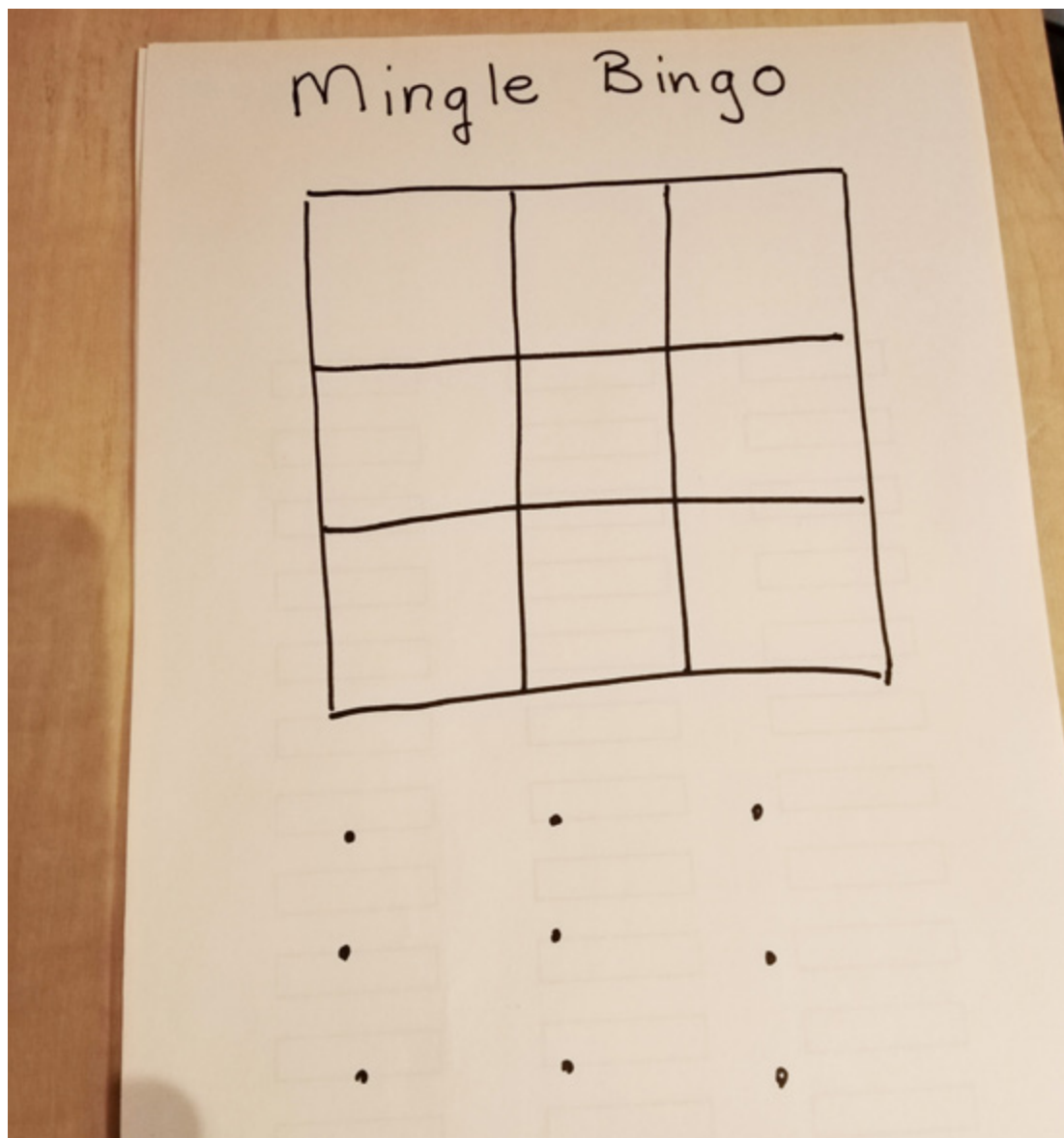


Mingle Bingo

by SUZAN ARRER AND ALIYA SADUOVNA ZHOLDABAYEVA



A blank chart, with nine dots underneath. Students will write information about themselves beside each dot; then, in each square, they will write the name of a classmate and one piece of information about that classmate.

Mingle Bingo is a classic mingle activity in that it involves a face-to-face exchange of information between classmates, with learners chatting simultaneously and then reporting their findings to the entire group. The bingo aspect adds an element of fun. Mingle Bingo can be used as an icebreaker in

one of your first encounters with a group—it is great for learning new names—but it can also be repeated on a regular basis to reinforce structures or vocabulary (see the Variations section near the end of this article). It can be adjusted to become an engaging activity for learners of all proficiency levels.

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Mingle Bingo requires practically no preparation on the part of the teacher other than to decide what purpose the activity should serve at that particular time for that particular learning level. Here, we will describe using Mingle Bingo as an icebreaker, so imagine that this is our first class. Learner level for the example we use is intermediate, although the activity can be used with upper-beginner and advanced learners as well. In any case, students are sharing real-life information with classmates, face-to-face, in a low-stress but active environment.

With smaller classes (about 15 students), the activity can take up to 90 minutes with information being shared about all students. Suggestions for using the activity with larger classes can be found at the end of the Procedure section. The only materials required are one blank A4 sheet of paper per learner and something to write with, along with a whiteboard and markers (or a chalkboard and chalk).

PREPARATION

Students get a blank piece of paper and draw a chart on the top half—just a big square (about 7 inches by 7 inches) that is divided into nine smaller boxes, with three boxes across and three boxes down. Underneath the chart, students make nine dots, one under the other (bullet points). See the photo on page 33 for an example.

The teacher asks students to think of nine bits of information about themselves and to write one piece of information next to each bullet point. Students should list only one or two words or a phrase, not full sentences. (See the photo on page 35.) To get students

thinking, the teacher can offer prompts, orally or on the board, such as favorite foods, pets, family, hobbies, and so on. The information should ideally be things that others do not yet know about the person. At the same time, it should not be too personal, as the information will be shared with the class. Discourage students from writing down information that is already clear, such as “I am learning English” and “I am a student.” After everyone has nine bits of information listed at the bullet points, Mingle Bingo can begin!

PROCEDURE

Step 1 involves preparing students to exchange information. The teacher writes key language on the board:

Hello, I'm [name]. Nice to meet you. ...

Nice to meet you, too! (Or Likewise!) ...

Can you tell me something about yourself?

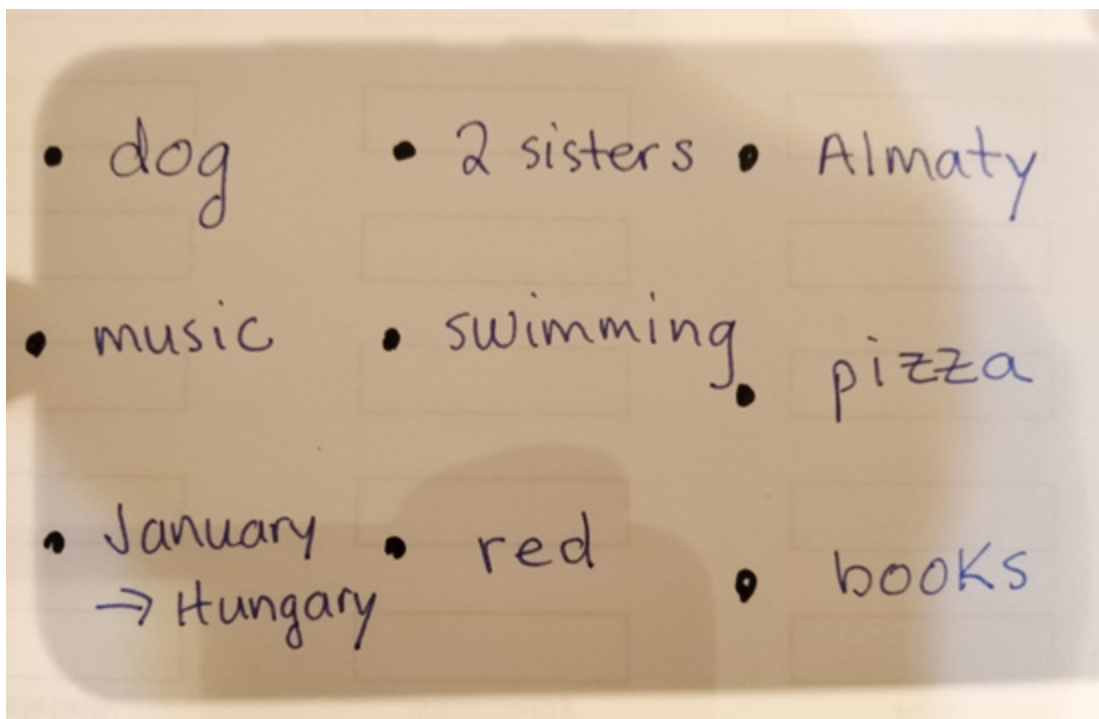
The teacher chooses one student to come to the front of the class and provides a demonstration of how the exchange will work when the activity begins. An example might go like this:

Teacher: Hello, I'm Sally Jones. ... What's your name?

Student: Hello. I'm Anargul. Nice to meet you.

Teacher: Likewise! Can you tell me something about yourself, Anargul?

Student: Yes. I have two sisters.



Nine bits of information that a student has written about herself; she will share these bits, one by one, with classmates during the mingle.

Teacher (*writes student's name in first box of chart and adds the information received—"two sisters"*):
Really? What are their names?

Student: Gulsana and Aygul.

Anargul then asks the teacher, "Can you tell me something about yourself?" When the teacher responds, Anargul uses her own chart to note down the information she receives.

After names and information have been recorded in the chart, the teacher checks to make sure the procedure is clear. If necessary, the teacher can ask two other students to conduct a similar "encounter" in front of the class. It is important that the students understand that they give *different* information to each person they chat with—and that they give just one piece of information to each person.

Step 2 is having students mingle and exchange information. When the teacher is confident that the students know what to do, all students stand up and mingle throughout the classroom. Once they have chatted with nine people and their chart is completed with nine different names, they may return to their seats.

In Step 3, students share the information they have gathered about their classmates. If possible, students should sit in a large circle so that everyone can see one another. To demonstrate the next step, the teacher begins, referring to his or her chart.

Teacher: I talked to Anargul. She said she has two sisters. Their names are Gulsana and Aygul. (*On the chart, the teacher demonstratively crosses out the block with Anargul's name.*) Who else talked to Anargul?

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It is important that the students understand that they give different information to each person they chat with—and that they give just one piece of information to each person.

Student 1: I talked to Anargul. She told me she doesn't like pizza. (*Student 1 may now cross off Anargul's name on his or her chart.*)

Student 2: Anargul said she plays volleyball. (*Student 2 crosses off Anargul's name.*)

Student 3: Anargul has a boyfriend in Shymkent. (*Student 3 crosses off Anargul's name.*)

Students 4 through 9 continue with information about Anargul. Each time a student speaks up and says what he or she has learned about Anargul, that student can cross off Anargul's name on his or her chart.

The teacher explains that when three names *in a row* are crossed off, students can call out "Bingo!" (Teachers can decide whether to award a small prize or whether it's enough to write "BINGO Winners" on the board and list the winners' names underneath.) "In a row" can be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal. Students who call out "Bingo!" must repeat the names of their "Bingo people," gesturing or nodding to them. Doing this helps students remember names in the new group. After some time, when there have been several BINGOs, the teacher can change the rules and explain: "Now we will play for the full card. Whoever has *every* name crossed off can call 'Bingo!' and is the grand champion!"

As mentioned above, sharing obtained information on 15 learners, plus the teacher, should take about 90 minutes. For bigger groups, two (or more) circles can be formed, with students put in charge of each group and the teacher moving back and forth between groups. Or the sharing-information step can be carried over to the next class meeting.

FOLLOW-UP

The teacher can take notes on vocabulary and grammar that students produce and may want to discuss these items during a follow-up class. In any case, associations between students' names and information provided will help everyone remember who is who, long after the activity is over.

VARIATIONS

Mingle Bingo can be adjusted according to learners' needs. It can focus on one structure (e.g., *have/has/doesn't have*). Students could list nine things that they have or don't have, then share that information with their classmates. When reporting time comes, it sounds like this:

Student 1: I talked to Anargul. She has two sisters.

Student 2: Anargul also has a dog.

Associations between students' names and information provided will help everyone remember who is who, long after the activity is over.

Student 3: Anargul said she does not have a car.

Student 4: Anargul has a blue phone.

And so on.

Other structures that could be selected for practice include *likes ... /doesn't like ... ; wants to ... ; and can ... /can't ...* . A focus could also be placed on vocabulary groups, such as pets, vegetables, animals, and sports. The possibilities are endless!

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Photos by Suzan Arrer