

A Letter to Colleagues & Allies

DEAR LANGUAGE-LEARNING SPECIALISTS & FRIENDS:

We all know that photocopying pages to hand out is time-consuming, expensive, and sometimes illegal! Yet eager instructors and learners usually want to *supplement* prescribed lessons--perhaps to adapt a one-level text to a multi-leveled group, to provide reinforcement and additional practice (in a different form) of text material, to offer the variety and challenge of a change of pace, or to facilitate more student-centered activity. There are always better and better reasons to take the trouble to “go beyond the ordinary.”

Presented and monitored with confidence and energy, the 26 ideas offered in **STILL DOING WITHOUT THE PHOTOCOPIER** *still* work just about all the time! As a totality, they are appropriate for a teacher-training course in materials development and use. Even relatively untrained or inexperienced language teachers, if they are motivated and enthusiastic, can succeed in the classroom by following these suggestions. As proof, witness the abilities of the author’s husband, social worker by profession, when asked to step in and contribute his talents to training, teaching, assisting, and/or networking situations.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SAVE TIME, MONEY, AND ENERGY?

Because I wanted to supplement the textbooks students had purchased without violating copyrights, I began creating materials in reusable-set form. Soon I found that I was not only reducing our department's photocopying bills but that I was also saving myself and others a considerable amount of time in lesson preparation—and in remembering how to do what worked in the past. Once an activity had been created and class tested, it could be reused

- ⇒ in the same class or group in another session or on another day
- ⇒ in another section of the same course or program
- ⇒ in the same learning sequence or lessons in another term, and/or
- ⇒ to supplement a related training plan or curriculum.

DO YOU NEED IDEAS FOR A VARIETY OF (SELF-) TEACHING SITUATIONS?

The ideas in this ***STILL DOING WITHOUT THE PHOTOCOPIER AA TO ZZ How-to Resource Book*** are abundantly inventive and flexible in their application to language ed and improvement--ESL (*English as a Second Language*), ENL (*English as a Native Language*), *Basic Skills, Developmental Communications*, language arts, foreign languages, and related areas. When used with native speakers, various concepts may be suitable to the *K through 12* environment as well as adult-school and community-college classrooms. If second-language learners are involved, only some ideas will work in elementary schools, but the others are suitable for secondary, adult, college, and university courses and programs beyond pre-literacy stages. They are also relevant in *Workforce Development*.

Initially, instructors, helpers, or students schooled in—or insistent on—traditional teacher-centered lecture-and-test methodologies may resist involvement in the creation or application of the styles of reusable materials/ methods suggested in this book. As soon as they experience success with *materials and activities that work*, however, they are likely to become converts to the principles and practices of inspired, involving and engaging, cooperative and learner-centered language education.

Whereas the suggested activities in many idea books for instructors and trainers are designed for *one single* purpose only--to teach a specific grammar point, a particular list of vocabulary items, a learning principle, or the like--the ideas in ***STILL DOING WITHOUT THE PHOTOCOPIER*** are much broader. Each set of principles and procedures is meant to serve as a teacher-training or self-training *concept*. For clarity, the examples for each series of instructions are based on a specific context, but the suggestions for adaptation to different levels of language proficiency, the possible variations, and the list of other areas of application are designed to stimulate your creative juices. As you try your own version of each activity, you'll learn a lot about language development and progress. You, your helpers, and your students will evolve group and individual techniques that work optimally in your unique situation(s).



DO YOU FOCUS ON SEPARATE SKILLS IMPROVEMENT IN YOUR (SELF-) TEACHING AND LEARNING?

For the sake of organization, the twenty-six ideas (from AA to ZZ) in ***STILL DOING WITHOUT THE PHOTOCOPIER*** are divided into six areas of focus:

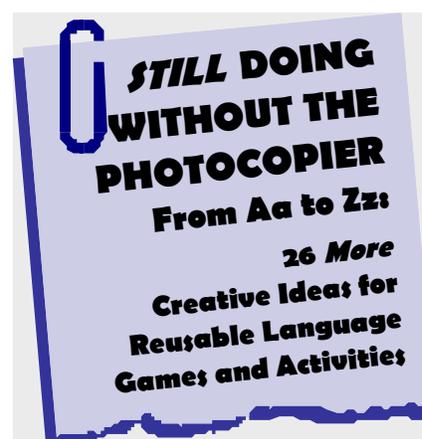
- ⇒ **SPELLING & PRONUNCIATION: IDEAS AA - DD**
- ⇒ **VOCABULARY: IDEAS EE - II**
- ⇒ **GRAMMAR (SENTENCE STRUCTURE) & PHRASING: IDEAS JJ - MM**
- ⇒ **ORAL LANGUAGE (LISTENING & SPEAKING): IDEAS NN - QQ**
- ⇒ **WRITTEN LANGUAGE (READING & WRITING): IDEAS RR - UU**
- ⇒ **INTEGRATED LANGUAGE SKILLS (MULTIMEDIA METHODS): IDEAS VV - ZZ**

If any of your courses or sessions are designed to address just one or two language skills (such as *Listening & Speaking* only), first try the concepts that *focus* on those areas (e.g., **IDEAS NN to QQ** for an *Oral Skills Curriculum*), omitting the non-essential steps that divert attention to less relevant intents. Other ideas will be useful in the same courses if you adapt some of the steps. For example, you could substitute *oral presentations* for *composition writing*.

DO YOU USE AN INTEGRATED LANGUAGE-SKILLS APPROACH?

Most extended language sessions, of course, involve abilities and/or content beyond the identified language-focus area. For instance, grammar activities like **IDEA JJ: GRAMMAR VIDEO-WRITING** include *listening/speaking* and *reading* steps. **IDEA SS: INSTANT READING KIT** begins with *writing* activity and ends with *oral skills* follow-up. And all the ideas with a *skills focus* expect students to use effective *grammar, vocabulary, and other language elements*.

The purpose of the organization of ideas into six categories is to provide a reference point for your choice of lessons, games, or activities. Keep in mind, though, that nearly all 26 concepts (especially those under "Vocabulary Building," "Content," and "Culture") offer opportunities for students to practice any or all of the four language skills--*reading, writing, listening, and speaking*.



Can You Facilitate Student-Centered Learning Effectively?

Every idea in *STILL DOING WITHOUT THE PHOTOCOPIER AA TO ZZ* calls for active participation at each stage of preparation, procedure, and follow-up. After getting ready, setting up, and demonstrating each step, you'll be free to *facilitate* the activity, giving individual attention to those taking part—as they use whatever know-how they are capable of. You can observe and learn from their interaction. The pressure is off. You will rarely be called on to “perform” before a large (and passive) audience at different stages of ability, of varied needs, and with diverse interests. Best of all, because everyone is involved simultaneously in the active process of learning and improving, the tedium factor disappears. Gradually, participants learn to help one another. They begin to take responsibility for their own—and others'—achievement.

Are You Ready to Go Beyond the Ideas in DOING WITHOUT THE PHOTOCOPIER?

Decades ago, when I finished writing *DOING WITHOUT THE PHOTOCOPIER A TO Z*, I assumed (mistakenly) that I'd never have to think of any more ingenious, all-encompassing, flexible, almost “perfect” ideas. I thought that the 26 concepts would suffice for the rest of my (and my colleagues') teaching careers—and beyond to teacher-training workshops in the 21st century.

Twenty years after that, this second volume, *STILL DOING WITHOUT THE PHOTOCOPIER: FROM AA TO ZZ*, began to address changes in language and other formalized education—shrinking budgets for classes, materials, and curriculum; in-fights and competition for money and enrollment numbers; accessibility and upkeep of state-of-the-art equipment and technology; needs of “motivated students” or “just folks” for efficient and effective training that doesn't waste time or money; talented faculty's right for more control over real-life objectives and procedures; and so on. Of course, since then the world of (*self-*)*instruction, communication, practical competencies, and life proficiency* has been changing quickly and radically. Yet with a minimum of tweaking, these 26 ideas are still significant to the future of human-brain and character development for success in work and life in our world. Again, I hope we've helped. Again, we invite your reactions, comments, and ideas.

E.K.-R. Culver City, California



The author with her husband, Arthur E. Rubin, who's finally getting into this creative language stuff. Both partners in *Authors & Editors* wear many hats.

SKILLS FOCUS: SPELLING & PRONUNCIATION

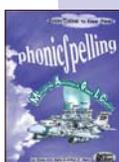
Though rarely the goal or culmination of language-acquisition instruction or improvement, word-level lessons in spelling and pronunciation are a good starting point. They can also be a welcome relief from more complex skills activities—lessons that require listening or reading comprehension or oral or written language production. The following generic concepts in this *STILL DOING WITHOUT THE PHOTOCOPIER How-to Resource Book* focus on letters and sounds in words, phonics patterns and spelling rules, and/or sound production in context:

- IDEA AA: **Flash Points**
- IDEA BB: **Lots of Lotto**
- IDEA CC: **Alphabet Answers**
- IDEA DD: **Letter Links**

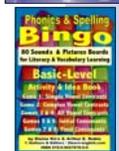
Would you like more suggestions for the effective teaching and/or learning of language at the word level? The following sections in the *DOING WITHOUT THE PHOTOCOPIER How-to Resource Book* (ISBN 978-0-9627878-4-3) also address spelling and pronunciation:

- IDEA A: **Phonics Bingo**
- IDEA B: **Phonics Pictures**
- IDEA C: **Dyad Spelling**
- IDEA D: **Spelling Grids**

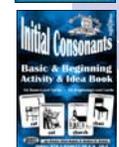
And so do these other Authors & Editors titles, among many others:



- **phonics|spelling: EVERYTHING to Know (Now) about Teaching & Learning Phonics & Spelling Instruction How-to Resource Book.** ISBN 978-1-934637-37-1



- **Phonics & Spelling Bingo: Four Levels of Pronunciation/Spelling Board Games + 4 Activity & Idea Books.** ISBNs 978-0-9627878-5-0 (6-7, 7-4, 8-1)



- **Initial Consonants: Basic, Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced Card Packs + Activity & Idea Books,** ISBN 978-1-934637-38-8 & -39-5; -40-1 & 41-8

- **Rhyming Words Card Decks A-L, with 3 Activity & Idea Books (Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced)** ISBNs 978-1-891077-18-0, -21-0, -23-4



- **Vowel Sounds & Spellings Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced Card Packs with 90-Page Activity & Idea Book** ISBNs 978-1-934637-21-0



- **Phonics & Spelling Workbooks, Basic & Practical.** ISBNs 978-1-891077-87-6 and 978-1-891077-87-6 + Audiotapes + Teachers' Guides



PUT IT IN CONTEXT

No section of generic ideas focusing on vocabulary would be complete without suggestions for ways to learn items in context. Of necessity, efficient, effective learning requires the ability to figure out approximate meaning and use of new or difficult words and phrases from the language that surrounds it in the same phrase, sentence, or paragraph. Similarly, in their own speech and writing, learners need to be able to choose appropriate items for the context.

- ⇒ **SPECIFIC TOPIC OF THESE INSTRUCTIONS:** Selections from reading-skills textbooks that provide various context clues to the meanings of vocabulary items
- ⇒ **LANGUAGE LEARNING & PROFICIENCY LEVEL:** High Beginning Through Advanced
- ⇒ **MATERIALS:** For each individual or pair, at least one reading selection, at or slightly above learners' language-proficiency level, with a number of *new, interesting, and/or difficult* vocabulary items underlined. Possibly, cards with the *definitions* of those items as they're used in that context. An identical reading selection with blanks replacing the targeted items

To learn to "put it in context," each person or pair needs a reading selection with highlighted vocabulary items, the same selection with blanks replacing the items, and (perhaps) definition cards.

A. COLLEGE LIFE
Many native and 1nonnative students go to 2community, junior, or 3technical colleges. All fifty states of the United States and the 4provinces of Canada have these schools. Some students get a community college 5certificate or 6degree after only two years of study. Many of these are in practical subjects like 7accounting, business,

A. COLLEGE LIFE
Many native and 1_____ students go to 2_____, junior, or 3_____ colleges. All fifty states of the United States and the 4_____ of Canada have these schools. Some students get a community college 5_____ or 6_____ after only two years of study. Many of these are in practical subjects like 7_____, business,

INSTRUCTIONS: *Teaching & Learning Vocabulary from Context*

1. **CREATING “GUESSING MEANING FROM CONTEXT” MATERIALS.** To create reusable class materials for the *vocabulary strategy* of “guessing meaning from context,” on equally-sized pieces of card stock paste up or print short reading selections. The chosen readings should be comparable in length and reading difficulty. In each, include and highlight (**bold**, underline, circle, etc.) the same number of unfamiliar vocab items, perhaps five to fifteen. These should be words and/or phrases not only worth learning but also important to the main point(s) of the reading. They should appear among helpful context clues to meaning. Provide a *title* (+ number?) with which to refer to the material.

(Self-
Teaching
Tips:
Source
Materials
for
Vocabulary
Practice in
Guessing
Meaning
from
Context

Any reading material slightly above learners' reading comprehension level should be useful in practicing “guessing meaning from context.” That's is because the text is likely to contain some—but not *too many*—vocabulary items that have not yet integrated into their active vocabulary banks (the store of words that they use appropriately in their own speaking or writing). Selections should be of particular interest to students. Perhaps they can all be on the same general subject or topic—so that the vocabulary in a set of readings will tend to repeat itself, recycle, and/or give clues to other words in the context.

The selections in most reading-skills textbooks, especially those written for beginning to intermediate students of *English as a second language*, are often designed for “natural” vocabulary development. The new or challenging items may be *highlighted* and *defined* in the margin. Readings may contain “context clues” (“hints”) of various kinds (meaning *explanations*, *appositives*, *synonyms*, *opposites*, *examples*, *punctuation*, etc.) for unfamiliar words and phrases, which students can use to develop their ability to figure out word meaning.

The sample reading-selection excerpts that appear in IDEA II are adapted from *Interactions One: a Reading Skills Book* (McGraw Hill, 1996). To make use of such materials for *reusable class learning “kits”* without violating copyright laws, you can cut up one or more purchased copies of the texts and paste up the relevant readings on paper, index cards, or card stock.

2. **CREATING DEFINITION CARDS.** Optionally, especially when students are novices in *guessing meaning from context*, it might help to supply *definition cards* to match the highlighted vocabulary items of each selection. On each card, be sure to print (out) an explanation of meaning that corresponds clearly and concisely to the way in which *that* item is used in *that* reading context.

UNCOUNTABLE NOUN:
the action or
process of keeping
financial records
("the books")

ADJECTIVE: not born
in a particular place
or not speaking a
particular language
from childhood

PLURAL NOUN:
political divisions
of a country or
empire (like
states)

(Self-) Teaching Tips:
How Fluent Readers Figure Out the Meanings of Vocabulary in Context

Beyond the survival level, the ability to “guess meaning from context” is a fundamental language-acquisition skill. To acquire reading fluency—as well as to learn vocabulary effectively, native and non-native readers may need “coaching” in how to figure out the approximate meaning of new words and phrases *without interrupting the reading process to look up the items in a dictionary*. To help learners develop this vital skill, you can

- try to convince them that it is not only *unnecessary* to know the exact meaning of words when first reading new material, but also that focusing on individual vocabulary items is *detrimental* to good reading and comprehension.
- prohibit—or at least discourage—language learners and new readers from looking up words on the first reading, which *should* focus on getting the main point or message of the material.
- mention the advantages of learning to guess meaning from context, which include reading faster, understanding more, and developing vocabulary-acquisition abilities *naturally*, with little conscious effort.
- point out the *kinds of context clues* learners might look for in figuring out meaning. In ascending order, these clues could include “definitions” after forms of the verb *be*, in appositive phrases, between commas (,), in parentheses (), or after a dash (—). Some connecting phrases that “signal” explanations of meaning are *in other words* and *that is (to say)* or *i.e.* Readers can figure out some vocabulary from the synonyms and/or antonyms (opposites) that appear in the context. They can also look for *examples* associated with the meanings of unfamiliar words or, conversely, try to recognize the approximate meanings of example items because of the *categories* they belong to. And finally, learners can venture guesses as to the general meaning of vocabulary from other words in the phrase, sentence, or paragraph—such as adjectives describing nouns, the subjects or objects of verbs, modifying phrases or clauses, etc.

3. **GUESSING MEANING FROM CONTEXT.** Give one reading selection to each individual or pair, with or without accompanying definition cards. Place extra readings (and cards) on a table available to all. Learners copy the number, letter, and/or title of their selections at the top of a piece of paper. Quickly, they read the material for general comprehension, to get the main point(s), perhaps to understand the meaning of important supporting detail. Then they “venture a guess” as to the *approximate meaning* of each of the highlighted vocabulary items. In a numbered list on their paper, they jot down a general explanation, in their own words, of each word or phrase. Finally, they check their guesses with the matching definition cards, if available, or by looking up the items.

How might learners *figure out* the meanings of the numbered and highlighted vocabulary items in the sample reading to the right? For instance, Word 1 (*nonnative*) is the opposite of *native*, a word in the same sentence. The context and word order indicate that *Words 2 and 3* are examples of *kinds of colleges*. *Provinces*, a plural noun, are in a country. They are parts of the country Canada, comparable to *states*.

A. COLLEGE LIFE
Many native and 1 nonnative students go to 2 community, junior, or 3 technical colleges. All fifty states of the United States and the 4 provinces of Canada have these schools. Some students get a community college 5 certificate or 6 degree after only two years of study.

4. On finishing *one* reading selection, learners exchange it for another, (along with its definition cards). They can trade selections with other readers or exchange them for those left on the table. They repeat the process of *Step 3* with as many different readings as they can.
5. How to provide feedback on students' vocabulary guesses? One way is to read aloud the selections projected onto a screen, stopping at highlighted items to figure out together. If helpful, be sure to ask relevant questions to guide them toward reasonable guesses.

Another method is to provide an *Answer Key* for each selection, with definitions you've created or copied from the dictionary. If feasible, indicate the context clues that lead logically to the definitions you've provided. Individuals or groups can borrow these *Keys* one at a time, in order to compare the "correct and complete answers" with what they have figured out on their own. In addition or instead, of course, you might want to collect papers for corrections, comment, and/or a grade.

6. **CREATING MATERIALS FOR "SUPPLYING VOCABULARY FOR CONTEXT."**

In addition to "guessing-meaning-from-context" activities, *Reading-Selection Cards* created in *Step 1* can be used as *Answer Keys* for another kind of *vocabulary-in-context lesson*. All that's needed is a second version of each selection, this time with the highlighted items "blotted out" (covered by white-out, correction tape, or opaque black marker. Alternatively, each selection can be retyped in large print, with relevant vocabulary items replaced by numbered blank lines.

7. There are several productive ways to use "fill-in-the-blanks" reading selections to work on vocabulary in context.
 - *Reading-Selection Cards* can be passed out to individuals, pairs, or groups, who try to complete as many as possible within the allotted time period. With *this* version of reading selections, instead of trying to guess the general meaning of highlighted vocabulary, participants attempt to supply words and phrases for the blanks. For each selection, they write suggested words or phrases in a numbered list, perhaps jotting down the "clues and cues" that lead them to their suggestions.
 - To be correct, each vocabulary item must *make sense in the context*. It has to also be grammatically correct—that is, the appropriate *part of speech* (usually *noun, verb, adjective, or adverb*), the correct number (*singular or plural*), and—for verbs—a reasonable *tense form*. Of course, in most blanks more than one word or phrase would be "technically correct," even if it is not "ideal" or in good style. Students can go over their work together, discussing the reasons for their recommendations. They can also compare their guesses to the "correct wording" that appears in the original readings.

- Paired with the original reading selections created in *Step 1*, the “fill-in-the-blank” versions can be used for what is known as “information-gap activities.” For each selection, one learner receives the reading *with* the blanks, while the other gets the *Answer Key*—the ...selection with the highlighted vocabulary items. The first partner reads aloud the selection, supplying feasible words for the blanks, while the second comments on the guesses and helps with hints if necessary. Again, vocabulary items other than those in the original reading may be acceptable, so the availability of an answer key with multiple vocabulary suggestions—or native-speaker “vocabulary-in-context judges”—would help.

Levels = Beginning to Advanced (How to Adapt)

↓ As with other reusable text materials, the *level of challenge* of “vocabulary-in-context selections” depends on the reading level of the paragraphs in which the words and phrases appear. Lower-level readings are usually *shorter* than more advanced ones. Paragraphs and sentences are shorter, too. Grammar and structure are *simpler*—that is, sentences consist of basic patterns such as *SUBJECT + VERB + OBJECT + PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE*, as opposed to complex patterns with modifying phrases and clauses.

↓ The “Definition Cards” mentioned in Step 2 of **IDEA II: PUT IT IN CONTEXT** will also serve to lower the level of difficulty of “meaning-in-context” activities. So will other preparation and follow-up aids. For instance, during fill-in-the-blank vocabulary activities, possible choices can be listed on a board or projected onto a screen.

↑ “Meaning-in-context” lessons can be adapted to require as much thought and ability as desired, just by *raising* the level of the materials on which they are based. The harder it is to predict the highlighted vocabulary items (or the blanks to fill in), the more challenging the activity becomes. A passage with many blanks is naturally more difficult to complete than one in which the omissions are few and far between. That’s because they contain fewer context clues to the missing words.

B. COMMUNITY COLLEGES

For 1 _____, refugees, and citizens, the cost of a 2 _____ college education is not very 3 _____ if they are residents of the 4 _____. Also, many students at these schools are 5 _____ twenty-five years old. They work and 6 _____ school too.

B. COMMUNITY COLLEGES

For 1 immigrants, refugees, and citizens, the cost of a 2 community college education is not very 3 high if they are residents of the 4 state. Also, many students at these schools are 5 over twenty-five years old. They work and 6 attend school too.

VARIATIONS & OTHER AREAS OF APPLICATION

The sample readings included in IDEA II are all adapted from *reading-skills & strategies texts*, which enhances their value in lessons on guessing meaning from or supplying vocabulary for the context of reading selections. Reusable materials can be based on any kind of resources, however—and they *should* be. Ideally, the passages should relate directly to the lessons being taught or review in the course at the time.