



Activity 1: Pyramid discussion

Aims

To help your learners build a growth mindset by reflecting on their attitudes and beliefs about exam success and failure and by sharing useful learning strategies. To practise speaking (build fluency).

Level

Adaptable from A2 to C2 (additional follow-up activities suggested for different levels/ages).

Step 1

Lead-in – write the following questions on the board.

- What tests and exams have you taken in the past?
- How do you feel about taking tests and exams? Why?

Ask learners to discuss the questions in pairs or small groups.

Feedback: Elicit a range of adjectives of emotion from the class to describe how they feel about taking exams. Encourage and explore any positive adjectives, and ask learners to explain why they chose those words, before discussing any adjectives that might be linked to exam anxiety. Try to create a sense of positivity about exams to motivate and encourage learners.

Tip: You can also use the lesson to highlight common collocations e.g. take / pass / fail an exam.

Step 2

Write the headings below in bold on the board or make the table into a worksheet. Ask learners to work individually to think of one or two ideas to add to each heading.

Things I can do to prepare before the test ...	Things I can do so we feel at our best on the day of the test	Things I can do when I get our mock test results back...
(Example: Make sure I understand how to approach the tasks in each paper.)	(Example: Go to bed early the night before.)	...if I am happy with my results (Example: Keep studying to make sure I do as well as I can .) ...if I am not happy with our results (Example: Don't give up!)



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Step 3

Put learners into groups of three to four (depending on class size). Ask learners to work with their groups and share their ideas so they now come up with three to five ideas for each heading. Give an example for each to get them started and monitor to give one or two more ideas as necessary.

Lower levels may need some extra help.

Step 4

When learners have a variety of ideas, mix up the groups again. In their new groups they should decide on the three best ideas.

Step 5

Share ideas as a whole class. Give feedback – at this point you can guide learners as necessary by offering information and advice such as:

- The test will help you see which areas you need to work on.
- It will help us make a study plan together and choose the best practice activities.
- You will be more confident when you do the real exam.
- Don't give up easily even if it takes a long time to achieve your goal. You are more likely to be successful if you stay positive and keep trying.

Optional follow-up activities

- For lower levels, ask students to make their advice into a poster to put on the classroom wall. This might also work for higher level learners, depending on the class.
- The discussion can be adapted into a writing task for higher levels, for example:
 - Mock tests are useful tools for both learners and their teachers.
Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer.
- For homework, learners research a famous person who has been successful as a result of working towards a personal goal or something they really believe in (e.g. Greta Thunberg). They then share what they found out in groups.