

Activity 2: Special Occasions (CEFR B1)

Level:
CEFR B1

Time:
90 minutes

Resources:

- ✓ Photos of an English wedding
- ✓ Greetings cards
- ✓ Handout
- ✓ Handout/website "Cards for all occasions"

Aims:

- ✓ To develop skills and knowledge in speaking and listening at Entry 3
- ✓ To explore vocabulary connected to Entry 3 topics
- ✓ To practise giving a descriptive account of special occasions
- ✓ To practise the language of describing and comparing and contrasting and giving opinions

Exam task focus: Component 1 Tasks 1 & 2

Procedure

1. Introduction and personalisation

- Tell the class we are going to talk about special occasions and celebrations. Everyone celebrates important events in their lives, but we all do that in different ways.
- Ask if anyone has got married recently or is planning a wedding (their own or someone in their family) or have a few wedding photos ready to contextualise. This will give you an opportunity to elicit, drill and board some of the key vocabulary.

2. Key vocabulary

- Pair or group students in threes if you can so they are with someone from a different cultural tradition, to put into breakout rooms (BORs). The speaking activity will then be genuinely authentic.
- Distribute the handout and ask them to read the passage in Task 1. They can check with each other on words that are new or call you over for help
- Then whole class check understanding and pronunciation.

3. Speaking activity

- Set up students to work in pairs or small groups in BORs using the prompt sheet in Task 2 and monitor and support. Then take feedback back in the main room. They must tell you what they learnt from their friend.

Materials

Wedding photos

Share handout via chatbox

4. Freer discussion promoting giving opinions

- At this stage elicit opinions to encourage use of intensifiers **too/not enough**
- Prompt by making statements about aspects of UK weddings.
- For example, *In the UK hen and stag parties have recently become very elaborate. People often go together on a mini break to another country. What do you think about that?* (other topics, party favours, expense of weddings generally)
- Write a couple of sentences demonstrating this use of intensifiers up to conclude.

5. Comparing and contrasting

- Ask students to choose. They must be ready to talk about the differences in wedding celebrations either between in the UK and their own culture or between a friend's culture and their own culture.
- Using the prompts on the handout, elicit some more examples.
- Put Ss into BORs to share their experiences.
- Back in the main room, elicit examples from a few different pairs.

6. Freer practice

- Now ask them to think of a wedding they would like to talk about and make some notes. Then in BOR pairs one asks questions and comments as the other talks.
- On returning to the main room, get a couple of pairs to do it for the whole class and encourage further comments and questions.
- Then they switch.

7. Other special occasions and excuses for celebrations

- Show them a few (real) cards if possible eg Birthday:
- Ask students *What other occasions do we celebrate?*
- On board elicit and write up the following:
- (scribe in this order - you may also get culturally specific ones such as first communion, big 15th birthday party for girls and other significant birthday or wedding anniversary years)
 - New baby
 - Birthday
 - Graduation
 - Wedding
 - Anniversary
 - Retirement
- It would be possible here to use the website handout for reading practice and further exploration of the topic. You could also do a writing activity choosing and completing a card appropriately.

8. Game

- See how many examples of the ones listed can you find on the website handout.

Cards

Cards for all occasions handout or website

NOTE: <https://www.greetingsisland.com/cards/events-and-occasions>

9. Free practice and extension

- Ask them to choose one of the other occasions and be ready to talk about it. Pair students up as far as possible with someone who has the same choice. Students discuss in BORs.
- At feedback, back in MR, ask them to explain some of the differences in the way the event they were talking about is celebrated and do further practice of the target language for describing differences.
- Then switch them so they are working with someone different and have further practice in a new BOR.
- Finally back in MR, if time and if they have been in the UK a while they may have been to a celebration here (including a wedding). Encourage the students to talk about this and what they found surprising.

Cultural awareness and appropriacy

All these special occasions are very culturally specific, and it is easy to act inappropriately without realising it. It is worth talking about any work-related occasions (someone leaving, new baby, etc.) if relevant to your students to support them in building social bonds with work colleagues.

Handout

Task 1- Weddings in the UK

The wedding ceremony

In England you can have a civil ceremony in the Town Hall or in a special place like a hotel. You can also have a religious ceremony, either in a religious building, like a church or in a special place.

People

There are special names for some of the people at a wedding. **The bride and groom** are the lady and man getting married.

The **best man** is a relative or friend of the groom. He gives a speech at the **wedding reception**, the party after the wedding ceremony, and **proposes a toast** to the bride and groom

Many brides have **bridesmaids** who wear special matching dresses. They can be friends of the bride or little children.

Traditions

There are traditions we sometimes follow at weddings.

To be lucky the bride should wear "something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue".

When the bride and groom leave the formal ceremony the guests throw **confetti**, little pieces of coloured paper at them.

Before the wedding

More and more couples now have extra parties before the wedding for their friends.

The party for the groom and his friends is called a **stag party**. The party for the bride's female friends and family members is a **hen party**.

Handout

Task 2 - Weddings around the world

In pairs or small groups find out how weddings are celebrated in your friend's country.

Here are some questions you could ask.

In your country

- 1 Is there a special ceremony on the wedding day? Is it religious or cultural?
- 2 What does the bride wear? Is there a special colour for her dress?
- 3 Where do you have the wedding reception?
- 4 How many guests come to the wedding?
- 5 How long does the wedding reception last?
- 6 Are there any parties before the day of the wedding?
- 7 Tell me about a tradition which brings luck for the couple.

Task 3 - Comparing and contrasting

Weddings in my country are **much bigger**/longer/simpler than in the UK.

Prewedding ceremonies such as Henna night are **much more important** than in other countries.

Weddings in the UK are not **as formal as** in my country.

Nowadays brides dress the same as in the UK. **However** in the past they used to.....

Be ready to make a true statement comparing weddings in your country with weddings here or in another country

Cards for all occasions

The screenshot shows the GreetingsIsland website interface. At the top left is the GreetingsIsland logo. A navigation menu includes 'Invitations', 'Cards', 'Calendars', and 'Search'. The main content area features a pink background with the text 'Cards For All Occasions' and 'Special occasions are a great time to tell people in your life you c'. Below this is an image of a white envelope with two gold rings and a dark card that says 'Congratulations MRS Mrs. Wonderful Couple!'. On the right side, there is a search bar and several filter buttons: 'AdChoices', 'free greeting cards', 'personalized cards', 'best congratulations card', and 'of greeting cards for all occ'. Below the filters is a grid of card thumbnails, including a blue arrow, a green 'GO' button, a red 'STOP' button, a black and white splatter, a gold textured card, a yellow smiley face, a green arrow, and a green smiley face. A sidebar on the right lists 'Events & Occasions' with sub-categories: Anniversary, Bar Mitzvah, Engagement, Graduation, New baby, and Retirement.

Image: Screen capture taken from <https://www.greetingsisland.com/cards/events-and-occasions>