

1. The United States

This week's lesson is about the United States, which famously celebrates its national independence on 4th July.

Level

Pre-intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level A2-B1 and above)

How to use the lesson

1. Brainstorm on the subject of the United States.

2. Divide the students into pairs and give each pair a copy of Worksheet A. Give them a few minutes to read the text, looking up any new vocabulary, then ask them to fill the gaps with the correct words from the box. This exercise introduces some of the vocabulary that appears on Worksheet B. Make it clear that there is only one possible word to fill each gap, and that there are fifteen words in the box but only twelve gaps in the text, meaning that three of the words should not be used.

3. Check answers in open class.

4. Keeping the students in their pairs, hand out copies of Worksheet B in which students have to match the numbers in the first column of the table with the items in the middle column. Point out that in a couple of cases the numbers are approximate. Although Worksheet A provides help, in some cases students might have to take a guess.

5. Check answers in open class.

6. Keeping the students in their pairs, ask them to turn over their copies of Worksheets A and B or to temporarily hand them back to you. Then hand out Worksheet C and ask the students to complete Exercise 3 in which they have to look at fifteen sentences based on the content of Worksheets A and B, decide whether they have been written correctly, and then 'bet' anything from 10 to 50 points on their guesses. In the first column after the statements they should write C (correct) or I (incorrect). In the second column they should write the number of points they are willing to bet on their answer (10 points if they are forced to guess, going up to 50 if they are very confident about the answer). Note that most of the incorrect sentences only contain one mistake.

6. After the pairs have given their answers, it's time to score. Each pair calls out their answer and how many points they have bet. If they have answered correctly, students enter their points in the final column (points won). If they have answered incorrectly, they should enter their points in the third column (points lost). At the end, students subtract the total of the third column from the total of the fourth column to give the total number of points they have won. The pair with the most points wins.

Answers

Exercise 1

1. third 2. states 3. England 4. longest 5. highest 6. flag 7. rectangle
8. cars 9. two 10. election 11. candidate 12. voted

Words that should not be used: very, votes, bigger

Exercise 2

A: 13 B: 750 C: 1961 D: 3 E: 6,194 F: 8 G: 52 H: 4,401 I: 50 J: 2
K: 75 L: 43

Exercise 3

1. **Incorrect.** Barack Obama **was** born in 1961.
2. **Correct.**
3. **Incorrect.** There are thirteen **stripes** on the flag of the United States.
4. **Correct.**
5. **Incorrect.** Barack Obama **won** the **presidential** election in November 2008.
6. **Correct.**
7. **Incorrect.** New Mexico is in **the** south-west of the United States.
8. **Correct.**
9. **Incorrect.** The United States is about 75 **times** bigger than England.
10. **Incorrect.** The **height** of Mount McKinley is 6,194 metres.
11. **Correct.**
12. **Correct.**
13. **Incorrect.** Alaska is the **biggest** state in the United States.
14. **Incorrect.** Mount McKinley is not **in** the Rockies.
15. **Incorrect.** The average number of cars **per** household **is** two.

2. Related Websites

Send your students to these websites, or just take a look yourself.

http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States

The United States entry in *Simple English Wikipedia*. Challenging for pre-intermediate level.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_7710000/newsid_7710000/7710068.stm

An article from BBC *Newsround* (2008) on Barack Obama's presidential election victory, with links on the right-hand side of the page to various other Obama-related items. Challenging for pre-intermediate level.

<http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/customs/questions/americanbritish.html>

Differences in vocabulary between American and British English, grouped into subject categories. Pre-intermediate level and above.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/country_profiles/1217752.stm

United States country profile from the BBC website. Intermediate level and above.