

DEVELOPING FLUENCY AND ACCURACY USING TECHNOLOGY

Creating Mini–TED Talks to Increase Speaking Fluency

Zuzana Tomaš

Levels	<i>Intermediate to advanced</i>
Aims	<i>Improve oral summarizing skills</i> <i>Practice speaking fluency</i> <i>Learn new vocabulary</i>
Class Time	<i>45 minutes–1 hour</i>
Preparation Time	<i>0–90 minutes</i>
Resources	<i>Access to TED talks</i>

This activity revolves around TED Talks (www.ted.com). These online talks range from relatively informal, high-interest stories to highly academic, lecture-like presentations and are easily accessible online. Because of the large variety of topics and high-interest content, TED Talks have been shown to motivate second language learners (DaVia Rubenstein, 2012). Though TED Talks lend themselves to a large range of activities, this activity has been designed to help students with increasing fluency in oral summaries—a valuable skill in various social (e.g., personal introductions, small talk) and academic (e.g., article or lecture summaries) tasks.

PROCEDURE

1. Guide students to select a TED Talk that they find engaging and accessible.
2. Ask them to watch the selected TED Talk three times. The first time, they should watch it for main ideas and general understanding. The second time, they should take notes to guide their subsequent summarizing. The third time, they should pause and take notes on useful language that they plan to use in their summarized versions of the talks. (*Note:* Direct copying is acceptable in this task; students can learn and use the exact vocabulary and/or phrases used in the original talks. You may require that students give credit to the original source and acknowledge that they have copied language chunks in their mini-talks.)
3. At home, students practice preparing mini–TED Talks of 2–4 minutes in length; they are based on the original talks. In class, they present to each other in small groups of three or four. To provide further fluency practice, students can then be encouraged to present their talks to the whole class, thus totaling three to four total repetitions, which is a prerequisite for fluency practice.

4. The activity may end there or be extended by focusing on more general speaking skills. Encourage students to relate different ideas from TED Talks to their own lives in group or class discussions.

CAVEATS AND OPTIONS

1. To save on preparation time, students can select the TED Talks.
2. To support students who may be anxious about continuous speech in front of peers, model the task, have students first present to you, or shorten the expected mini-talks.
3. Students can be challenged to teach a limited number of useful expressions from their TED Talks to their peers, following their presentations.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

DaVia Rubenstein, L. (2012). Using TED Talks to inspire thoughtful practice. *The Teacher Educator*, 47(4), 261–267.