

## The High Security Prisoner

**Aims:** To work on fluency through learners creating and defending a plan to help the prisoner escape.

**Length of lesson:** 90 mins

**Level/age:** B1 upwards

**Language:** Daily routines, prison language, eg *governor, officer, cell, exercise yard*, etc

**Materials:** Cuisenaire rods, small pieces of paper

**Preparation:** None, apart from making sure you have enough small, folded pieces of paper for each learner. Make sure there is a cross on one per group.

### Procedure:

*Warmer:* Put sts in groups of 4-5 depending on numbers. Sts in 2 gps brainstorm prison vocab and sts in the other 2/3gps brainstorm daily routines in prison. T gets feedback and boards some of vocab and makes suggestions if necessary. (Don't forget prisons can have kitchens, laundries, vegetable gardens, libraries, workshops, etc.)

1. T explains the prisoner is a high security prisoner and kept in isolation in his own wing of the prison, away from other prisoners. S/he exercises/eats alone. With the cuisenaire rods they have to build the prison and put the prisoner (the smallest cubed rod) in his cell. There have already been attempts to free him, so his cell and must be extremely secure.  
NB Make sure the prisons do not have more than two layers of rods, otherwise they will be knocked down throughout the lesson. Set time limit of 15 mins max. Each group should try and prevent other groups from seeing their prisons.
2. When sts have built their prisons, or when the time is up, each group decides on their prisoner's daily routine, and double check they can defend their prison from attack. It is important that one member of the group is secretary and writes down the routine so that everyone knows it well. Time limit: 15 mins.
3. T gives out small, folded pieces of paper to each member of each group. One piece of paper in each group should have an 'x' on it – that person is the spy. Spies move to another group.
4. With their inside information, the spies help their new groups to plan the prisoner's escape. Time limit 15-20 mins.

5. Groups take turns to explain their escape plan and the group guarding that prisoner defend their prison says why it wouldn't work. This usually leads to quite animated discussion and often even the shy students get involved. You should have about 20-25 mins for this final part of the activity, so split the time equally between the different groups – usually about 5 mins each.
6. T makes notes of good language and errors to feedback. Correct as whole class activity.

Contributed by Sandra Piai, Italy  
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Acknowledgement: I learnt this activity at a workshop in Oxford in the 1990s, but only remember the teacher's name as being Yvonne)