

# Racing to English

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## Gordon Ward

Since retiring almost a year ago I have developed a CD of teaching materials called **Racing to English**. At the time of writing there are 133 activities on the CD for staff to print out and use. These include:

- **34 photosets** with over 400 photos, together with activities, worksheets and pages to make up a picture dictionary. The sets include animals, actions, body, face, bathroom, food, clothes, café, house, park, street, supermarket, vehicles and weather.
- **68 collaborative activities:** there are seven types – Connect Four, Guess Which, Pairs, Question Tracks, Spot the Difference, Story Prompts and Describe & Draw.
- **15 mini stories** (written by children) together with sequencing activities and worksheets
- **16 stories** about Eek-eek-eek the mouse and his friends. Each story focuses on a particular tense and includes worksheets.
- **9 documents for staff** including suggested teaching order, resource suggestions, advice on teaching beginners and using first language, thoughts about race, etc.

The activities have been developed for beginners to English. I have been concerned for many years that staff have been working with little or no support or training for work with beginners. This situation has worsened by the move towards using Teaching Assistants for EMAG funded work and there has been little support from the national strategies for developing particular work and activities for beginners, the assumption being that they will simply be included within the normal classroom processes. Most of us would argue that beginners learn most quickly when interacting with competent speakers of the target language; however, it is also useful for them to have particular time and particular activities to support their language development.

In practice, many beginners are withdrawn or supported within the classroom either on a one-to-one basis or in small groups but there are almost no resources for this situation. Racing to English seeks to fill this gap – it is based on the following principles:

- **Visual** support for understanding - this is particularly evident in the photosets.

- **Interaction** with other pupils/students – I believe that learners have to use language in order to learn it effectively.
- **Repetition** – the use of collaborative and game-like activities which are **FUN**, and allow a huge amount of repetition, without boredom or loss of concentration.
- **Clear language aims** – all the activities encourage learners to use particular sentence structures and a controlled range of vocabulary.

If you would like to find out more about Racing to English email me – [gordon.ward2000@ntlworld.com](mailto:gordon.ward2000@ntlworld.com).

If you want to purchase a CD (£25 + p&p) email me your address and I'll send you one together with an invoice