

## Why Play Games in ESL Classes?

Games are played because they are fun, they lower students' affective barriers, and they motivate students by meeting their need for enjoyment. Games are a way to engage students in drill and review; the best games meet teachers' objectives and leave students feeling positive and excited. Games also provide a perfect opportunity **for Whole Brain Learning**. In other words, teaching with games allows you to provide students with formats for learning and review that address multiple intelligences and therefore enable you to meet the individual learning needs of your students through group activities. Most games can address several learning styles at once. Sometimes as teachers we play games because we know they will provide us with the results we want, but we are not sure if playing games actually has a sound basis in pedagogy; for this reason, we often feel a bit guilty if we let our students play! To help you see how your games can meet learning style needs, try looking at the chart below and as we play today fill in the chart by writing in the name of games which you feel would allow students to exercise each type of intelligence.

<b>Intelligence/Learning Style</b>	<b>Responds to:</b>	<b>Game</b>
Logical Mathematical:	graphic organizers, charts, maps, outlines, routines, rules, organizational tasks	
Verbal Linguistic:	events chains, sequencing, words/semantic mapping, flash cards, reading/writing	
Interpersonal:	group work, presentations, centres, team work	
Kinesthetic :	skits, role plays, mind mapping, action games	
Spatial – Visual:	drawing, mind mapping, imagery, pictures, diagrams, pictograms	
Musical:	songs, chants, dance, poems	
Intrapersonal :	individual work, silent reading, writing, listening	

## Games For The Whole Class

### 1. CHANGE GAME:

- students choose or are assigned a partner
- students stand facing each other
- students are instructed to look at each other carefully for 3 minutes
- students are told to turn around so that their backs are to their partner
- students must change 3-5 things about their appearance
- students turn to face each other
- students tell what their partner has changed

(I learned this game at the “Tribes,” presentation at the TESL 2001 Conference, in Toronto.)

### 2. BUZZ:

- teacher prepares overheads which have a sentences containing adjectives/adverbs or some other grammatical structure that you want to practice. You may wish to prepare a short paragraph, poem or story or use individual sentences.
- teacher instructs students to read the sentences aloud as a group.
- teacher then points out the grammatical structure to be emphasized (eg adjectives)
- teacher has class identify the adjectives
- teacher then starts game by having individuals take turns reading sentences aloud
- as they read aloud the student must substitute the word BUZZ for every adjective in the sentence
- if students forget to say BUZZ they are out
- the winner is the student who is able to read without forgetting to substitute the grammatical structure chosen for BUZZ
- a great way to reinforce the structure being practiced would be to have students substitute using the name of the structure they are identifying

### 3. The CLAPPING GAME:

- teacher selects a category such as fruits, transportation, clothing, cities in Ontario...
- class begins clapping a two beat rhythm
- students take turns saying a word that fits the category on every second beat (eg clap, clap, bananas, clap, clap, apples, clap, clap, strawberries....)
- students are out if they can't come up with a word
- You can soften this game and allow for extra practice by playing simply to make it around the room without stopping – ie get them to start over each time someone can't answer, but allow the students to help each other so that it is a team effort.

### 4. ALPHABET CHANT:

- students take turns completing a chant that goes as follows: A my name is (any name that starts with an A), and I come from (any place that starts with an A) and I like (any food or game, object [teacher's choice].... that starts with an A)
- the chant continues as students go through, in turn, each letter of the alphabet, for a large group you may need to start over with A at some point
- students who can't complete on their turn are out

## 5. BRICKS:

- teacher prepares several overheads each of which features a picture of something which most students could identify (you can make it as challenging as you wish)
- teacher covers the picture with numbered index cards (bricks) to make a 3x3 grid or something similar (the picture should be completely covered)
- teacher then asks a series of review questions
- when a student/group correctly answers a question they may choose which brick to remove from the picture
- if the student/group can guess what the picture is, they win the game
- students/groups take turns answering questions until enough bricks are removed to correctly guess what the picture is
- teacher can keep track of the score on the blackboard, the winner is the student/group who guesses the most pictures correctly
- the game can go on until all the pictures have been guessed or until you finish your review

## 6. WHAT IS IN THE BAG?:

- teacher divides class into groups
- teacher provides each group with a bag containing an item which they must not show to the other teams
- each team must elect a recorder who will write down their descriptive sentences and a reporter who will later read the sentences to the class
- each team examines the object in their bag and creates sentences (one per person or a fixed number suggested by the teacher) which describe their object without naming it
- when the groups are finished, the teacher selects a group to report to the class
- the reporter reads the first sentence to the class Groups should rank their sentences so that they present their best clue first.
- if the class guesses the object correctly on the first sentence the group gets full points
- if they class can't guess, then the reporter gives the next clue , the points are reduced for every clue the reporter has to give
- if the class can't guess even with all the clues, then the teacher may need to help by providing some more clues (while groups are making clues, teachers can assist so if probably won't come to this!)
- There's no clear winner in this game, although you may record the points. The main object is to help groups learn to make good descriptive sentences

## 7. IT'S A LIE:

- teacher prepares a series of statements which are either true or false and large cards which say Truth and LIE; these statements can be drawn from things you have been learning together either about grammar or language conventions or the content of a story/unit you have completed
- the class divides into teams
- teacher then reads a statement aloud and asks the teams to decide whether the statement is true or a lie – teams must come up with 1- 3 reasons why they chose true/lie
- each team holds up their answer
- the teacher asks each team to present their reasons and then reveals the answer

- teacher can debrief after each question or after the game is finished; the main objective is to allow the teacher to gain insight into students' knowledge/skills and give feedback to both praise and correct
- with more advanced students you might play this game before beginning a unit to gauge how much they know and also to correct any fact or skill based problems you target, in order to help students get more out of the unit itself

#### 8. ASSEMBLY LINE:

- Teacher provides groups with an object which has several parts, in a bag
- the groups have 30 seconds to assemble the object
- when time is up the group must stop and write on a card what they did, then disassemble the parts and return them to the bag
- groups then exchange bags and are given 60 seconds to read the card and try to assemble the object
- if no group assembles its object within the time limit, they must add to the card what they did, disassemble the object and pass it on again
- when a group is able to completely assemble an object they may sit out the next round
- the game is over when all objects have been assembled successfully
- after the game the teacher debriefs the groups on what was helpful or not helpful in the instruction cards written by the groups, how well groups co-operated etc...

#### 9. ACTING OUT:

- teacher divides class into groups
- groups are given a piece of chart paper and asked to write down as many verbs or nouns (depending on what you want to work on) as they can
- the group with the longest list wins
- the catch is that groups may challenge each others' lists if they believe that a group has written a word which is not a verb or which they don't understand
- when challenged group members have to take turns to act out the word being challenged, if they can't show they know the meaning, they have to eliminate that word from their list

#### 10. LAST ONE STANDING :

- teacher gives every student some tokens (how many depends on how long you want the game to last – ie the more you give the longer the game)
- students take turns making declarative statement using "I have never..."
- student who have.... must either give up a token, or if they have used them all, sit down
- the last one standing is the winner

(This game was suggested by a teacher on the TESL-L list serve as a way to practice participles. It could be adapted for many uses and could be played with the whole class.)