

### Appendix A

#### Optional Single-word Vocabulary Flashcards

Ship	Pants	Book
Spider	Star	Lamp
Stairs	Bathroom	Coin
Ball	Heart	Worm
Cow	Broom	Bus
Spoon	Duck	Balloon
Rabbit	Shopping	Pen
Carrot	Apple	Dinosaur
River	Sunglasses	Dream
Seashell	Jar	Tree

### Appendix B

#### Target Phrases

##### *Phrases to describe something*

- It is something (that) you ...
- It is a type of ...
- It is like a ...
- It is used with ...
- It is used for ...
- It is (bigger) than ...
- It is made of ...
- It has ...
- It has a ...

##### *Phrases for guessing something*

- Could it be ...?
- Could it be a ...?
- I think it might be ...?
- I think it might be a ...?
- Would it be ...?
- Would it be a ...?
- Is it ...?
- Is it a ...?
- Are you describing ...?
- Are you describing a ...?
- I believe it is ...?
- I believe it is a ...?
- It has to be ...?
- It has to be a ...?

## [RESOURCES] TLT WIRED



### Sarah Deutchman & Edward Escobar

*In this column, we discuss the latest developments in ed-tech, as well as tried and tested apps and platforms, and the integration between teaching and technology. We invite readers to submit articles on their areas of interest. Please contact the editors before submitting.*

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## Using Google Classroom Questions to Create a Class Discussion Board

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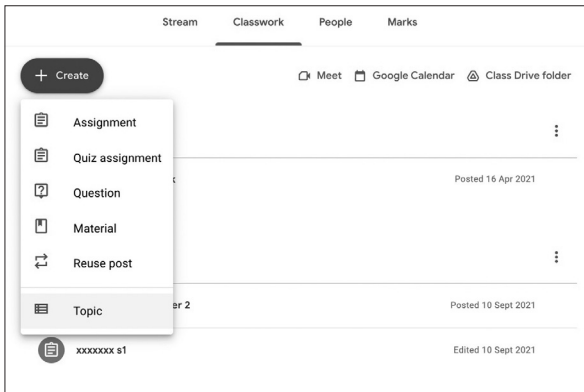
In response to the pandemic, educators were forced to rapidly adapt to new technologies to teach in the online environment (de Vries, 2021; Iwabuchi et al., 2022; Lim, 2023). Google Classroom, an educational platform that can administer assignments and manage online student-teacher communications, quickly emerged as a popular tool in this arena (Ikeda, 2022; Okmawati, 2020). The Questions function is one of the features that supports this online interaction. This function can facilitate bidirectional feedback and advice. However, with a subtle shift in the framing of Google Questions, more in-

depth discussions can be managed using discussion boards. In the following sections, I will describe how to create discussion boards on Google Classroom and give some specific examples of how they can be applied in an educational setting.

## Creating a Discussion Board on Google Classroom

This procedure merely requires the instructor to set up a new Google Classroom topic and select the appropriate settings. First, select the Classwork tab to create this new topic. Then click + Create and Topic (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**  
*Creating a New Topic in Google Classroom*

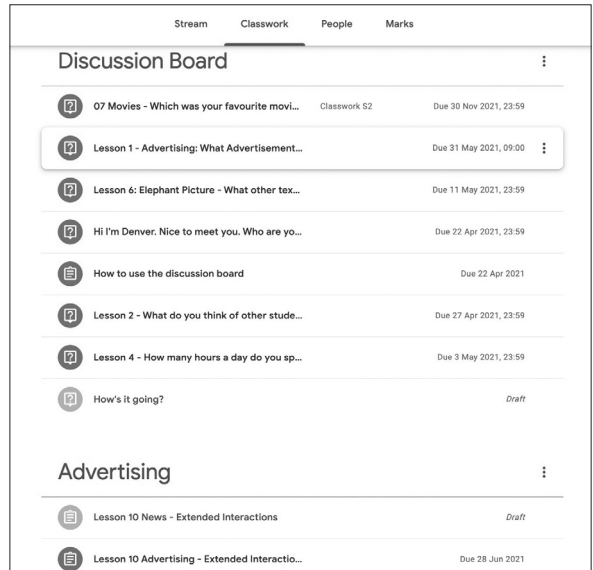


Next, type the topic name (i.e., DiscussionBoard) and click Add. The Discussion Board section will then appear in the Classwork tab. You can now add questions to this area to build the discussion board (see Figure 2).

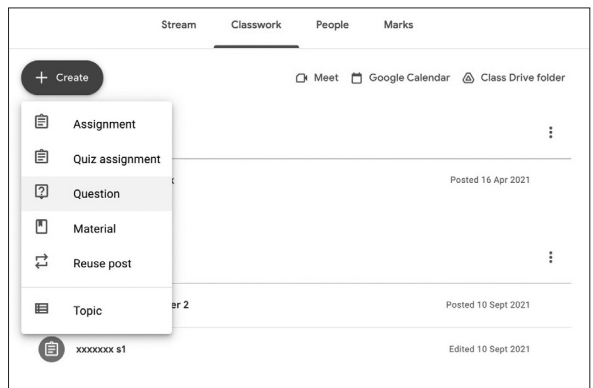
The next step is to post the questions to the Discussion Board. This procedure is the same for creating any question on Google Classroom, but specific settings create the interactivity of the Discussion Board. First, to post a question, click + Create and choose question (see Figure 3).

Next, enter the question text in the appropriate box. Then, select Short Answer from the drop-down menu next to the question. After this, set the due date and points as required. The most important step is to check the *Students can reply to each other* box, as this essentially creates the discussion board functionality. It is also often useful to check the *Students can edit answer* box. Next, select the discussion board topic, which was created in the previous step. Finally, click the Ask button in the top right-hand corner to post the question (see Figure 4).

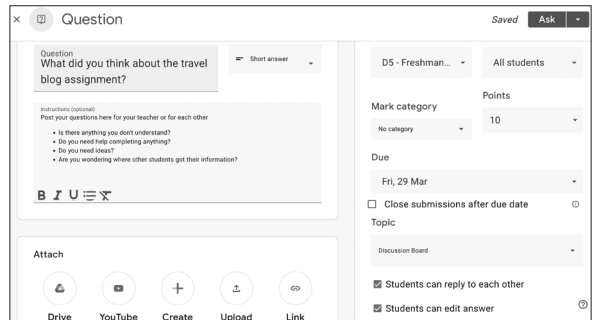
**Figure 2**  
*Example of a Google Classroom Discussion Board*



**Figure 3**  
*Creating a Google Classroom Question*



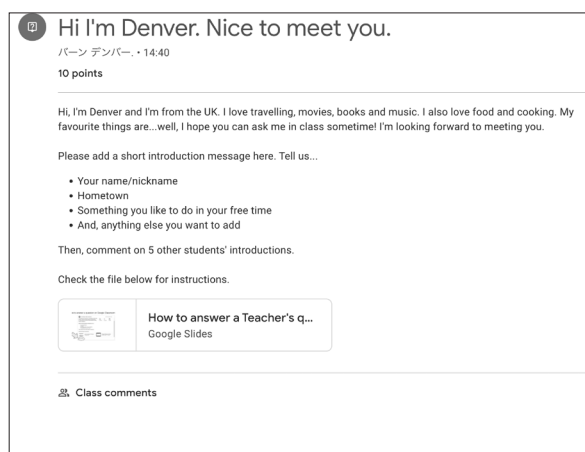
**Figure 4**  
*Settings for a Discussion Board Question*



## Google Classroom Discussion Boards in Practice

For new classes, I add something connected to the commencement of lessons, such as asking students to write a short introduction. This introductory activity helps familiarise learners with the discussion board and integrate it into lessons from the beginning (see Figure 5).

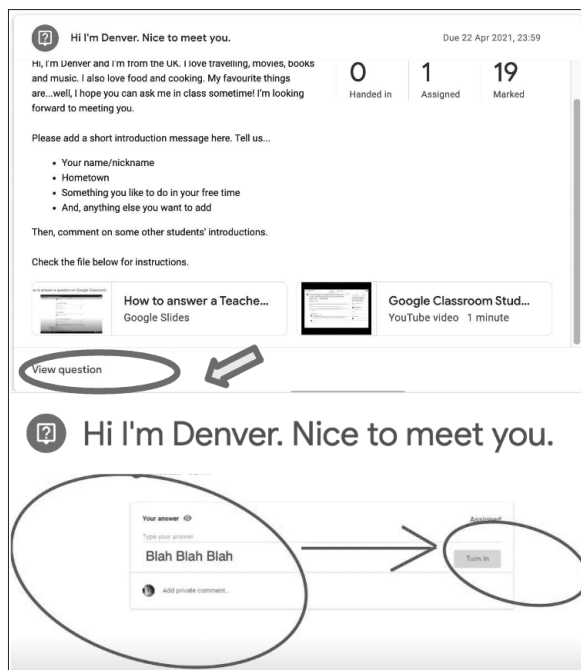
**Figure 5**  
*Example Introduction Activity on the Class Discussion Board*



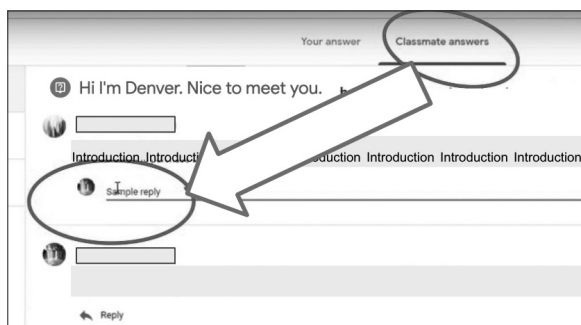
As Figure 5 shows, the title does not actually need to be a question. In addition, detailed information can be posted in the dialogue box marked Instructions below the question. The most crucial point, though, is to ask students to comment and reply to each other's posts. This framing transforms the activity from a question-and-response task into something much more interactive. In this first post on the discussion board, I upload instructions on answering questions and adding comments. For this purpose, simple illustrative slides were produced rather than detailed written instructions (see Figures 6 and 7).

2024 Board of Directors Election Candidate Statements can be found on page 51 of this *TLT*

**Figure 6**  
*Instructions for Answering Questions on Google Classroom*



**Figure 7**  
*Instructions for Commenting on Classmates' Answers*



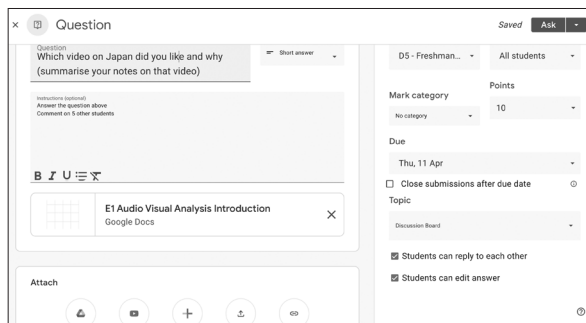
## Using Questions on Google Classroom for Assignments

Once the discussion board is up and running, it can manage any number of asynchronous interactions such as debates, conversation practice, homework queries, or collaborative student projects. However, this functionality can also be used for focused and detailed discussion assignments. The following is an example from a communicative English class for 1st-year university students. In this instance (see Figure 8), there was a worksheet attached to the question. The worksheet linked to four English-language

YouTube videos. The students had to watch the videos and answer short analysis/opinion questions in the worksheet. Finally, the students summarised their worksheet answers in the Google Classroom Question section and then read and commented on classmates' summaries.

**Figure 8**

*Example Homework Assignment Using a Google Classroom Question*



To ensure this activity did actually become a discussion, the question was posted with instructions telling students to comment on a minimum of five classmates' posts. In addition, a due date was set for the assignment. I found this type of task worked best if students were instructed to make a minimum number of comments and awarded points for completing the task on time. Without these instructions, learners were sometimes confused about how many comments to make and some members did not respond or comment at all.

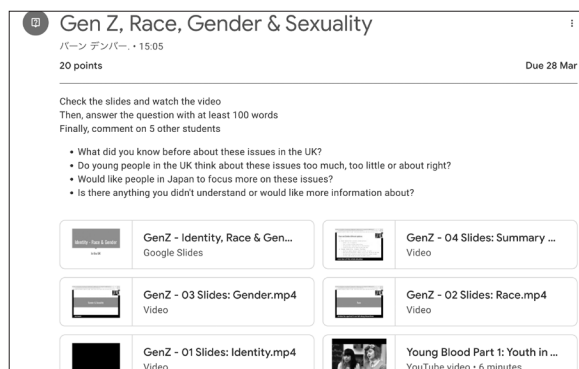
Google Questions can also facilitate more in-depth discussions. The final example is from an asynchronous content and language integrated learning (CLIL) class on British youth culture for 3rd- and 4th-year university students. In this instance, several materials were attached to the question (see Figure 9).

In this assignment, students learned about young British people's attitudes towards race, gender, and sexuality. The question post contained a set of slides and videos of the teacher presenting those slides. There was also a short, subtitled YouTube video where young people discussed their experiences and opinions. Detailed instructions, also explained to the students in person, were posted on the Question screen. The instructions asked learners to view the materials and write a 100-word appraisal of the issues based on the materials and structured questions. Students then read and commented on five classmates' answers. Thus, this ex-

ample demonstrates that students can interact with quite complex subject matter using this technique.

**Figure 9**

*Example of an Asynchronous Lesson Using Google Classroom Questions*



## Conclusion

The advantage of using Google Classroom's Questions in this way is that the asynchronous part of the class becomes interactive. Moreover, this technique can be used for homework as well as remote learning. Furthermore, learners can work at their own pace, which might allow quieter class members greater opportunities to participate in interactive tasks. A disadvantage might be the dislocation of these remote conversations. However, by mimicking social media communication styles, it may be more relevant for learners. Nonetheless, there is no substitute for actual face-to-face communication, so it is advisable to review these assignments in class and consider them as supplements to the usual classroom activities rather than replacements.

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# The Duolingo English Test: Experiences and Recommendations

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Assessment through testing is a vital aspect of education. However, recent global challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have raised concerns about traditional in-person, paper-based testing. The question arises: Is it time for a paradigm shift in testing modes to embrace the growing ubiquity of Internet connectivity? Could online testing, accessible anytime and anywhere, become a more influential element in education? In reality, this transition is already underway, with universities in the U.S. and the U.K. increasingly moving towards online exams (UNLwise, 2022).

In terms of language testing and assessment, the Duolingo English Test (DET) might be a relative newcomer but is gaining traction with various

international institutions such as Imperial College London and Harvard (Duolingo, n.d.). Therefore, while the authors were considering options for an easily administered proficiency test, the DET, which is an online-only test, appeared to be an interesting and viable alternative to other common tests in Japan (e.g., TOEIC).

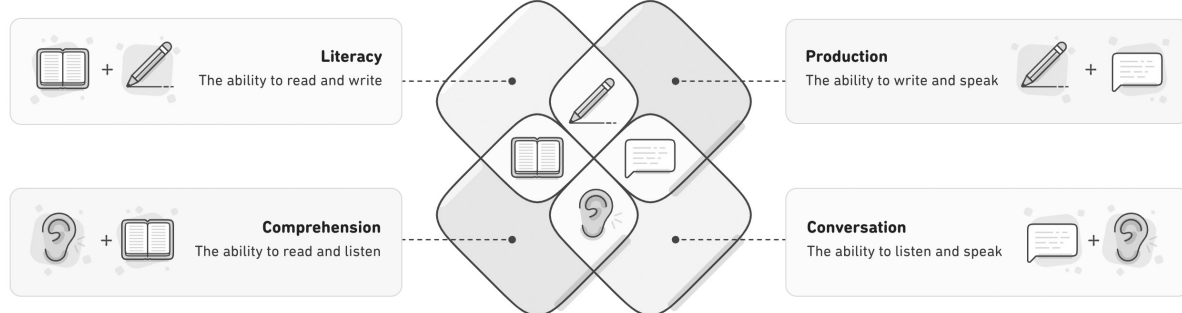
## The DET

Created by the educational technology company, Duolingo, the DET was released in 2016 and is an affordable, online, on-demand, standardised English proficiency test that can be taken from anywhere with an Internet connection, allowing test-takers to do the test in the comfort of their homes. However, to be clear, even though they share a name, the Duolingo language learning app and the DET are separate technologies.

The test is aimed at non-native-English speakers and assesses the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in a single blended test. Compared to other proficiency tests, it is relatively short and adapts to each test-taker's level by adjusting the difficulty of questions based on their previous answers. This ensures the AI software accurately measures competency in a rapid and efficient manner. The test structure is comprised of three sections: introduction and onboarding (5 minutes), which includes technical setup, ID input, and a rules review; the adaptive test (45 minutes); and a writing sample and speaking sample (10 minutes), totalling approximately one hour. The difficulty of the test varies throughout, and it contains numerous types of unique and randomly selected questions, such as listening to spoken words, selecting the real words, and filling in missing letters from a text. The number of questions is not predetermined as the grading engine adapts and finishes the test when it is confident of the test-taker's score. Once

Figure 1

The DET: Subscores



Note. The DET score consists of four subscores: literacy, comprehension, conversation, and production. Each subscore encompasses two skills.



the test has been submitted, the results are sent to the test-taker by email within 48 hours.

The test is assessed by AI and human proctors who check test-taker videos and keystrokes to ensure tests are completed correctly. Successful individuals will receive a computer-generated score that evaluates their proficiency in English on a scale ranging from 10 to 160, including four subscores (see Figure 1 on the previous page). The overall score is not simply an average of the subscores but rather a weighted combination. Figure 2 illustrates how the DET compares to other test scores.

**Figure 2**

*The DET: Comparative Test Scores*

TOEFL iBT		IELTS Academic		CEFR	
160	120	160	8.5-9	160	C2
155	119	155		155	
150	117-118	150	8	150	
145	113-116	145		145	
140	109-112	140	7.5	140	C1
135	104-108	135		135	
130	98-103	130	7	130	
125	93-97	125		125	
120	87-92	120	6.5	120	
115	82-86	115		115	
110	76-81	110	6	110	B2

*Note.* The overall DET score can be compared to other frameworks and test scores.

### The Pros and Cons of the DET

There are many factors that make the DET captivating to takers of English proficiency tests:

- Flexibility and convenience: The DET can be taken anywhere with a stable Internet connection and a quiet room.
- Cost: 59 USD plus tax (about 8,750 JPY)
- Adaptive test: Question levels are adjusted depending on the test-taker's answers, leading to a test time of approximately one hour (about half the time of the TOEIC test).
- Non-traditional question styles and test format: The four skills are tested in a blended manner (e.g., no extended reading, writing, or listening sections) which may suit some students better.
- Expedited results: Test scores are issued within 48 hours. Test-takers receive a holistic score and breakdown of four subscores (see Figure 1).

- Accepted at higher education establishments: The DET is used in admissions procedures of an increasing number of higher education establishments such as Stanford University in the U.S.

While the DET has many advantages over other English proficiency tests, namely its competitive price, convenience, and brevity, it also has some limitations:

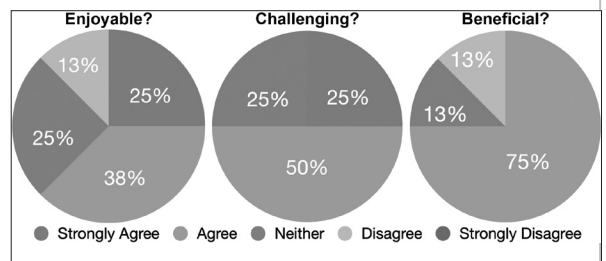
- Test authentication and rules: These are the most significant issues for test-takers. Any violation of the stringent regulations risks test invalidation. Additional factors, including Internet or technology issues, can also impact success. The rules for computer-based tests without in-person invigilators differ from traditional testing, which results in some unusual requirements, such as not looking away from the screen for a prolonged period.
- ID validity: Test-takers may not have the requisite ID (a government-issued photo ID is required) so they may be unable to take the test.
- Test study: Compared to other tests, there are few specific test preparation materials and methods available. Students must improve their English across all four skills to improve their scores.

### Student Impressions

A total of eight voluntary participants undertook the DET as part of a pilot study. In a survey, five participants reported that they enjoyed taking the DET, two were neutral, while one did not enjoy it. Six of the eight considered the test challenging, and six also felt that taking the test was a beneficial experience in their English language learning journey. These results are presented in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

*The DET: Student Impressions*



Students commented that “It was [a] very strict test and hard to get verified” and “It’s too hard to get verified,” which resulted in the majority of participants needing more than one attempt to be authenticated by the DET AI and/or human proctors. However, despite these challenges, students generally had a positive impression of the test, with comments including: “Great. I assume that I can test my true practical English ability and essential understanding of language not just memorising words” and “I think it is good. The time limits make me feel pressure, and it also didn’t let me to think [about] one question a lot. It was thrilling, so I feel the time passed so quickly. I enjoyed taking the exam.”

Thus, test-takers’ impressions of the DET were positive, in terms of test style and task difficulty, but verification issues also frustrated the participants.

### Recommendations

To get the most out of the DET, it is beneficial to consider the factors below, especially given that test verification can be problematic:

- Usage: This test would be extremely difficult to use in a classroom context. It is recommended for individual case-by-case instances only.
- Create an account: The DET homepage can be difficult to navigate pre-login, so it is recommended that test-takers and instructors create accounts to access vital information about the test more easily.
- Watch the summary videos: Watch the videos available to get a holistic understanding of the process of taking the DET.
- Read the rules: The DET rules are extremely rigorous and can also be unusual and unexpected for those who have not taken an online test before, so reading and understanding the rules in detail is extremely important for successful verification (e.g., test-takers can be disqualified simply for wearing their hair down, as their ears must always be visible).
- Check the environment and the technology: The test must be taken in a quiet, empty room with a reliable Internet connection. There are also various technology requirements, including a front-facing camera, microphone, and speaker.
- Do the practice test: Completing the (free) practice test is highly recommended.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the DET is gaining recognition and may play a significant role in the future of testing. From the perspective of instructors and invigilators, although its brevity, convenience, and affordability are positive aspects, there are significant practical issues that will hinder its adoption. In the context of the classroom, the DET is not a practical form of assessment, as its administration is logistically problematic—payment and ID issues, the requirement for individual test rooms and specific technology, as well as the difficulty of test validation—make it challenging for educators to facilitate multiple concurrent test-takers.

For individual higher-level test-takers who have a strong desire to study abroad, the DET may enhance applications to some institutions. However, in its current guise, and due to lagging recognition in educational institutions and workplaces in Japan, it is struggling for relevance, especially when competing with conventional testing options.

Improved technology, especially in AI proctoring, could enhance the reliability and credibility of the DET as an English proficiency test. It is likely a precursor for a future increase in online language testing and a compelling shift in educational assessment.

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