

# Cell Phone Activities



TESL ONTARIO CONFERENCE 2012

Presenter: Lesline Smikle

Centre for Education & Training™

Contact: [lsmikle@tcet.com](mailto:lsmikle@tcet.com)

Blog: <http://ltrcblog.blogspot.com>

## Workshop Procedures

### **Rationale:**

Students today are very different than those 10 years ago. They think and act differently and much of the credit or blame is given to this digital society. One of the new behaviours observed by teachers is the increased appearance of mobile technology into the classroom. Cell phones (for example) are extremely popular and affordable. Learners of all ages are carrying them into the classroom.

### **Discussion:**

1. What is your classroom / school policy concerning cell phones?
2. How many of your students have cell phones and bring them to class?
3. What is your view of cell phone etiquette? Has it changed at all?

### **Activities:**

1. Presentations about my mobile device
  - a. App advice
2. Instructions for a game
3. Dictation /Write a note
4. Cell phone survey
5. Describe my room, my family...
6. Create digital "flashcards"/picture dictionary
  - a. Pantomimes & Non-Verbal Communication
7. Photo Essays
  - a. A Day in the life of...
  - b. Documentaries
8. Neighbourhood Scavenger Hunt
9. Visual Notes: Take pictures of board work
10. Audio Journaling
11. Read aloud model
12. Record Videos
  - a. Advertise This! (Radio or TV ads)
  - b. Demonstrations
  - c. Professional Development Opportunities
  - d. Record field trips/guest speakers
13. Dial-A-Story (check with your local library) in Toronto, it's **416-395-5400**.
14. Interview: Call for information/interview via speaker phone

Think about it!

"...linking instruction to the technologies adults have access to outside of a classroom...is central to learner-centred practice."

Smythe,S (2012). *Incorporating Digital Technologies in Adult basic Education: Concepts, Practices and Recommendations*. Toronto AlphaPlus. Retrieved online <http://incorporatingtechnologies.alphaplus.ca/>

**Wrap-up:** What are the challenges of using cell phones activities in the classroom?

# 1. Presenting...my cell phone

Higher levels can interview each other with the question “What features does your cell phone have?” After interviewing each other, learners may be able to extend their thinking and explain what a cell phone can reveal about a particular individual and their personality.

Lower levels can ask more formatted questions “Does your cell phone have \_\_\_\_\_?” (see [appendix](#)).

In the case where all learners do not have cell phones, it is a good idea to pair them up so that the one who does not have a cell phone interviews and reports on someone who does.

For those who have apps, it is always interesting to find out from them which app is their favorite or most unusual and then talk about useful apps intended for language learning.

When they have finished their respective interviews, learners can prepare presentations on their own or each other’s phones. Presentation techniques can be taught at this point to facilitate the task.

## 2. Game Instructions

Every phone has games on it. Let the learners teach each other how to play one of the games on their phone and they may also write the instructions ([see appendix](#)) without looking at the instructions on the phone, of course! On the other hand, learners could read the instructions for one of the games that they have not played yet and follow them.

## 3. Dictations

Teacher gives one-, two- or three-word phrases or idioms/expressions and learners type it in their cell phones (instead of their notebooks). They can be asked to use these words throughout the day. At the end of the week/unit, they can look at all of the words they learned and complete a review exercise. Collaboration is encouraged if learners who were absent pair up with others.

As a learning management tool, learners may also write notes to themselves about homework assignments, field trip reminders, etc.

## 4. Cell Phone Survey

Have learners text their family or friends (you determine the number) with a common question (related to your theme/unit) and compare/discuss/classify/analyze/graphically organize the results. For example, lower levels when studying food can text, “What is your favorite fruit?” Higher levels can ask more difficult questions such as, “What makes a good citizen?”

When the results have been collected, higher levels can write reports (see appendix) while lower levels can write summaries or create graphs.

For individualized or small group projects, each learner can pick their own survey question to text 10 people and (orally) report the results to the class.

## 5. Descriptions

Learners can take pictures of their room, an item in their house, a family member/group and describe it to a classmate, who will in turn, write a description. There are many extensions to this activity. For example, classmates can read 3 descriptions and match it to the correct cell phone picture, or others can have a question and answer session with the camera phone owner about their picture.

## 6. Personal Picture Dictionary/Flashcards

For those learning vocabulary words, pictorial dictionaries are very useful. Let students take pictures of items that they want to remember (e.g. classroom objects) or make visual connections with concepts they need to remember (e.g. emotions or cultural gestures).

## 7. Photo Essays

A photo essay is a series of pictures which tell a story or has a thesis. Students should study some examples of photo essays first. See online samples. Then they can make photo essays for topics of your choosing (see appendix). For example, when teaching about occupations, learners can take 5-6 pictures that describe a day in the life of a professional. They may also chart a scientific process, a narrative or a demonstration.

## 8. Neighbourhood Scavenger Hunt

Give instructions on where to find specific places, things, sights and/or signs in and around the school or neighbourhood. Have the learners walk around in groups and take pictures of their group members beside the item. The first group to return with all the items in their pictures gain the title of “Super Sleuths” or “The Mighty Hunters”.

## 9. Visual Notes

After brainstorming a certain topic or teaching a certain process, students can take pictures of the notes made on the board and review the information the next day using the picture(s) they took.

## 10. Audio Journaling

Some cell phones have the capacity to create and store voice memos. Teachers can give one journal topic each day and have the learners speak about it for one minute. Learners can also use it to record their feelings about learning/immigrating and interacting with others. At the end of the semester or term, learners should be able to look back and reflect on the changes that they have taken place. They can write summaries of their learning as reasons why they should be able to move on to the next level and use aspects of their voice memos as indicators of proficiency.

Native communities have been known to use voice memos to document oral traditions. Teaching direct and indirect speech would be useful when using this cell phone feature.

## 11. Read Aloud

Students can record a native speaker (or their teacher) read a text. Students can then use that recording to improve their pronunciation and fluency or prepare to read aloud for their class (see appendix).

## 12. Video Recording

Students can record their presentations and demonstrations and complete self/peers feedback forms or checklists (see appendix). For teachers who are interested in developing their craft, they can tape themselves teaching and self-evaluate. When guest speakers visit or when you go on field trips, you can ask permission to record small amounts of the presentation or tour to review later.

## 13. Dial-A-Story

Many public libraries have a telephone program called “Dial-a-story” where children and parents can call a special phone number and listen to stories. Have students dial that story and reconstruct the text with their classmates (see appendix). If the phone has a loudspeaker, then a whole group can listen and collaborate to recreate the text.

## 14. Telephone Interviews

Arrange to interview an expert via speaker phone. Have learners set up the questions beforehand and prepare the interviewer on the intended questions and outcomes. Learners may also call a service/business to ask questions about what they provide and report back to the class (e.g. call 411).

## References:

Ancker, W. P. (2002). [The challenge and opportunity of technology: An interview with Mark Warschauer](#). English Teaching Forum, 40(4), 1-8.

Prensky, M. (2005). *What can you learn from a cell phone? Almost anything!*. Innovate 1 (5).  
<http://www.innovateonline.info/index.php?view=article&id=83>

Smythe, S (2012). *Incorporating Digital Technologies in Adult basic Education: Concepts, Practices and Recommendations*. Toronto : AlphaPlus. Retrieved online <http://incorporatingtechnologies.alphaplus.ca/>