

Five Minutes of Australia

Stories, slang, traditions, and fun facts shared before class

A small pre-class tradition that helps students know their instructor, encounter another culture, and begin class in a relaxed, welcoming way.

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Building Community Through “Five Minutes of Australia”

TEACHING PRACTICE

At the beginning of many class meetings, I spend approximately five minutes sharing an aspect of Australian culture, language, geography, wildlife, or daily life. These brief conversations give students a relaxed way to get to know me as a person while learning something unexpected about another culture.

Over the semester, “Five Minutes of Australia” becomes a familiar class tradition. It creates an accessible opening for conversation, invites student questions, and contributes to a classroom atmosphere in which students feel comfortable participating and connecting with their instructor.

<p>1</p> <p>RELATIONSHIP</p> <p>Students learn something personal and memorable about their instructor.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>CURIOSITY</p> <p>A surprising fact or phrase gives students an easy entry point into conversation.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>BELONGING</p> <p>A low-stakes routine helps the room feel welcoming before mathematical work begins.</p>
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How I use it

- Choose one topic that can be introduced in about three minutes.
- Invite one or two guesses, reactions, or questions from students.
- Connect the topic to a personal story when appropriate.
- End with a memorable phrase, image, comparison, or mini challenge.



Australian Slang Dictionary

Aussie word	Meaning	In context
Avo	Avocado	"I put avo on my toast."
Arvo	Afternoon	"I'll see you this arvo."
Agro	Aggressive	"He was agro after the fight"
Devo	Devastated	"That's devo"
Smoko	A short work break	"We stopped for smoko."
Bottle-o	Liquor store	"The bottle-o is around the corner."
Servo	Service station / gas station	"We need to stop at the servo."
Mozzie	Mosquito	"The mozzies are terrible tonight."
Barbie	Barbecue	"We'll have a barbie on the beach."
Sunnies	Sunglasses	"Don't forget your sunnies."
Chrissie	Christmas	"What are you doing for Chrissie?"
Pressie	Present	"I bought you a pressie."
Brekky	Breakfast	"Let's get brekky."
Biccy	Biscuit/Cookie	"I brought biccies to share"
Choccy	Chocolate Bar	"Can I have a choccy please?"
Brolly	Umbrella	"Bring a brolly, it's going to rain"
Footy	Football/NFL/AFL	"Want to play some footy?"
Esky	Cooler	"Put the drinks in the esky."
Kindy	Kindergarten	"She starts kindy this year."
Uni	University	"I studied mathematics at uni."
Trackies	Tracksuit pants	"I wore trackies all weekend."
Bludger	A freeloader	"Stop being a bludger"
Dag/Daggy	Someone quirky or uncool	"You are dressed like a dag"
Cark it	To die	"My car carked it yesterday"
Flat Out	Busy	"I've been flat out lately"
Chockers	Full	"The party was chockers"
Whinger	Someone who complains	"Stop being a whinger"
Sookie-la-la	A sook	"You're being a Sookie-la-la"
Sheila	A woman	"Take a look at that Sheila"
Bloke	A man	"He was a strong bloke"

Expressions That Need a Translation

She'll be right	It will be all right. Things will work themselves out. <i>When the plan is imperfect but probably fine.</i>
Yeah, nah / Nah, yeah	Usually “no” / usually “yes.” <i>Tone and context matter more than grammar.</i>
Good on ya	Well done—or sarcastically, “great job.” <i>Listen carefully to the tone.</i>
My shout	I will pay for everyone. <i>Often used when buying food or drinks.</i>
Have a sticky beak	Take a curious look. <i>A playful way to say “go have a look.”</i>
Take a squiz	Have a quick look. <i>“Take a squiz at this.”</i>
Sus it out	Investigate or figure it out. <i>A useful everyday phrase.</i>
Chuck a sickie	Call in sick to do something fun instead. <i>A cheeky Australian classic.</i>
Spit the dummy	Have a tantrum. <i>Like a baby spitting out a pacifier.</i>
Chuck a wobbly	Have a tantrum or dramatic outburst. <i>Often humorous rather than literal.</i>
Go troppo	Become irrational or lose your temper. <i>Historically linked to tropical heat.</i>
Pull your head in	Stop behaving foolishly or arrogantly. <i>A blunt warning.</i>
Bugger off / Rack off	Go away. <i>Informal and impolite.</i>
Chuck a U-ey	Make a U-turn. <i>A very practical driving phrase.</i>
Woop woop	The middle of nowhere. <i>“They live out in woop woop.”</i>
Are you right?	Have you lost all your brain cells? Get lost <i>An invitation to back off now.</i>

Australia ↔ United States

Same idea. Different word. Excellent classroom debate.

Australia	United States
Capsicum	Bell pepper
Coriander	Cilantro
Mince	Ground meat
Lollies	Candy
Fairy floss	Cotton candy
Esky	Cooler
Bogan	Redneck
Trolley	Shopping cart
Jumper	Sweater / hoodie / jacket
Footpath	Sidewalk
Whipper snipper	Weed whacker
Witches hat	Traffic cone
Dunny / loo	Toilet / restroom
Snag	Sausage, often served in bread
Chips	Can mean fries or packaged chips
Scissors, paper, rock	Rock, paper, scissors

Pronunciation Challenge

Ask students to say the word first—then give the Australian version.

Mazda

Nissan

Hyundai

Aluminium

Buoy

Adidas

Basil

Oregano

Tomato

Teaching note

This works best as a live comparison rather than a formal phonetic guide. Students can listen for differences in vowel sounds, stress, and syllable emphasis, and they often contribute words from their own families, regions, or languages.



Places, Systems, and Everyday Life



A useful opening topic: Guess where I live.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

- Driving on the left
- Australian currency
- Australian politics and voting
- Weather
- Schooling system
- School buses and school uniforms
- Australia Day
- Australia's "Big Things" roadside attractions
- The dance taught in schools "The Nutbush"
- Australian Christmas
- Happy Birthday Song



USEFUL FACTS

- The Population of Australia is about **27 million** people, that's less than the population of California.
- 90% of Australia's population lives within 50 km (~31 miles) of the coastline.
- More than 2/3rds of Australian's live in just 8 cities
- Tasmania, the smallest state in Australia, is larger than Florida.

Wildlife and “Only in Australia” Facts

QUOKKAS	The famously photogenic marsupial native to Rottnest Island.
WOMBATS	Their cube-shaped droppings are an unforgettable conversation starter.
UNIQUE WILDLIFE	80 % of Australia’s species are found nowhere else.
WORLD’S DEADLIST SPIDER	The Australian funnel-web spider is the most venomous spider in the world. It is also one of the most aggressive and deadliest creatures on Earth.
LARGE SPIDERS	The Huntsman spider can reach up to 15 to 30 centimeters (6 to 12 inches) across, easily covering an adult human's hand.
NATIONAL ANIMALS	Kangaroos and emus cannot walk backward due to how their bodies and large tails are built, which is why they appear on the national coat of arms
SNAKES	21 of the 25 most toxic snakes in the world are all from Australia
CAMELS	There are more camels in Australia than Egypt and Saudi Arabia.
SHEEP	There are 3 times more sheep than people in Australia.
BEACHES	The number of beaches is so large that visiting a new one every day would take 27 years.
THE EMU WAR	A strange episode in Australian history that sounds fictional but makes students want the full story.
HAROLD HOLT	The prime minister disappeared while swimming; so we named a public swimming pool after him.
EARLY POLICE	Australia’s colonial history includes early constables drawn from transported convicts. Basically our first police were just the best behaved criminals...
BIG THINGS	Giant roadside sculptures—bananas, prawns, pineapples, and more—make a fun visual topic.
DAINTREE RAINFOREST	Australia has the oldest continuously surviving tropical rainforest on the planet
GREAT BARRIER REEF	The Great Barrier Reef is the largest living structure on Earth.
NO VOLCANOES	Australia is the only inhabited continent that does not have any active volcanoes

Food, Celebrations, and Taste Tests

Tim Tam Slam

Bite opposite corners from a Tim Tam, use it like a straw with milo or hot chocolate, and eat it before it collapses.

Sausage sizzle

A sausage, diagonally in bread, often sold as a fundraiser outside community events or hardware stores.

Aussie food

Vegemite, meat pies, lamingtons, pavlova, fairy bread, Milo, and chicken parmi.

Candy-bar translations

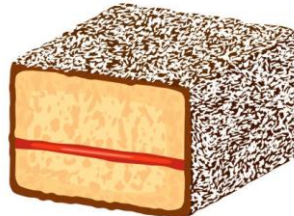
An Australian Milky Way resembles an American 3 Musketeers; an American-style Milky Way is closer to a Mars Bar.

Birthday tradition

“Hip hip hooray” after the birthday song.

Australia Day

A chance to discuss food, public celebrations, national identity, and the complexity of the date.



Aussie Quiz

Use at the end of the semester—or whenever the class needs a two-minute reset.

1. What is an esky?

A. A hat B. A cooler C. A kangaroo D. A backpack

Answer: A cooler

2. What is brekky?

A. Breakfast B. A short break C. A biscuit D. A barbecue

Answer: Breakfast

3. What animal has cube-shaped poo?

A. Koala B. Quokka C. Wombat D. Platypus

Answer: Wombat

4. What does “my shout” mean?

A. Speak louder B. I will pay C. Leave me alone D. It is your turn

Answer: I will pay

5. What is a snag?

A. A problem B. A sausage C. A mosquito D. A sweater

Answer: A sausage

6. “Yeah, nah” usually means...

A. Yes B. No C. Maybe D. Thank you

Answer: No

The goal is not simply to teach facts about Australia. It is to create a small, consistent moment of curiosity and connection before students begin the day’s mathematical work.