Expressing yourself: ways of suggesting something

Overview: In this lesson, learners review, consolidate and practise ways of making and reporting suggestions.

Total time for activities: 45 minutes
Level: upper intermediate to advanced

1. Before class, cut up the Student’s Copy so that you have four individual worksheets for each learner.

2. On the board, display this sentence:
   I can’t make this new printer work.
   and these words, jumbled randomly in a word pool:
   how about plugged in try always could
   why if plugging don’t not may I
   what plug it you could can suggest

3. Ask learners, individually or in pairs, using the words in the word pool – and no other words – to write down as many suggestions as they can in response to ‘I can’t make this new printer work’. (You could make this into a competition, if you think it will appeal to your class.)

4. Elicit possible answers in class. Correct and clarify as necessary. Distribute Worksheet A and give learners a few moments to read through it and ask any questions they may have.

5. Draw learners’ attention to ‘Plug it in’. How does it differ from the other sentences?
   Answer
   It can be a suggestion, especially if ‘perhaps’ is added at the end and it is said with a rising intonation, but it can also be an instruction. All the other sentences are suggestions (ideas or plans that you offer for someone to consider).

6. Ask learners, working in pairs or individually, to make a list of people and scenarios where these sentences can be used, e.g.
   ► two co-workers in an office
   ► customer and customer service representative in a phone conversation
   ► two teachers in the staff room
   ► brother and sister at home

7. Get learners to act out some of these scenarios in pairs using tone of voice to convey attitude, e.g.
   Brother: I can’t make this new printer work.
   Sister (sounding a bit condescending): I suggest you try plugging it in.

8. Distribute Worksheet B. Ask learners to think, individually, of some possible solutions to the problems. They could also add any other problems they face, or have faced, in learning English.
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9. If feasible, ask learners to stand up so that they can circulate easily. Divide them into two equal groups. Each member of group 1 chooses one of the problems from Worksheet B and tries to get suggestions from each member of group 2 in turn. (Alternatively, if they prefer, they can ask for suggestions for different problems from different members of group 2.) The learners in group 2 reply with advice, using as many different sentence patterns from Worksheet A as they can. The group 1 members finish each encounter by responding to the suggestion they have been given – e.g.

   Thanks, that’s a good idea.
   Hmm, I’m not sure. I might try it.
   I’ve tried that already, and it didn’t work, I’m afraid.

10. Repeat the activity with roles reversed: group 2 state their problems and group 1 make suggestions.

11. Distribute Worksheet C. Learners identify and delete the incorrect sentences.

   **Answers**
   
   Sentences 1, 2, 4 and 7 are incorrect.


13. Learners report on the suggestions they were given in the previous activity – maybe the best suggestions, or the most useless suggestions – e.g. ‘Jan suggested I should get up an hour earlier every day and study English’. Prompt them to correct any mistakes they make in using the grammar patterns with ‘suggest’.

**Follow-up**

► In subsequent lessons, ask the class for suggestions in response to any problems you are willing to share with them – these don’t have to be very serious problems!
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Worksheet A

Making suggestions
► Plug it in.
► Why not plug it in?
► How about plugging it in?
► What about plugging it in?
► Why don’t you plug it in?
► Why don’t you try plugging it in?
► You could always plug it in.
► You could always try plugging it in.
► I suggest you try plugging it in.
► Can I suggest you plug it in?
► What if you plugged it in?

Worksheet B

Think of possible solutions to the problems.
► I never seem to have any time to work on my English between lessons.
► I’d like to read novels in English, but when I try I find them quite difficult and I get easily discouraged.
► When I watch films in English I find it hard to understand the dialogue without relying on the subtitles.
► Sometimes when I look words up in the dictionary I feel overwhelmed by all the different meanings and uses that are listed.
► My teacher told me I should try to think in English, but I’ve no idea how to do that.
► When the phone rings unexpectedly and I have to answer in English, my English collapses and I can hardly say anything at all.

Worksheet C

Cross out the incorrect sentences in the list of reported suggestions.
1. She suggested to plug it in.
2. She suggested me to plug it in.
3. She suggested plugging it in.
4. She suggested me plugging it in.
5. She suggested that I should plug it in.
6. She suggested I should plug it in.
7. She made suggestion that I should plug it in.
8. She made the suggestion that I should plug it in.

Worksheet D

Reporting suggestions – answer key
1. She suggested to plug it in.
2. She suggested me to plug it in.
3. She suggested plugging it in.
4. She suggested me plugging it in.
5. She suggested that I should plug it in.
6. She suggested I should plug it in.
7. She made suggestion that I should plug it in.
8. She made the suggestion that I should plug it in.