

# Imaginative images

Using images in the classroom can be much more useful and exciting than the traditional visual aids

## 1. SOURCING IMAGES

Go to online sites to find authentic images from amateur photographers and illustrators, most of which are copyright-free. A great source is [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com), a popular and free photo-sharing service. Google also has an equivalent site, [www.picasa.com](http://www.picasa.com). Simply insert a tag or keyword and you're away. Another good link which features personalised recommendations for seeking out interesting images/sites is [www.stumbleupon.com](http://www.stumbleupon.com). Alternatively, ask the students themselves to provide the images/realia.

**Classroom tasks** *What's in your bag?:* Students examine the contents of different bags and pockets and discuss what they know about a person from their possessions. The same can be done for other things, such as fridge magnets.

*Is that you?:* Students bring in old photos of themselves and write short captions for them. Mix these up and then ask the class to match texts to images and identify who's who.



## 2. CHALLENGE THE FAMILIAR

Consider an image that you may use regularly in class, such as a map of the world. Rather than using the standard map, familiar to us all, search for alternative ways of representing the planet. Check out [www.worldmapper.org](http://www.worldmapper.org) for some fascinating cartograms that will also teach your students some interesting facts about the world. Get students to create their own maps at <http://maps.google.com/>. Here students can upload images, video and texts to personalise their own Google map. Students print them out and explain them to their partners in class.

**Classroom tasks** *Image history:* Students look at different representations of the same symbol and discuss how its significance has changed over the years, for example the apple or the heart.

*The old and the new:* Show students some archive and contemporary adverts for the same product (e.g. Coca-Cola) and ask them to compare the different images.

## INTRODUCTION

It is hard to imagine daily classroom practice without the use of images – flashcards, wall charts, board drawings, etc. – and yet these rarely lie at the forefront of what we do in class. Images are often simply treated as decoration or as subservient to text. While texts are often taken from authentic sources to reflect real-life language, images are still today made up of archive photos from stock image banks which rarely stimulate students, and yet there is nothing like a striking image to capture attention and motivate learners. These tips will give you some ideas of where to source different kinds of still images and encourage you to think of original things to do with them in class. **Practicability, impact, openness to multiple interpretation and opportunity for personalisation** are key criteria when choosing an image, as can be seen in the following suggestions:

## 3. LOOK BEYOND THE FRAME

Students are used to describing images in class but not to interpreting them. Make the class aware that visual images do not have fixed, predetermined meanings, but are socially constructed and culturally dependent. Work with different symbols and icons to uncover these different meanings. Banknotes, flags, stamps and pictograms are good examples for encouraging intercultural awareness in class.

**Classroom tasks** *Stamps, icons and banknotes:* Choose a selection online from different countries. Students describe these and then go on to consider what cultural values they represent or messages they convey about the country in question.

*What is an icon?:* A similar task can be designed around icons. Look at [www.icons.org.uk](http://www.icons.org.uk) for some good examples of British ones.

## 4. MANIPULATE IT

Ask students to customise or jazz up their own digital images. For example, they can make cartoons from their own uploaded photos and more besides at [www.befunky.com](http://www.befunky.com) or create magazine covers at [www.magmypic.com](http://www.magmypic.com). You can also make a poster, a jigsaw, a mosaic, a calendar, etc. using Flickr toys at <http://bighugelabs.com/flickr/> or at [www.dumpr.net](http://www.dumpr.net).

**Classroom tasks** *Is it real?:* Students look at two similar-looking images and have to decide which is real/fake and decide why.

*Selling yourself:* Students create their own adverts, placing an image of themselves alongside a product of their choice.

## PHOTOCOPIABLE STAFFROOM RESOURCES



## 5. IMAGING

Activate students' ability to visualise or picture experiences. In many cases our imaginations conjure up far richer images from within (from our mind's eye) than those we receive externally.

**Classroom tasks** *Drawing with words:* Students create a mental image of a place using words and then take it in turns to describe their images, using complete sentences.

*Questions to a portrait:* Show the class a portrait. Students then have to imagine this person's identity and character and conduct an imaginary conversation with him/her.



## 6. IMAGE AND TEXT

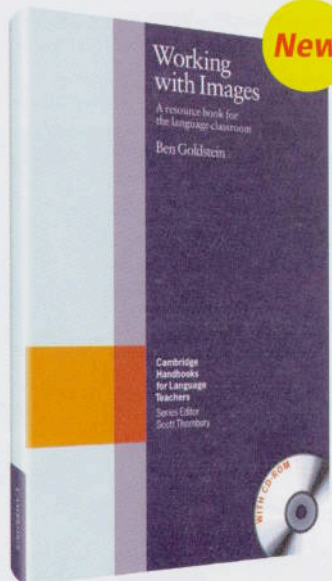
Traditionally, images have been used to illustrate language or stimulate language use. Consider using images which show the difference between two contrasting grammar items (e.g. passive and active voice). Shift the balance by bringing into class examples of images which have accompanying texts, such as adverts, comic strips, cartoons or movie storyboards.

**Classroom tasks** *Speech/thought bubbles:* Show students an engaging image in which people might be having a conversation. Students create their own dialogues or thought bubbles based on the image.

*Art poems:* Ask students to read a verse written about a specific work of art. Students can then analyse their relationship. Are the texts simply descriptive, narrating what is happening, or do they interpret the image in any way? How does the text get beneath the surface of the image? Students can then practise writing about an artwork or choose a particular individual in a painting and create a role for them.

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## Looking for new ideas to liven up your lessons?



*Working with Images* unlocks the power of images to stimulate ideas and discussion. It contains over 75 practical teaching ideas for the language classroom which place authentic images at the centre of the language learning process.

- Step-by-step instructions allow you to use activities with minimal preparation
- Activities can be adapted and re-used again and again
- Over 400 stunning images are included on the accompanying CD-ROM
- Advice and guidance on sourcing your own images is provided



*Working with Images* is one of the latest titles in the fantastic **Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers** series, providing inspiration for busy teachers and trainers! Whether it's professional development or great classroom activities you're after, with over 40 titles, we've got the book for you!

