

Ten top tips for using the Richmond Mazes

The **Richmond Mazes** are a brand-new series of interactive readers with a difference. The mazes use a gamebook format where students are the hero of their own story. As students read they have to make decisions and choose how the story develops.

The mazes are set in a variety of interesting contexts, covering a range of business situations from running a hotel in the Caribbean to saving an advertising company from bankruptcy. Students can read the mazes independently, but there are also many ways that they can be used in a class or a one-to-one teaching environment. Here are ten top tips to help you get started.

- 1. The mazes work like a game.** In each chapter, students have the opportunity to win bonus points by making good decisions. After they have read the book, ask students how many bonus points they won. Can they remember why they won the bonus points? Did they think they deserved them, or was it just good luck? How did the bonus points affect the ending of the maze?
- 2. The mazes include many examples of business texts such as emails, memos and CVs.** Ask your students to use these models to write similar texts in class. How do they differ from the conventions that are used in their country?
- 3. Use the mazes to discuss business cultures.** Some of the decisions students have to make relate to different business cultures. For example, readers may be asked whether they wish to disagree with their boss. This is acceptable in many British or US companies, but could cause problems in other cultures. How did the students feel in these situations? Did they make the correct choice? What would happen in their country if they took the same course of action?
- 4. Ask students to write down one useful phrase for each chapter.** Then bring these along to the next class and discuss them together. How useful are the phrases? Can students use them in their own lives? You can also target the search: find one phrase for agreeing and disagreeing. Find one phrase for apologising, etc.
- 5. The mazes are written to encourage re-reading.** In the first read, students may attempt to make all the best decisions and complete the maze as quickly and effectively as possible. What happens if they go through the maze making 'wrong' decisions? How do the characters react? Do they learn more language by making the right decisions or the wrong decisions?
- 6. Sometimes in English teaching we encourage students to focus on the whole package.** For example, we ask them to write a film review. In fact, when speaking in L1, it's much more common to discuss your favourite moment from a film or a book. In a group class, ask all the students to summarise one moment from the book and say why they liked or remembered it. Give them time to make notes. Then compare as a group. Did everyone choose the same moment? Why? Why not?
- 7. Ask students to pick a character from the book, and write a short description of the character under these headings: appearance, clothes, nationality, age, job, personality.** Ask students to find a quote from the character in the book, then get them to compare notes in pairs. Can they guess which character is which? Do they agree or disagree about what a particular character did? Would

they like to work with this person? Why? Why not? Then ask students to repeat the task for a real person that they know.

8. If students are reading the book together, ask them to revisit decisive moments from the book.

Ask students why they made the decisions they did and get them to justify these to the rest of the class. After each paragraph with a decision, ask them what decisions they would like to make that are not suggested. After they have successfully completed the maze, ask them what they think might happen if the story continued.

9. You can use the maze to practise specific reading skills, such as scanning. If you have a few copies of the maze on different devices, you can ask students a number of very specific questions related to one of the chapters. Students can then race to find the answers.

10. At various points in the maze, students can listen to other characters in special audio recordings. Use these at home and in class to practise pronunciation as well as intonation and stress. Students can play the messages back as many times as they like.