

# Textercise

A set of blended m-learning exercises  
for teens and adults  
at CEF A2 (elementary) and above

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Brighter ELT



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**Key:** Ls = learner(s) or student(s)/TTs = teacher(s) or trainer(s).

**The aims of this title are:**

- To use the Ls' mobile device as stimulation for open-ended, skills-based group work.
- To use and enhance Ls' writing, typing, negotiating, suggesting, listening and speaking skills.
- Learning and enhancing cooperative, creative, negotiating, risk-taking and blue sky thinking skills in a supportive environment.

If you are new to m-learning, get ready to experience a new phenomenon on the next 45+ pages that is starting to spread across all areas of teaching and training; from universities, colleges and private language institutions to arts education, m-learning is taking off in some unique and special areas.

Most TTs are a little worried about using m-learning as it is new and unpredictable. But with these tried and tested plans you have some sound tools to get you started.

In general, m-learning is easier to set up and use than earlier e-learning packages on the market. This is emphasised here because the lesson plans in this book use SMS (short message service) to deliver instruction to the Ls.

Most contracts in the UK offer 'fair usage' or free SMS, which means that immediately the biggest worry for most training institutions, costs, are eliminated. The second worry for most institutions and TTs alike is the setting up of the new lesson structure, especially since using technology often means an additional burden in terms of training.

However, m-learning involves using technology that most people are already familiar with. Problems may occur but this is far less likely than say trying to connect with a group via VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) or getting a projector to work in front of a group who are sitting there twiddling their thumbs as you sweat, pressing endless buttons in a vain effort to get something to appear on the screen!

This means you can now concentrate on the delivery of the product, be it business training or education. There are several ways to go about delivering the product to the Ls – some of which are listed below – and with a little imagination you will probably think of a whole lot more!

These plans are for task-based discussions with groups but can also be adapted for use in 1:1 situations. They work by texting the first message to the Ls (either one Ls in a group or the whole group individually) who then work together to find a solution.

The biggest strength of m-learning is in capturing the attention of hard-to-reach Ls who feel disengaged from the learning process or in an adult context with people who are away from the central hub (e.g. head office) but need to be kept in the loop.

These plans can be used via a combination of technologies (for example with dispersed groups around the country or indeed the world) or with blended learning where TTs use a combination of traditional face-to-face instruction with additional technologies.

There are no right or wrong answers to the problems presented in the units of this publication; though some are more commonsensical than others, they are there as a springboard for generating discussion and negotiation. Best results are obtained when groups work together using the strengths of the individuals collectively.

We have included a number of extra text messages under the heading of **Extra**, which are there for you to use at your discretion. They can be invaluable when you have larger groups where one team finishes a task ahead of the others.

No matter how you decide to execute the session, the most important thing is to facilitate an open and supportive environment where Ls feel they can take risks.

Setting up the plan has been kept as straightforward as possible. All you have to do is type in your message to the device you are going to send the message from and save it to drafts until you are ready to send it (remember, it may be there for future sessions too).

You could even ask a colleague to send the message at a pre-set time to the target Ls.

Remember to get the Ls' mobile numbers prior to the session so you have time to prepare.

Preparation for a group of 40 Ls should not take more than an hour the first time round and after this you will begin to get the swing of it and so it will become a lot easier. You may want to practice by sending the messages to a colleague first.

The message could be sent via Bluetooth or through the web if you wish. Use the method you are most comfortable with in order to deliver the message.

*Textercise* also comes with a '**Notes**' section at the end of each plan. This enables you to reflect on the session and record the things that worked well and areas that could be improved upon.

*Allowing yourself time to reflect on each session is an important part of your continued professional development (CPD). Keep this section up to date and refer to it often.*

## Suggested Procedure

**ELT levels** are given for language institutions but will also be helpful with international groups.

The **aims** are the same for each unit but are restated on each plan to help keep TTs focused on the overall objectives and desired outcomes of the activity.

**Times** are given as a general guide only and should not be taken as an exact fit for each plan. Groups will vary and so too will the times.

**Materials** are the extra resources you may find helpful.

As a general rule, you may decide that Ls can use their mobile device to record their answers in the 'notepad' function or if you trust them, why not get one of the Ls to record the conversation using their 'voice record' function? You could use this later as a resource for examining the process of negotiation – and for non-English mother tongue speakers, this is a great resource for pronunciation practice, fluency and correction.

**Pre-class** offers guidance on particular areas that could be looked into before this session takes place. This could be used as a warm-up or a lead-in for the session. It serves as a loose introduction to the topic.

**Procedure** is the key to successful implementation of the plan. It provides an overview of the plan and how it should look in theory to both TTs and Ls. It introduces the activity more fully and gives a break down of the different components to the plan.

**Additional information** is just that! This section will provide you with some resources or offer some advice on some fun extra activities.

The **Internet** section may provide a web resource for use with the plan or simply offer additional tasks for the Ls to complete online.

The **Instruction** text could be sent to one member of the small group and disseminated to the group through that Ls; alternatively, Ls could be sent the message individually.

The **Extra** texts could be sent to another group member providing a more inclusive style of learning for the group.

**Answer sheets** are provided as a means to record solutions. Alternative methods can be used but remember it is good practice to have some reflection on the task.

For 1:1 sessions, the main task could be delivered to the Ls' mobile device before the session. *Not all tasks are appropriate for 1:1 or for the cultural setting – this is left to your discretion.*

**REMEMBER:** The extras do not need to be included and are there as additional materials if time allows and if appropriate to the session. They can even be used as an opening for another session with the same group, or why not reverse the extras and instruction?

Planning is essential for any class activity, and this applies to m-learning too. It is very important that you type out the text instruction and save it to 'drafts' before the session. The message could be sent just before the session begins, at the beginning or after your lead-in. If you are new to m-learning, we suggest that you test a number of different approaches to find which one best suits your needs. It is also vital that you have the correct contact details of the Ls to whom the messages are to be sent.

You may also need an agreement to use the Ls' number(s) for the session. We have supplied a possible template for this at the back of this publication. However, it may need rewriting for your particular situation.

The text boxes look like this:

Instruction	Count
1.1 You are being sent to a desert island. In small groups, choose 8 things to take with you. No communication device, people or transport allowed.	143
Extra	
1.2 If you had a choice of remaining on the island for life or trying to leave the island with a 25% chance of survival, which would you choose? Why?	146
1.3 You have been on the island for 25 years. Suddenly you are saved. What are the first 3 questions you would ask about the world?	127
1.4 What would you miss the most?	29
1.5 What 3 DVDs would you take with you?	36
1.6 What 3 CDs would you take with you?	35
1.7 Text an SOS from your island.	29
1.8 Briefly describe the 3 books you would take to the island.	58

The first box (**Instruction**) is the most important as this is the main task for the Ls. Each text is numbered for convenience. These numbers are not included in the '**Count**' on the right which contains the number of characters to the text. Most phones today allow 160 characters, but older phones only allow 150. For this reason, we have made every effort to keep the number of characters in each text to below 150.

In the next section (**Extra**) there are additional messages that may be sent in any order. They are not an essential part of the plan (see '**REMEMBER**' above) and are offered as additional resources for use at the TTs' discretion. These provide an additional dynamic and sometimes support to the initial text.

## Textercise 1: Desert Island

**ELT Level:** A1/ALTE level 0/breakthrough/elementary and above.

**Aims:** To report a completed task. This can either be written on paper, texted, emailed or saved to draft or notepad on Ls' mobile devices for viewing by TTs and/or class later.

**Time:** Approximately 40 minutes for the first text. The 'extra' at the end could be used as a follow-up or incorporated into the session (time allowing). This section should take approximately 10 – 15 minutes.

**Materials:** Writing materials maybe required.

**Pre-class:** What is the biggest adventure your Ls have been on or would like to go on?

**Procedure:** In this activity, the Ls have to decide what eight items they are going to take with them to survive on a desert island. Allow plenty of time for the Ls to digest the task and organise themselves into small groups. Optional extras if required which can be done as group work or individually.

**Additional Info:** They are political prisoners and are going to spend the rest of their lives on this island. The island has a good climate and vegetation; food and shelter can easily be found.

**Internet:** Find the cheapest flights to the following island destinations:  
Cuba, Iceland, Madagascar and Papua New Guinea.

Instruction	Count
1.1 You are being sent to a desert island. In small groups choose 8 things to take with you. No communication device, people or transport allowed.	142
<b>Extra</b>	
1.2 If you had a choice of remaining on the island for life or trying to leave the island with a 25% chance of survival, which would you choose? Why?	146
1.3 You have been on the island for 25 years. Suddenly you are saved. What are the first 3 questions you would ask about the world?	127
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Desert Island – Answer sheet

<p>You are being sent to a desert island. In small groups choose 8 things to take with you. No communication device, people or transport allowed.</p>	
<p>If you had a choice of remaining on the island for life or trying to leave the island with a 25% chance of survival, which would you choose? Why?</p>	
<p>You have been on the island for 25 years. Suddenly you are saved. What are the first 3 questions you would ask about the world?</p>	
<p>What would you miss the most?</p>	
<p>What 3 DVDs would you take with you?</p>	
<p>What 3 CDs would you take with you?</p>	
<p>Text an SOS from your island.</p>	
<p>Briefly describe the 3 books you would take to the island.</p>	

**Notes on Textercise 1:**

**What worked really well?**

**What could be improved?**