

Games

Sentence Race

Level: Any Level

A good game for large classes and for reviewing vocabulary lessons.

1. Prepare a list of review vocabulary words.
2. Write each word on two small pieces of paper. That means writing the word twice, once on each paper.
3. Organize the pieces like bundles, 2 bundles, 2 sets of identical words.
4. Divide the class into 2 teams. get them to make creative team names.
5. Distribute each list of words to both teams. every student on each team should have a paper. Both teams have the same words.
6. When you call a word, 2 students should stand up, one from each team. The students must then run to the blackboard and race to write a sentence using their word.

The winner is the one with a correct and clearly written sentence.

Spelling Contest

Level: Any Level

First, if you have a large class you have to divide it in 2 teams. then the teacher says a word or a sentence depending on the level for the students to spell. Students should spell these correctly with not even one mistake. The team that has more points is the winner.

What's the Meaning?

Level: Medium to Difficult

You, the teacher, may need a dictionary do this activity.

- Choose a word which is long, difficult, and unknown to the students, a good word to begin with is: *warmonger*.
- Without using a dictionary, your students write down a definition. (They can work out the definition in groups of three). Allow them a few minutes to think and write.
- Collect the definitions and read them aloud.
- When you have finished reading, they will have to vote which of those is the correct one. (It doesn't matter if none of them is the correct one)
- After they have voted and none of the groups guessed the meaning you read the correct one aloud.

The idea of this game is to let students be creative and practice writing skills.

Then you can have the students to discuss their writings.

Catching up on your ABC's

Level: Any Level

This game is short and simple. Write the alphabet on the board. Throw a bean bag to someone and say a word beginning with the letter A. This person must catch the bean bag, say a word beginning with the letter B and then throw it to another person This third person says a word beginning with the letter C and so on.

Obviously the game is meant to be played fast. If played with higher level students you may not want to write the alphabet on the board. There are many ways to change the game to make it adaptable to your level of students.

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Crazy Story

Level: Any Level

This is an activity that will make your students speak in class and be creative.

- Ask students to write a word on a piece of paper and tell them not to show anyone. This word should be a verb (or whatever you'd like to review).
- The teacher starts telling a story, then stops and chooses a student.
- That student will continue the story and must use his/her word. This student then chooses the next student to continue the story.
- The last student must end the story.
- After the story is over, the students then try to guess what words each student has written on his/her paper. The student who guesses the most words wins the game.

Act Out an Activity

Level: Easy to Medium

This is a game-like activity to teach continuous tense.

One student simply acts out some activity (e.g. cooking) and the other students guess what that student is doing. The student who guesses correctly acts out another activity...

Survivor Spelling Game

Level: Any Level

Use this activity to review vocabulary:

Make a list of vocabulary covered in previous lessons. Have students stand. Call out a vocabulary word. The first student begins by saying the word and giving the first letter, the second student the second letter of the word, the third student the third letter, and so on until the word is spelled correctly. If somebody makes a mistake they must sit down and we start from the beginning again until the word is spelled correctly. The last student must then pronounce the word correctly and give a definition in order to stay standing. The student who is left standing is the "survivor" and wins the game. I usually give them some type of prize. If all the students remain standing we have a pizza party at the end of the week.

FOUR-LETTER-WORDS

Level: Any Level

This game has nothing to do with offensive words. I play it just for fun and the students like it a lot. You will be amazed to see how many different words can be generated from a single word!

1.-The teacher writes a four-letter word (not a bad word but word made up four letters) on the board.

For example:

The teacher writes on the board: TIME

2.-Students will take turns generating words from the first one. The idea is to change only one letter but generate a meaningful word.

TEACHER.-TIME

STUDENT1.-DIME

3.-Any letter can be change. Only one at a time, but not on the same place consecutively. Example:

TEACHER.- TIME

STUDENT1.- DIME

STUDENT2.- LIME (Wrong you should change any other letter but not on the same place consecutively).

TEACHER.- TIME

STUDENT1.- DIME

STUDENT2.- DOME

STUDENT3.- COME

STUDENT4.- CAME

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STUDENT5.- CANE

The teacher has to limit the time the students take to write the words (may be 20 seconds). The students score a point for each meaningful word they write. If a student takes too much time he loses his turn. Finally the student who makes more points is the winner.

THE GAME OF TRUTH

Level: Medium to Difficult

I learnt this game when I was chatting with a Brazilian girl. It is a very simple but interactive game. As you know people always ask the same questions in chats over and over again. What do you do? How old are you? etc. She asked me if I wanted to play THE GAME OF TRUTH. I say yes of course! Here are the rules: (I made some changes for the English classroom)

1. Make a lot of small cards with interesting topics written on them, such as:

LOVE, JEALOUSY, PIRACY, MONEY, SMOKING, SEX, DRINKING, CLONING, BRIBING, FRIENDSHIP, DEATH PENALTY, PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT, FAMILY, etc., etc. Look for topics that make students speak. Sometimes even CONTROVERSIAL ones.

2. Every student in the class will take turns in taking a card. He or she will talk a little about the topic in the card he or she selected. For example:

MONEY: for me money is very important, but is not the most important thing. It is only a way to reach things. Success is not measured by the money you can get, etc., etc.

3. Allow student to express their feelings even if it is not their turn. Remember the main point of this game is to make students speak! However don't lose the control of the class.

P.D. If you select very interesting topics I guarantee everybody will try to answer the questions even when it is not their own turn. This activity is excellent "to break the ice" and to help you know each other in the classroom.

Active Brainstorming

Level: Any Level

This activity can be made to fit nearly any level, and works in class sizes of 6 to 40. The aims are to not only generate lists of relevant vocabulary around a theme, but to invigorate the class with a rather noisy and rambunctious activity.

To begin with, the teacher must select three or four vocabulary subcategories within a theme, for example with a theme of housing/describing rooms, the subcategories might be things found in a bedroom, a living room, and a kitchen; in a sports theme, there might be team, individual, and non-competitive sports. Students are then paired up and asked to generate ideas together for each subcategory, preferably under a time limit to keep things pacy, much as in any brainstorming exercise. Then pairs should be grouped into 2, 3, or 4 larger teams (depending on class size, logistics, etc.) to share/compare ideas and lengthen their lists if possible.

Now comes the wild part. The black/whiteboard is divided into sections, one for each subcategory, and one student from each group is called up and handed a piece of chalk or a marker of a color assigned to each team. There must be one color per team, eg. the blue team, the yellow team, and so forth. The designated writers for each team are not allowed to bring any paper up with them. Instead, their team members must shout out ideas which can be put under each/any subcategory, including the correct spelling of same. With all teams shouting at the same time, a seemingly out of control, but quite enjoyable atmosphere pervades. The object is to be the team with the most words on the board at the end.

It is best to stop every minute or two and change designated writers so that all can get a chance. Also, depending on how strict the teacher wishes to be, groups which use L1 might have their entries erased. It is also a good idea in big classrooms to move the teams as far away from the board as possible, so as to increase the pandemonium. Finally, the teacher shouts "Stop!", and the scores for each team are tabulated.

This activity will take between 30 and 50 minutes, has been used successfully with groups ranging in age from 16 to 65, and would seem to suit younger learners as well. The only materials required are a rather large board and as many different color markers or pieces of chalk as there are teams.

Submitted by: P. Bruce Riley

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A Variation on Bingo

Level: Any Level

Instead of making the cards yourself, have your students make them.

1. Get a set of review questions from your classes text book or trivia type stuff that they should know. Make sure the questions cover a variety of grammar points that you have studied.
2. Give each student a blank bingo grid.
3. Get the students to fill in the bingo grid with the proper answers to the questions.
4. Go over the answers just to make sure every one has got it right etc...
5. Now start the bingo game, except instead of reading off the answers, read the questions. this gets them thinking listening and writing/reading (three out of the 4 ain't all bad eh?)

Making Words from Letters in a Long Word

Level: Medium to Difficult

This game is a good activity for learning new words and for reviving some word knowledge and for giving a teacher time to prepare other tasks for students.

The class is to be divided into 2-3- teams. Give each team a dictionary and write on the board a long word. Students should compose different words from the letters of this word. After some time, the teams give their words. the team that has the most correct words wins.

For example:

R E T R I B U T I O N

return tribute iron notion note tone rib tube bruit tent tribe bur button rent burin nob bite burr run route tire tore bent bet bonnet rub nib net nub bin nut bit rube ruin rob rot unit union unite tier tie tin tint tone toe brute burn brunt butt butter riot tot tenet tenure terrier retro bone boot born bout totter tote tour bore

Then you can ask them to learn these words

Verb Review Game

Level: Any Level

This game can be played in teams or individually, depending on the size and knowledge of the students.

Step 1:

The teacher gives the students 5 minutes to review a list of both regular and irregular verbs.

Step 2:

Then the teacher writes something like this on the board : "things we do with our feet"

Step 3:

The students then have exactly one minute to write all the verbs related to this topic, such as: walk, kick, dance, run, jump, etc.

Step 4:

After the time is up, the teacher checks the students' lists of verbs. Each verb counts for one point. Any verbs appearing in more than one list are eliminated.

Then the teacher writes another topic on the board, "things we do with our mouth", for instance.

The student or team with the most points is the winner.

NOTE: This game can be used to review not only verbs but also adjectives, nouns etc

Mystery Object

Level: Any Level

I am teaching my Level 1 writing students how to describe things by means of process (First second then), extended definition (for instance/compare-contrast), and directions (N.S.E.W./right, left, etc). We have done these things one at a time but my students are continually making learning leaps beyond the simple assignments and I want to reward them for their abilities while making sure they have the basics down. Also,

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we will soon be studying the correct form for personal letters and I think they are ready to move on. We did these two fun assignments:

Imagine a terrible disaster has befallen our class here at the University (Monsoon, earthquake, rainstorm, snowstorm, tornado, flood, etc.) Write me a letter in which you describe this event and tell me exactly how you responded (I ran out the door and turned left! I ran straight ahead to the end of the hall and looked right and left. etc.).

We had such fun with this assignment! Everyone got into the drama! Exciting assignments like this really test the basic understanding of sentence construction as well as show them how all these forms work together in a paragraph. It was clear when they began to put all of the various forms together that some of them had not completely understood directions when they were not directly connected with the book example of street directions (North, South, and Right, Left). After this adventure in creative writing, however, they all felt that every sort of description was easy. So, we went on to another adventure that was even more fun!

Assignment 2: Write me a letter in which you tell me a wild story or an outrageous lie about yourself! (Everyone looks up outrageous in their dictionary). I provided them with stamped envelopes and these letters were actually mailed to me -- so I had the additional fun of getting personal letters in the mail. These letters were the best writing they had done so far and were, in addition, hysterically funny (one of my Turkish students warned me that he was a space alien and that the information he was about to tell me was "specific and secret!"). The following week, I helped each student with grammar mistakes and then read the corrected letters aloud in class. Everyone enjoyed this (particularly the public praise and appreciative applause) and they also saw that there were many ways to tell a story and still use correct English writing style. Two of my students had difficulty with sentence construction when they let their imaginations run in this way so they were provided with a topic sentence/supporting sentence review tool and they then wrote me a third letter while constantly referring to their topic/supporting sentence diagram. The improvement in their writing was astonishing.

I always encourage imaginations running wild; the greatest portion of my student's training tends to be incredibly focused and detail-oriented and an occasional stretch is important. Also, my father, who was an orchestra conductor, told me that when you are about to begin a new piece with the orchestra you do not start by practicing each section and then, when the sections are perfect, putting them together. You start by playing the entire piece through! You tell everyone not to be concerned about their mistakes, but just to try and keep up. Naturally this first "stagger through" sounds terrible! But the psychological result is that when you are done every musician says to himself, "I can do this!" Obviously, they do not want to look bad in the group, so they will self-discipline themselves to improve.

Word Grab with Songs

Level: Any Level

This is a wonderful activity if you think your class needs waking up a little.

Choose a song that the students have or have not heard before. Choose 10-15 pieces of vocabulary from the song and write them on separate pieces of paper. With lower level groups you may want to pronounce the words with the students first. Stick each word to the board with putty (blue tack). Put the students into 2 teams each one in a line before the board. Play the song. When the 2 students at the front of their line hear a word in the song that is on the board they must race each other to grab that word from the board (this can get quite violent!). They then go to the back of the line and it's up to the next pair. The team with the most words wins. I don't usually stop the tape so don't choose words that come one after the other. If you want to make it more difficult you can put red herrings up. You can usually play the song a couple of times until they get all the words.

Time Indicators

Level: Any Level

Rationale: Students practise using different subject pronouns, verb tenses, and the time words and phrases that go with them. They must also be able to recognize different forms of the same verb, especially irregular verbs.

Materials: None.

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Levels: All. Beginners can play using only four verb tenses (present, past, future, and present progressive). More advanced can play using all the tenses.

Method: One student says a time word or phrase (e.g. next year, a few days ago). A second student must complete a sentence using the proper verb tense. That student then says a different time word or phrase. A third student uses it to form a sentence, but may not use the same verb or subject pronoun the second student used.

Verb tenses may be repeated if necessary, but verbs may not, and subject pronouns may be repeated only after they have all been used once.

The game can continue as long as the teacher wants, though two runs through all the subject pronouns is an appropriate length. The teacher may write the full sentences on the board, but should at least keep track of which subject pronouns and verbs have been used.

Example:

First student: "At the moment . . ."

Second student: ". . . I am sitting in a classroom."

Second student: "Last year . . ."

Third student: ". . . they went to Europe."

Third student: "Every day . . ."

Fourth student: ". . . she takes the bus to work."

Flip a Card

Level: Any Level

Rationale: Students develop vocabulary and, at higher levels, practise proper word order by forming sentences.

Materials: Standard deck of playing cards.

Method: For each card from ace to king, assign two letters of the alphabet, and write these on the board. Assigning letters can be done at random, but it is logical to have some sort of order, e.g.:

A 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 J Q K

A B C D E F G H I J K L M

N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

For beginners: Flip a card. The student must think of a word beginning with one of the letters that card represents. If, for example, the card is a 3, the student must say a word beginning with C or P. Variation: The word must fit a category, e.g. animals, occupations, etc.

For higher beginners and intermediate: Flip a certain number of cards-say, seven. Each student must write down a sentence using words beginning with the given letters, in order. If the teacher so wishes, the students can work in small groups. Students then read their sentences aloud.

For advanced: Taking turns with each card flipped, students orally form grammatically and syntactically correct sentences. For example:

Cards: A, Q, K, Q, K, 6, 8, 7, 5, 4, 4, 10, 2, K, 2, 2, 8, 9, A, 7.

Sample sentence: A lovely monkey laughed merrily, for his green

elephant drank quickly while orange zebras brought over hungry,

intelligent, naughty giraffes.

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Guess the Object

Level: Any Level

The teacher prepares cutout pictures that are pasted or taped to index cards. One student selects a card and must describe it in English until another student can guess the object. This is very much like "20 Questions" but instead of the challenge being to ask questions, the bonus is on the cardholder to verbalize the description.

The teacher should be careful to select pictures that reflect the vocabulary level of the students. Simple objects, like "baby", "door" or "car" are good for beginners. Later on, more complicated pictures that suggest actions, scenes and relationships could be used, like: "mother bathing child".

Tic Tac Toe" or "Noughts and Crosses"

Level: Any Level

This is a good game for a revision or for a reader's discussion. Divide the class into two groups. Draw a grid of nine squares on the board and write a number on each square (from 1 to 9). Prepare nine questions and set one question for each number. The groups call out the numbers and if they answer the question correctly, they get the point. The goal of the game is to make a line (either horizontal, vertical or diagonal).

Twenty Questions

Level: Any Level

First one member of the class chooses an object, an occupation, or an action which ever you decide. Then members of the class try to discover what it is by asking questions which can be answered by "yes" or "no" For example, if the subject is "occupations" then the questions might be like these.

Do you work in the evenings?

Do you work alone?

Do you work outside?

Simon Says

Level: Easy

This game which is often played by native-speaker children is very useful in the ESL classroom. The person chosen as "Simon" stands in front of the classroom and issues commands. The rest of the class only follows these commands if prefixed with the words "Simon says". If someone follows a command not prefixed by "Simon says", he is out of the game. The last person remaining becomes the next "Simon". Some examples of commands are: stand up, sit down, touch your left ear, say "yes"

Whispering Game

Level: Easy

Divide the class into two teams. Line up the players. If there's an odd number of players, one can be the teacher's "helper". The teacher or his helper whispers a message to the first person of both group A and group B. The game only starts when both players know the message. Then each player whispers the message to the next player in his group successively until the last player gets the message. The team which can repeat the message first and correctly receives a point. Start the game over with the second student of each group becoming the first ones in line.

Hangman

Level: Any Level

Divide the class into two teams. On the blackboard, draw spaces for the number of letters in a word. Have the players guess letters in the word alternating between the teams. If a letter in the word is guessed correctly, the teacher writes it into the correct space. If a letter is guessed which is not in the word, the teacher draws part of the man being hanged. The team which can guess the word first receives a point, then start the game over.