

Dick's axe is always black

/sk/,/ks/ activities for Pre-
Intermediate (A2) learners and
above



Purple Hippo

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'Dick's axe is always black' /sk/,/ks/ activities
Teachers' Notes

Rationale – this set of material focuses on accurately hearing and producing the phonemes /sk/ks/ , which are frequently mispronounced by learners. Below is a suggested guide for using the materials, with timings. Teachers should feel free to adapt the materials and plan according to the needs of the class.

Phase 1 (15 minutes)

Introduce the phonemes that being studied. Focus on the sound /sk/. Beginning with a simple word like, 'ask', drill pronunciation with the class. Model and explain how the /s/ is made by a steady flow of air with the teeth touching, finishing off with a /k/. Then introduce /ks/, showing how a /k/ gives way to an /s/ sound. Do each very slowly, then practise using 'ask' and 'axe'. Try another pair, such as 'risk' and 'Rick's'

Phase 2 (15 minutes/homework)

Meaning of vocabulary

An activity to attach meaning to the vocabulary items already covered. As a class activity - students have Sheet 3 (in pairs), which has the definitions for the 20 words already introduced. Students then use their knowledge and guesswork to fill in the first column in pencil. Next, the teacher gives the answers as dictation, as extra listening practice, before the answers are shown on the board. This can be done by projecting Sheet 3 onto the whiteboard, with the students completing the space using board markers. Alternatively, Sheet 2 (words and definitions) can be used as a Running Dictation activity. As homework – Students take home the 20 words (as Sheet 1 or copied into their notebooks) and Sheet 3 (as a photocopy or sent by email) to complete using a dictionary (online if necessary), before checking in class.

Phase 3 (15 minutes)

Teacher dictation phase – a very important phase, in my experience, as students often have profound difficulty in accurately distinguishing similar sounds, even when carefully formed by a native speaker. Project the table of words (Sheet 1) being studied onto the whiteboard. The teacher can then quickly model the 20 words before dictating a random ten of them, which the students write in their books. Check answers – an easy way is for the students to number the words 1-10 on sheet 1 on the whiteboard, using board pens.

Phase 4 (15 minutes)

Teacher dictation 2 - Phase 2 can be followed up with a board race game of two teams, each with a differently coloured marker pen. One player from each team approaches the board. The aim is to circle the word that the teacher says.

Finish with *Group drilling practice* – the whole class says each word as the teacher points to it on the WB.

Phase 5 (15 minutes)

Student-student dictation

Another very valuable phase. In groups of 4, students write down, then dictate, a list of six words that they choose from the 20 on the board. The other students write down these on mini-whiteboards or on paper. The students then compare the results – pronunciation errors are often revealed at this stage. It is much better to use groups of 4 – if done in pairs, there is a chance that the listening student will make a correct guess on a badly pronounced item – this is far less likely in a group of four.

Phase 6 (20 minutes)

Student-student dictation mingle 1

Students each have a single line from Sheet 4 (cut up before the class by the teacher) and a copy of Sheet 5 / a blank notebook page. Students exchange the information in a mingle.

With a willing class (and teacher) the completed 10 lines can be used as a chant in class.

Phase 7 (15 minutes)

Student-student dictation mingle

Each student forms a single 'nonsense sentence', using prepositions to link the words together, for example, 'Decks on mask in brisk on backs'. The nonsense element means that mispronounced words cannot be guessed correctly from context, while it gives practice in using the words as part of a longer chunk, rather than in isolation.

Students mingle and exchange sentences. Final results could be checked by having the students write their own sentences in large letters on A4, and sticking these to the wall/whiteboard.

Phase 8 (20 minutes)

Student-student information exchange

Using the story, 'Dick's axe is always black', (Sheets 6-7), students exchange information to complete the whole story together. This can be done in pairs in running dictation style, or by working in a group of 4.

1

sk / ks

ask

axe

task

tax

desk

decks

disk

Dick's

mask

Max

dusk

ducks

brisk

bricks

bask

backs

Maxim

Maxwell

risk

Rick's

	sk/ks word	Definition
1	ask	When you make a question, you ____
2	Max	A male name, from the Latin for 'greatest'
3	axe	A sharp tool for chopping wood
4	ducks	a) to bend over quickly (verb- third person), b) a bird that can fly and swim (plural noun)
5	desk	A table for writing or working at.
6	backs	The rear of something (plural noun)
7	decks	The floor on a ship (plural noun)
8	maxim	A short statement, similar to a motto. Also, one of the first machine guns invented.
9	mask	Used to cover or hide your face
10	task	A job or a project
11	Maxwell	A Scottish family name. _____'s Silver Hammer is a song by The Beatles.
12	dusk	The time of day when the sun is setting – the opposite of dawn
13	tax	Money that is paid to the government.
14	bricks	Cuboids made from clay – useful for making houses (plural noun)
15	bask	To lie in the sunshine, or to enjoy warmth or praise from something.
16	disk	A round and flat thing
17	risk	A possible hazard or danger (noun), to take a chance in a dangerous situation (verb)
18	brisk	Similar to quick or fresh (adjective)
19	Dick's	It belongs to Dick!
20	Rick's	It belongs to Rick!

3	/sk/,/ks/ words	Definition
1		When you make a question, you _____
2		A male name, from the Latin for 'greatest'
3		A sharp tool for chopping wood
4		a) to bend over quickly (verb- third person), b) a bird that can fly and swim (plural noun)
5		A table for writing or working at.
6		The rear of something (plural noun)
7		The floors on a ship (plural noun)
8		A short statement, similar to a motto. Also, one of the first machine guns invented.
9		Used to cover or hide your face
10		A job or a project
11		A Scottish family name. _____'s Silver Hammer is a song by The Beatles.
12		The time of day when the sun is setting – the opposite of dawn
13		Money that is paid to the government.
14		Cuboids made from clay – useful for making houses (plural noun)
15		To lie in the sunshine, or to enjoy warmth or praise from something.
16		A round and flat thing
17		A possible hazard or danger (noun), to take a chance in a dangerous situation (verb)
18		Similar to quick or fresh (adjective)
19		It belongs to Dick!
20		It belongs to Rick!

4	<i>/sk/,/ks/ rhyming chant information exchange</i>
1	Ask axe task tax
2	To axe your tacks you have to ask
3	Desk decks disk Dick's
4	The disk you want is on Dick's desk
5	Mask Max dusk ducks
6	Ducks at dusk cannot find Max
7	Brisk bricks bask backs
8	Bricks bask on turtle backs
9	Maxwell and Maxim risk Rick's
10	Rick's biggest risk is Maxwell's Maxim

5	<i>/sk/,/ks/ rhyming chant information exchange</i>
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

6

/sk/,/ks/ story - Dick's axe

1.

Dick's axe is always black, I don't know why, I need to ask. It's right at the top of my list, a task to tax my floppy disk.

2.

Another bother is just this, when ducks fly south at half past six, is that too much of a risk?

3.

If they fly at dusk it is, for that's when Max goes round to Rick's, and those boys have tremendous fun, with a brisk tat-tat on a Maxim gun.

4.

Guns and boys rarely mix well, especially the boys called Maxwell, we're glad to see the backs of them, throwing bricks at half past ten, smashing up Dick's den and then breaking up his desk and, next, basking in the glory of the golden glow of a Molotov.

7

/sk/,/ks/ story gapfill

1.

_____ is always black, I don't know why, I need to _____. It's right at the top of my list, a _____ to _____ my floppy _____.

2.

Another bother is just this, when _____ fly south at half past six, is that too much of a _____?

3.

If they fly at _____ it is, for that's when _____ goes round to _____, and those boys have tremendous fun, with a _____ tat-tat on a _____ gun.

4.

Guns and boys rarely mix well, especially the boys called _____, we're glad to see the _____ of them, throwing _____ at half past ten, smashing up _____ den and then breaking up his _____ and, next, _____ in the glory of the golden glow of a Molotov.