



**Expansion Activities**  
Basic English Grammar, 3rd Edition  
**Chapter 9: Expressing Past Time, Part 2**

**Activity: Alibi**

**Materials needed:** None

**Description:** The purpose of this activity is for two separate groups of students to ask questions of two “suspects” and try to break their alibis.

First, pre-plan a crime story. Details are not necessary; just a bare sketch will do. Select two students to be the suspects and tell the class the story.

For example: “Last night, sometime between 9:00 P.M. and 11:30 P.M., two people robbed the bank at the corner of Main Street and Lemon Avenue. The security camera shows two suspects, well-disguised, turning off the security system and blowing a hole in the safe.”



At this point, send the two students who are your suspects out of the room. Together, they are to plan an alibi for each other -- where they were together, what they were doing, what they were wearing, etc., during the time in question. The alibi should be as detailed as possible: if in a restaurant, what they were eating; if driving, who was driving, where they were going, what time they left, etc.

Divide the remaining students into two groups of detectives sitting on separate sides of the classroom. These two groups should write down questions they plan on asking the suspects. Questions could include: “Where were you last night between 9 and 11? What were you doing? Who was with you? What were you wearing? How was the weather?”

After the students (especially the two suspects) have enough time to plan, bring the two suspects back in the classroom -- with a little drama. For example:

“OK, detectives, we’ve picked up the two suspects. Here they are. You -- go into the first interrogation room, and you -- go into the second interrogation room. Detectives, when you are finished interrogating your suspects, switch. Ask them the same questions and see if they give the same answers. If they don’t, we’ll know they are lying!”

Now each group of students begins to question a suspect. Instruct your groups of detectives not to interrogate too loudly, or the suspects will overhear the questions and answers and be forewarned when they switch groups. At least one person in the group should take notes of the suspect’s responses. When finished, the suspects should get up and switch interrogation groups. The student detectives now interrogate the second suspect, trying to catch him or her in a response that is different from the first student’s.



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To wrap up the activity after some time, ask each group of detectives if they found discrepancies in the two suspects' alibis. The students should explain the differences they found. For some drama, bring the two suspects to the front of the class and ask the groups to decide if they should be set them free or arrested for the crime.