at the ... er ... office.

Unit: 10 exercises for practising writing subskills

Idea: 4. Topic sentences and supporting sentences

Showing students how to structure an individual paragraph is also important, especially if they have to write for examinations such as the Cambridge First, the Cambridge Advanced or IELTS. To introduce this idea, a re-ordering exercise like this one is helpful:

Read four sentences from a paragraph and number them in the correct order (from 1 to 4) with the topic sentence first and then the three supporting sentences.

- a) *In addition, employers can reduce the cost of office space.* ____
- b) *In the last decade, the internet and digital communication have had a major impact on the way we work.* ____
- c) *For example, many employees are able to work remotely: they don't always need to go to an office but can log on from home.* ____
- d) *This allows greater flexibility for the employee and reduces the amount of time spent travelling.* ____

Answer: 1b), 2c), 3d), 4a)

Unit: 10 tips on writing effective rubrics

Idea: 2. One action per sentence

As a general rule, each sentence of your rubric should include one action – at least, no more than two. So 'Work in pairs' is one action. 'Work in pairs and ask each the questions below' is safe because both actions are simple. However, a rubric like 'Work in pairs, ask each other the questions below and try to use all the words in the previous exercise' suddenly becomes confusing.

Unit: 10 tips for creating board games

Idea: 2. The snakes and ladders board

Instead of a basic board, this time create a grid of squares. As in the children's game snakes and ladders, include snakes (the head on one square and the end of the tail on another square lower down) and ladders (joining a lower square with a higher square). Then add different tasks to various squares on the board. As in the game above, the students move around the board and do the task they land on. If the player lands at the bottom of a ladder, they go up to the top and do the task. If they land on a snake's head, they go down to the tail and do the task there. You can find an example of a snakes and ladders board in Appendix 34.2 on pages 172–173.

How to play

Toss a coin to move around the board.

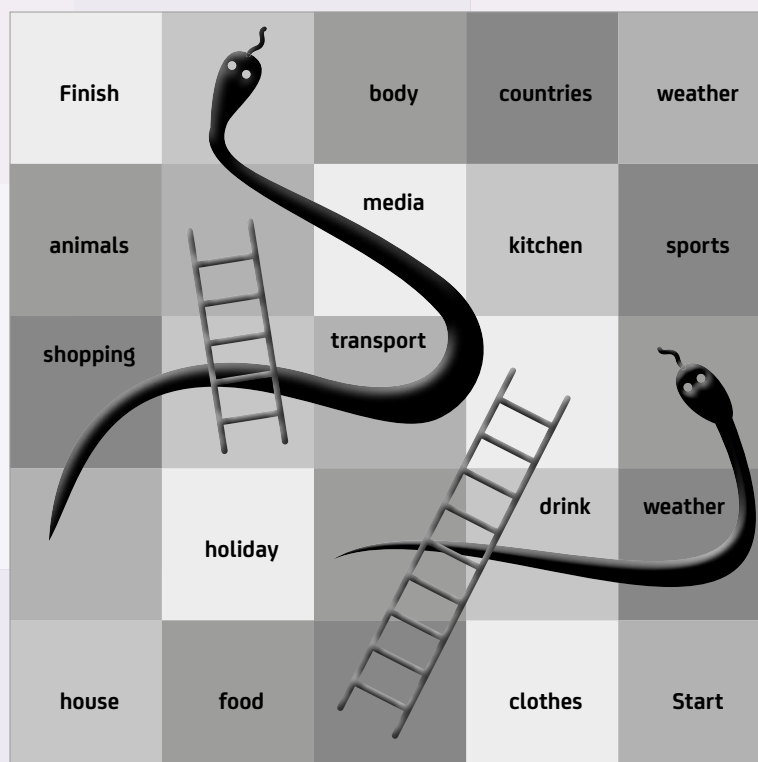
Heads: go forward 1 space.

Tails: go forward 2 spaces.

If you land on a ladder, go up the ladder.

If you land on a snake, go down the snake.

If you land on a category, say five words in that category.



You can find a full A4 version of these cards at the end of this sample, to print and use.

Unit: **10** tips and ideas for writing video lesson materials

Idea: 7. Watch only

For the first while-watching activity, you can prepare a series of questions that the students first try to answer while watching the video with the sound turned off.

For more dramatic clips, this could include speculating about what the characters said (especially if this has caused a strong reaction in another character). This is a type of gist-prediction type exercise, so your rubric could be something like this:

Watch the video with the sound off. How do you think the two people feel? What is their relationship to each other?

Unit: **10** tips on test writing

Idea: 5. Avoid complicated rubrics

As with writing language exercises, your rubrics for test questions should be very clear. Keep them to one clause, one verb per line. A rubric such as 'Choose the most appropriate tense to complete the gap, using a verb from Exercise 3 above' is far too difficult, whereas 'Complete the gaps using the verbs in the box' is fairly straightforward. For more on rubric writing, see Units 29 and 30.

Unit: **10** tips on writing language reference material

Tip from Jon Hird, coursebook and grammar book author

"When writing language reference material, it is important to remember that it is often not possible to give a full explanation of the use of certain language items. Decide what are the most appropriate and useful uses and constructions for the learners you're writing for, and explain these as simply and as clearly as you can. At the same time, make sure that you don't oversimplify and overgeneralise as this could confuse when the learners come across other uses of the language item. Use phrases such as is generally used, is commonly used, can sometimes be used, is used in three basic ways, and so on to show that other uses are possible."

Jon Hird, coursebook and grammar book author

Unit: 10 questions on copyright and permissions for materials writers

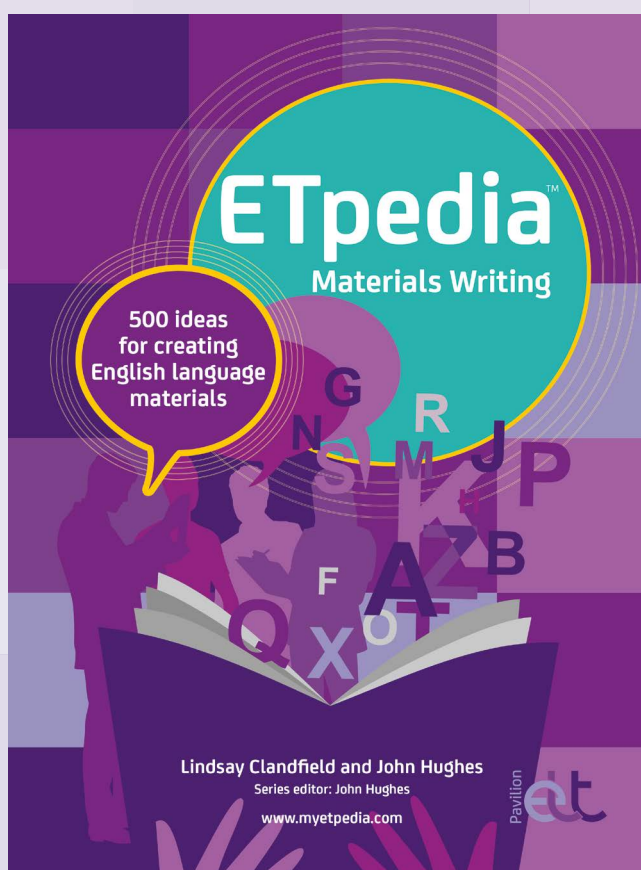
Idea: 8. Can I use an online video?

Showing an online video from a site like YouTube in class may or may not be legal. Even if you are showing it for educational purposes and don't intend on making money from it in any way, you need the video-maker's permission (which might be indicated somewhere with the video). In general, videos with adverts or well-known sites like TEDtalks.com are OK to use in your lessons so you can make worksheets to go with them. For more information, the ELT materials writer and video maker Vicki Hollett provides some detail on the legalities of showing videos at <http://www.vickihollett.com/can-i-legally-show-this-video-to-my-class/>. Again, remember that making your own video content has never been easier, so it might be worth creating your own video instead of using other people's. Note again the issue of people's privacy when filming. (See question 1.)

As part of the celebrations, we also have some fantastic offers for you throughout 2024!

Get your copy of *ETpedia Materials Writing* for just **£26 (£36.95)**, throughout April!

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30%



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Unit 34.2: Snakes and ladders board game

How to play

Toss a coin to move around the board.

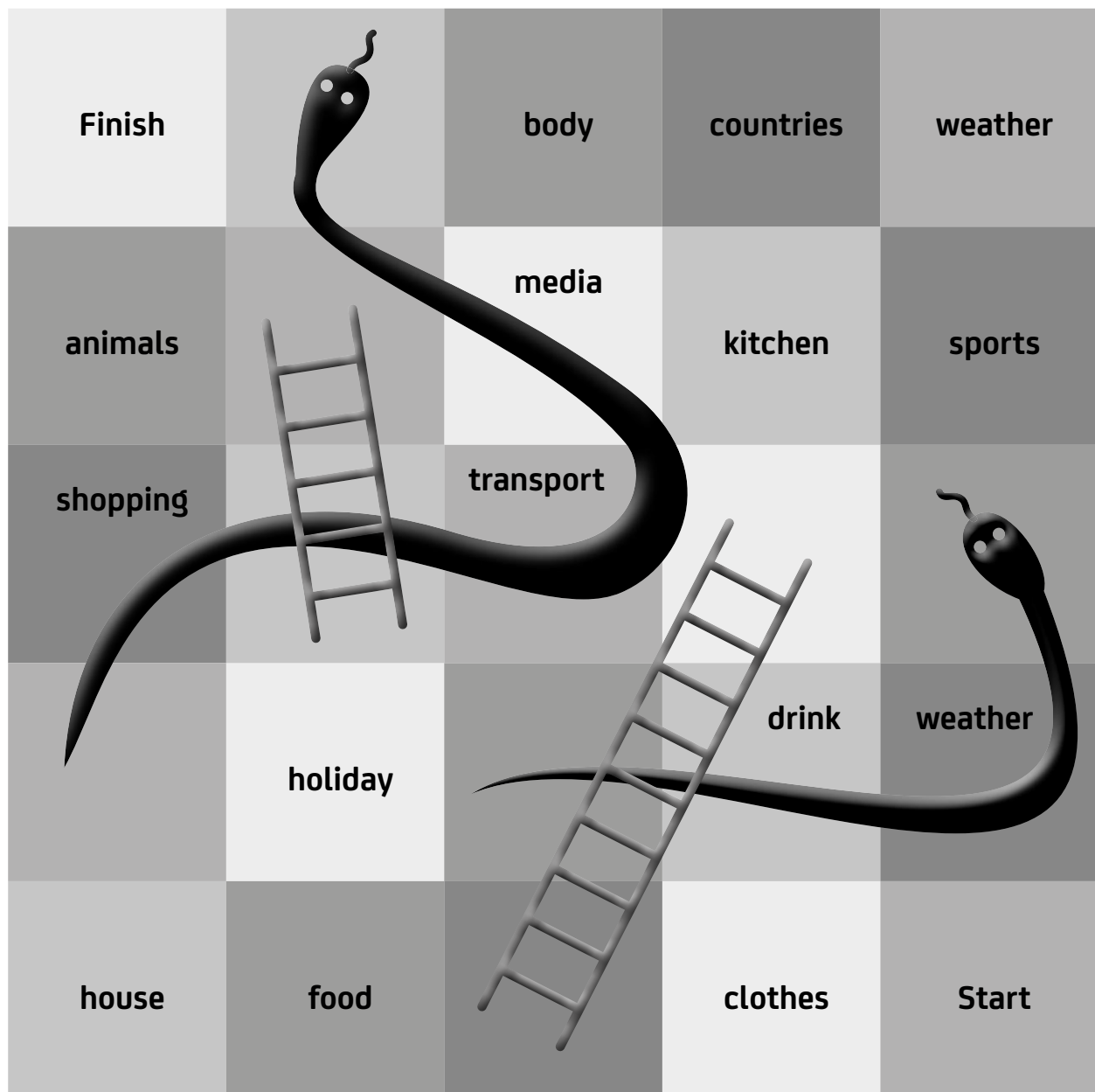
Heads: go forward 1 space.

Tails: go forward 2 spaces.

If you land on a ladder, go up the ladder.

If you land on a snake, go down the snake.

If you land on a category, say five words in that category.



Unit 34.2: Blank Snakes and ladders board game

How to play

Toss a coin to move around the board.

Heads: go forward 1 space.

Tails: go forward 2 spaces.

If you land on a ladder, go up the ladder.

If you land on a snake, go down the snake.

