

Travel offers rich, real-world contexts that map perfectly onto **proficiency-based language teaching**. When learners plan a trip, write a postcard or read a menu, they practise authentic tasks that mirror what they will need to do outside the classroom. These activities make language meaningful, recycle useful structures and vocabulary, and provide easy opportunities for formative assessment aligned with proficiency goals.

Why travel activities support proficiency-based language teaching

At the heart of **proficiency-based language teaching** is the idea that learners demonstrate what they can do with language in real tasks. Travel-themed tasks are naturally task-based. They demand specific outcomes, for example to buy a ticket, describe a past trip, or recommend a restaurant. That means you can assess communication, not only isolated grammar or vocabulary.

Use these activities to target different modes of communication: interpretive reading of timetables and menus, interpersonal exchanges through postcards and role plays, and presentational speaking or writing with travel presentations and scrapbooks. Each task can be linked to clear can-do statements and rubrics so students understand the proficiency targets.

Core activities to try

1. Postcards: focused writing with cultural research

Postcards are small, purposeful texts. Assign students a destination and ask them to research specific items such as local foods, attractions and typical activities. Then they write a postcard to a classmate including time references and appropriate letter conventions. This is an excellent way to practice past tense and informal register while integrating culture.

2. Realia: tickets, menus and authentic materials

Realia-based reading tasks are perfect for interpretive activities. Ask students to find specific information, fill in forms, or sequence travel steps. These tasks support **proficiency-based language teaching** by measuring comprehension and

practical usage.

3. Suitcase drawings and TPR

Turn vocabulary practice into a kinaesthetic task. Give students a destination and describe the weather and activities, then have them draw and label what they pack. Use total physical response to reinforce phrases and nationalities. These lightweight, repeatable tasks are great for novice and intermediate learners and tie directly to communicative goals.

4. Scrapbooks and digital slides

Students create a scrapbook, physical or on Google Slides, that narrates a trip. They add photos, short captions and present the story to the class. This supports presentational speaking and allows you to assess fluency, cohesion and accuracy against proficiency criteria. For more advanced learners, ask them to narrate the slides and include cultural reflections.

5. If I were from... research presentations

Have learners pick a place and answer guided questions: Where would you live? What would you eat? How many hours would you work? Require eight to ten researched facts and then present. This task builds research skills, cultural knowledge and structured output, and fits neatly into a proficiency-based framework because outcomes are observable and assessable.

6. Planning a trip and collaborative boards

Use Pinterest-style boards or printed picture boards in the classroom. Students gather resources for hotels, restaurants and activities, comment on classmates' choices and defend their plans. The collaborative element strengthens interpersonal skills and gives opportunities to assess negotiation, persuasion and content-specific vocabulary within **proficiency-based language teaching**.

Practical tips for classroom implementation

- **Provide clear task rubrics:** Link each activity to can-do statements and a simple rubric so students know the proficiency target.
- **Differentiate:** Offer scaffolds such as vocabulary lists, sentence starters or

templates for postcards and presentations.

- **Blend physical and digital:** Use printed realia, laminated postcards and digital slides to accommodate classroom resources and remote learners.
- **Recycle language:** Design tasks so that useful structures and tenses reappear, for example requiring past tense in postcards and sequencing words in itineraries.
- **Use authentic images:** Source photos from free repositories and encourage students to include images in their scrapbooks to increase cultural awareness.

Assessing travel tasks within a proficiency framework

For each activity, decide which mode of communication you are assessing and use short, observable descriptors. For example, a postcard rubric could include ability to convey past events, appropriate greeting and closing, and inclusion of cultural detail. A presentation rubric can target organization, pronunciation, and task completion. These focused assessments make **proficiency-based language teaching** practical and transparent.

Final thoughts

Travel-themed activities are engaging, adaptable and closely aligned with real-world language use. They provide natural opportunities to see what learners can actually do, which is the core of **proficiency-based language teaching**. With simple materials, clear rubrics and a mix of interpretive, interpersonal and presentational tasks, you can create lessons that are meaningful, assessable and a lot of fun.

Looking for more ideas?

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