

Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue

4.3 Making gaps

LEVEL	Intermediate and above
AIMS	To create student-generated cloze tests
TIME	25 minutes
PREPARATION	Find two authentic tests of around 200–250 words (they could be longer for higher levels or shorter for lower ones, but they must be complete). Look for easy-to-read newspaper or magazine articles on topics of interest to students, possibly in coursebooks. Make sets of copies of both texts.
PROCEDURE	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Work through cloze exercises in the students' books that they have already done, getting the class to comment on the parts of speech most often required. In many cases these are prepositions, verb forms, and linking words. Choose a few examples and elicit the contextual clues that guide the reader to the right answers.2 Students work in pairs with the texts you have prepared. Give Student A two copies of one test and Student B two copies of the other.3 For homework, they blank or cut out 10, 15, or 20 words (the number depends on their level and experience with this activity)—particularly the kinds mentioned in stage 2—from one of the copies.4 Students swap their gapped texts with each other and fill in as many gaps as they can.5 They mark each other's work using the copy of the original, checking alternative answers with you.
COMMENTS	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Explain to the class that designing cloze tests for each other is the best possible way of gaining an insight into how these exercises work. Point out that what is being tested is the ability to use the whole text for clues, not just the words next to the gaps.2 The words chosen can provide you with useful feedback on what learners themselves regard as difficult. For example if they repeatedly delete <i>could</i>, <i>should</i>, and <i>may</i>, it might indicate that remedial work on modals is needed.

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