

Information about English grammar and EFL/ESL sets

Can Do Cubes for English grammar

Can Do Cubes for English Grammar is a teaching and learning toolkit developed for the effective presentation and exploration of English grammar structures. No specialist knowledge or understanding of grammar is required for its use. For those of us who were never taught or have forgotten about word classes etc. all information necessary for the enjoyment of these cubes is contained in the accompanying book, this website and the cubes themselves.

As a creative resource, Can Do Cubes for English Grammar offers a variety of enjoyable games and classroom activities designed, in part, to cover teaching objectives found in the National Literacy Strategy and Frameworks for teaching English. However, we are keen to emphasize that Can Do Cubes for English Grammar is also intended to stimulate a student's interest in the variety of expression afforded by the English language and to explore the richness of its creative power.

The kit consists of a canvas 'word bag', an Activities Book and 150 hardwood cubes. Every cube is laser engraved, with the words appearing on each of their six faces being grammatically related (for example, all tenses of a particular verb, all pronouns, prepositions or nouns etc.). On some of the cubes showing regular verbs, the sixth face is blank; these might be used as 'joker' spaces, inviting the student to choose the word they wish to use. The most commonly used punctuation marks are included within the set.

Can Do Cubes act as a link between the written and the spoken forms of the English language. Like the spoken form, individual words can be chosen, or taken at random, and combined with other words to form language 'chunks'. These 'chunks' can be cut, extended, changed or corrected at will. No record of wrongness, or failure, accrues. Students are, therefore, encouraged to experiment freely with the language. Like the written form, the words can be placed together to reveal structures or grammatical rules, or simply to start a piece of writing or something that might suggest a subject for dramatic exposition.

The cubes are a pleasure to handle, and naturally encourage conversation and comparison. As such, they are particularly effective in group work, but they can be used in individual, one to one, group or whole class teaching and learning situations to very good effect. By stimulating the interaction of an individual's visual, auditory and kinaesthetic perceptual systems, learning is enjoyed and enhanced.

Can Do Cubes for English Grammar may be used as a single resource (perhaps by inviting students to 'lucky dip' from the 'word bag'). However, the availability of three different fonts allows us to produce a set containing three sub-sets of 50 cubes each which, despite containing a variety of different words, retain the same number of cubes for each word class. Thus, all the activities in the book can be enjoyed using the full set or any, or all, of the

three sub-sets. (It follows that two full sets of Can Do Cubes for English Grammar could provide six sub-sets, sufficient for use with six groups of students in whole-class work.). Details of the cubes and how they can be grouped to form these sub-sets are included in the accompanying book.

Can Do Cubes for English Grammar is an extremely versatile resource. It can be used in all Key Stages of the National Curriculum for stand alone lessons, as part of the Literacy Hour or for starter activities. It is an extremely effective addition to the delivery of Literacy in secondary schools through starter activities, intervention and catch-up classes, and is warmly welcomed in all subject areas as a tool for delivering Literacy across the Curriculum. It can be used by specialist, non-specialist and supply teachers, class room assistants, students, parents or anyone who wishes to promote an understanding and enjoyment of the English language. During trials at St Augustine's High School (City of Westminster LEA, London) Can Do Cubes proved popular and effective with English and Literacy classes and were enthusiastically embraced by both EAL and SEN departments.

The Teaching Objectives Grid, suggesting which activities might be used for the various Teaching Objectives, is included in the book as a guide only; it will, no doubt, be hugely improved and extended by each user.

The lessons and activities contained in the book are not arranged in any particular order and are not exhaustive. It is hoped that the creative impulses the Cubes inspire in students will be enjoyed by teachers as well. To keep up with new lessons and activities to use with Can Do Cubes, and, perhaps, to share your own ideas, log on at candocubes.com.

Can Do Cubes for EFL/ESL

There is nothing complicated about Can Do Cubes. Every cube is engraved with six words; all words on a particular cube are grammatically related. Some cubes display only verbs (either different verbs in the one form or the same verb in different forms); some show pronouns or nouns, prepositions or conjunctions. All word classes are represented, as are the most commonly used punctuation marks. Each cube presents a little lesson of its own. By combining and re-combining the cubes, the ways that words relate to each other in the English language can clearly be demonstrated and practised.

The words contained in this toolkit include those which are the most frequently used in day to day English. They are used because they are simple and versatile; they are at the heart of English grammar. An understanding of the way they relate to one another is essential to discovering how English works.

By using the games and creative activities to focus a student's attention on the words and word relations that build into the English language, the boredom and fear, often associated with the learning of English, are removed. When mistakes are made, they are there to be seen, to be discussed, corrected and learnt from. Exploring grammar becomes a simple matter of: "Can you do this?" or: "What can you do with that?" It is a process of discovery.

English grammar is traditionally presented as a system of rules and definitions with a prescribed order in which they should be learnt. This not only discourages many students, but may also hide the knowledge a student already possesses.

Can Do Cubes are not limited to any particular learning level or order; they simply find out what a student can do whilst supplying the elements needed to discover what might be done with this or that word, this or that structure.

There is always a range of abilities among students in even the most carefully graded classes. Can Do Cubes reveal an individual student's knowledge of English (from the internet, pop music, advertising, the cinema etc.) and invite him or her to reveal this knowledge to their teacher. Left in the hands of students, they will encourage the mutual sharing of this knowledge and facilitate the very natural process of learning from one's peers.

The cubes are beautiful to look at and a pleasure to touch; they invite handling and discussion. Both building with blocks and playing with words seem to be natural human activities from an early age. Can Do Cubes bring these instincts together, effectively harnessing them in the classroom to make the learning of English grammar a pleasure.

Can Do Cubes put the English language in the hands of the student.