

WHY GAMES?

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What words do you think of when you see the word *game*? I hope that your responses include such words as 'play', 'fun', 'cooperation' and 'competition'. The aim common to all communicative activities, to have people relaxed and enjoying themselves, acquiring language through natural use, as well as making learnt language more readily available, are particularly important here.

When teaching young children, this type of approach is especially relevant, but relaxation and enjoyment are important to all learners, and the most serious of adults can become completely absorbed in cooperating with colleagues in order to win a game.

There are two kinds of games: *competitive games*, in which players or teams race to be the first to reach the goal, and *co-operative games*, in which players or teams work together towards a common goal.

The insertion of games as an integral part of any language syllabus provides an opportunity for intensive language practice, offers a context in which language is used meaningfully and as a means to an end, and acts as a diagnostic tool for the teacher, highlighting areas of difficulty. Last, but certainly not least, although the above discussion has tended to focus on methodological considerations, one of the most important reasons for using games is simply that they are immensely enjoyable for both teacher and student.

Which game should be played, once we have decided it is time for such an activity? Many factors enter into deciding the answer to this question:

1. The size of the class.
2. The class level - elementary, intermediate, advanced.
3. The structures being studied at the moment.
4. The physical space you have to work with.
5. The noise factor - will you disturb the classes around you?
6. The student's interests, in and out of class.
7. The equipment and materials available.
8. Cultural considerations
9. The time available for a game.

Here are some games you can use in the classroom, but this is just a really short list:

1. Who's got the tense

You can play this game to revise the tenses. Prepare some cards before you enter the classroom. On each card write the tense learnt by the students until that point. E.g. PRESENT SIMPLE, PRESENT CONTINUOUS, etc. and give each student a card. Choose one student to come in front of the class and say a sentence using one of the tenses learnt. Students have to recognize the tense and if they have the tense written on their cards have to hold up the card. If they hold up the correct card, they get a point. At the end the winner is the student or students who have the most points.

Another variation for this game could be questions instead of sentences. The students who have the tense and hold it up correctly also have to answer the question.

2. YES/NO

It can be played with any vocabulary item or grammatical structure at any level, but it goes better with smaller students. Divide the blackboard into two halves; write YES on the left and NO on the right. Divide the classroom into two groups; call out a student from each group. Show a picture/flashcard for e.g. a flashcard with a farmer on it and say the word farmer. In this case the word you said matches the flashcard, so Ss have to put their hands on the YES word. The student to be first wins a point for his/her group. Show another flashcard e.g. doctor and show the flashcard with a teacher on it, in this case students have to touch the NO word. Go on with the game until each individual student comes to the blackboard.

Correct and incorrect sentences can be used as well.

3. Paper ball prepositions

Students sit in a circle, Teacher demonstrates throwing a ball to a student saying "from Ben to Anna". Students throw the ball to each other narrating as they go. Teacher demonstrates new constructions including between, on the left, over, under, behind etc.

4. Adverbs game

One student leaves the room while the others choose an adverb of manner e.g. *angrily*, *sadly*, *quietly* etc. The student outside comes back in and gives commands like *play the violin*, *feed the dog*, *walk around* etc. which the group carry out in the manner of their adverb, so they will have to play the violin angrily for example. The student who went outside then has to guess the adverb.

5. Running Dictation

Use your own short text or any text. Cut the text into sentences and place them around the room. Split the class into groups or pairs. Each group must have one runner and a designated writer. The runner has to go around the room and read the sentences - committing them to memory - they are not allowed to touch the paper, take the paper back to the group or shout the sentence across the room. Once they think they can remember the sentence they return to the group and repeat to them what it said.

The writer of the group writes down the sentence as it is dictated, if the runners forget part of the sentence they are allowed to go back to the paper and re-read it (same rules apply).

The group can then choose another runner and another writer and they have to find a new sentence. The group then has to put the sentences in the correct order.

6. Dictagloss

1. A short text is read to the class at normal speed. The students should listen for meaning.
2. The text is read again and as it is being read the students should write down key words and phrases.
3. Working in small groups the students use their words and phrases and attempt to reconstruct the text from their shared resources. Their version should contain the main ideas of the text and approximate the language choices of the passage.
4. Each group of students produces their own reconstructed version, aiming at grammatical accuracy and textual cohesion but not at replicating the original text.
5. Each group reads their finished version to the class and each text is analyzed and compared.

7. Picture dictation

The teacher, or a student, describes a picture to students who draw what they hear. Picture dictation targets several skills and learning styles. Listening is in the forefront. Good pronunciation skills are essential for the person dictating. Both the "artists" and the person dictating must use communication strategies such as rephrasing to negotiate meaning.

The activity may be adapted to provide practice of specific vocabulary lists, or to enhance speaking skills in general.

8. Gold, gold – Who’s got the gold

This game can be done to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day. Teacher chooses a student who will be the leprechaun and comes in front of the classroom. The student covers his/her eyes or turns around and the teacher gives a coin or a chocolate coin to one of the other students from the classroom. When the leprechaun uncovers his/her eyes or turns back to the class all the students have their hands behind their backs. The leprechaun has 3 chances to guess who has got the coin. If he guesses he can keep the coin and another student will be chosen to be the leprechaun. If he doesn’t guess the student who has the coin will keep it.

This game can be played with different vocabulary topics, too. Instead of coins you can give the students words with a certain vocabulary item. For example: jobs, fruits, vegetables and so on.

9. Think Fast

A game for revision (review). It also works well for the last 5 minutes of class

The teacher prepares a list of items for revision e.g. word fields such as fruits, vegetables, describing people, weather, job, and so on; grammar, facts. Three to five volunteers leave the classroom and wait until their turn has come. The teacher appoints a student to take the exact time and another to take down a tick for every correct answer. No repetitions! Then the first player is called in. Give an exact time for e.g. 20 sec to name as many things as come in his/her mind. Once all volunteers have done their bit, award a small prize (e.g. a sticker) to the winner of the round. Then ask the class for additions before you pick the next item. Then pick the next item.

Web sources:

1. <http://iteslj.org/games/>
2. <http://english.daejin.ac.kr/~rtyson/fall2000/elt/games.html>

DE CE SĂ ALEGEM JOCURI? (WHY GAMES?)

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Jocul este un element important în cadrul orelor de limba de engleză și nu numai. Un joc este întotdeauna binevenit, copiii adoră jocul și acest fapt îi ajută pe elevi să fie mai activi și mai cooperanți în cadrul orei.

De asemenea prin intermediul jocurilor se poate realiza aprofundarea lecției, exersarea anumitor structuri gramaticale, noțiuni de vocabular și nu în ultimul rând poate fi relaxant și distractiv atât pentru elevi cât și pentru profesor.

Atunci când decidem că dorim să introducem în activitatea de la clasă un joc trebuie să avem în vedere mai mulți factori cum ar fi; numărul de elevi din clasă, nivelul clasei, ce anume predăm la momentul respective, spațiul de care dispunem, dacă deranjăm sau nu pe altcineva, interesul elevilor, materialele și echipamentul de care dispunem, considerații culturale și timpul de care dispunem.