



Expansion Activities
Understanding and Using English Grammar, 3rd Edition
Chapter 2: Past Tense

Activity: Who is this baby?

Materials needed: A baby picture of each student, writing supplies, tacks or blue tack

Description:



It's a lot of fun to see baby pictures of adults you work or study with -- especially if those pictures are goofy or impossibly adorable. In this activity, students like the baby picture angle so much that they forget they are involved in past-tense writing practice.

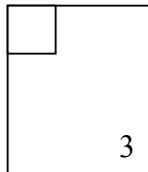
Each student should bring in a baby picture of herself or himself, the cuter or sillier the better. The pictures should be of a very young baby (a year old or less) so it isn't easy to match the adult face with the baby one. Instruct the students not to let anyone see their photos.

Working alone, students write sentences about themselves as a baby and toddler, being careful not to reveal their identity in their writing. You can set a minimum number of sentences. Encourage the students to write about things that are unique to themselves.

I was born in my grandfather's house.
My favorite toy was a yellow duck.
I had no hair until I was two years old.
My mother called me "Mouse."
I loved spinach.
Etc.

Remind students not to refer to countries or languages so they won't reveal their identity.

When the students are done writing, tape each student's baby picture to the top of her or his writing and clearly number the writing. Display the written work on a bulletin board or use blue tack and put them up all over the room at eye level.



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Students now number a paper with as many numbers as there are displayed writings. They mill around the room reading the “infant bios,” looking at the pictures, and trying to guess the identity of each baby. For example, when a student thinks she knows the identity of the student in display #5, she will write the student’s name on her own paper next to #5.

When everyone has finished, the class can compare their guesses as a group. As long as the baby pictures are from a young enough age, and as long as the student hasn’t revealed his current physical characteristics, ethnicity, language, etc. in the writing, there will be many mistaken guesses -- sometimes even girls for boys and vice versa, resulting in a lot of laughs.

Encourage relaxed discussion! This wrap-up time is a great opportunity to get students to practice forming past-tense questions and responses to each other as they question each other about the writings, asking for clarification or more information. (Did you really say “Picasso” for your first word? Why?)

Culture Note: Obviously, students need access to baby photos. This activity will not work with visiting students or with *some* students from refugee backgrounds, so consider your class make-up before suggesting this activity.