



Firsthand and Flipgrid

Marc Helgesen
English Firsthand author

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I hope you are well.

One of the tools I'm finding very useful for teaching on-line during Covid19 is Flipgrid.com. Flipgrid is a free service from Microsoft. It lets students record and view short videos.

If you are new to Flipgrid, you might want to watch a few tutorials on Youtube.com to see how it works. Here is one I like. (Note: some of the specific information is outdated. For example, it says teachers are limited to 3-minute videos. This is no longer true. You can adjust the times from 15 seconds to 10 minutes. Also, you are no longer limited to one grid.) Anyway, the tutorial' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-aZ523-HHBg>

Here's how I'm using it with *English Firsthand*. During or at the end of each unit, I have each student make a video. They then go back and watch other students' videos. I require them to watch and record comments on at least 3 other students' videos. I will suggest topics for each unit below, but usually they are either a variation on the *Real Stories* or the *Group Work* topic. I am using Flipgrid mainly for fluency work, so I use it toward the end of each unit, after they've already done accuracy-focused work like the conversation and the *Pair Work*.

I don't "correct" the videos. This is fluency work. And teachers don't need more stuff to do right now. I let the students' comments on each other's videos be the feedback.

Here are some tips:

Think of a "grid" as your course/group of students. Inside the grid, you can have several topics. I use a new topic for each unit.

- I give students points for posting their videos. I also ask them to make a video comment on a few (about 3-5) classmates' videos.
- The teacher sets the task and records a sample.
- I sometimes show that sample in class. I don't usually show the other student videos in class. I make an exception if something feels like "project work." The *EFSuccess*, Unit 2 fashion show is an example.



- Students make the videos by clicking on the big green PLUS sign.
- I ask my students to write their names over their videos. Actually, the names appear in the middle. They need to drag them down to chest level or above their heads. They can also add emoji or other seals for decorations. If they are adding names and decorations, they must do so BEFORE they record the video. After they record the video, they can check it and redo if they aren't satisfied. Then they take a selfie and upload the video.
- To record a video, they need a Microsoft or a Google ID. If they don't have one, I ask them to open a gmail.com account (free). Note they don't need to actually use Gmail. They just need the address.
- I protect it with a password.
- You can set it up so you approve each video before it is posted. Because I use a password, I don't bother with this.
- I set it up so CC (Closed Captions/ subtitles) are visible. The subtitles don't handle foreign words (like student and place names) very well. I just tell students not to trust the subtitles to be correct.
- I have had very few technical problems. If a student can't record, I tell them to (1st) turn off, then restart their device. If that doesn't work, then (2nd) if they have the option of a different device (i.e., a smart phone instead of a laptop/slate computer), try that.
- I had two students who just couldn't seem to make and post their videos. We are still not sure why. So I had them make their videos on their smartphone. Then they mailed it to me via WeTransfer.com (the free version). I was able to post it for them.

Firsthand ACCESS

Unit 1: (introductions) Introduce yourself. Tell us something about yourself that is different than other people. This will help us remember you.

Unit 2: (imperatives/command forms) What do you do to prepare for a test?

Unit 3: (Things at school, home or work) Are you neat or messy? Maybe use your smartphone to give us a tour of your room.

Unit 4: (routines) What is your routine. How has it changed before and after Covid19?

Unit 5: (Family) Show us the picture of your family (drawing from Pair Work or a photo). Say at least 3 sentences about each person.

Unit 6: (clothing) Fashion show. Wear some clothes you really like. Describe them as if you are a model in a fashion show.

Unit 7: (schedule and frequency). Your daily schedule now and how that is different than in "normal" times.

Unit 8: (Food and cooking) If you like to cook, tell us how to make something, especially something most of us don't know how to make. If you don't cook, talk about something else you know how to do.

Unit 9: (Present continuous) 50-second challenge. Set a timer for 50 seconds. How many things are you doing right now. Say them. Count as you do. *I am speaking English. I am sitting on a chair. I am breathing.* (Note: the suggestion for 50 seconds is so they can say their total within one minute.)

Unit 10: (describing places, prepositions of location) Give us a short tour of one room in your house or someplace nearby – your garden, a park, etc. Describe what is there.

Unit 11: (simple past tense) Choose your most interesting answer from the Pair Work. Tell us the story. How long can talk without stopping?

Unit 12: (*will* and *going to* future) What are you going to do when the Covid19 problem is over?

Firsthand SUCCESS

Unit 1: (introductions) Introduce yourself. Tell us something about yourself that is different than other people. This will help us remember you.

Unit 2: (clothing and designs) Fashion show. Wear some clothes you really like. Describe them as if you are a model in a fashion show. (This took on the feel of real project work. It really helped the class – first year students who didn't know each other, bond.)

Unit 3: (health/happiness) What do you do to stay healthy? ...happy? OR What are you doing to deal with the stress of Covid19?

Unit 4: (directions, describing places) Describe your city, town or neighborhood) OR, use your smartphone. Film something interesting in your neighborhood. Describe it.

Unit 5: (describing objects) Show and tell. Show and describe an interesting give or something you have.

Unit 6: (future tenses) What are you going to do after Covid19 is over (real or your dream).

Unit 7: (Past tense) Choose your most interesting topic from the Pair Work or the Group Work. How long can you talk about it without stopping?

Unit 8: (animals, nature, comparative and superlative adjectives) Talk about an animal you know or like. If you have a pet or stuffed animal, show us.

Unit 9: (*can* for ability). What was the most interesting question from the Pair Work? Can you do it? Show us.

Unit 10: (gerunds [*verb+ing*] and infinitives [*to +verb*]) What was your most interesting answer in the Pair Work? How long can you talk about it without stopping?

Unit 11: (modal verbs for permission/obligation) Talk about (a) a rule you like, (b) a rule you don't like AND (c) a rule you don't like, but it is a GOOD rule.

Unit 12: (narrative and sequence markers) Tell us a story from the Pair Work or the Group Work.

Firsthand 1

Unit 1: (introductions) Introduce yourself. Tell us something about yourself that is different than other people. This will help us remember you.

Unit 2: (describing people) Draw or show a people of your family. Talk about all the people.

Unit 3: (routines) Talk about your daily routine. OR "Tell a lie" Talk about your daily routine but put in 2-3 things that are not true. Partners, in your comment, try to guess the lies. Later, make a comment on those comments, telling what the lies were.

Unit 4: (locations) Describe your room, your house or a favorite place. Maybe use your smart phone to show us.

Unit 5: (directions) Imagine you are a taxi driver. You are driving from your home to someplace like school, a store or someplace else. Describe what you are doing (I'm

turning right at the corner.). Partners, try to shadow the speaker like in the Group Work.

Unit 6: (past) What is the most interesting trip you have ever taken? Talk about it.

Unit 7: (talking about abilities and preferences). What is your “dream job.” Why? What can you do to help yourself get that job?

Unit 8: (entertainment, invitations) After Covid19 is over, what do you want to invite a friend to do? What will you do there?

Unit 9: (*going to* and *will* future). What do the lines on your hand predict about your future (Pair Work)? Good things? Bad things? Do you believe them? Why or why not?

Unit 10: (shopping routines, comparatives and intensifiers). What was the most interesting question from the Group Work. How long can you talk about it?

Unit 11: (instructions, sequence markers and imperatives). What food do you know how to make? OR What is something you know how to do that most people don't. Tell us how.

Unit 12: (music, simple past vs. present perfect) What was the most interesting question from the Pair Work. Talk about it.

Firsthand 2

Unit 1: (introductions) Introduce yourself. Tell us something about yourself that is different than other people. This will help us remember you.

Unit 2: (emotions) How do you deal with stress. OR choose an emotion (look at page 23). When do or did you feel that way?

Unit 3: (comparatives) A friend from another country is going to visit you. Where will you take them? Why? What is it like?

Unit 4: (superlatives) What is the most interesting concert/festival/event you have attended. What was is so good?

Unit 5: (reasons/excuses) Did you ever give an excuse in a difficult situation? Talk about it. OR What was your funniest excuse from the Group Work. Tell the story. Try to make it sound real.

Unit 6: (culture) Choose the most interesting question(s) from the Pair Work. Talk about it.

Unit 7: (past simple, expressing gratitude) Read the “gratitude letter” on page 67. If you wrote a gratitude letter, who would you write it to? Why? Will you really write it? (Hint: if you do, that person will be happy. And YOU will be happier, too!)

Unit 8: (making plans, modal auxiliary verbs) At the end of Covid19, you and your friends are going to have a party? What are your ideas to make the party great?

Unit 9: (conditionals, giving advice). What was your most interesting answer for the Pair Work? How long can you talk about it?

Unit 10: (narratives, past simple and past continuous) Look at the Pair Work again. Tell the story in your own words. Answer the questions **in bold**.

Unit 11: (stating opinions) What was the most interest topic in the Pair Work or Group Work. Talk about it. Give your opinion.

Unit 12: (future plans and possibilities). Think about your future. What do you want to do next year? In five years? In 20 years?

I hope this is useful.

Good luck. Stay well.

