

MEMBERSHIP

ADVERBS SONG

-LY

About this activity

A comedy song with a grammar point

- ▶ **Language level:** B1
- ▶ **Main task:** Students write verses to a song
- ▶ **Topics:** Music, rhythm and rhyme
- ▶ **Language focus:** Adverbs

For this activity, you will need the following:

- **Six flashcards** (see page 5)
- **An animated song on YouTube** (see below)
- **The worksheet** on page 4 (a copy for each student)

This is a lesson plan from the **LessonStream Membership**. For all materials and discussion, please go to the corresponding page in the Resources section:

<https://membership.lessonstream.com/resources/adverbs-song/>



The song

The Electric Company was an educational children's TV series produced by CTW, the same nonprofit organisation that created *Sesame Street*. It ran in the 1970s and used comedy sketches to help elementary school children develop their grammar and reading skills. Singer-songwriter Tom Lehrer wrote 10 songs for the series and this lesson plan makes use of one of them – a song titled "L-Y", which was used to teach adverbs.

Part one – flashcards

1. On the board or screen, write the following:

- a porcupine
- squeaky shoes
- count Dracula
- soaking wet
- taking a snooze
- a secret agent

2. Hold up the flash cards one at a time so that everyone can see them. In each case, elicit the phrase that it refers to. You can reinforce or clarify meaning with (concept checking) questions:

- If you met **a porcupine**, would it be a good idea to pat it like a dog? (Answer = no – they have very sharp hairs which they use to defend themselves.)
- If you have **squeaky shoes**, they make a noise when you walk in them. Can you think of something else that can be squeaky? (e.g. a squeaky voice, a squeaky toy, a squeaky door)
- **Count Dracula** is the most famous what? (Answer = vampire)
- If you are **soaking wet**, how wet are you? (Answer = very wet, 100% wet, completely wet)
- Can you give me another word for **a snooze** (Answer = a nap or a siesta)
- Can you give me an example of a famous **secret agent**? (e.g. James Bond)

3. In pairs or groups, ask students to complete the following sentences in any way that they like:

- The problem with squeaky shoes is that ...
- The problem with porcupines is that ...
- The problem with Count Dracula is that ...
- The problem with taking a snooze is that ...
- The problem with getting soaking wet is that ...
- The problem with secret agents is that ...

4. Go over your students' ideas and give language feedback when possible. Here are some ideas that came from my friend Andy:

- The problem with squeaky shoes is that they let the victim know the assassin is coming.
- The problem with porcupines is that you can't trust them with balloons.
- The problem with Count Dracula is that you can't reach him during the daytime.
- The problem with taking a snooze is that your teacher will be angry if you do it in class.
- The problem with getting soaking wet is that it can make your clothes shrink.
- The problem with secret agents is that you can never add them as friends on Facebook.

Part two – worksheet

1. Tell students that in a moment, they are going to hear a song by US singer-songwriter Tom Lehrer. Before that, they are going to work with the lyrics. Give out copies of the worksheet on page 4 and ask students to complete part 1 (**Gap fill**) according to the instructions provided.
2. Go over the answers.

i. snooze ii. man iii. most iv. wet v. knee vi. meet vii. room

3. Elicit a few examples of adverbs that end in “-ly” and write these on the board or screen (e.g. *quickly, perfectly, dangerously*, etc.) Then move onto part 2 of the worksheet (**Adverbs**). For each verse in the song, students should try to think of an “-ly” adverb which answers the question.

Notes:

- Go over the first verse together and make sure that students understand the task. Elicit a few possible adverbs to answer the question (e.g. *gently, carefully, quietly*)
- If students are at all confused, you can play the first verse of the song on YouTube. This will show them how it works.
- The task is open – students are not necessarily trying to predict the correct answers. It is more important that they explore possibilities and write down their own ideas.

4. Ask students to compare their answers. For each verse, what adverbs did they think of?
5. Play the video on YouTube and let students hear the song and enjoy the animated lyrics.
6. Go over the seven adverbs in the song. Find out if they were similar to your students’ answers.

i. silently ii. normally iii. eagerly iv. patiently v. quietly vi. carefully vii. immediately

Part three – students write their own verses

In their groups or pairs, or as a homework task, ask students to invent a new 4-line verse for the song. It should fit the same format as the others:

- Line one: **the situation**
- Line two: **the problem**
- Line three: **the question** beginning with “how”
- Line four: **the answer** – a single “-ly” adverb

Also:

- Lines one and two should rhyme if possible
- Students should write the verses in the second person

Adverbs song

Below are the lyrics to a song by singer-songwriter Tom Lehrer. As you can see, the song gives seven situations and asks seven questions.

1. **Gap fill:** In each verse, the last syllable on the first line rhymes with the last syllable on the second line. Use this information to predict the missing words.
2. **Adverbs:** Try to provide an answer to each question. In each case, suggest a single word – an adverb that ends with “-ly”.

i. You're wearing your squeaky **shoes**
And right there taking a _____
Is a tiger
So how do you walk on by?

ii. You're a secret agent _____
Who's after the secret **plan**
How do you act so they don't know you're as spy?

iii. At an eating contest you **boast** *
That you can eat the _____
How do you down ** your fiftieth piece of pie?

iv. On the lake your boat was **upset** (👎)
And your clothes got soaking _____
How do you stand and wait for them to dry?

v. In the public library
You fall and you hurt your _____
But the sign says "quiet please," so how can you cry?

vi. As you walk along the **street**
A porcupine you _____
How do you shake his hand when he says hi?

vii. You enter a very dark _____
And sitting there in the **gloom** ***
Is Dracula!
Now how do you say goodbye?

-LY

* If you **boast**, you proudly tell other people about your life, your achievements, your children, what you can do, etc. It is considered a bad thing to do. (E.g. "He never stops boasting about his 7-figure salary.")

** If you **down** something, you drink or eat all of it very fast. (E.g. "Quick! We have to leave. Down your beer.")

*** **Gloom** = darkness



