

Eikaiwa – English Conversation Classes

‘Eikaiwa’ is an English conversation class that is aimed at helping adults and children converse in English.

A brief overview of eikaiwa

The format of an eikaiwa class can vary. Some will have a fixed schedule while others will have a flexible schedule. Some are taught alone, others will be taught in a team. Sometimes learners are separated according to their level, whereas other classes will contain a mix of levels. One thing that is consistent is that the focus of the class should be on developing students’ English conversation skills. If you have no teaching experience, don’t worry! You will get the hang of it in no time and there are many resources at your disposal. Always remember that your students like English. They are eager to learn the language, including grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and spelling, but they also want to learn about you. Telling the students about yourself will make classes fun and help you to relax.



Adult eikaiwa:

Some eikaiwa classes have a set schedule of topics and others are flexible. It is important to sit down with your class and find out what they want to learn from the outset. This will not only benefit your students, but it will help make lesson planning much easier for you. Most adults want to learn for travel, to help their children with English or simply out of personal interest and the enjoyment of learning a language. The students enjoy watching videos and listening to music, so if you can use technology, do so, but make sure that it is in fulfilment of the aims of your lesson. There are also amazing resources on the Internet that require little preparation and no technology.

Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- **Introductions:** Do a small presentation about yourself and your home country. Play games that break the ice and get your students talking.
- **Culture:** This is fun to incorporate into every facet of your lessons. If you are learning about food, teach them about food from around the world.
- **Current affairs:** Depending on the level of your students, this is a great way to get people talking and expressing their opinions.
- **Hobbies and work**
- **Travel:** This can cover everything from how to book a holiday at the travel agent to small talk at the airport.
- **Family:** People love talking about their families, so this is a great topic for them. You could do it in a show and tell style where the students need to bring images of their families and discuss.

More ideas for activities:

- **Song lyrics:** This is a great activity to teach new vocabulary and learn about music from around the world. You can hand them lyric sheets with some words blanked out, or ask them to arrange lyrics in the right order. Finish off the activity by asking them to sing along!
- **Find someone who:** Students complete a scavenger hunt in the classroom by ‘finding someone who’ says ‘yes’ to a statement. For example, ‘Have you ever been to Australia?’ Students can then ask for more details.

- **Movies/commercials/short videos:** These can be used to teach grammar and vocabulary as well as providing a starting point for a discussion on favourite movies, actors, and shows. Mr. Bean is particularly useful for teaching the Present Continuous Tense.
- **Themed classes:** These classes are always fun because students can learn about holidays from around the world. You can also talk about Japanese holidays in English to incorporate something familiar.
- **Jeopardy:** Adults love this because they have an opportunity to practise their vocabulary and learn interesting facts about the world.
- **Show and tell:** This idea is adaptable to anything you want to teach. Ask students to bring pictures of their family or pets, tell them to bring their favourite book or a traditional Japanese item in their house. Remember, one important thing that Japanese people may need to do is explain Japanese culture to foreigners in English!
- **Role plays:** Role play activities allow students to use the grammar and vocabulary they have been taught. It gives them a chance to practise in a realistic scenario, which makes it more memorable.

Children's eikaiwa

This is a little easier to plan because you can usually recap on what the children have been learning at school. It also requires a little less preparation because there are more games and activities available for this age group. You can cover basic topics from days to colours, animals to food. You can also slowly introduce writing and sentence formation to help them with school.

Some ideas are:

- **Fruit basket:** Children sitting on a chair in a circle are assigned a fruit. One child standing in the middle will call out a fruit and race to sit on one of the chairs.
- **Evolution game:** Students walk around pretending to be an animal. When they encounter another student, they introduce themselves in English and do janken. The winner moves up the 'evolutionary chain' and the loser devolves. My evolutionary chain suggestion is 'spider' 'frog' 'monkey' 'human'.
- **Missing game:** This involves hiding one or two flashcards and getting the children to guess which flashcard is missing from the board.
- **What's the time, Mr. Wolf?:** Good for teaching numbers and time.
- **Monster game:** Insert a 'monster' card in a stack of vocabulary cards. This could be a witch, snake or anything scary. Drill the vocabulary. When the monster appears, chase the students to a 'safe' area.
- **Karuta:** Similar to the card game snap.
- **Pictionary/Gesture game**
- **Songs:** "If you're happy and you know it...", "A, B, C, D..."



Useful links:

- <http://www.eslflow.com/index.html>
- <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/>
- <https://en.islcollective.com/> (You do need to sign up but it's free and the best source for worksheets)
- <http://www.eslgamesplus.com/english-courses-for-kids/>
- <https://goo.gl/BZEU4c>
- <http://www.esl-galaxy.com/adults.html>
- <https://www.eslkidstuff.com/> (This is the best site. You have to pay for the resources but the lesson plans are free so you can use them and just find or make your own resources.)