Teaching prepositions in a foreign language can feel like the final frontier for many learners. These small words carry big meaning and often reveal whether someone learned a language instinctively or studied it. When students struggle with phrases like “get married to” versus “get married with” or with location words such as “next to” and “on top of” they are usually wrestling with prepositions. This article offers practical, classroom-tested activities to make prepositions clear, memorable and enjoyable.

Why focus on prepositions?

Prepositions show up everywhere in everyday speech. They are tied to phrasal verbs and fixed expressions and they are highly frequent. Because of this, mastering prepositions improves fluency and helps learners sound more natural. A neat way to remember their importance is the idea that you can often tell a native speaker from a learner by the way they use prepositions. That small detail matters more than it seems.

Core principles before you start

- **Make them visual.** Try to use images and movement.
- **Recycle often.** Return to the same prepositions in different activities so learning sticks.
- **Check comprehension immediately.** Short tasks that reveal understanding let you correct mistakes right away.

Five engaging activities for the classroom

1. Interactive picture book

Use a lift-the-flap picture book that illustrates common prepositions of location. Pages that open to reveal what is “under” or “behind” bring those words to life. This works equally well with beginner children or adult beginners because the visuals are concrete and memorable. I love my Spot book.

2. Where’s the baby?

Hide a small object in the room while learners close their eyes. When they open

them they must describe the object using the target preposition. For example, “The baby is under the table” or “The baby is next to the red chair.” Turn-taking keeps everyone engaged and provides repeated spoken practice.

3. Draw what I say

Give each student a small board or sheet of paper. Give instructions such as “Draw a bed in the middle, a nightstand next to the bed and a lamp on top of the nightstand.” Students draw while listening and you can instantly assess comprehension. This activity is excellent for both prepositions of place and for giving directions.

4. Dollhouse or miniature room

Use a dollhouse with furniture to recreate the same types of instructions but in three dimensions. Ask learners to place items according to commands. This tangible manipulation helps link language to real spatial relationships.

5. Simon Says with movement

Turn commands into a game. Use “Simon says put the book on the table” or “Simon says stand next to the window” to practice both imperative forms and prepositions. For higher levels, students can take turns as the leader to create commands.

Assessment and progression

Start with recognition tasks and move to production. Mix receptive activities like pointing or drawing with productive tasks like giving directions or describing a scene. Provide corrective feedback gently and encourage self-correction by asking follow up questions.

Final tips

- **Keep practice frequent and short.** Multiple short exposures beat one long lesson.
- **Use real objects and movement.** Physical context cements meaning faster than definition alone.
- **Encourage students to notice differences across languages.** Explicit

comparison helps avoid false friends like different preposition use in marriage verbs.

With simple, playful activities you can turn the tricky business of teaching prepositions in a foreign language into one of the most rewarding parts of your lessons. Students gain confidence, fluency and the natural phrasing that makes their speech sound native.

Building Proficiency for World Language Learners: 100+ High-Interest Activities
Discover over 100 dynamic activities to make world language learning interactive and fun. I wrote this book with some of my favorite activities for educators aiming to build proficiency with high-impact strategies.
Learn more and get your copy here.

5 Weeks of No and Low Prep Fun
Need quick, engaging activities for your class? This free guide includes **25 no-prep and low-prep ideas** to save time while keeping students excited about learning.
Download your free copy now.

100s of Videos to Learn Spanish
Gain access to an extensive collection of videos for self-paced Spanish learning.
Browse the videos.