

The Day They Planned a Caper: A Lesson Plan For an Adult, Intermediate/Advanced EFL Conversation Course

What This Is:

The Day They Planned a Caper is a 3-4 day sequential classroom exercise/project for adult Conversational English EFL students of intermediate to advanced level. Its goals include:

1. demonstration of the capacity for rapid strategic competency development
2. giving students a chance to plan two presentations, using language for process (first, second, then, next, after that) and cause-and-effect (because of X, Y or Y happened, and so X happened after.)
3. giving students practice with future modals, and with simple past tense
4. providing impetus for a series of two related presentations
5. introducing vocabulary related to "capers" and "heists" but more importantly language related to betrayal by trusted others.

Boilerplate:

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Day 1: All About Capers

Step 1: Warm-Up Exercise.

This is a gap exercise in conversation-reading and conversation-steering.

1. Split the students into two separate groups, who don't know one another's "missions".
2. The first group is provided with some vocabulary input related to keeping secrets ("Just between you and me..."), confirming confidence ("Promise you'll keep it to yourself?") and telling secrets ("Can you believe it?"). They are prompted to think up a shocking secret and tell it to their partner, but only after securing an assurance of confidence.
3. The second group is instructed to find out the other person's secret by making assurances of confidence, only to outdo it with a bigger secret of their own when the time comes. They receive inputs related to comparison ("That's not as shocking as my secret!"), dismissal ("That's nothing!"), and assurance ("I promise I won't breathe a word...").
4. Have the students in the first group choose a conversation partner from the second group, and have their conversations in English. Once they have done this, poll them about their results in terms of using the phrases provided, and their success in carrying out their "missions" and in reading/steering the conversation generally.

Step 2: Introducing Capers, and Caper Vocabulary

After a brief intro, show students an episode of *The Hustle*, or clips on Youtube of heist-plan explanation scenes from movies. Discuss crime films a little, bringing up their favorite examples, and cover (and bring to their attention) vocabulary for:

- **various types of crimes:** heist, scam, con, long con, short con, robbery, kidnapping, extortion
- **roles within a group of criminal conspirators, and terms for criminals:** the leader, the brains, the brawn, the femme fatale, the hacker, the driver, the safecracker; crook, gangster, mobster, thief, burglar, assassin, kidnapper
- **expressions related to crimes and betrayals:** to rip someone off, to scam someone, to screw someone over, to knock over a [business type], to con someone, to kidnap someone for ransom, to extort money from someone, to blackmail someone, to take someone out

Step 3: Making Groups, Discussing

Split the students into groups of 4 or 5. Each group should be provided with its own space -- even sending students to nearby empty classrooms, if possible -- to plan out their own crime. But before they plan them, a set of rules should be provided. (See attached.)

Step 4: Explaining the Pitch

Gather the groups together, and talk about some of the simpler scams that both groups discussed. Instruct the students to try thing of a creative crime to plot out.

Explain that you (the teacher) are playing the role of their gangster boss. You, the boss, have decided that none of the criminals working for you are bringing in enough money, and so you are testing your underlings. The group that comes up with the best plan will get to try it out, while the group that fails will end up "sleeping with the fish."

Assign the preparation of a presentation with a plan--to be expressed with future and conditional modals--will, might, could, should--to the class. They will need a powerpoint to accompany their presentation.

Each group should receive a copy of **Rules for your Crime Plan**.

Students should be give a week to prepare a full pitch (presentation, including a powerpoint) for the class.

Day 2: Pitching Their Capers

Step 1: Warm-Up Exercise.

Pair members from each group. Provide a few vocabulary inputs related to bragging ("Wait till you see...") and being cagey ("I can't really say much right now, but..."). Students in this conversational exercise have a mission: to find out whatever they can about the other group's plan.

Step 2:

Playing the gangster boss, roleplay a meeting with the two groups. Have them sit down, explain that you know things have been hard lately, but today is an important day for the family, for deciding how business will go from now on. Remind them of the stakes of the competing proposals, encourage them to take notes, and remind them that a question period of at least 10 minutes will follow each 15-20 minute-long group presentation.

Step 3:

Have each group present, and follow up with a Q&A. Other students from competing groups should have priority in the Q&A, but (still playing the mob boss) the instructor can also pose challenges, questions, or ask for clarifications.

Step 4:

Regardless of whether any given plan seems a sure-fire winner (or a sure-fire loser) the mobster boss has a change of heart: he's going to let everyone give their plan a go.

If there is a minimum of 25-30 minutes left at the end of the pitches, proceed to Day 3. If there is less time, review or do another exercise on a different subject of your choice.

Day 3 (Short/half class): Stabbed In The Back

Step 1: Preparations

Have the students sit in the crime groups again. Distribute the three-page **How to Determine Your Heist Outcome** handout, along with a few six-sided dice, to each group.

Review the vocabulary related to betrayal from Day 1:

- **expressions related to crimes and betrayals:** to rip someone off, to scam someone, to screw someone over, to knock over a [business type], to con someone, to kidnap someone for ransom, to extort money from someone, to blackmail someone, to take someone out

Add more phrases like, "How dare you?", "You backstabber!", and "I trusted you!" Tell students they will be using these phrases a lot in the next hour.

Step 2: Betrayal Dice Game Prep

As a warm-up, have one student read the rules within each group (the attached 3-page handout titled "How to Determine Your Heist Outcome." Clarify vocabulary questions, questions about the rules, and possibly model the game with volunteers. Explain that this game will provide them the basis for their homework for next class. Encourage students to use the vocabulary from earlier in the class--"How dare you?" etc.--during the game.

Step 3: Rolling the Bones

Have students run through the game routine with their dice, until each group has completed its game.

Step 4: Drawing Narrative Prompts

As each group finishes its game (perhaps one or two much earlier) have students pick out narrative prompts from a hat. (See the last page of this lessonplan, and create more as needed.) Groups that finish early can begin the process of constructing a narrative according to the rules laid out on the handout.

Step 5: Explain the Second Presentation

Explain to students that they will be "crafting" a narrative that combines (a) the prompt on the slip of paper they drew, plus (b) the result of the dice game. Outline the rules for the presentation in terms of time limits, whether powerpoint is needed, and so on before the end of class. Give students a full week to prepare their presentations.

Day 4: Then It All Went To Hell

Step 1: Warm-up

Have students talk with a partner about something that happened to them at some point in the recent past, when things didn't go according to plan. Focus on the phrases for "was supposed to" and "actually did." Have them ask follow-up questions as usual for such pair-work.

Step 2: Intro to Storytelling

Once again playing the gangster boss, remind the class that you were impressed with their planned crimes and you are curious to find out what happened.

Step 3: Tell Us How It Went

Students present the story of their crime's outcome, explaining what each one was *supposed to do*, and what he or she *actually did*. Make sure they highlight their story prompts. Encourage students to use a persona, that is, to role-play a stupid gangster while telling the story, and provide prompts in the form of questions, interruptions, requests for clarification, in the role of gangster boss.

Step 4: Choose the Best

Have students vote on the funniest story. The winners receive whatever bonus points or other benefits were offered for the best plan on Day 1.

Step 5: Closing Comments/Review

Just in case, remind the students humorously of how stupid their plans are and how funny their horrible fates turned out to be... and (just in case) remind them that their English teacher isn't *really* encouraging them to commit a crime in real life. Then review the goals for the exercise and relate it to their approach to studying English in general. (ie. strategic competency, specific modals, phrases and terms learned, and so on.)

Rules for Your Planned Crime

- 1. You must get W500,000,000 (US \$500,000) in one week.**
- 2. You must do so illegally:** no borrowing money, no selling your kidneys. This is *crime*, folks, not TV drama.
- 3. You must think of an interesting and unique plan:** don't copy a movie. That's the easiest way to get caught!
- 4. You need to have a decent chance of not getting caught.** Robbing a bank the old-fashioned way doesn't work anymore.
- 5. Use your real-life resources: no more and no less.**
Whatever skills and connections you have in real life, use those in this plan. Can you hack a computer network? No? Then don't include that in your plan. Can you shoot a gun? Yes? Feel free to include it in your plan.
- 6. Everyone pulls his or her own weight.** Nobody in your group gets to sit around and do nothing. If someone doesn't participate in the planning, let me know: the fish are always looking for new friends at the bottom of the ocean!
- 7. Nobody dies.** If your plot requires someone to die, we need extra money to cover for hush-hush expenses, and you'll need to triple the income to W1.5 trillion won.

How to Determine Your Heist Outcome

1. How Are You Gonna Play This?

On a piece of paper, write out your plan for the "worst case scenario." If things go really badly, will you **stick together** with the others, or **backstab** them? Fill out your slip of paper secretly, and make sure nobody knows what you have written!

2. Roll the Bones!

Whoever was born latest in the year (December, November, October...) rolls first, using 2 dice. Then he or she passes the dice to the person on the left. Continue around the circle till everyone has rolled. When you roll for your turn, write down the number.

3. Reveal your plan! Form Factions!

Now's the time to come clean: show your group your plans, regarding whether you were going to **stick together**, or **backstab** your friends!

Now, your group can be made into two "factions": **Faithful** vs. **Backstabbers**. Note carefully which one you are.

4. Betrayal Round!

The Betrayers start out this round. Begin with the Betrayer with the fewest points. He or she challenge another player to a betrayal roll, or pass. **Note:** *if you don't betray now, you cannot betray later!*

If the player challenges another player, both players roll a die. Whoever roll the highest wins the betrayal challenge: the prize is the difference between the two rolls.

However, if a player chose **Stick Together**, then everyone else who rolled **Stick Together** will also roll. The highest result in the group applies *for every member of the group*.

- If the challenger rolls higher, the loser or losers (everyone who Stuck Together) loses the total number of challenge points, and the Challenger collects *all* of those points.

Example: Successful Betrayal

Player 1 (3 points) challenges **Player 2** (11 points). **Player 2** chose to **Stick Together** with **Player 3** (9 points).

Player 1 rolls a 5. **Player 2** rolls a 1. **Player 3** rolls a 2.

Player 1 wins! **Player 1** collects 3 points each from **Players 2** and **3**.

Now, **Player 1** has 7 points (3+2+2). **Player 2** has 9 points (11-2). **Player 3** has 7 points (9-2).

- If the Challenger loses, then the Stick Together group shares the points however they like.

Example: Failed Betrayal

Player 1 (3 points) challenges **Player 2** (11 points). **Player 2** chose to **Stick Together** with **Player 3** (9 points).

Player 1 rolls a 1. **Player 2** rolls a 5. **Player 3** rolls a 6.

Player 1 fails! The **Stick Together Group** collects 5 points to split up however they like. They decide that since **Player 3** has fewer points, she will receive more.

Now, **Player 1** has -3 points (3-6). **Player 2** has 13 points (11+2). **Player 3** also has 12 points (9+3).

You don't have to betray another character, of course, not even if you planned to do so. (For example, if you rolled very high, it's not necessary or wise!) But if you do, keep careful track of *who you betray*, and *who betrays you...* you'll need that information later!

After all the Backstabbers have betrayed as much as they want, the Stick Together people can choose to betray become Backstabbers and betray others, or to immediately end the betrayal round.

5. Resolution Table

Check the number of points you have against the Resolution Table below, to discover your fate.

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| < -4 : | Your fate is worse than death... You survive, but your life sucks so badly that you usually wish you hadn't. You will live haunted by what you experienced, and never be happy again. |
| 0 to -4: | You're dead. Whether you got hit by a bus, killed by someone who betrayed you, or died when a safe fell on you: at any rate, things almost couldn't have gone worse for you. |
| 1 to 4: | Your life is seriously ruined. Maybe you're permanently scarred or handicapped, along with being sent to jail. If you survive long enough to see the light of day, you'll be lucky. |
| 5 to 8: | You're going to jail. Or at best, you might get probation, but you have a criminal record, with all the suffering that guarantees. But at least you're alive. |
| 9 to 12: | You get away with it, but just barely. Someone still suspects you, and you'll be looking over your shoulder for years to come, because they might just find more evidence to put you away. You won't get to relax for years... but maybe you learned your lesson, or a few new tricks? |
| 13 to 16: | You lucky bastard. You managed to avoid jail, to get a little benefit from your crime, and maybe to learn a thing or two. Maybe this is the start of a career... or maybe you just got lucky. |
| 17+: | You are the luckiest criminal alive. Not only do you succeed in your heist, scam, or con, and benefit from it, but you end up praised by your community like a local hero, and many opportunities open up for you. Don't expect it to happen again! |

6. Craft the Narrative

Now, it's time to figure out the narrative that tells what happened. Take one PROMPT slip from the paper, check over your list of who betrayed whom, and work together to create a story including everyone's fate and prompts. Next week, you'll be telling us the story using Past Tense (as if it really happened) along with a powerpoint where you and your group re-enact your results!

an untied shoelace	slippery floor
baseball bat	broken heart
broken promise	an unheeded warning
lost keys	a bouquet of flowers
a little mix-up	family problems
an unplugged fridge full of rotten food	a lost phone number