

Spot the mistake

Read what a teacher says about this activity

'Spot the mistake' is an activity that you can use to help learners correct mistakes after speaking. It's good for correcting common mistakes, and learners love it. They particularly like working in teams.

Stage 1: Collect mistakes	<p>When learners are speaking in pairs or groups (e.g. dialogues, discussions, etc.):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulate, monitor and listen; • Note down the mistakes you hear, especially common mistakes.
Stage 2: Select mistakes	<p>Look at your list of mistakes. Choose 5–8 that are common and that learners can correct. The mistakes should be presented in a phrase or sentence so that learners understand the context (E.g. I went in the bus; I attended (= waited) one hour!).</p>
Stage 3: Introduce activity	<p>After giving general feedback on the speaking activity, say: 'When I was listening, I heard some mistakes. I want you to identify and correct the mistakes.'</p> <p>Put learners in small, mixed-level teams. Say: 'Don't talk.'</p> <p>Write the sentences with mistakes on the board. (Do not underline the mistakes.) Say: 'Work together. Spot the mistakes and correct them. You have 5 minutes. Go!'</p>
Stage 4: Identify and correct mistakes	<p>Circulate and monitor. Prompt if necessary. After 5 minutes, say: 'Stop'.</p> <p>Variation: Team race: Each team has a runner. Teams write the corrections on small pieces of paper: [number list 1–5] Teams do number 1. The runner brings it to you. You say if they are correct. ⇒If yes, they return to their team and do number 2. ⇒If no, they return to their team and try again. The first team to correct all the mistakes is the winner. When complete, do Stage 5: Take feedback.</p>

**Stage 5: Take
feedback**

Ask: 'Can you spot the mistake in number 1?'

Choose one team ('Team A'). Ask them: 'What's the mistake?' They should give their answer. Ask the class whether they agree.

⇒If the class agree, invite a learner from Team A to the board to correct the mistake.

⇒If the class don't agree, encourage discussion. Then invite a learner from Team A to the board to correct the mistake.

Ask: 'Is this correct?' (Check all teams understand the correction.)

Repeat for other mistakes. Choose a different team each time.

Stage 6: Write

Say: 'Now write the correct sentences in your books'. Circulate and check all learners have the correct sentences.

Ask learners if they enjoyed 'Spot the mistake'.

Invite different learners to the board next time you use Spot the mistake. Remind learners of common mistakes next time they practise speaking. You can also use this activity with written mistakes.

Author: Deb Bullock