

Calling a Child in Sick: Unit Activities

Activities

I. Reasons for Absence (*Appendices A and B*)

(Speaking/Vocabulary)

Discuss excused and unexcused absences: teach the difference between these first and elicit ideas from learners about good and bad reasons to miss school. Use the attached worksheets to generate further discussion on this topic. Appendix A is for higher students, while B includes pictures and fewer words for lower students. Teachers may choose to use this in small groups. Some of the excuses do not have clear-cut answers, so discussion of each excuse should center on why it is acceptable or not, and what the situation depends on (i.e. the excuse “bad weather” may be different for someone who lives within Madison and whose children are bussed, and someone who lives on a rural road or drives their children to school).

II. Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes

(Speaking/Vocabulary/TPR)

In order to prepare to discuss and teach common illnesses, the teacher can teach and sing the song “head, shoulders, knees, and toes / eyes, ears, mouth, and nose” while motioning the mentioned body parts. Use this song to help parents describe what hurts or aches, and follow up by teaching other body parts and illness-related words like *fever, cold, etc.*

III. Listen: A Message Calling In Sick (*Appendix C*)

(Listening/Writing)

The teacher may choose to pre-record the message below or read it in class (recording has the benefit of consistency). Playing the message at least four times is recommended: the first time can be used as an introduction, and the teacher can ask general comprehension questions after listening. The second time, students can attempt to fill in the missing information, and the teacher can check any vocabulary understanding after. Teach “*this is ____*” for phone introductions and the phrase “*if you need to reach me.*” The third time, students should attempt to fill in the blanks again, and the fourth time, students can try again and then check their answers.

Lower level students may be given the worksheet from the beginning and/or asked only to fill in a few pieces of information. The teacher may also choose to repeat him/herself or pause the recording and repeat information. The message may be simplified, if necessary. Students may also be put into groups so that each listens only for a specific piece of information and then share with each other.

Listening text:

“Hello, you’ve reached Hawthorne Elementary Attendance Line. At the tone, please leave your name, your child’s name, the reason for absence, and a number where you can be reached. Thank you and have a good day.”

“Hello, this is Jane Laronga. My daughter May Laronga will be absent today, April 16, because she has a fever. Her name is spelled M-A-Y L-A-R-O-N-G-A. She’s in fifth grade. Her teacher’s name is Mr. Mitchell. If you need to reach me, my phone number is 651-330-4493. Thank you.”

IV. Leave a Message Calling in Sick (Appendix D)

(Speaking/Reading)

V. Listen: Calling a Child in Sick (Appendix E)

(Listening/Writing)

After listening to the message in Activity III and after learning vocabulary related to illnesses, students should practice leaving their own messages to call their children in sick. The instructor may want to practice spelling names with the students before embarking on this activity. For difficult-to-pronounce letters, the teacher may teach a spelling alphabet (e.g. A as in apple, B as in bus, C as in cat) and ask the students to practice using it in various forms. Emphasize again “*this is ____*” for phone introductions and the phrase “*if you need to reach me.*”

In pairs or small groups, students practice leaving messages according to the script on worksheet D. Their partners listen and fill the information they hear in worksheet E.

Lower level students can be encouraged to focus only on the first two sentences of the message or, instead, focus only on spelling their and their children’s names, perhaps with the spelling alphabet.

VI. A Conversation Calling in Sick

(Listen/Writing)

After practicing leaving a message, the class may also want to discuss phone conversations: what happens if they call the school and reach a person, not an answering machine. The teacher should discuss the differences between a message and a conversation.

The teacher may read or record the following script or a similar one with altered information (the school, names, etc). Using worksheet E again, students may fill in the information they hear. As in Activity III, it is recommended that students hear the conversation at least four times.

The message may be simplified for lower level students. The teacher may alter worksheet E, or simply hand out paper and instruct students on what to fill in, for different levels: lower students might listen only for the child’s name and grade, while higher students listen for all of the information noted in worksheet E.

Listening text:

“Good morning, East Elementary School.”

“Hi, this is Keith Rushmore. I’m calling because my son Leon Rushmore can’t come to school today. He’s really sick.”

“Okay. How do you spell your son’s first name?”

“It’s L-E-O-N.”

“Which class is he in?”

“Mrs. Noriega’s class. Fifth grade.”

“Okay. I hope he feels better!”

“Yeah, me too!”

“Thanks for calling.”

“Bye.”

VII. Talk: Calling Your Child In Sick (Appendix F)

(Speaking/Reading/Listening/Writing)

After listening to a conversation as in Activity VI, students can read or act in a role play. In this dialogue, students should work in pairs and act as the parent and the school reception. Each of the pair should receive half of worksheet F. Before they read or speak, the “parent” should fill in his/her information in order to read through the script quickly and naturally. Students can then read together a number of times specified by the instructor, switching roles after a couple of readings, if appropriate.

For lower level students, the teacher might prefer to fill in the parent’s information in order to have an easy-to-read script ready. Alternatively, the teacher might prefer not to separate the two sections of worksheet F and instead integrate them so that both students in the pair can see what each will read. For higher students, the instructor might encourage a couple of read-throughs of the script and then for the students to write down what the other is saying (i.e. the “parent” fills in the blanks of what the “school” says). Higher students can also be asked to then flip the script over and repeat it from memory or to create their own similar dialogue. The teacher might also wish to teach other ways to say some of the sentences (e.g. “I’m calling about my daughter....”).

VIII. Jumbled Sentences (*Appendix G*)

(Speaking/Reading/Vocabulary/Grammar)

After completing a number of the previous activities, or when the students are comfortable with the concepts, phrases, and language of this unit, the instructor can give them the sentences in worksheet G. These sentences should be cut up: the teacher may choose to separate every word or to keep some phrases together (e.g. “reach me” or “to call”), depending on the students’ levels. At the instructor’s discretion, some groups of students may be given anywhere from one to all four sentences in a single envelope. The students should work together to put the sentences in order, while the instructor observes and only tells them if the sentences are correct or incorrect (but gives them time to correct the sentences themselves before offering the answers).

For classes with various levels of students, the instructor may group students by level and alter the sentences or give fewer to lower students and more to higher students.

Appendix List: Worksheets

A. “Reasons for Absence” (higher level, no pictures)

B. “Reasons for Absence” (lower level, pictures)

C. “Listen: A Message Calling In Sick”

D. “Leave a Message Calling in Sick”

E. “Listen: Calling a Child in Sick”

F. “Talk: Calling Your Child in Sick”

G. “Jumbled Sentences”

Reasons for Absences

Are these good reasons to miss school (will these *absences* be *excused*)?
Or are these bad reasons to miss school (will these *absences* be *unexcused*)?

Excused?

Reason

Unexcused?

Your child is sick.

The weather is very bad.

Your family is going on vacation!

Your spouse is in the hospital.

Your child slept late and is tired.

You want to go shopping with your child.

Your child didn't do his or her homework.

A family member died.

Your child has a birthday party.

Your child has a dentist appointment.

Reasons for Absences

Are these good reasons to miss school (will these *absences* be *excused*)?
Or are these bad reasons to miss school (will these *absences* be *unexcused*)?

Excused?

Reason

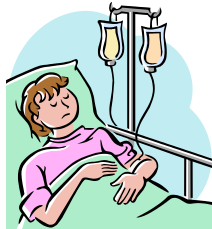
Unexcused?

Sick



Bad weather

Vacation



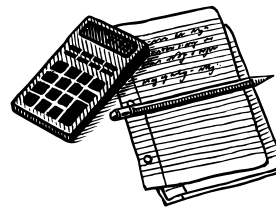
Family in hospital

Tired



Shopping

Didn't do homework



Death in family

Birthday party



Dentist appointment

Listen: A Message Calling In Sick

“Hello, you’ve reached Hawthorne Elementary Attendance Line. At the tone, please leave your name, your child’s name, the reason for absence, and a number where you can be reached. Thank you and have a good day.”



Parent’s Name: _____

Child’s Name: _____

Date: _____

Reason for Absence: _____

Grade: _____

Teacher’s Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

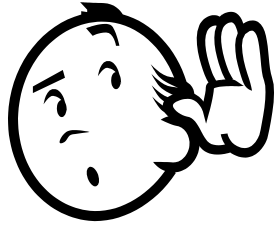


Leave a Message Calling in Sick

Hello, you've reached Hawthorne Elementary Attendance Line. At the tone, please leave your name, your child's name, the reason for absence, and a number where you can be reached. Thank you and have a good day.



"Hello, this is _____. My
(your name)
son/daughter _____ will be absent
(your child's name)
_____, because _____.
(day/date) (reason)
His/Her name is spelled _____.
(spelling)
He/She is in _____ grade. His/Her teacher's name is
(grade)
_____. If you need to reach me, my
(teacher's name)
phone number is _____. Thank you."
(your phone number)



Listen: Calling a Child in Sick

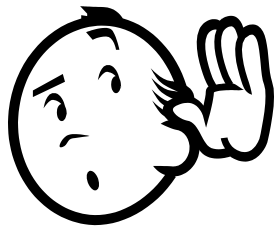
Parent's Name: _____

Child's Name: _____

Reason for Absence: _____

Teacher's Name: _____

Grade: _____



Listen: Calling a Child in Sick

Parent's Name: _____

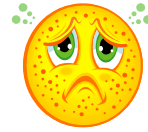
Child's Name: _____

Reason for Absence: _____

Teacher's Name: _____

Grade: _____

Talk: Calling Your Child In Sick



F

School: "Good morning, Marshall Elementary School."

Parent: _____

School: "Okay. How do you spell your son's/daughter's name?"

Parent: _____

School: "What grade is he/she in?"

Parent: _____

School: "Okay. I hope he/she feels better tomorrow!"

Parent: _____

School: "Thank you. Bye."

Talk: Calling Your Child In Sick



School: _____

Parent: "Hi, this is _____. I'm calling because my son/daughter
_____ can't come to school today. He's/she's sick."

School: _____

Parent: "It's _____."

School: _____

Parent: "_____ grade."

School: _____

Parent: "I hope so too. Thanks."

School: _____

My son can't attend school
today.

If you need to reach
me my number is
608-284-8997.

I have to call my son
in sick.

My daughter will be
absent today.