

One trip. Different routes.

A 45-minute mixed-ability ESL lesson for teenagers and adults.

Shared goal: recommend a trip with two reasons, ask or answer a relevant question, and agree on a plan within the budget and return time. Every learner uses the same text.

Before class: check that learners can read a short everyday text and make simple suggestions with support. Print pages 2-4, or display them and use notebooks. You need pens and a timer. Places and costs are fictional; no app or account is required.

Time	Stage and actions
0-5	Set the shared goal Introduce the budget, return time and weather. Ask pairs what makes a trip a good choice. Model one reason with because.
5-10	Read the same text Read silently or hear the teacher read it. Highlight prices, return times and indoor/outdoor details. Explain the six glossary items.
10-18	Prepare a recommendation Offer the support, core and extension cards. Learners choose or receive a starting card privately; they can change cards. All still prepare a choice and reasons.
18-28	Negotiate in pairs Each learner proposes a plan, asks one question and responds. Agree on a plan. Use two rounds of three minutes each, then four minutes to complete the joint decision.
28-35	Compare and challenge Pairs join another pair. Each explains its choice; listeners check the three constraints and ask about one trade-off.
35-41	Improve and share Pairs revise the decision. Invite a few reports, then let every learner rehearse their own reason with a partner.
41-45	Complete the common exit check Each learner independently writes or tells you a choice, two reasons and one drawback or condition. Use the same criteria for all.

Flexible grouping: offer support privately or as a choice; allow movement between cards. Rotate proposer/listener roles. Do not use fixed ability labels.

If time is short: reduce whole-class reports before cutting the individual exit check. Use a teacher read-aloud or extra preparation when needed; record support if assessing progress.

Choose our Saturday trip

Name: _____ Date: _____

Our English group is planning a Saturday trip. We can spend at most EUR 18 per person, including travel, and everyone must be back at the learning centre by 17:00. We will bring packed lunches, so we do not need to buy food. The forecast says that rain is likely after 13:00. We want time to talk together as well as see something interesting.

The Riverside Trail costs EUR 9, including the bus. We leave at 10:00 and return at 15:30. The visit includes a 90-minute walk and an outdoor picnic area. There is no indoor shelter. The organiser can cancel the walk before departure if heavy rain is forecast, but cannot promise another activity that day.

The City Museum costs EUR 16, including the bus. We leave at 10:00 and return at 16:30. Its history exhibition and lunch room are indoors. Groups can use the lunch room for their own food. There is an optional guided talk at 14:00; we can also explore in pairs.

The Discovery Lab costs EUR 18, including return travel. We leave at 09:30. The normal return is 17:20, after the final demonstration. We can instead take an earlier bus and arrive back at 16:50, but we would miss that demonstration. Both buses are included in the ticket. The exhibits and lunch area are indoors.

Useful words

At most: no more than. **Forecast:** a weather prediction. **Shelter:** protection from weather. **Optional:** you may choose it. **Demonstration:** showing how something works. **Drawback:** a disadvantage.

Find the facts

1. What is the maximum cost per person, including travel?
2. What time must everyone be back?
3. Which place has no indoor shelter?
4. Which option costs EUR 16 and returns at 16:30?
5. Why does the normal Discovery Lab schedule fail the group's rule?
6. What must the group give up to visit the Discovery Lab and still arrive on time?

Prepare your recommendation

Choose a starting card. You may borrow support or try an extension. Everyone returns to the shared discussion.

Support card: find and build

1. Underline the return times and circle the three prices. Put a tick beside indoor places.
2. Answer the six fact questions. Compare answers with a partner before planning.
3. Choose an option. Use: I suggest _____. It costs _____. We return at _____. It is a good choice because _____. Another reason is _____. One problem is _____.
4. Ask your partner: Which option do you prefer? or Can we get back by 17:00? Respond with one reason. Use the glossary and text throughout.

Core card: compare and agree

1. Answer the six fact questions, then compare two options using price, return time and weather.
2. Recommend one option with two reasons from the text. Explain one drawback or condition.
3. Ask a follow-up question about your partner's suggestion. Do not repeat a question they have already answered.
4. Agree on a plan. Prepare a four-sentence report: recommendation, two reasons and one trade-off.

Extension card: defend and adapt

1. Prepare a recommendation that meets the budget and time limit. Explain why a reasonable person might choose a different option.
2. New condition: one person must be back by 16:00. Reconsider all three options. Decide whether a safe, reliable plan can be guaranteed from the information given.
3. If no option meets all requirements reliably, explain the conflict and propose what information or new arrangement you would need. Do not invent a bus, discount or indoor shelter.
4. Join the shared discussion. Summarise your partner's point before you challenge it, and give space for their reply.

Useful discussion moves

I suggest _____ because _____. / One drawback is _____. / What do you think?
Do you mean _____? / I understand your point, but _____. / Shall we agree on _____?

Partner check: both people propose, ask or answer a relevant question, and explain a reason. Do not let one person complete the task for both.

Our plan, then my plan

Use the reading to check facts. Do not invent a discount, bus or shelter.

Joint decision

Our choice / cost per person / return time

Two different reasons from the reading

One drawback or condition

Question we asked / what we learned

Individual exit check

Complete independently: I recommend _____. My two reasons are _____ and _____. One drawback or condition is _____. Include the cost and return time.

My recommendation

Check your response

- ☐ I named an option and gave two accurate reasons.
- ☐ I checked EUR 18 maximum and arrival by 17:00.
- ☐ I explained a real drawback or condition.
- ☐ A reader or listener can understand my recommendation.

Teacher: use the same criteria for all. Mark shown / partly shown / not yet shown; note support. This is a lesson check, not a proficiency score. An oral response can use the same criteria under agreed access arrangements.

Reasons matter more than one answer

A different preference can work when the facts, constraints and conditions are clear.

Reading answers

1. EUR 18. Food is brought from home, so do not add an invented lunch charge.
2. 17:00 at the learning centre, not 17:00 at the attraction.
3. The Riverside Trail.
4. The City Museum.
5. It returns at 17:20, twenty minutes after the latest acceptable time.
6. The final demonstration. The early bus returns at 16:50 and is already included in the ticket.

Possible recommendations

City Museum: EUR 16; back 16:30; indoors. A sound default for rain. It costs EUR 7 more than the trail; some learners may prefer science to history.

Discovery Lab: EUR 18; indoors. Meets the deadline only with the earlier bus, back 16:50, and missing the final demonstration. The normal 17:20 return fails.

Riverside Trail: EUR 9; back 15:30. Likely afternoon rain and no shelter remain problems. Acknowledge the risk of cancellation; an invented indoor picnic area is not a solution.

Extension, back by 16:00: only the trail meets the time, but the weather issue remains. No reliably weather-protected trip meeting all conditions is guaranteed by the text. Learners can request a verified earlier indoor option, change the day or propose an indoor class activity; these are proposed arrangements, not facts already available.

Model exit response

"I recommend the City Museum because it is indoors and costs EUR 16 including the bus. We return at 16:30, before the deadline. One drawback is that it costs more than the trail."

Choose the follow-up from evidence

Incorrect times: practise reading timetables. Correct facts but unclear recommendation: model choice + reason + condition. Little interaction: rehearse follow-up questions. Do not infer individual success only from a successful pair report.

Source and reuse

British Council TeachingEnglish: Mixed ability. General guidance on common aims, varied task demands and flexible grouping informed this lesson. All trip text, cards and answers are original; no endorsement, formal CEFR level or classroom testing is claimed.

Read the British Council guidance

Full HTML and source links: thekingdomofenglish.com/articles/mixed-ability-esl-lesson-plan.php

You may print or adapt these original materials for your own classes. Keep the source credit when sharing an adaptation.