

# An old lady who swallowed a fly

## Topic

Animals

## Aims

To develop and practise:

- vocabulary: animals (and food)
- structure: infinitives of purpose
- integrated skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing

## Age

Younger primary (7–9 years)

## Time

90 minutes approximately

## Materials

1. Song, activity sheet, answers and lyrics: 'An old lady who swallowed a fly'  
<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/songs/old-lady-who-swallowed-fly>
2. Your turn: 'Pets'  
<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/your-turn/pets>
3. Worksheet: 'Looking after pets'  
<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/worksheets/looking-after-pets>

For a complete list of all 'Animals', 'Pets' and 'Wild animals' content on LearnEnglish Kids, click here:

<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/category/topics/animals>

<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/category/topics/pets>

<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/category/topics/wild-animals>

## Introduction

In this lesson, learners will be introduced to the traditional song 'An old lady who swallowed a fly'. They will listen to the song, complete comprehension activities, act the song out, and sing the song. Finally learners can do some extension work based on the song, writing another verse or creating a new version.

## Procedure

### 1. Introduce the topic (5 mins)

- Show a picture of the old lady from the song or draw an old lady on the board. Ask learners how old they think she is. Do they know anybody about this age?

<b>2. Focus on vocabulary (10 mins)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the animals featured in the song (fly, spider, bird, cat, dog, cow, horse) with pictures, mime or sound. Get learners to mime the animal back to you.</li> <li>• Tell learners that you are going to listen to a song about an old lady who swallows these animals. Demonstrate 'swallow' by miming (try to exaggerate!) and explain or translate if necessary.</li> <li>• Ask learners if they have ever swallowed anything strange by accident, e.g. a tooth, a button, or if they usually swallow chewing gum or toothpaste.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Listening for global comprehension (5 mins)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play the song. Learners complete part 1 of the activity sheet: number the animals in order.</li> <li>• Learners compare answers in pairs.</li> <li>• Listen again and check answers as a class.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Listening for detailed comprehension (10 mins)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Now play the first verse and pause. Elicit that we don't know why she swallowed a fly, and that we think she might die!</li> <li>• Play the second verse and pause. Demonstrate the second line through mime. Elicit why she swallowed the spider (to catch the fly).</li> <li>• Continue verse by verse, eliciting why she swallowed each animal (to catch the previous one).</li> <li>• Learners complete part 2 of the activity sheet: write the missing words. Check answers.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Acting the song out (10 mins)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Now act the song out. Nominate a learner (or pair) to be each of the animals and one learner to be the old lady. As you read or play the song, Learners act it out, i.e. the old lady pretends to swallow each animal in turn, and each animal pretends to catch the previous animal after it's been swallowed.</li> <li>• Repeat with different groups if you have more learners, or with the same learners in different roles. Learners can be the ones to say the lines.</li> </ul>
<b>6. Illustrating the song (5–10 mins)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assign each sentence from part 2 of the activity sheet to a group of learners. The learners can copy and illustrate their sentence, for example the spider catching the fly.</li> <li>• Put the pictures on the board in order, to help the learners when singing the song in the next stage.</li> </ul>
<b>7. Singing the song (5–10 mins)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners sing along to the song. Practise verse by verse – depending on ability, you might decide to have learners leave out the second line of verses 2-6.</li> <li>• When learners are comfortable with each verse, sing along to the whole song.</li> </ul>
<b>8. Short written extension (5–10 mins)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners think what she might have swallowed next, had she not died after swallowing the horse. Brainstorm ideas as a class.</li> <li>• Learners draw a picture and write a sentence. Display the work around the room. Allow time for learners to look at other learners' work.</li> </ul>
<b>9. Longer written extension (10–15 mins)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you would like to do a more challenging extension activity, try 'An old lady who swallowed some bread'. Ask learners if they think the old lady was normal or crazy to swallow the animals, and tell them they are going to imagine a very crazy sandwich for the old lady.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learners draw and write (depending on ability) the sandwich layer by layer. For example: 'There was an old lady who swallowed some cheese, she swallowed the cheese to go on the fish, she swallowed the fish to go on the banana, she swallowed the banana to go on the bread,' etc. You might like to prepare a worksheet for learners for this stage, with as much or as little support as you think they need.</li></ul>
<b>10. Setting homework (5 mins)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The previous stage can be done as homework, or learners can create another version. They could also practise the song.</li><li>• If they are members of LearnEnglish Kids, they can also read the comments on the 'Pets' Your turn and then leave their own. Alternatively, you could give them the 'Looking after pets' worksheet to complete.</li></ul>

**Contributed by**

Rachael Ro