

First and Last: A speaking activity

[Version A. For basic levels]

Directions for the teacher:

Step 1 – Use the activity to practice question and answer formation using the simple past. Write the following verb phrases on the board. You may add other phrases if you wish to target other irregular verbs. Be sure all words are understood.

bake a cake	ride a motorcycle
dance a slow dance	see a shark
drink a cocktail	speak to a large group
go hiking	spend a lot of money
make a big mistake	watch a scary movie
meet someone from another country	write a letter in English

Step 2 – Under verb phrases write these prompts:

Question 1: When was the first time you _____?

Question 2: When was the last time you _____?

Answer 1: The first/ last time I _____ was _____. [At what age? What year? How many years ago?]

Answer 2: I never _____.

Step 3 – Moving clockwise around the room, one student will ask another classmate about a first or last experience. If student A asks about the first time, then student B must ask student C about the last time. New verbs can be used in each exchange. If a student is able to recall the first or last time of a certain experience, the questioner must add one more question to learn one more detail.

Model:

Student A: When was the first time you watched a scary movie?

Student B: The first time I watched a scary movie was maybe in the seventh grade.

Student A: What film did you watch?

Student B: Aliens.

Student B: When was the last time you baked a cake?

Student C: I never baked a cake.

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[Version B. For intermediate and advanced levels]

Follow the same steps; however, the focus will be on pronunciation. Explain how old versus new information influence both sentence structure and sentence stress. Note how usually old information comes first and new information comes last when giving an answer. New information receives greater stress.

Before students begin the Q&A activity, share the model and underline the words that should be stressed.

Student A: When was the **first** time you watched a scary movie?

Student B: The first time I watched a scary movie was maybe in the **seventh grade**.

Student A: What **film** did you watch?

Student B: I saw **Aliens**.

Student B: When was the **last** time you baked a cake?

Student C: I never **baked** a cake.

Be sure students are using falling intonation for *wh*- questions and rising intonation for *yes-no* questions.