

Help the meaning come first

Suggested A2-B1 | About 25-30 minutes | No recording required

Share: page 1, then private page A (2) or B (3). Separate role PDFs are supplied.
Keep this page for you.

Outcome: ask about two jobs, describe dates and lengths, and check a similarity and difference.

Teach, practise, check

3 minutes: elicit one work or study example; fictional answers are welcome.

5: use Nora's timelines. Ask whether each job continues. Establish how long, starting point and start/finish dates.

3: check the four choices, including why for works in two different tenses.

8: send the private pages separately. Partners interview; both ask and answer. Do not display both profiles together.

4: hear one shared fact and one difference. Give one repair about meaning or form.

3-5: use the new facts below. Reduce support and hear each learner speak again. Adjust timings as needed.

Answers and useful alternatives

Page 1: a since; b for; c from; d for.

Alex: North Cafe for four years / since 2022. Park Hotel for three years / from 2018 to 2021.

Sam: Hill Hotel for three years / since 2023. River Cafe for four years / from 2017 to 2021.

Similarities: both have four years of cafe work and three years of hotel work; both left the previous job in 2021. Differences: current job, start date and order of cafe/hotel jobs. Accept any accurate comparison.

Accept have worked / have been working for continuing jobs. For works with finished and continuing periods. Here, since links a start to now; from ... to ... marks start and finish. Since also works with past perfect when the reference point is past.

Try again after feedback

New facts (today: 1 July 2026):

Mina: art course, 1 July 2025 to now.

Earlier music course: 1 July 2020 to 1 July 2022.

Partners ask about both courses. Each gives a length and a date phrase, then checks the answer. Learners may read the facts.

Key: art for one year / since 2025; music for two years / from 2020 to 2022. Note: accurate alone / after a cue / with the model. Share facts without answers online.

Use the facts. Enjoy the puzzle.

Select this activity separately from the time-expression lesson.

Keep the learning useful

Focus on describing, explaining and choosing a phrase that fits the known facts. Check cows, wolves and kittens before starting. The unusual group words are an optional puzzle, not essential everyday vocabulary or a required memory list.

A short route

3 minutes: establish herd, pack, litter and the useful general phrase a group of.

4: learners choose the words for the four cases and compare.

3: ask for reasons. Check why different mothers prevent us calling case d one litter.

3-5, optional: use the word puzzle with the three animal names visible. Explain porcupine if needed: an animal with sharp spines.

3-5: pairs describe animals without naming them. Each listener asks a question before guessing. Shorten the optional stage when needed.

Answers and boundaries

1: a herd; b pack; c litter; d group, using each word once in this exercise. A group of cows/wolves/kittens is also normal English in suitable contexts; these are not exclusive labels for each species.

3: tower of giraffes; leap of leopards; prickle of porcupines. These are attested unusual expressions. The imagined clues are memory aids, not claims about the phrases' historical origins.

4: there is no fixed animal description. Accept clear, accurate clues and a reasoned guess.

A fresh check

Three puppies were born to one dog last night.

Four kittens, each from a different mother, are sharing a room.

Ask learners to describe each group and explain the choice. Model answers: a litter of puppies; a group of kittens. Other accurate general descriptions are welcome.

Support: keep the examples visible; use a shared language for animal names. Stretch: ask which expressions learners would actually use and which are mainly a word game.

Online/one-to-one: read one case, let the learner explain, then change the facts. No pictures, printing or recording are required.

Sources checked: Cambridge Dictionary: herd, pack, litter; British Council: How long; San Diego Zoo: porcupines and leopards; Save Giraffes Now: tower. Original tasks and fictional profiles by Gav & Em. Classroom outcomes remain untested.

A request for extra lessons

A communication and reflection tool inspired by S05E14

A learner on a company-organised course asks about extra lessons directly with you. Before offering a price or timetable, make the next step clear. Use the route that applies to your work.

1. Clarify the request

What help does the learner want? Who organises the course? What needs checking before you offer a separate lesson?

2. Choose the next step

Who can clarify the organising route? What will you tell the learner before sharing their request? What can you say now?

3. Draft a reply

An adaptable example: Thanks for asking. As your current course is arranged through the company, I will check how extra lessons can be organised. I will let you know the next step once that is clear.

My reply: _____

4. Try it with a colleague

One person plays the learner and asks when the lessons can start. The teacher replies warmly and explains the next step. Swap roles, then improve one sentence.

Check and follow through

Does the reply acknowledge the request and name a next step? Have you avoided guessing what an agreement permits?

Agreed action: _____

This sheet does not determine what a particular agreement permits. It is a communication exercise, not a decision about your contract.