

## Language games students and teachers love!

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Please feel free to email me with questions, comments, or new ideas!

### Game Instructions

#### **Battleship - All Levels**

This is a great game which involves *speaking, active listening, reading, and THINKING*. The students are motivated to win the game and, in the process, get a lot of practice, but without the rote drills!

Ahead of time: prepare the Battleship sheets. Choose 10 sentences with your chosen target structure/vocabulary. Divide your sentences so that the second half of the sentence can grammatically make sense with the first half. Write the first half of the sentences on the horizontals, and the second half on the verticals. Make enough copies, 2 per player.

→ Make sure your students know how to play Battleship. I teach mine with a couple of the traditional games, but you can certainly make them on paper (or use the template).

#### **How to play:**

- Give the students old folders for their set-up. Place the two grids inside an old file folder, and open the folder in the shape of a letter “L”, with the two grids facing the player (and away from the opponent). Students can play one on one, or in two-student teams.
- The vertical grid is for the student to mark his or her guesses. The horizontal grid is where his or her ships are located.
- Each player places their 5 “ships” on the horizontal grid. Ships can be positioned either horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.
- The players take turns calling out a spot by reading the “sentence coordinates.”
- A player says “hit” if he/she has a boat on the spot named or “miss” if he/she does not have the spot occupied.
- Each player should keep track of his/her guesses by writing an “H” in a square for hit or an “M” for miss. Also keep track of the opponents guesses on the grid. Another way to mark hits and misses is to use two different colored pencils or markers.
- If a player hits every letter of his/her opponents ship, that ship is considered sunk. When a player has a sunken ship, he/she must call out, “You sunk my \_\_\_\_\_.” (type of ship such as a *rowboat* )”.
- The first player to sink all his/her opponents ships is the winner.

The first few times of play, I actively “helicopter” to make sure they have the right idea. After that, they can play on their own, but it’s not mere play... it’s work hidden into the form of play (sneaky!).

 I have blank templates in Microsoft Word or as a PDF. Email me to request copies.

## **Do You Love Your Neighbor? - Intermediates and Up**

I use this game in a number of situations: for team building, to practice vocabulary, for formative comprehension checks, and just for plain fun on a day when students can't seem to get motivated.

### **How to play:**

- Students sit in a circle; one student stands in the center.
- Everyone sitting in the circle asks the person in the middle, “ [student name], do you love your neighbor?”
- The person in the middle has these options:
  1. Say “Yes” and then add a qualifier.
  2. Say “No”

### Example:

Class: Pedro, do you love your neighbor?

Pedro: Yes, I love people who wear jeans.

Class: Olga, do you love your neighbor?

Olga: Of course! I love people who were born in March.

Class: Zubeda, do you love your neighbor?

Zubeda: No!

- Once the qualifier has been said, everyone to whom it applies gets up to find a new chair. The person in the middle also tries to find a new chair.
- If the person in the middle said, “No!” then everyone gets up and scrambles to find a new chair.

### **Extra Rules:**

1. The person in the middle cannot name names. If the student wants only one person to get up, s/he must use specific description. Here is an example of how *not* to do it, and the permissible way to do it:
  - ⊗ Class: Phara, do you love your neighbor?  
Phara: Yes, I love my brother Billy!
  - 😊 Class: Phara, do you love your neighbor?  
Phara: Yes, I like boys from Haiti and their birthday is in February!
2. An individual student who finds him/herself in the middle may not say “No” twice in a row (teacher must keep tabs of this). In addition, “No!” may not be given as the answer by ANYONE more than twice in a row.
3. It is NOT okay to get up and scoot one to the left or right (when several students do this together, it ends up looking like a clockwork motion). When looking for a new chair, students must put in an *honest effort* to find one that is not a neighboring chair. As long as there is an honest effort to find an unoccupied chair, a player may sit in the neighboring chair, or their original chair, for that matter.

- 4. The descriptions must be appropriate for school. \*In 10 years of using this game, I've only had one inappropriate description, which I quickly squelched.
- 5. In general, take care not to get too rowdy, lest feet be trampled-upon or accidents happen.

- As the teacher, I sometimes maneuver myself into the middle and either help the students out with vocabulary ideas: birthdays, clothes, grade in school, brothers/sisters in the same school or recently graduated, country of origin, language(s) spoken.. the list is literally endless. I also will put in funny comprehension checks:  
 Class: Ms. Paxton, do you love your neighbor?  
 Ms. P: Yes. I love people who have teeth.

**Letter-by-Letter - All levels**

This game is good for teams, or for individuals. I have used it with all levels.

<p><b>How to play:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students can work in teams, pairs, or as individuals. If students are in teams, designate one person as the “spokesperson” for the team.</li> <li>• The teacher writes a phrase on the board, using underlines for each letter, and separating each sentence with a slash.</li> </ul> <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> <p>Example:        _ _ / _ _ _ / _ _ _ _ / _ _ _ _ / _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ ?</p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students guess each letter of the puzzle. Unlike “Hangman,” the letters are being guessed <i>in order</i>.</li> <li>• When a team guesses a letter correctly, the teacher fills it in and awards the team one point. The play stays with that team, and they get to guess again immediately.</li> <li>• Though students may guess what the words are, <i>they must spell the words out</i>.</li> <li>• The game is over when the puzzle is filled:            Do / you / love / your / neighbor ?</li> <li>• For lower-levels, I also write the alphabet immediately below the puzzle. As each team incorrectly guesses a letter, I erase that letter. Then, if a team guesses an already-erased letter, I just point to the empty spot in the alphabet. Once that letter is correctly guessed, I rewrite the letters into those blank spots.</li> </ul>
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This game is really marvelous because you can literally see how they are trying to puzzle out English. It also brings up opportunities to discuss how English is written. For example, I played this game recently with my beginner level group. There was a word which began with “t”, but some students kept wildly guessing letters such as “z, k, l,” etc. I would make a face and try to say something beginning with “tz”, “tk,” or “tl” (works with “Tlingit,” but I’m not sure what else!). Then I could focus the students with possible letters to follow “t.”

### **Team Tic-Tac-Toe - Any level**

I tend to have small-ish classes, so I just divide the students into two teams. Designate one team as “Team X” and the other as “Team O”

Ahead of time: prepare at least fifteen questions which the students should be able to answer.

#### **How to play:**

- Write a large tic-tac-toe grid on the board.
- Write numbers in the empty spaces, 1-9
- One team picks a number
- Ask the team a question. If the students answer the question correctly, write their team moniker, X or O in that square. They’ll direct the tic-tac-toe play.

I say to prepare fifteen questions in case you want to play the game more than once.

### **Julia’s Game - Intermediate and Up**

I call this game “Julia’s Game” simply because Julia was the student who first suggested it to me.

#### **How to play:**

- Each student or team has a piece of paper and a pencil.
- Divide into pairs or teams of 3-4, or students can play as individuals.
- Students make a series of columns on the paper with these headings:  
BOY GIRL ANIMAL CITY or PLACE THING SCORE
- One student silently thinks the alphabet, then another designated student tells him/her to stop. The first student names the letter s/he was stopped on.
- The students then work to write down something from each category which begins with that letter.

For example: H

Harold Helen horse hospital hat

K

Karl Kathy kettle Ketchikan ketchup

- After time to fill in one letter’s categories, the answers are scored:
  - An original answer (the only one in the room) gets 10 points.
  - An answer that more than one person or team wrote gets 5 points.
  - Fake names or things (clearly fake, not merely mistakes) earn - 5 points.
- Rotate the positions of “alphabet thinker” and “alphabet stopper” and play again.

**Think Fast! - All levels**

This game is very similar to “Julia’s Game,” or similar “categories” games.

**How to play:**

- Each student or team has a piece of paper and a pencil.
- Divide into pairs or teams of 3-4.
- Pick a letter.
- Each team writes down as many words as they can think of that starts with that letter.
- Variations to “pick a letter”:

Pick one:

**How many things can you think of that:**

- ... are bigger than you are?
- ... are rectangular?
- ... are round?
- ... are long and thin?
- ... make a noise?
- ... work on electricity?
- ... are made of paper?
- ... are made of wood?
- ... are made of glass?
- ... people enjoy looking at?
- ... have handles?
- ... you can sit on?
- ... take a long time to chew?

- After a few minutes, or when the writing has slowed down, the answers are scored:
  - An original answer (the only one in the room) gets 10 points.
  - An answer that more than one person or team wrote gets 5 points.
  - Fake names or things (clearly fake, not merely mistakes) earn - 5 points.