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Rules of Life

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Quick Guide

- Keywords: Personalization, Learner Autonomy, Values, Rules of Life
- Learner English level: Pre-intermediate and above
- Learner maturity: Junior high and above
- Preparation Time: 10 minutes
- Activity time: 30–60 minutes (can be extended)
- Materials: Blackboard, coloring pencils or pens

In The Rules of Life, Templar (2012) provides advice for living better. Some rules he proposes include, “Accept what is done is done” and “Dedicate your life to something.” Although these kinds of rules proposed by other people can be useful, this activity helps students to identify their own rules. This can foster learner autonomy and critical thinking as well as provide a fun language learning experience. After writing their own rules, the students represent them graphically with icons and share their rules in short group presentations.

Preparation

The teacher composes his or her own “Rules of Life” to use as a reference. For example, consider how you learned something from a mistake that you made and share your rule: “Always learn from your mistakes.” Other examples and materials to create a student handout are available in the Appendix.

Procedure

Step 1: Elicit some of the rules of the school or classroom from the students. You can use these to show the common grammatical structure of rules, for example, “Listen to the teacher” (imperative) or “You must wear a uniform” (positive modal verb). Later, when students are writing their rules of life, they should be written positively, so if any of the school rules are stated negatively, elicit from the students how they can be rewritten positively. For example, “You should not leave the classroom without permission” can be rewritten as “Ask the teacher for permission if you want to leave the classroom.”

Step 2: Explain that these school rules are made by someone else and that society creates many rules for us in every area of life. These are important, but we can also make rules for our own lives. Provide one or more of your prepared examples to inspire students, for example, “Always learn from your mistakes.”

Step 3: Ask students: “What rules will help you to have a happy and successful life?”

Step 4: Have students work alone for about 5 minutes to write 3–6 rules for their life.

Step 5: Have students share some of their rules in pairs, groups, or with the whole class.

Step 6: Introduce the idea of logos and identify some famous logos. (See Appendix for more details of Step 6–9).

Step 7: Have the students design a logo to represent each of their rules.

Step 8: Have the students combine them to create a ‘Life Logo’.

Step 9: Have the students make presentations to share their rules and ‘Life Logo’ in groups. Students should explain each rule and its logo. Then they should show how they combined the logos into a “Life Logo.” For a lower-intermediate class, 1–2 minutes is a suitable length.

Conclusion

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The January 2018 issue (42.1) of The
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This activity can be adapted to any class. It is a fun personalized activity that encourages autonomy and engagement in the language learning process and beyond. We have found that students appreciate the opportunity to think about their own lives in a structured way, and that they show more motivation towards language learning with this kind of personalized activity.

Reference

Templar, R. (2012). *The rules of life: A personal code for living a better, happier, more successful kind of life* (3rd ed.). Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited.

Appendix: *Examples of 'Rules of Life'*

Here are some examples from Robert Templar's (2012) book. Students will probably respond better to rules that you as their teacher share, especially if you put them into the context of a story from your life.

- Accept what is done is done.
- Be the last to raise your voice.
- Be your own adviser.
- Count to 10, you'll get an appropriate response
- Change what you can change, let go of the rest.
- Aim to be the very best at everything you do, not the second best.
- Don't be afraid to dream.
- Don't dwell on the past. Live here, live now. Live in this moment.
- Don't live in the future. Dreams are great but reality is fine too

Just sharing one or two examples with students is probably sufficient. You should be sure not to guide them too much because the activity is designed to promote independent thinking.

Step 6

"You probably know some logos of famous companies." If students' bags or clothes or other items have well-known logos, use them as examples. Or share some other famous logos. Then elicit more from the students. "What are some other logos?"

Step 7

"Use the boxes to create a logo for each of your rules. Add colour.

Explain your rules and logos to your classmates. "

Step 8

Two student examples of 'Life Logos' are shown.

- *My life logo combines "E", "R", and "C". "E" refers to "Sleep early and get up early", "R" refers to "Always be ready", and "C" refers to "Do not be afraid of changes."*
- *My Rules of Life: "Believe in myself", "Always do my best", and "Take a good rest."*

Step 9

The format and length of the presentations will depend on your students' age and English level. Example instructions for lower-intermediate first-year university students are suggested below.

- Make a presentation to the other members of your group.
- Your presentation should be 1–2 minutes long.
- Show one of your logos and explain the rule.
- Repeat for your other logos.
- Show your "Life Logo" and explain how it includes all the rules."

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