

The benefits

Projects involve students working together to produce something in English. They can require students to research and present information, create something or design something. Students might do two or all of these things. For example, students might research museums around the world, design their own museum idea, and present it to the class.

Projects in the English language classroom provide several benefits:

1 Authentic use of language

Students work on an authentic task which requires them to use English authentically. Projects also often develop all four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. At A2 level, code-switching (i.e. using a combination of English and L1) is acceptable as students work on projects, but do encourage students to use English as much as possible.

2 Development of personal skills

Projects require learners to collaborate, enabling them to develop skills such as the ability to co-operate, solve problems and communicate with their peers.

3 Development of autonomy

As project work involves students making decisions about how to achieve their learning objective, they are able to develop learner autonomy with support and guidance from their teacher.

4 Development of thinking skills

Students can develop information literacy and media literacy when doing research online, determining what information is useful, biased, misinformed etc. They can also develop critical thinking skills when analysing that information, evaluating it and deciding how to use it.

5 Development of creativity

Many projects require learners to be creative in some way. Creativity, along with collaboration, communication and critical thinking skills are considered to be key skills for 21st century learning.

6 Increased motivation

Project work can provide a break from lessons which have a very specific language or skills focus. They also offer students a chance to bring their own interests and experience to the classroom. In addition to that, all of the other benefits mentioned here can make project work motivating for students.

It is important to note that while project work provides many development opportunities, students are likely to need support in exploiting those opportunities, such as advice from their teacher on how to work independently or feedback on their communication skills.

How to extend Gold Experience projects

At the end of each unit in the Student's Book, there is a Switch On lesson which provides video input and listening tasks followed by a project. These can be completed in one lesson, or students can work on them over a longer period of time e.g. one lesson a week over a month plus homework. By extending the project, students can more fully benefit from it.

Below is the project task from Unit 1.

Project

- 5** Check understanding of the term *rewilding* (bringing a wild animal back to where it used to live, or increasing its numbers if there are still some there). Brainstorm rewilding projects with the class and write some on the board to give students ideas. If you don't come up with enough ideas, do a quick internet search with the class on the IWB. Put students into small groups and if you think it will help, break down the task for students on the board. Stronger classes can do Exs 5 and 6 together; otherwise pause the activity after Ex 5 for students to share their ideas and for you to offer any guidance needed before they move on to Ex 6. Ensure that they have gathered enough information to help them persuade people to help.

To expand the project over a longer period of time, you could do the following:

Lesson 1

In class

Students watch the video and complete the listening tasks.

Homework

Each student goes away and researches examples of tiny houses.

Lesson 2

In class

Students work in their pairs and share their research. They discuss what rooms they are going to have in their tiny house, and what things in each room. They divide the rooms between students.

Homework

Each student draws the plan for their allocated rooms.

Lesson 3

In class

In their pairs, students share room designs. Students plan how to share their design with the class and write a script for this.

Homework

Students practise their script.

Lessons 4 onwards

In class

Two or three pairs share their tiny house design with the class. It usually works best to have only a few students present in any one lesson to maximise interest of the other students. Get two or three watching students to give positive comments or ask questions to the presenting students.