

# 176 English Language Games for Children



**By: Shelley Ann Vernon**

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## Introduction and Tips



The games presented here are ideal for ESL pupils aged 6 to 12 with many games also useful for ages 4 to 5.

### The philosophy behind the games

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I am delighted that you now own these games and that you will soon be bringing more success and joy into the lives of the children you teach.

One thing we all know to be true is that we never forget our teachers. We remember all the ordinary ones, who were either unimaginative or just going through the motions, and we feel grateful for the few incredible teachers we had who challenged us and made us think, rather than spoon feeding us so we could regurgitate our answers all over the exam paper to get a reasonable grade and then forget everything immediately afterwards!

As a teacher of English as a second language the greatest gift you can give your students is the skill and confidence to speak the language, actually use it and hold a conversation. You may have a qualification in a language but if you cannot understand or speak to the people when you go to the country, what use is it?

### Who learns their native language by first sitting with a textbook reading out paragraphs?

Because of the logistics of getting large numbers of students through exams, written exams might be two or three hours long while the oral exam is a mere ten minutes. As a result of this, teaching time is usually divided up in the same way with 90% of the class time spent reading textbooks and doing writing assignments.

This quite simply does not reflect our pupils' needs. What child learns his or her mother tongue by first sitting with a textbook reading out paragraphs? Absolutely no one, obviously! Children already understand and speak their native language before learning to read and write it. So how do teachers ensure our pupils get a chance to understand and speak English given they often have big classes? It takes a long time for each student to repeat a given phrase in turn, plus it's boring for everyone while they wait for their turn and it is not particularly productive.



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With these games you now have the tools to multiply the talking time of your class exponentially and have your children passing their written exams AND be able to speak the language. This is because the games are designed to allow everyone plenty of opportunity to be talking as much as possible, without neglecting spelling, reading and writing.

This book contains more listening and speaking games than reading and writing activities because currently the skill of speaking is the most neglected in classes today. The games are designed to have as many people talking at once – but in a controlled environment in terms of the language they are practising and in terms of keeping discipline in class.

There are no arts and crafts activities, or elaborate things to cut out and fold in, because although those things are valid and fun, especially for young children, these language games are not destined for an art class but emphasise getting results in speaking the language. When time is short, time-consuming craft activities are not the best use of lessons.

Purpose and fun: The games are tried and tested and work for many reasons, the first one being that they make learning fun. When children enjoy the class they identify with the subject, pay more attention and do better. Playing a game also has a purpose to it, an outcome, and your pupils will need to say things in order to play the game, rather than just repeat them back mindlessly, or with no real reason to communicate.

Movement: The physical movement involved in some of the games also helps keep everyone alert and focused. Children naturally have a lot of energy and are not good at sitting for long periods so if you throw in a game with movement from time to time you will prevent them from getting restless and bored.

Repetition: Another reason these games work is that they involve frequent repetition, and repetition is the mother of skill. Repetition can be boring but in the context of these games it is disguised or given a purpose. We remember things by making a special mental effort to retain them, and also by frequent exposure. Repetition is an integral part of most of the games, thereby guaranteeing maximum exposure to whatever language you are teaching.

Revision: In addition the games lend themselves perfectly to quick bursts of revision. In fact you can revise a whole topic in a five-minute game. If you use games to revise two or three topics every lesson, as well as teach the new language, imagine how well your pupils will do at exam time.

Create a teacher-student bond: Playing games in class will engage your students and undoubtedly you will create a closer bond with them. They will respect you more and grow to love you. Ultimately this is what gives you satisfaction as a teacher, alongside seeing your students achieve through your guidance.

Games will also create a relaxed atmosphere in class where optimum learning is favoured and where children will feel that it is OK to try rather than fearing failure. You'll also find even the shy students will join in and become motivated and over all your class will find learning English more accessible and more fun.

Learning styles: Games also tap into the different learning styles of your pupils. It is well researched that using more than one style increases the overall rate of learning. In addition you are sure to resonate with all the pupils in your class. Be sure to use a great variety of games and not always the same favourites. The games here cover all learning styles so if you vary the games you will use the auditory, visual, kinaesthetic and tactile styles.

Teacher organisation and attitude: To ensure the pace is lively do be well organised in advance and have the material ready. Use class members to hand materials out in a speedy fashion, and be ready to drop or simplify a game if it is not working and replace it with something else.

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The games are fun but the teacher does not have to be a clown. Smile and be yourself. Don't think that games are time-fillers or treats for when the children are good. These games are far more effective than passive teaching methods so do the children a favour and use them in every lesson.

Always encourage the children, and make them feel that they are doing well. A child who gets poor grades all the time or who is always way down the list in class will tend to stay there as their self-esteem drops lower and lower. Now with these language games you can really turn them around.

My husband Bernard tells the story of how he always got 0.5 out of 20 for Latin so he asked his father, author and professor of Latin and Ancient Greek, to do his homework for him. Result: 0.5 out of 20. His father went in to see the school Latin teacher and found himself obliged to give her a lesson in Latin. From this point on Bernard got 6 out of 20, as the teacher did not dare go any lower. So don't be like that Latin teacher! If most of your pupils are doing poorly then either your assignments are not suitable or your preparation is inadequate, but either way, you are partially responsible for your students' grades!

Now you can't do the work for your students – it is in their hands whether or not they apply themselves and make the mental effort required of them, but you can certainly motivate and make it easier for them so they have every chance to succeed.

I'll never forget a parent coming to me at the end of two terms and telling me how her daughter, who had learning difficulties, had gained so much in confidence since coming to my classes that she had improved across the board in all subjects at school. I had of course noticed that the child in question did indeed have a problem – you wouldn't know it by looking at her, but she could not remember anything for more than a few seconds, while the children around her were retaining the words and phrases. I never let on that I had noticed, and would frequently ask her questions where the answer had only just been used by one of the other children. I heaped praise on her when she got it right, and she felt good coming to my classes. She felt like she was doing really well and gained confidence in herself, which had a knock-on effect in all her academic development.

The games in this book, when used successfully, will improve your pupils' confidence, motivation, behaviour, retention language and skills. If you have not used games before in class you will be surprised to see how motivated the children become, because they have a reason to pay attention that they can immediately relate to – a game! If they do not pay attention during the presentation of new language and make a mental effort to memorise it, they will not be able to play the games well, and they'll let their team and themselves down. You will find that the use of games during class stimulates and motivates your children to new levels, even the shy ones will participate and naughty pupils will settle down.

These games are going to be another string to your bow to allow you to feel the joy of teaching, and the satisfaction of being successful in your mission, having your class love you and your head of school, if you have one, appreciate you immensely as a valuable member of the team. But most of all you are going to know that you have made a great contribution to the world by spreading love through your encouragement and lively, inspiring teaching, and you'll treasure the thanks and appreciation that will come your way.

## Tips on using the games

It is possible to teach a whole lesson with games or pepper your class with them in between textbook or other tasks.

### (1) The category

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Each game has a category. There is the listening category of games, which are for introducing new vocabulary, new grammar and also for revision. Next is the speaking category, and these games allow various degrees of speaking, from a limited drill to freer speaking games. Occasionally the speaking opportunity is just saying a rhyme as part of a game. Most games lend themselves to practising any vocabulary or grammar. The listening and speaking categories make up the bulk of the games on the basis that this is what is missing most in classes today. Some reading, writing, spelling and pronunciation games are also included, and they usually combine one or more of the other skills.

### (2) Group size

All the games in this book are suitable for small groups and small classes of up to 20 children. However many games have variants for use with large classes. There are even games that you can play with a lecture hall full of 80 students on benches. Equally if you are tutoring any private pupils many games can be adapted for that use. Tips are given lower down this section for large classes and for one to one teaching for ideas. The detailed index indicates the ideal class size for each game. This is the IDEAL size and will not correspond necessarily to reality – many teachers already use these games with great success with far more pupils than specified in the ideal group size – so try them out and look for the variants to suit different class sizes.

Each game has a recommended number of players because there is nothing worse than becoming bored sitting around waiting for a turn if there are too many players, and each turn takes too long. However the games are very flexible, and once you become familiar with them you will have more and more ideas about how to adapt them to the needs of your class.

### (3) Level

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The level indicated for each game is often flexible as it ranges over several levels because the games can be adapted in so many ways. For a beginner level introduce fewer words and use simpler structures. The quantity or complexity of the language dictates the level and the teacher is in control of that, while the rules of the game remain the same.

It should be noted that there is no link between the level and the recommended age. Advanced games are not for older children only; they can be played with younger children who are at that level. Equally adults can play some of the beginner games and enjoy and learn from them. Most of the games provided are for the beginner to intermediate levels, and this is quite simply because in most schools where children are being taught English as a second language, these are the most relevant levels. However a teacher may use basic games to practise advanced grammar.

### (4) Materials

Picture flashcards are essential for most of the games. Either buy some ready made, make your own or have your class draw pictures for you on card and laminate them so that they last.

It is a good idea to use miniature items or real items when you can with the younger children. You might want to occasionally ask the class to bring things in, and you can also build up quite a collection of props from garage sales, charity shops and markets. For example enhance a lesson on the present continuous by using old clothing and playing the dressing up games from this book. (What are you wearing? I am wearing a hat.)

Many of the games require no materials or have a variant using no materials (aside from the class board), and these can be especially useful if you have a few minutes spare at the end of your planned lesson or if you are waiting for people to arrive who are late.

### (5) Age

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All games are suitable for children aged 6-12 and many for children aged 4-5. Some games can also be used with adults. The detailed index groups the games by age group as well as by skill. The games themselves are simple as far as learning the rules, and the level is varied depending on the amount of vocabulary and the complexity of grammar that you use in the game. In addition, many games have variants for older or younger children. The trick is to have an alternative on standby, be ready to simplify the language if a game is not working well.

Specialist resources by the author are available for children aged 3-5 and for teens and adults on the web [www.teachingenglishgames.com](http://www.teachingenglishgames.com).

### (6) Pace

There are three types of game regarding pace: excitable, wake up and calm. You can use these categories strategically to control the energy level in your group. For example if your language class comes right after a lesson with a deathly dull teacher who sends all the children into total lethargy, then start with a lively game to wake every one up. If your class is immediately after the recreation period you might start with a calming game. It is possible to teach exclusively with games, however the likelihood is that you will have course books to work through. In this case you adapt the games to the language in the chapter you are studying, and intersperse the session with games to introduce and practise the new vocabulary and grammar and when you want to inject some energy into the class.

For example you may be in the habit of opening up the textbook the minute you walk into the class and having pupils take turns in reading it out. Instead use listening games to first introduce all the vocabulary and language structures in the text, reinforce it with further listening or speaking games, and then have the book opened. Students will now be able to whiz through the chapter because everyone will understand it, and the reading will serve to reinforce the newly acquired vocabulary and language. Even if you adhere to the most traditional methods, and they do work, you can still use games here and there during the class to keep the pupils focused and alert.

### (7) Competition

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In any group-learning environment one always has children of different natural ability and one of the teacher's greatest challenges is to stretch the brighter children, while nurturing the less gifted ones. Using games allows for this beautifully, as long as the teacher creates a balance between competition and team spirit. Team spirit can be created by allowing students to help each other, and not just within a team, but within the whole class. More academic children can stretch themselves by helping the slower ones. An element of competition with children over six definitely gives an edge to the games and the children are generally more motivated to make an effort to remember words. Having competing teams rather than competing individuals spreads out the winning and losing. That said individual students within a team are accountable and have a responsibility towards their team.

A teacher may freely rig the play (subtly, so the children do not notice), in order to keep scores as close together as possible and avoid having one team or group trailing way behind the others. Also there is no need to make a big deal about who wins, after all it is the learning that is important and not who wins the game, unless you want to specifically praise a certain student because they need extra encouragement. In particular, with younger players below age 7, let the game go on until all the teams or people have completed. Also, while some competition livens things up a bit, one doesn't want to make every game a point scoring exercise, but just an opportunity for some enjoyable learning. In order to ensure a variety of winners and a bonding of the whole class mix up your groups, sometimes putting all the bright kids together, and sometimes allocating the best children to be team leaders.

Avoid competition with children younger than six. You can still play against the clock and have races with youngsters, you just don't emphasise the winner over the others;

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everybody wins. Make sure young children always succeed at the task in the given time frame - by stretching the time frame, or by starting from the beginning again. Young children can burst into tears from the pain of failure at what seems a trifle to adults, so set the game up for everyone to complete successfully.

### (8) Mixed abilities

Games allow you to make the most of your brightest children. For example, one thing that works well is to let the most talented children work together initially, and once they have learned the material, send them out as group leaders to the rest of the class, to lead a series of games, or use them as referees or runners in the games for quality control. (This will be mentioned in the instructions for certain games). Of course you have to let them play too sometimes!

### (9) Logistics

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If you are in a cramped classroom you might once in a while see if you can go out into the playground or gym, perhaps for an end of term lesson, which would allow you to play games that do not work in your particular class. However if you can never do this then fear not, there are enough options and adaptations to allow you to play most of the games provided. A few of the games imply running, and if you have the space and feel you can control your class well enough, then you can allow this, but it is up to you. You may prefer to allow fast walking only. Naturally you have to watch out for obstacles in a class situation where people are coming up to the board, or moving around the class. You might want to have all school bags placed in a corner out of the way. One thing you can be sure of, the more you use the games the more uses and adaptations you will think of.

#### (a) Forming teams

To quickly create teams of 12 count in unison with the class from 1-12, pointing at a different student each time. Those students are all in team A. Your pupils should make a note of their team letter as a precaution. Then count the next batch of pupils who become the Bs, again counting up with the class. Keep those teams for the whole lesson. If you notice one team always wins swap over some of the talented pupils or in the next class count differently so your pupils are always in different teams. You can count across the rows, vertically and by dividing the class up into imaginary squares.

When your pupils are expert at counting from 1-12 you can make up your teams by counting from 13 upwards. The size of your teams will depend on how many you have in your class and how many teams you want. Fewer teams can be easier to manage.

#### (b) Giving each member of the class a number

You may sometimes want to give each pupil a number so that all the number ones can do one thing, all the number twos do another and so on. You want to do this quickly but in a way that the students will remember the number they are given. First instruct your pupils to write down their number as soon as they are given it so they do not forget, as many of them will. Then count round the class and have the whole class count with you and point at the pupil who is that number as they count. When they come to themselves they place their hand on their chest as they say their own number and then write it down.

In this way you quickly organise your class for a game while everyone practises counting together, but counting with a purpose, not just meaningless repetition. Use this method to practise different numbers. Let's say you want 5 teams of 10 pupils and the class know 1 to 10 backwards. Count from 113 to 122 five times instead of the usual 1 to 10.

### (10) Team slogans

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Divide the class into groups and let each group identify itself with a special name such as an animal. Even better is to give each group a chant or slogan that they perform standing up with actions or clapping. The groups can be asked to say their slogan when they win a team game as a reward, or for fun to break up a period of sitting.



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Let the children create their own slogans in teams. Make sure the slogans are correct grammatically before being voted as the official slogan for that team. If you have beginners use simple slogans such as "We are the birds and we love to fly, We are the birds and we fly up high!" If that is too difficult just start with "We are the birds, we are the birds!" Then let all the groups add more to their slogans later in the term as they progress.

### (11) Classroom Management and Noise

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It is vital to keep discipline in class so that your time is well spent. Most of keeping good order comes from the teacher's attitude. Just because a teacher uses classroom games does not mean an excuse for a party.

#### (a) Some essential basics to manage a large class

Together with your pupils define the rules in the first lesson, and post them on the classroom wall for reference. Knowing WHY a rule is in place makes it easier to keep. You must establish the rules on day one and stick to them! This really works, as the teacher below testifies:

*'I want to share a classroom management idea that works for me. I am an early childhood teacher and on the first day of school I sit with my students in the circle. I ask the children to make the rules that they would like to follow and I post those rules right next to the calendar. So whenever a rule is not followed I go back to the poster and ask the misbehaving child to follow the rule next time and tell the other children to remind him/her. I have no reward and no punishment in my classroom. The responsibility is with the children and they feel very powerful.'*

Be consistent in applying your rules. If you are arbitrary about how you dish out your rewards and 'consequences' or punishments, you will undermine the rules themselves. Praise good behaviour to generate love and self-esteem. Whatever you do, avoid being like so many parents who spend their whole time telling their children, "don't do this", and "don't do that". By focusing on the positive in order to draw more attention to it you apply the universal law of "you attract what you focus on".

Reward and appreciate good behaviour. Happy faces work well and cost nothing as this teacher describes:

*'Thanks for all your tips. I have another tip for classes of excitable children. Write all the children's names on the board and tell them there will be a prize for the child with the most 'happy faces' at the end of the class. Then the first time the class gets rowdy, without saying anything, draw a happy face next to a quiet child's name. This will instantly get the attention of the class and I have found that if you give the rowdiest child a happy face the instant he or she behaves better (even if only slightly better), then he or she will make an effort for the rest of the class. Often children who are rowdy are used to being left out of privileges so won't bother making an effort to behave. So if you recognise good behaviour from them quickly and acknowledge it, they will be quick to try and take part.'*

Here is an extended version of the 'happy face' principle:

*'Thank you for the lovely tips to manage a noisy class. I do apply some of them and the point on saying a poem or rhyme while the handouts are distributed is a good one.'*

*I thought I could share an idea, although it may not be new. I have prepared a motivation chart for the entire class, one for boys and one for girls as all the names cannot fit in one. The names are in the left column and the parameters for which I expect an improvement are:*

- 1. General class behaviour.*
- 2. Regularity in class work and homework.*
- 3. Contribution to class either by giving ideas or getting some interesting facts and sharing or creating/finding a piece of art and putting it up on the class bulletin board.*
- 4. Novelty - any thing new and creative that is done by the child purely on self motivation.*

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### 5. Personal cleanliness (clean shoes, ironed clothes, nails trimmed and hygiene)

*These 5 points form the five columns. There is one row for the whole class too.*

*There will not be any black marks. Only red stars are given for every positive thing that the child or class does. This does not mean that whenever the child completes his or her homework on time, she will get red star. It is customized and subjective; depending on the effort that child must have taken to complete it on time. When a naughty boy stays quiet for a period, he gets a red star while the others don't. But a brilliant student who contributes to class and shares knowledge, will earn a red star in that column.*

*All these may not be new to you, honestly, but I felt like sharing it as I have found they work wonders in class improvement. I teach for the 10 year olds. With warm regards, Lalithashree.'*

For the prize the teacher refers to this could be a round of applause from the whole class or being given a special task by the teacher such as leading a game or writing something up on the board.

If you are working in a school, know the law and rules of your institution before you go into the classroom for the first time, and work in harmony with the school. Start out strict and fair - and stay that way! Being strict is not about looking stern and being bossy. It is about making sure the rules are kept, in a firm but fair way. You can still be a really fun, loving teacher and be strict with your class at the same time.

#### (b) Useful discipline tips

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- Don't break your own rules by raising your voice to be heard. Instead talk quietly or stop and wait. Your class should know that for every minute you are kept waiting they will receive extra English homework, or whatever consequence you have designated.
- Children love the sound of their own name more than anything else. So use an individual's name for praise and avoid using it when telling someone off.
- Create teams and deduct or reward behaviour points to a team's score during a game. Your class will respond naturally by using peer pressure to keep the naughty children from misbehaving.
- Empower your children with choices. For example, ask a naughty child, "Do you want me to speak to your Dad?" By asking a question you give the child the power to choose, whereas if you use a threat such as, "I'll call your Dad if you don't behave", you take the initiative away and seem tyrannical. For example, say things like, "you can either play the game properly or you can sit in the corner". The child will probably choose to play the game properly, and you make them responsible for their behaviour.
- Prevention is better than cure, so try giving boisterous children an important task BEFORE they start to play up. They may respond well to the responsibility.
- With a large class it is especially important to hand things out quickly or use a system to have this done, such as giving the well-behaved children the task as a reward. Sing a song together or do some counting or a quick game to occupy the class while materials are handed out.
- Play a mystery game and, before you start, say that during the activity you will be watching the whole class for 3 well-behaved children who will be rewarded.
- Keep the pace of a game moving so the children do not have time to mess around as if they do they will miss something, and not score a point or miss a turn.



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- Follow the noisy games with quiet games or a worksheet to keep a lid on the level of excitement. If you are feeling cautious, use the calm games, and pepper your classes with 5-minute games, in between textbook exercises.
- Most of the listening games can be played in silence so it is wrong to assume that using games automatically means more noise in class. Use peer pressure to make students behave by deducting points from a team for talking in the native language or being noisy.
- Only play games where you know you can keep a handle on the situation. For example there is no point playing a boisterous game with a lot of movement if you have more than around 20 children. With large classes, including classes of up to 60 children, you need games where the children have limited movement - such as standing up or making gestures while remaining in their seats.

### (c) Attention grabbers

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- Start an English song the children know and love – they will all join in with you and at the end you'll have their attention.
- Clap out a pattern, which the class must clap back, or start a rhyme they know with actions.
- Use quiet cues such as heads down or lights off. Vary these with other fun quiet cues such as "Give me five". 1--on your bottom, legs crossed; or sit down; 2--hands folded in your lap; 3--face the speaker; 4--eyes and ears open; 5--mouths closed. You teach this repeatedly in the first lessons and after a few weeks, you only have to say "Give me five: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5", and the children will do it.
- From teacher Kashmira Vazifdar: *"Your tips on class management sure do wonders. I have been using the give me a 5 technique for several years and it truly is effective. Another technique I use when I have a noisy class on is to do various hand and head actions. I start any action like a wave, a flying bird, or just hands swaying from side to side, and the class just copies me till we reach the last action of the hands placed lightly over the mouth – which has been established as an action for silence. The entire class is then silent, attentive, energised and focused to begin the class on a quiet note."*
- You can also use the Magic 1 2 3 idea. When a child does not comply start counting 1, 2... The child knows that if you get to 3 there will be some sort of consequence, such as missing out on the next game. If you use this and you reach 3, you must follow through with an appropriate consequence consistently.
- Play [Sit and Be Silent](#)

To summarise, establish the rules and consequences for good and bad behaviour, apply them consistently, set a good example, use peer pressure and points, and use attention-grabbing cues such as favourite songs and English rhymes with actions and countdowns. Above all play suitable games where you know you can keep in control of your class. If you cannot manage your class you should realize that, although it sounds harsh to say so, you are wasting your pupils' time.

### (d) Loud individuals

If you have trouble with a few children who always shout out the answer before others be careful not to kill their enthusiasm by crushing them. Speak to them privately, explaining that everyone should have a turn. Pick children out to answer in alphabetical order or draw names out of a hat to be fair. Rather than asking children to put their hands up to answer a question pull a name out of the hat. This avoids wasting valuable minutes while the whole class strain and go "oohh teacher, please sir!!!" etc. When you can only pick one out of 60 you want to spend as much time on task and as little time as possible on logistics. Still it is good to use variety and having the children put their

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hands up to answer does get them to move their bodies a little. In general you want to try and avoid having only one child involved in an activity while the other sixty watch. Use the games in this book where at least a handful of children participate at once.

### (12) Movement

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Aristotle said that the three things children should concentrate on are music, arithmetic and physical education. Arithmetic develops the mind, music the emotions and physical education the body. Nowadays we have a broader curriculum but nonetheless children benefit from being active. You have surely noticed how most children like to run everywhere. Children generally do not walk; they skip, hop, run and naturally can't keep still. These days we coop children up in classrooms like battery hens and it is not natural, it's not natural for the hens either for that matter.



If you can include some movement in your language classes you will quite simply get better results. Movement will snap the children out of any lethargy or boredom that they may be in as a result of sitting for long periods. I know children often move between classrooms for different lessons and that is good, but I maintain that using movement during the class gives better results than keeping children still.

If you have space then using movement is easy. If not just have the children stand up, sit down, move various body parts, point to a different picture around the room or pass things around in the context of a game. You can also bring different children up to the front of the class and have others distribute things for you or collect them in. The games in this book give many ways of including movement, even with very large classes.

### (13) Group work

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It is a good idea to demonstrate with a group at the front first so everyone is clear on what is to be done. Tell the children to only use whispering or quiet talking to keep the overall noise level down. Use a signal, such as flicking the lights off and on again, and the children know that when this happens they must be silent immediately.

Make up a small central group. When a child in the group has spoken once or twice he or she goes back to the main group and someone from the main group comes in and takes the place in the group. For example 12 children are passing two balls around saying sentences or words. When a child has had the ball twice his turn is up and someone takes his place. This has to happen seamlessly without stopping the game so you keep up the pace and flow of children through the game.

Very large classes: If you are able to divide the class up you can have one group on school computers doing worksheets or word games, or even homework which they can email to you. Another group can be doing something on the board, another on the overhead projector, another can be working on a role-play, another can be watching a video or doing a listening comprehension. In this way you can have only a few groups

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engaged in speaking while the rest are involved in quiet activities. Rotate so each group has a turn at everything. Your overall noise level will be manageable this way.

Let each group create a poster with words they know and take turns showing the class and naming the items. Each group can either have a vocabulary theme or use any words, as you wish. For more advanced students you can use this idea to make up and present stories or jokes or funny things that happened, favourite films and why, and so on. Each group can also create a newsletter, or take it in turns to do so. This can then be posted in the class for the week for everyone to read.

### (14) Pair work

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Role-plays are excellent for speaking practice. Demonstrate up front with several students and then let the students work in pairs. Again try allowing only whispering to keep the overall noise down. Any pairs caught using the native language instead of English risk losing a point or being disqualified, or whatever measures you are using to maintain discipline and productive work.

### (15) Spoon-fed choral repetition

When a teacher has a huge class of 45 students or more – even up to 120 – this can seem like the only option to get children speaking English. However it is dull and not particularly effective although it is better than never letting the children say anything!

If you have to use this, use it sparingly. Instead look for ideas in the games that follow. Rather than making the children repeat things back like parrots why not put the vocabulary and grammar you are teaching into rhymes or songs. Let the children make up a rhyme, for homework or in small groups, with a given number of words or a specific sentence in it. Once you have a few decent ones the class can learn those for fun. At least the children feel they are being creative and thinking about the language rather than just mindlessly repeating back what they hear from you.

### (16) Worksheets

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Large classes may mean that giving out worksheets is expensive and wasteful. Ideas are to give out one worksheet per group of children and let them fill it in together. Use an overhead projector to display the worksheet and let the children copy it. Laminate your worksheets and let the children fill them in with washable pens so you can wipe and reuse the worksheet over and over.

### (17) Getting to know the children

Have the children wear nametags in class. While it may be a sea of faces at first gradually you will get to know them all. To learn names quickly associate a feature with the name such as Lisa with the glasses or pouting Lena or blue-eyed Joe. Obviously you keep the feature to yourself but this helps you match the name to the person.

If you participate in school events and at lunch the children will see more of you and this will help you learn their names and get to know them. They will appreciate it if you show an interest in them as to their likes and dislikes and who they are outside of class. If you can, invite groups of children back to your house for a drink to watch a cartoon or for a board game.

Always allow a few minutes of class time for individuals to come and see you with requests for help while the rest of the class are occupied with something. You may not have time to explain everything but you can note down the requests and cover them again in future classes.

### (18) Karaoke

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Yes they love it! If you can afford such a thing this could be one of your best investments. Let the children learn songs in groups if group work is feasible for you, or as a class if not. You can learn the vocabulary to the songs first using games and ask the children to write up the words and learn a verse at a time for homework. Put actions to the song; let the children give you their suggestions, so you have some movement too. If you have several classes at the end of term let each class perform to the others.



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Older boys will probably not enjoy singing but both sexes of the younger children will love it.

### (19) Performances for motivation

Many children love to show off and perform. If you have several classes have a competition in your class where one or two groups are voted winners by the others and then have a show with all the winning teams. Things to perform can be songs, rhymes, mimes, role-plays, question and answer type quizzes, vocabulary quizzes, or drawing pictures according to instructions. Even without the combined class show you can run friendly competitions in class in an effort to focus the children and motivate them to concentrate when practising together in groups before showing the class.



### (20) Teaching One to One Tips

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If you are teaching children one to one, or in pairs then I recommend that you consult the following website where you will find a demonstration video and games adapted for one to one teaching:

<http://www.homeenglishteacher.com>

### (21) Short plays are ideal for small groups

If you have the good fortune to teach children in small groups then plays and skits are ideal. Putting on short plays for parents or friends is a highly motivating activity. Children absolutely love to be the centre of attention and show off what they have learned. One can write simple repetitive scripts with basic English, but with a funny twist in them and this will give a great deal of pleasure to the child, who will be happy to rehearse and perform, and the parents who will be so impressed with your results that they will be sure to keep sending their child to the lessons.

You will find an easy, fun short play that is ideal for beginners here:

<http://www.teachingenglishgames.com/eslplays.htm>

In addition a short skit is included free with the Food lesson plans as part of this resource.



### (22) Adding value to enhance your teaching and reputation

If you really want to help your students as much as possible then lend or recommend films to watch for homework, such as Spiderman, Batman, King Kong, or Cinderella and Walt Disney movies - all with English soundtrack and possibly subtitles in the native language so that the children will actually watch the movies! Your pupils will watch these many times over willingly and will absorb a huge amount of language subconsciously.

If you are thinking about the cost of buying videos then buy them second hand online or locally. Over time you can build up a library of these for your teaching purposes. You might want to take a deposit from students on loan of your material to ensure its return.

You could also build a library of comic books to lend. You would not expect your students to understand all that much initially but the subconscious will be absorbing the language all the time.

### (23) To summarize, here are the top tips:

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- Always start with games from step one - you cannot expect the children to be able to play games with the language until they understand the language. Steps one and two are vital.
- Use games intermittently throughout your class in combination with your course work, to reinforce or to prepare for it.
- Mix in calm, wake up and excitable games to keep your class alert and on their toes, and use movement games every now and then. Note that in some games, movement can be used even while the class remain seated at their desks.
- Follow the natural learning process of 1.listening, 2.speaking, 3.reading and 4.writing. See the six steps outlined below for which games to use during each of these steps.

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- Start easy, build confidence and make it harder gradually. This applies to the level of language presented, the amount, and also the nature of the task according to the age of your pupils. Always make it easy to start with so every one can do it, feels good about it and can therefore build on a solid foundation.
- Be organised and ready with materials to keep momentum going so the children do not have time to get bored.
- Cultivate team spirit and use competition for the purpose of keeping everyone motivated rather than as an end in itself. Avoid competition with youngsters under 6.
- Use the resources that you have to hand such as props in the classroom, clothing, body parts, furniture around you, and have your children make picture and word flashcards for you if you do not have any.
- Keep an eye on the games you choose so that children are not sitting around waiting for their turn.
- Always have reserve material and be ready to switch to another game immediately if something is not working out.
- Always stop the games while they are still enjoying them.
- Use short games for revision frequently and revise previous themes covered often. You can revise a whole theme in a few minutes with a game. Repetition is the mother of skill.
- Surprise your pupils by avoiding a predictable routine.
- Use masses of praise and encouragement.
- Use the class talent to help you out running the games.
- Speak to students in English as much as possible, using mime and demonstrations where possible rather than reverting to the native tongue. If you are teaching a multi-lingual class you will be used to doing this anyway.
- Give them tests at well-chosen moments so that even the children who usually do not do well have the pleasure of going home and telling their parents they got 9 or 10 out of 10.
- Enjoy yourself!



## Quick Start Guide and Detailed Index

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2. [Step Two](#) - Listening games to consolidate
3. [Step Three](#) - Easy speaking games
4. [Step Four](#) - Consolidating with more demanding speaking games
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6. [Step Six](#) – Spelling and writing games
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8. [Games ideal for playing with songs or rhymes](#)
9. [Games you can also use with older children or adults](#)      [Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

It is **vital** that you play **enough** listening games for the children to recognise the words well before proceeding to speaking games. If a game is not working it is most likely because the children cannot handle the language well enough yet.

Keep it simple and build progressively so that everyone has fun. If you rush to a speaking or writing game before the children have taken the new language or vocabulary on board the game will fail.

It is highly recommended to use steps one to three in order, to give the children the best chance of remembering what they learn and being able to use it in the subsequent steps. Steps four to six may be used in any order.

### Step one – listening games to introduce new vocabulary and language

Before playing any games you need to present the vocabulary for the first time. You can do this by holding up a picture, or pointing to the item and saying "chair". Have the class repeat that back to you in unison. You can do this twice per word for three words and then start an easy listening game right away. As you play the game feed in more new words. Hold up the new picture card, name the word and feed it right into the game. Each time you introduce new words vary the listening game so it does not become a dull routine.

After one or two step one games proceed to step two, and you want to vary the ones you use each lesson so that your group never know what is coming up next.

With 4 year olds, only introduce three words to start with, and play some games just with those three words. With older children introduce 6 new words, play games with those and add more if you see your class can easily handle it. A good tactic is to use 6 new words and 6 words that are revision. When introducing new grammar use known vocabulary so not every element is new.

The best games to use during the presentation stage of new vocabulary are:

### Step one listening games for all language for ages 4 to 12      [Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

[Commands Race](#) Class: any Space: aisles OK Pace: flexible Level: easy  
[Copycat Commands](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Decoding](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy  
[Draw](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Head to Head](#) Class: 4 to 30 Space: flexible Pace: excitable Level: easy  
[Jump the line](#) Class: any Space: flexible Pace: Wake up Level: Easy  
[Matching and Mirroring](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: wake up Level: Flexible  
[Musical Vocabulary](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: yes Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Pronunciation Hands Up](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy  
[Pronunciation Word Stress](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Rapid Grab It](#) Class: 2 to 20 Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Rapid Reaction](#) Class: 2 to 16 Space: circle game Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Recognising Tenses](#) Class: any Space: flexible Pace: wake up Level: easy



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[Show Me](#) Class: any Space: flexible Pace: wake up Level: Easy  
[Team Race Basic](#) Class: 1 to 30 Space: yes Pace: excitable Level: easy  
[The Big Freeze](#) Class: any Space: flexible Pace: calm Level: easy  
[Upside Down Game](#) Class: small group Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy

### **Step two – more listening games to consolidate new language**

Once you have introduced the maximum number of words your group can handle you can play more listening games that require a slightly better grip of the words.

These games also allow for fun and effective revision of many words in a short space of time. It is useful to refresh your pupils' memories with a quick listening game before any speaking activity.

#### **Step two listening games for all language**

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[Abracadanagram A](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: No Pace: wake up Level: flexible  
[Abracadanagram B](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[All Change](#) Class: 6 to 20 Space: yes Pace: excitable Level: flexible  
[Bingo](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy  
[Board Bash](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy  
[Colour Wolf](#) Class: any Space: flexible Pace: flexible Level: easy  
[Flashcard Chase](#) Class: small group to small class Space: yes Pace: Lively Level: Easy  
[Ladders Basic](#) Class: 8 to 40 Space: yes Pace: excitable Level: easy  
[Phonemes Wall Charts](#) Class: 1 to 35 Space: children circulate, wake up, easy  
[Simon Says](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Swat It!](#) Class: 2 to 20 with option for more Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Team race Q and A](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space yes Pace: excitable Level: easy  
[Team Race on the Board](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[True or False](#) Class: any Space: No Pace: Calm Level: Easy  
[Where Is It?](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible

### **Step three – games for communicating with the new language**

Once your class or group have become proficient at listening and understanding the new vocabulary or language structure you are presenting, you can proceed to some of the speaking games.

#### **Step three speaking games for all language**

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[Abracadanagram B](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm - wake up Level: flexible  
[Abracadanagram C](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm - wake up Level: flexible  
[Action Race](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: aisles OK Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[All Change speaking](#) Class: 6 to 20 Space: yes Pace: excitable Level: easy  
[Alphabet B](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Backwards Bull's Eye](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Balloon Fortunes](#) Class: 4 to 30 Space: aisles OK Pace: wake up Level: flexible  
[Blind Painter](#) Class: 2 to 30 in small groups Space no Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[British Bulldog Basic](#) Class: 5 to 30 Space: yes Pace: excitable Level: easy  
[Call My Bluff](#) Class: Any size in small groups Space: No Pace: Calm Level: easy  
[Chanting Game](#) Class: 2 to 15 Space flexible Pace: wake up Level: very easy  
[Chinese Whispers](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy  
[Dancing Demons](#) Class: 3 to 21 Space: yes Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Duck, Duck Goose](#) Class: any Space: yes Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Find the Pairs](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: to sit in groups Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Find Your Friend](#) Class: 6 to 40 Space: aisles OK Pace: wake up Level: flexible  
[Flashcard Chase](#) Class: small group or class Space: yes Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Gorilla](#) Class: flexible Space: flexible Pace: wake up or excitable Level: easy  
[Go to the Vocab](#) Class: 4 to 20 Space: yes Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Grandma's Footsteps](#) Class: 4 to large class Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Guess the Action](#) Class: 4 to 40 Space: flexible Pace: wake up Level: easy

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[Hangman](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy  
[Hangman Variant](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: Flexible  
[Hidden Picture A](#) Class: 1 to 30 Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Hot Potato](#) Class: 5 to a large class Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Jackpot](#) Class: 3 to 35 Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy  
[Joker](#) Class: small group Space: to sit in group Pace: calm Level: easy  
[Jungle Treasure](#) Class: 8 to 20 Space: yes Pace: wake up Level: flexible  
[Kidnap](#) Class: 12 to large class Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Ladders Q And A](#) Class: 8 to 40 Space: yes Pace: excitable Level: easy  
[Miming Games](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: flexible Pace: wake up Level: flexible  
[Mystery Bag](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no, but useful Pace: calm Level: easy  
[Noughts & Crosses](#) Class: pair work Space: no Pace: Calm Level: Flexible  
[One Lemon Class](#): 4 to 35 Space: no Pace: Calm Level: Easy  
[Oranges](#) Class: 6 to 40 Space: aisles OK Pace: wake up Level: flexible  
[Pass the Box](#) Class: 4 to 40 Space: flexible Pace: calm - wake up Level: easy  
[Pass the Parcel](#) Class: 3 to 30 Space: flexible Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Pass the Pictures](#) Class: 5 to 40 Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Phoneme Hangman](#) Class: 1 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: phonemes  
[Phoneme Race](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: no Pace: calm Level: phonemes  
[Phonemes Wall Charts](#) Class: 1 to 35 Space: aisles OK Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Pictionary](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: sit in small groups Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Piggy in the Middle](#) Class: 4 to 15 Space: Yes Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Piggy Guessing Variant](#) Class: 4 to 15 Space: yes Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Ping Pong Pong](#) Class: Up to 30 or so Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy  
[Preposition Mimes](#) Class: Any Space: OK in the aisles Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Pronunciation Chart Game](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: no Pace: calm Level: pronunciation  
[Pronunciation Feather Game](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: no Pace: calm Level: p, b and h  
[Pronunciation Game](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: no Pace: calm Level: pronunciation  
[Pronunciation Pictures](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: no Pace: calm Level: pronunciation  
[Proverb Pairs](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: medium  
[Question and Answer](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy  
[Q and A Lottery Match](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Rapid Reaction A](#) Class: 2 to 16 Space: circle game Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Relay Race](#) Class: any Space: flexible Pace: wake up Level: easy drill  
[Scissors Paper Stone](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: aisles OK Pace: calm Level: easy  
[Shopping List Memory](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Snowballs](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space aisles OK Pace: wake up Level: flexible  
[Squeak Piggy Squeak](#) Class: 4 to 20 Space: yes Pace: wake up Level: flexible  
[Swampland](#) Class: 5 to 30 Space: playground game Pace: excitable Level: easy  
[The Blanket Game](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy  
[True Or False](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm to wake up Level: easy  
[Truth Or Consequence](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Up Jenkins](#) Class: 6 to 15 Space: sit around a table Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Very Large Class Choral Work](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[What's the Time, Mr Wolf?](#) Class: any Space: flexible Pace: variants Level: easy  
[Which One's Gone?](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: sit in groups Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Word Stress Chant and Spell](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy  
[Zip Zap Vocabulary One](#) Class: 6 to 30 Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Zip Zap Vocabulary Two](#) Class: 6 to 20 Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy

### **Step four – consolidating with more demanding speaking games**

Once your class has a very good grasp of the vocabulary or language structure, or with more advanced groups, try these alternative games: [Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

[All Change](#) variant Class: 6 to 50 Space: yes Pace: excitable Level: medium  
[Balls and Tenses](#) Class: Small group Space: a little Pace: Wake up Level: medium  
[Bang](#) Class: 2 to 20 Space: flexible Pace: wake up Level: flexible  
[Bogeyman](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: flexible Pace: excitable Level: flexible  
[Brainstorm](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: wake up Level: vocabulary revision  
[British Bulldog](#) Class: 5 to 30 Space: yes Pace: excitable Level: flexible

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[Call My Bluff Grammar](#): Class: any in small groups Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Charades](#) Class: 2 to 20 Space: no Pace: calm Level: medium  
[Charades Race](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Chinese Whispers](#) (sentences) Class: 3 up Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Detective Game](#) Class: 6 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Dress Up Variant](#) Class: 4 to 30 Space: a little Pace: wake up Level: medium  
[Fizz Buzz](#) Class: 4 to 24 Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Flip A Card](#) Class: small group table top game Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Guess the Word A](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Guess the Word B](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Hangman Variant](#) Class: pair work or small groups Space: no Pace: calm Level: harder, asking multiple questions  
[Happy Families](#) Class: table top game Space: sit in groups Pace: calm Level: easy  
[Hide & Seek Prepositions](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: medium  
[Hot Potato variants](#) Class: 3 to large class Space: no Pace: wake up Level: flexible  
[I Spy](#) Class: small group game Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy  
[Keep A Straight Face](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Make a Sentence](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Name And Chase](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: better with Pace: excitable Level: revision  
[One Up Stand Up](#) Class: 6 to 40 Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Pass the Box](#) Class: 5 to 40 Space: flexible Pace: calm to wake up Level: flexible  
[Picture Flash Cards](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm - wake up Level: flexible  
[Ping Pong](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: no Pace: wake up Level: vocabulary revision  
[Potato Race](#) Class: 2 to 20 Space: yes, aisles OK Pace: excitable Level: easy  
[Preposition Challenge](#) Class: any, in pairs Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy  
[Relay Race variant](#) Class: any Space: flexible Pace: wake up Level: medium  
[Rhyming Ping Pong](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: no Pace: wake up Level: medium  
[Sentence Conversion](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: aisles OK Pace: wake up Level: flexible  
[Shop-A-Holics](#) Class: 5 to 30 Space: useful Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Simon Says](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy, giving commands  
[Team Race Q & A shopping](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: yes Pace: excitable Level: easy  
[Tongue Twisters](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm - wake up Level: medium  
[Treasure Hunt](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: flexible Pace: calm - wake up Level: medium  
[What am I?](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm but can be noisy Level: medium  
[Who Wants to Be A Millionaire?](#) Class: 2 to 20 Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Zambezi River](#) Class: 1 to 12 Space: aisles OK Pace: wake up Level: Easy

### **Step five – reading**

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Many of the games in steps one to four can be used with word flash cards as well as picture cards in order to familiarise players with spelling. Here are some reading games:

[Abracadanagram A](#) Class: 3 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Abracadanagram B](#) Class: 4 to large class Space: no Pace: calm Level: medium  
[All Change](#) Class: 6 to 20 Space: yes Pace: excitable Level: flexible  
[Balloon Fortunes](#) Class: 4 to 30 Space: aisles OK Pace: wake up Level: flexible  
[Bingo with words](#) Class: any Space: No Pace: calm Level: easy  
[Dancing Demons](#) with words Class: 3 to 21 Space: some Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Find the Pairs B](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: to sit in groups Pace: calm Level: easy  
[Jump the Line](#) Class: any Space: flexible Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Ladders Basic](#) Class: 8 to 40 Space: yes Pace: excitable Level: easy  
[Musical Vocabulary](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: yes Pace: wake up - Excitable Level: easy  
[Noughts and Crosses](#) Class: any, pair work Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Quiz Race](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy to medium  
[Rapid reaction](#) Class: 2 to 16 Space: to sit in circle Pace: wake up Level: easy  
[Reading Comprehension with a difference](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Reading Puzzle](#) Class: any Space: children circulate or in groups Pace: calm Level: flexible  
[Remember and Write](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy, remembering spelling



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of individual words

[Show Me](#) Class: any Space: flexible Pace: wake up Level: easy

[Silly Dialogues](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: medium to difficult

[Team Race Basic](#) Class: 1 to 30 Space: yes Pace: excitable Level: easy

[Tongue Twisters](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: medium

[Word Flash Cards](#) Class: 2 to 35 Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy

[Zambezi River](#) Class: 1 to 12 Space: aisles OK Pace: wake up Level: easy.

### **Step six – spelling and writing games**

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[Abracadanagram B](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: medium

[Abracadanagram C](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm - wake up Level: flexible

[Anagrams](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: flexible Level: flexible

[Bingo A](#) writing option Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy

[Bangle Game](#) Class: From 6 up to any class size Space: no Pace: Lively Level: flexible

[Boggle](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: medium, spelling game

[Bucket Game](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible

[Decoding](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy

[Figure It Out](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: aisles OK Pace: wake up Level: medium

[Hangman](#) Class: 2 to small class Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy

[Hidden Picture B](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: optional Pace: calm Level: easy

[Guess the word B](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy

[Make a sentence](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: medium

[Making up Stories](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: medium

[Match Up](#) Class: 6 to 40 Space: children circulate Pace: calm Level: easy

[Mystery Bag](#) Class: 1 to small class Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy

[Ping Pong](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: wake up Level: vocabulary revision and/or drilling short sentences

[Proverb Pairs](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: medium

[Question and Answer](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible

[Q & A Lottery Match](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible

[Quiz Race](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: medium

[Remember and Write](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy

[Shopping List Memory](#) Class: any in groups Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible

[Silly Dialogues](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: medium to difficult

[Spell and Act](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy

[Spell and Speak](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: medium

[Spelling Board Game](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible

[Spot the Difference](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: medium

[Stop](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: no Pace: calm Level: medium

[Story Teller](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: medium

[The Big Freeze](#) Spelling idea Class: any Space: flexible Pace: calm Level: easy

[Treasure Hunt](#) writing idea Class: 2 to 40 Space: no Pace: calm Level: medium

[Vocabulary Cut Outs](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible depending on the clues that you give

[Word Challenge](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible

[Word Photographs](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: flexible Level: flexible

[Write It Up](#) Class: 2 to 35 Space: no Pace: wake up Level: flexible

[Writing Race](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: aisles OK Pace: wake up Level: flexible

### **Games ideal for specific grammar or vocabulary**

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**99%** of the games can be played to learn any grammar or vocabulary. Having said that, certain games are ideal for, but need not be used exclusively for specific language.

### **Actions**

Step One [Matching and Mirroring](#) Class: any Space: flexible Pace: wake up Level: flexible

Step One [Copycat Commands](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy

Step One [The Big Freeze](#) Class: any Space: flexible Pace: Calm Level: Easy

Step Two [Twister](#) Class: small groups Space: yes Pace: wake up Level: easy

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Step Two [Simon Says](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy

Step Three [Miming Games](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: flexible Pace: wake up Level: flexible

### **Alphabet**

Step Two [Alphabet A](#) Class: 2 to 30 children in small groups or working alone Space: no Pace: flexible Level: easy

Step Three [Jackpot](#) Class: 3 to 35 Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy

Step Three [Hangman](#) Class: 2 to small class Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy

Step Three [Zambezi River](#) Class: 1 to 35 Space: yes Pace: wake up Level: easy

See also all the numbers and counting games grouped under the letter C, which can also be used for the alphabet.

### **Body parts**

Step One [Matching and Mirroring](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: wake up Level: flexible

Step One [Copycat Commands](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy

Step One [Head to Head](#) Class: 4 to 30 Space: flexible Pace: excitable Level: easy

Step Two [Board Bash](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy

Step Two [Twister](#) Class: small group Space: yes Pace: wake up Level: easy

Step Two [Simon Says](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy

Step Three [Jungle Treasure](#) Class: 8 to 20 Space: yes Pace: wake up Level: flexible

### **Clothing**

Step One [Copycat Commands](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy

Step Two [Dress Up Race](#) Class: 4 to 30 Space: some Pace: wake up Level: easy

Step Two [Simon Says](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: wake up Level: flexible

Steps Two and Three [Colour Wolf](#) Class: 3 to a large class Space: yes Pace: excitable Level: easy

Step Two [Twister](#) Class: small group Space: yes Pace: wake up Level: easy

Step Three or Four [Colour the Card](#) Class: pair work Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy

Step Four [Dress Up](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: a little Pace: wake up Level: medium

### **Colours**

Step Two [Twister](#) Class: small group Space: yes Pace: wake up Level: easy

Step Two and Three [Colour Wolf](#) Class: 3 to a large class Space: yes Pace: excitable Level: easy

Step Three or Four [Colour the Card](#) Class: pair work Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy

### **Comparatives**

Step Three or Four [Higher or Lower](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy

### **Counting and numbers**

Step One [Count the Cards](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy

Step Two [Telephone Game](#) Class: 6 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy

Step Three [Add up the Dice](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: adding up

Step Three [Guess the Price](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible

Step Three [Pass the Ball](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: flexible Pace: calm Level: easy

Step Three [Higher or Lower](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy

Step Three [Zambezi River](#) Class: small groups Space: no Pace: Wake up Level: easy

Step Three [Jackpot](#) Class: 3 to 35 Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy

Step Three [One Lemon Class](#): 4 to 35 Space: no Pace: Calm Level: Easy

Step Four [Clap and Count](#) Class: 1 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy

Step Four [How Many](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: flexible Pace: wake up Level: flexible

Step Four [Match Stick Game](#) Class: small groups Space: children sit in groups Pace: calm Level: easy adding up

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Step Four [Don't Drop the Bomb](#) Class: 2 to 20 Space: yes Pace: excitable Level: easy  
Step Four [Fizz Buzz](#) Class: small group Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible

### Directions

Step Two [Grandma's Directions](#) Class: any Space: aisles OK Pace: wake up  
Level: easy, following simple directions  
Step Three [Directions on the Board](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy  
Step Four [Blind Directions](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: flexible Pace: excitable Level: easy  
Step Four [Elastic Band Game](#) Class: 3 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy

### Families

Step Three or Four [Happy Families](#) Class: small group table top game Space: to sit in groups Pace: calm Level: easy

### Prepositions

Step Two [Where Is It?](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible  
Step Three [Preposition Mimes](#) Class: Any Space: aisles Pace: wake up Level: easy  
Step Four [Hide and Seek Prepositions](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: flexible Pace: wake up  
Level: easy, making sentences  
Step Four [Preposition Challenge](#) Class: any, in pairs Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy

### Pronunciation and Phonemes

See a series of games grouped under the letter [P](#) including: Phonemes – Wall Charts, Pronunciation Chart Game, Pronunciation Game, Pronunciation Hands Up, Phoneme Race, Phonemes Hangman, Pronunciation Pictures, Pronunciation Word Stress and [Word Stress Chant and Spell](#).

### Telling the Time

[What's the Time, Mr Wolf?](#) Class: any Space: flexible Pace: flexible Level: easy

### Question and answer games

Step One or Three [True or False](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: easy  
Step Two [Question and Answer](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: wake up Level: easy  
Step Three [Ladders Q and A](#) Class: 8 to 40 Space: yes Pace: excitable Level: easy  
Step Three [Scissors Paper Stone](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: class stand in two lines Pace: calm Level: easy  
Step Three [Team Race Q and A](#) Class: 3 to 30 Space: yes Pace: excitable Level: easy  
Step Three [Relay Race](#) Class: any Space: aisles OK Pace: wake up Level: easy  
Step Three [Joker](#) Class: small group Space: to sit in group Pace: calm Level: easy  
Step Three [Up Jenkins](#) Class: 6 to 15 Space: seating around table Pace: wake Up  
Level: easy to lower intermediate  
Steps Three or Four [Find Your Friend](#) Class: 6 to 40 Space: aisles OK Pace: calm Level: easy  
Step Four [Potato Race](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: yes, aisles OK Pace: excitable Level: easy, asking and answering questions drill  
Step Five or Six [Quiz Race](#) Class: any Space: no Pace: calm Level: flexible

### Short dialogues

Step Three [Scissors Paper Stone](#) Class: 2 to 40 Space: aisles OK Pace: calm Level: easy  
Step Three [British Bulldog](#) Class: 5 to 30 Space: yes Pace: excitable Level: easy  
Step Four [Bogeyman](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: flexible Pace: excitable Level: flexible  
Step Four [What Am I?](#) Class: 2 to 30 Space: no Pace: calm Level: medium

### Games ideal for playing with songs or rhymes

A few games in this book are ideal for use with music.

Step 1 listening: [The Big Freeze](#), [Musical Vocabulary](#)

Step 3 speaking: [Duck, Duck Goose](#), [Oranges](#), [Pass the Parcel](#), [Piggy in the Middle](#)

Step 4 speaking: [Hot Potato](#), [Limbo](#)

If you are keen on using music in class then you may like my songs activity book that comes with the Teaching English Songs 1 CD – available on CD or download as preferred from here:

<http://www.teachingenglishgames.com/eslsongs.htm>

### Games to use with older teens or adults

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There is a separate book available for teens and adults with many fluency based speaking activities and more advanced ideas.

<http://www.teachingenglishgames.com/adults.htm>

From this primary games book the following games are suitable:

**Listening:** All Change (some may perceive as childish), Abracadanagram, Bingo, Rapid Reaction, Show Me, True or False, Simon Says – harder version, Team Race on the Board, Where Is It?

**Speaking:** Alphabet B, Balls and Tenses, Charades, Chinese Whispers with tongue twisters or proverbs, Blind Directions, Brainstorm, Detective Game, Find the Pairs, Find your Friend, Fizz Buzz, Guess the Action, Guess the Word, Hangman, Happy Families, Hidden Picture, Hide and Seek Prepositions, Hot Potato, Make a Sentence, Match Up, Mystery Bag, Noughts and Crosses, Pass the Pictures, Phoneme Hangman, Pictionary, Ping Pong, Pronunciation Chart Game, Pronunciation Game, Pronunciation Hands Up, Proverb Pairs, Rapid Reaction, Relay Race and advanced variant, Rhyming Ping Pong, Scissors Paper Stone, Sentence Conversion, Shopping List Memory Game, True or False 2 without the blanket, What's the Time Mr Wolf? What am I? Which one's gone? Zip Zap vocab revision

**Reading:** Abracadanagram, Bingo, Find the Pairs, Reading Puzzle, Proverb Pairs, Rapid Reaction, Remember and Write, Riddle Pairs, Show Me, Word Flash Cards

**Writing (mostly spelling games):** Abracadanagram, Anagrams, Boggle, Figure it Out, Hangman, Guess the Word, Make a Sentence, Match Up, Ping Pong, Remember and Write, Shopping List Memory Game, Stop, Story Teller, Treasure Hunt, Word Challenge, Writing Race



## Games A-B

[Abracadanagram A](#)

[Abracadanagram B](#)

[Abracadanagram C](#)

[Action Race](#)

[All Change A & B](#)

[Alphabet A & B](#)

[Anagrams](#)

[Backwards Bull's Eye](#)

[Balloon Fortunes](#)

[Balls and Tenses](#)

[Bang](#)

[Bangle Game](#)

[Bingo](#)

[Blind Painter](#)

[Board Bash](#)

[Bogeyman](#)

[Boggle](#)

[Brainstorm](#)

[British Bulldog \(End of term game\)](#)

[Bucket Game](#)

### **Abracadanagram A**

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Category: Listening and reading variant

Group size: Best for small classes

Level: All levels

Materials: Picture or word flashcards

Age: 6 to 12

Pace: Wake up if using movement or calm if children work individually at desks

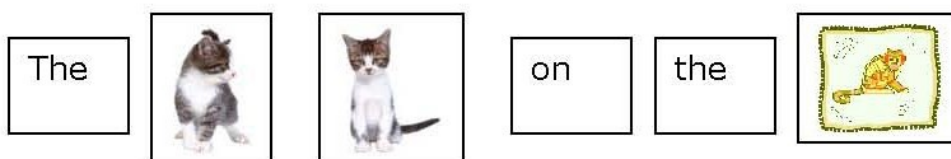
#### How to play

This game is adaptable for many language levels and ages. Divide your class into groups of three and give each group a pile of pictures and /or word flash cards from which they can make a sentence or question. Each player takes one card each. Call out a sentence such as "Jacky loves chocolate" and the three players must stand in the right order, to represent the sentence, holding their pictures up or out in front so you can see them.

If you have a rule where the children cannot swap flashcards with each other but must switch places that forces them to move which helps learning. If you are stuck for space then swapping cards around until they are in the correct order is fine.

If you have a big class you can recruit a couple of "runners" - your best students, who will have the job of running around and checking that everyone has got their pictures in the right order. You can use word flash cards for older players and mix up pictures and words.

The cat sat on the mat.



Aside from the very young children you want to have the teams race each other to get into the correct order, calling out "Abracadanagram!" or "We're finished!" when they are ready, at which point you or your runners can check the sentence.

#### Language ideas

Here are ways of adapting the game to suit different levels with the sentence, "The cat sat on the mat" as an example:

Young beginners: use only 2 pictures, a cat and a mat.

Up a level: use 2 pictures, a cat and a mat combined with the words "the, sat, on the".

Up a level: a word flashcard for every word in the sentence.

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For more advanced players still you can have sentences with clauses in them, such as, "The cat sat on the mat, which was in the hallway, where the dog also slept under the stairs".

You might also want to use this game to reinforce grammatical structures or verb tenses, or question forms.

### Reading variant

To make it harder, you can give out a pile of words to each group but not call out the sentence so the group has to figure it out for themselves. You can also give a complete set of words to each group and ask them to form a question or statement from the words provided as fast as possible, not necessarily using all the words. The first few teams to form the correct sentence or question get a point for that round.

If you give out the following words: "do, does, you, he, she, they, like, likes, pizza" and a flashcard with "?" you can make a good variety of questions and statements for drilling present tense and present tense question forms.

### Materials

Use flashcards. Picture flashcards help with vocabulary retention. Word flashcards can help with spelling. If you think it is too much work getting material together then simply use word flash cards, which you can get your class to write out for you by copying the words off the board - one word per piece of paper.

### Abracadanagram B

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Category: Speaking and optional writing

Group size: 4 to 30 in small groups and large class variant

Level: All levels

Materials: Picture or word flashcards or use the board

Age: 6 to 12

Pace: Wake up

### Class organisation

Divide your class into small teams of about 4 players per team. If you have a small group you can divide the group into pairs, which also works very well. The fewer players per team the less chance some players will be distracted and not make any effort to join in.

It is also highly desirable to have the teams swap around so that you sometimes have all the most talented students together, (and those teams will always finish first), and other times you mix up the most talented with those who need more help - the slower ones will learn from the quicker ones. In any case you want to avoid having the same groups forming all the time, and the same people winning all the time.

### How to play

On the word "Go!" one player from each team comes up to the front of the class and collects pictures and / or words for a sentence. The player dashes back to his team and holds up each picture in turn to his team. The team must name the pictures or read out the words in order to be given the card. Each player has a word to place in the sentence and together as a group they create a sentence out of the pictures and words given. As soon as they have finished they call out "Abracadanagram", or "Finished!" and you (or one of your runners if you are using them, (see *Abracadanagram A*) go over and check that the sentence is correct. The team must read the sentence out loud, or if you want to reinforce the words or sentence structure even more, have each team member write the sentence out before calling out "Finished". The team leader can then bring that to you for checking.

At the end of round one another player from each team comes up to the front of the class, returns the first set of flash cards and takes a second set back to the group.

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Alternatively if you are using different sentences for each team the players pass their words and pictures to the team next door.

### Writing option

First make up a simple story using the vocabulary or grammar that you wish to reinforce. Split this story into sections and play Abacadanagram B as described above. On completion of each sentence the team writes it down in the correct order and swaps sentences with another team until all sentences have been unravelled. Now the teams race to put the sentences of the story in order through reading.

### Material

Zip lock bags are useful to store picture and word flashcards. You can dispense with all the material by writing up the words to a sentence in a jumble on the board, the class, working as individuals or pairs unscramble the sentences as fast as you write them up with pen and paper at their desks. This is not as fun as actually handling flashcards, which appeals to the often-neglected kinaesthetic and tactile learning styles too.

### Large class variant

Divide your class into teams. See the note on logistics in the introduction for an easy way to do this. Again using your target structure or vocabulary ask your pupils to each think of three sentences, or questions, and to write them out in a jumble. You may find it a good idea to have some examples on the board, as you want your pupils' sentences to be accurate. If they are full of mistakes it will be very difficult to decipher them.

On your command every one folds their paper in two and hands it to their team leader. Team leaders swap over all the papers with another team. If your class are on long benches and no one can move, have all papers collected at one end of the bench, and then passed forward one row. You take the front row and give it to the back. Papers are handed out again but only unfolded when you give the signal. Then everyone races to decipher the sentences they have been given.

While the class are silently deciphering their papers people who have worked out their sentence can put their hands up and read it out. The first ten people can win points for their respective teams. You'll be able to do a quality control check that way to see that most people are using the target language correctly.

### Abacadanagram C

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Category: Pair work speaking

Group size: Any class size including very large classes

Level: All levels

Materials: Picture or word flashcards or use the board instead

Age: 6 to 12

Pace: Wake up

Give your students a written exercise to complete, such as a crossword, while you prepare the board. Using the target structure and vocabulary write up a series of jumbled questions under letter A with jumbled answers under letter B. For example:

A	B
you how old are?	years am seven old I
name your is what?	Shelley name my is

Tell your pupils to form pairs and for one to be A and the other B. On the word "go" the As work out their question and the Bs work out their answer. A then asks B the question and B answers. When a pair has finished your list they stand up. Wait until a few pairs are standing and then hear some of the answers.

You don't have to use a question and answer format, but can use only questions, or only sentences. The sentences can be repetitive if you are drilling a certain structure, and you

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can throw in a few sentences, which revise what you have been teaching in recent weeks.

If your class will not perform pair work exercises correctly, but just talk all the time, or you are not sure what they are doing because there are so many of them, then use this game for fun reading and writing practice. Give a time limit for the task so everyone who finishes in the given time wins. If possible allow the pupils who struggle the most to sit next to the best students and allow copying so students may learn from each other!

### **Action Race**

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Category: Easy speaking - repeating words or short phrases

Group size: 2 to 40. Some space needed down the aisles of the class at least

Level: Beginner

Materials: None

Age: 4 to 10

Pace: Wake up to Excitable

Put children in teams. If you have 30 children have four or five teams to limit waiting time. Place one chair per team at the front of the class with one student from each team in the chairs. Call out an action and the children in the chairs must do that action down to the end of the class and back to their seat.

As the children reach their seats they can say, "I can jump", or whatever the action is. Alternatively you can have the children repeat "I am jumping" over and over as they complete the action, only stopping when they reach their seats. You may award points for saying the English nicely as well as reaching the seat first. Watch out though for children hurting themselves when trying to race. If in doubt do not play the game as a race. With the 4 to 6 year olds avoid any kind of competition anyway - all children succeed simply by completing the action.

Use this to practise any language. If you have already taught many actions tell the students to repeat any given phrase continuously while hopping or jumping down the class. For the 6 year olds and upwards tell the children they can only move when they are speaking and they have to stop in the silence between sentences.

### **All Change**

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Category: Listening, speaking and reading variants

Group size: Small groups of 6 to 20

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Picture or word flashcards

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Excitable

#### How to play

Players stand in a circle, with one player in the middle. Each player in the circle has a picture or word flash card. Call out two of the picture card items. The two players holding these cards have to change places without the person in the middle taking one of their spots in the circle. When the person in the middle succeeds in taking a place in the circle, the other player hands over his or her card and takes a turn in the middle. At any time you can call out "All change!" and this means that every one has to change places. Use this if you see someone is getting stuck in the middle.

#### Language ideas

You can either simply name the items on the flashcards, or make sentences. For example if everyone has a food or drink picture card you could say: I like bananas and milk. The children with the picture of milk or bananas change places with each other.

Other sentence ideas for different topics are:

Next weekend I'll windsurf and play tennis, or

On my farm there are pigs sheep, or

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My mum's a doctor my dad's a dentist, or  
On Monday I am going to the bank and the supermarket

### Listening and reading variant

Play the game as described above but using short phrases that you write out on cards. For example write out "Hello, how are you?" on one card and "I'm fine, thanks" on another. Write, "Where do you live?" on one card and "I live in India" on another, and so on until everyone has a card. Use this idea with sentences that you cut in half too.

For revision, or if you have some students who are more advanced than the others, let the students take it in turns to call out the phrases to the group.

After a few rounds the children can swap papers with each other and take a turn with a different sentence. However bear in mind not to play for more than ten minutes to keep the game fresh and fun.

### Speaking variant

To convert this into a speaking game for the players give the player in the middle the task of calling out the pictures that must be swapped.

### Intermediate speaking variant

To make the game harder, have the person in the middle make up his or her own sentences with two of the given picture words in it, as in the above examples. Be careful that your students are up to this or the game could drag.

## **ALPHABET A & B**

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Category: Listening and speaking variants

Group size: 2 to 30 – a table top game for small groups

Level: Beginners to learn the alphabet

Materials: Letters of the alphabet

Age: 5 to 12

Pace: Calm

### How to play

Divide the class into small groups of 2 to 4 children. Give each group a pile of letters and spell out a word. The children take the relevant letters from the pile and form the word on their table. With the younger children only give them a few letters to start off with.

With a smaller group make several teams and have the players come up to the front of the class and make the word on the front desks, before running back to their seats when they have finished. With a large group you would be better keeping the children at their seats and working calmly in pairs. If necessary, to keep control of the class, you can play this game with the children working individually.

If you have a mixed ability class use the more knowledgeable children as floaters to go around the class checking up on the words that are being formed.

### Language ideas

To start with you can give out different letter combinations, such as all the consonants and the vowel A and give easy words such as PAT, CAT, and FAT. Round two can be a letter combination of all the consonants and the vowel I, for words such as FIT, BIT and PIT. It is OK if the children do not understand all the words they make. The important thing is that they recognise the sounds of the alphabet.

With young children call out the sound of the letter in the context of the word rather than naming the letter. For example the letter P in the word PAT would be "pe" not "pee".

### Materials

If you do not have any letters make some on your computer or ask the children to write their own letters, one letter per piece of paper.



### **Alphabet B - speaking variant**

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#### How to play

You, or a class member, spell a word out loud. Each team has 3 seconds to name the word you spelled. If the team has not named the word within the 3 seconds the rest of the class is free to call out the word to win a point for their team, if you are keeping score.

To get all the children saying the words have a rule where the whole team must call out the word, as well as the person who guesses it first, within the three second limit. The quickest children will name the word first but the rest of the team must be listening and ready to chime in with the word before the three seconds are up in order for the team to win its point. If three seconds is too short extend the time limit to fit in with your class level.

No materials are needed. Use words that are harder to spell for older or more advanced children.

### **Anagrams**

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Category: Reading, spelling and speaking

Group size: any and large class variant

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Materials: Sets of letters

Age: 4 to adult

Pace: Calm to excitable variants

#### How to play

Cut up the letters of the words you would like your players to work with and place the letters in zip lock bags, one word per bag. Stick to very simple words such as CAT and DOG for the 6 years olds. In order to make the task of deciphering the word fairly easy either give out words which are in the same family of vocabulary, such as food words or professions, or give out a clue with every set of letters, which can be written on a sticker on the bag. Give the signal to start, the players race to make up their word, which they can then call out.

When everyone has their word (the quickest to finish can help anyone who would like help), the players put their letters back in the bag. You then play some music (optional) while the bags are passed around the class until you turn the music off. The game then continues with each player having a fresh bag to work with.

A variation is to have a few teams working together, and to give each team a big pile of letters containing twelve words. Either have pictures or clues of the words on the board, otherwise this is far too difficult. On your signal each team works together to form all the words from the pile. The first team to finish wins. Alternatively allow every team to finish and congratulate all teams as they finish.

#### Small group variation 1

There is a more excitable team version of this game, similar to that described in *Hidden Picture A*. Divide your group or class into small teams of three children per team and have piles of letters for each word at the front of the class, a different word per team.

The first member of each team runs up to the front, forms the word, calls it out to their team-mates and runs and touches the next team-mate, who gets up runs to the front of the class (meanwhile you have swapped the letters over), forms a new word, calls it out to the team, runs back, etc. You play this as a relay so the game is continuous until everyone has had a go. In order to keep your materials together you may disqualify any team that does not treat your letters carefully and put them ALL back into the bags!

#### Small group variation 2

Another fun way to play if you have a small group is to give each player or team a

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buzzer. The bells you often find on hotel receptions are a fun idea. The kids love the novelty factor of a bell and it is very easy to prevent them from ringing it all the time as you just deduct a point every time someone rings the bell without an answer, and that works! Lay out or write up the scrambled letters of a word. All players try to figure out the word (give them a clue if necessary), and as soon as a player has the word he or she hits the buzzer to get a point for the team if correct. I do not deduct points for wrong answers as I do not believe in penalising people for trying, but I do deduct a point if they ring the bell when they have not got an answer ready.

Either allow a free for all or give them a certain amount of time (10 to 15 seconds) to figure out a word, after which it is open to the buzzers of the other teams. You can rig the game to keep all the teams very close together by giving easier words to a team that is lagging behind, which they are sure to get in the timeframe, before the other buzzers can come in and steal the point.

### Advanced variant

You can also give out the letters for sentences for advanced players. Here you would need to give a clue. Have a go at this game yourselves - you'll see that it can be pretty difficult, so pictures or clues are often necessary to prevent the game from becoming a drag.

### Another variant – good for all class sizes

Write up 12 words from a theme on the board and ask each pupil to pick a word each and make anagram of it. When everyone has written out their anagram they swap it over with a neighbour or someone near them. Clear the board and give a time limit for students to decipher the anagram and write the word out correctly on the paper.

The game is now to unite all the identical words together. Use the first part of the Kidnap game to do this. It is explained here for convenience: Let's say you are using furniture vocabulary and "here is / here are". One person with each piece of furniture stands up, so you have 12 children standing. The child with the table must collect in all the other tables.

The other children stay seated and make a mental note of the furniture on their paper, which they fold up into four, so the word cannot be read. All students pass their paper from hand to hand, telling the child they pass it to what it is, so that it may continue its way to the collector. This allows for such frequent repetition of these twelve words that your students will have them memorized by the end of the game.

You may use simple target structures with this, in which case use vocabulary the class are already familiar with, so that not every language element is new. Keep the sentences short so that the papers can be passed quickly.

You can insist on whispering if you want to keep the overall noise level down.

### Materials

Use plastic zip lock bags (like freezer or sandwich bags) to hold the letters of a word, one word per bag. For a full class you might want to give out 12 different words, repeated once if you have a class of 24 and repeated twice with a class of 36. For a quick way to prepare, print these words off, that way they are sure to be legible and you can save the document for future use with another class.

### **Backwards Bull's Eye**

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Category: Speaking - making sentences

Group size: 2 to 30

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: None or pictures

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Calm to wake up



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Put the children into teams. Draw a large target on the black board. You could draw a dartboard or similar or just a big circle. Write up two known vocabulary words on the board. With the first word demonstrate how the game will be played. The students all think of a sentence containing that word. For drilling purposes this sentence can follow a specific structure or tense. For fluency and quick thinking you may let them make up any sentence containing the word. It is useful to play this as a grammar drill.

All students have a few seconds to think something up, as no one knows who will be chosen. The teacher picks someone who says his or her sentence. If the student does not have a sentence ready, too bad, move straight on to someone else. There should be no waiting on an individual and this is important as it shows the class members that they must actively prepare a sentence EVERY time, regardless of whether picked to aim at the bull's eye or not.

The class decide if the given sentence is correct, with the help of the teacher if needed. If correct that student has a chance to aim at the bull's-eye and win a point for the team. To aim children stand with their backs to the board and bend down and aim at the board by looking between their legs. If this is not culturally acceptable for you then modify to suit your needs. For example children may aim by tossing the beanbag over their shoulder without looking at the board, or have children try to hit the target with eyes closed.

As soon as a child earns a chance to aim at the board the teacher writes up the next word so students can be mentally preparing their sentences. Give a ten second time limit for the creation of sentences, or a little longer if necessary, but be sure to keep this moving along so students spend most of their time thinking about sentences rather than sitting about while someone tries to throw something at the bull's-eye.

You may consider putting children into pairs to work together at coming up with sentences. In that case both children have a go at the bull's-eye simultaneously. This method is best for smaller groups where the noise level will be contained. Otherwise this game can be played in silence aside from students saying their sentences when chosen.

### **Balloon Fortunes**

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Category: Reading and speaking - good end of term game

Group size: 4 to 30

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: One balloon per child

Age: 6 to 12

Pace: Wake up

This is time consuming to prepare and is a nice idea for an end of term lesson or party rather than a regular lesson. Prepare some funny fortunes for your class members such as: you will marry a Martian and have 25 children, you will become a pop star, you will become an astronaut and so on. For each fortune create a match such as: you become a Martian, marry a human and have 25 children, you will marry a pop star, you will build a space ship and become best friends with an astronaut, and so on.

You have the option as always of asking your class to come up with some funny fortunes for homework. Collect these in and correct them and use the students' ideas for the balloon fortunes game. The children's ideas of what is funny will probably work better than your own! Write out the fortunes on pieces of paper and place each paper inside a balloon, one balloon per child. These balloons all need blowing up and tying so good luck if you have a large class!!

Start your end of term lesson with a bang by distributing the balloons to the children and let them each burst one and read the fortune inside it. Students can then have the task of finding their pair or matching fortune, i.e. the astronaut will pair up with the student who will build a space ship and become best friends with an astronaut.

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If you have intermediate students or you want more reading practice you can put a longer descriptive passage inside each balloon and let students read it and find their match. A description of how to build a space ship could match up with a description of how to become an astronaut. Again let the children write these for homework and correct the mistakes before inserting into the balloons.

To get more mileage out of the balloons before bursting them you can also play Don't Drop the Bomb. You could also use this balloon idea for any of the passing games such as Hot Potato or Pass the Box or Pass the Pictures. Here use a balloon instead of a flashcard and when the music stops the child with the balloon can burst it and read out the fortune. Or use the balloons to play those games as normal and have a rule that the children cannot burst the balloon or they get a forfeit. Once done you can play Balloon Fortunes and explode all the balloons!

### **Balls and Tenses**

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Category: Speaking

Group size: Small group. Put the children into small groups of three or four per group.

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: One ball per group.

Age: 4 to Adult. Basic bouncing only for the 4 and 5 year olds.

Pace: Wake up

This game was given to me by a teacher called Ramey who uses it with his small groups of up to six students. He feels it would work in a classroom but I have my doubts, knowing how mental most boys go when they catch sight of a ball! However it is certainly ideal with small groups.

One student in the group bounces the ball in a given way that represents a certain tense. The other students then make up a sentence in that tense. Students take it in turns with the ball. With beginners use two tenses only. With intermediates mix up as many tenses as you need to in order for the game to be challenging, but not too hard.

Here are Ramey's ball movements and you'll notice that the left side represents the past while the right represents the present:

Simple present: bounce the ball straight down between your feet while alternating left and right hands. Younger children need not alternate hands.

Simple past: Hold the ball in your left hand with your left arm stretched out. Bounce the ball ONCE on the verb: e.g. We WENT shopping last week. Students take it in turns to make a sentence and bounce the ball on their verb.

Present Continuous/progressive: Walk in a circle to the right while bouncing the ball continuously.

Past Continuous/progressive: As for present continuous but walking to the left.

Present Perfect: Hold the ball in the right hand and bounce it diagonally between the feet, catching it with the left hand, then back the other way: e.g. They HAVE (right hand bounces to the left hand) DONE (left hand bounces to the right hand) their homework.

Past Perfect: Hold the ball in the left hand and bounce on HAD, step to the left and bounce again on the participle: e.g. They HAD (left hand bounce, one step to the left) EATEN (left hand bounce once) before they LEFT (left hand single bounce for Simple Past) for work.

Ramey and his students have a hilarious time with it, especially when they combine tenses (which means combining the bounces), so I thought that I would pass it on to you.

### **Bang**

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Category: Speaking

Group size: 2 to 20 for best results but can be played with more

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: None

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Age: 4 to Adult

Pace: Wake up

This game comes from a Vietnamese playground game and it can be used for basic vocabulary review, for drilling specific language or for fluency practice. Students form a circle with the teacher in the middle as the cowboy. The teacher pretends to shoot a student in the circle and fires a word or sentence at them. This student ducks and the students on either side must shoot each other with the answer. The fastest student who uses correct English wins and the other student is out. Continue until you have two students left. These two students walk away from each other for four steps as the teacher counts up to four, then the teacher calls out the word and the two students turn round and shoot at each other with the answer.

This works for small groups but if you have more than 10 students I recommend keeping students in the circle rather than making them be out. Otherwise students will be hanging around on the sidelines, probably getting up to no good or chatting. Therefore with a bigger group or class just keep students in and playing all the time. Instead, each child has three lives. Play until one child loses all three lives and is out. At that point the game is over.

Here are some examples of how you can practise language with this game:

### Vocabulary ideas

For 4 and 5 year olds and for beginners play this with basic vocabulary where you say "green" and the other students have to say any other colour. If you say an animal they must say any other animal. Bear in mind that with very young beginners they will have limited vocabulary and will not generally be that quick mentally at thinking things up out of the blue so stick to themes, and at first play with words they know well.

Another vocabulary variant is for you to say a word such as "cup" and the two students race to come up with any other word that starts with a C. You can also play this game using word association so if you say "cup" the students may say "tea" or "plate" and so on. Another idea is to play with parts of speech so you say a noun, they say a noun, you say a verb, and they say a verb and so on.

### Phrases

To practise short phrases the teacher says part of a sentence and the students add to it along specific guidelines. For example to practise adjectives the teacher may say: a girl. The students must think an adjective to add to that and come back with: a pretty girl, or a tall girl and so on. Do the same with adverbs. The teacher says: Read a book. The students say: Read a book slowly or read a book intelligently. Be sure to brainstorm adverbs before hand.

### Full sentences

For drilling specific grammar the teacher may say a word such as "saucepan". The students then make a sentence using the target structure using the vocabulary word. If the target structure is the present simple the teacher could say: Every morning. Students must make a sentence such as "Every morning I brush my teeth". If you use words or phrases such as: Every morning, every day, every evening, on Mondays these are easy prompts for inventing a present simple tense.

Make it harder for more advanced students by giving a harder start. For example to practise sentences using "have you ever" the teacher can say: "blue eyes". Students invent a sentence such as "Have you ever seen a girl with blue eyes?" This is harder to do than a more basic prompt like "China", which would be "Have you ever been to China."

Therefore think carefully about what words or phrases you will use before the game so you do not throw anything too hard at your students if they are younger or have a lower level of English. If your students are struggling then make your prompts easier and simplify. Switch to phrases rather than sentences. The game must be quick to be fun

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rather than having students standing around scratching their heads. The idea is to get them talking.

### **Bangle or Bracelet Game**

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Category: Writing/Spelling

Group size: From six children up to any class size

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: One bracelet for each team. If you have no bracelets then curtain rings or other large rings will do.

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

#### How to play

This is a variant of Relay Race but using bangles. A bangle is the American word for a bracelet. Any circular items will work such as curtain rings, copper or rubber plumbing seals, elastic hair ties or even elastic bands at a push though it will be faster with bangles or similar.

This is a game made up by a teacher to wind up an English camp. It would be good at the end of a long day or to wake your pupils up after an intense session. The pace of the game is lively though in theory it can be played in silence so there is no trouble with disturbing neighbouring classrooms here.

Children stand in rows of three to eight per team with pens in their right hand. There should be a white board or a piece of paper in front about 10 – 15 feet away from them. The last child in each row has a bangle hung on the pen. When they hear the whistle to start, the last child passes the bangle to the pen in front until it reaches the first child who runs to the board and writes W on the white board and joins the line at the back and passes the bangle to the child in front with the help of the pens. If anybody drops the bangle, they have to start from the beginning at the back.

Each one writes a letter to have the sentence WE HAVE WON on the Board. The first team to finish wins the game. Alternatively give the class various words to spell by saying the word to them as the signal to start. The winners are those who have spelled the most words correctly.

### **Bingo**

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Category: Listening

Group size: Any

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: None obligatory or one bingo set per player

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Calm

#### How to play

Bingo is a game where the pupils each have a card with several numbers each. The teacher calls out the numbers randomly and when a number is called out the pupil circles it. When a pupil has circled all the numbers he or she says "Bingo!" and has finished.

You can play bingo successfully and easily with a class of even 120 pupils. Your pupils make their own bingo grid by drawing or writing out 6 words of their choosing from a selection of 20 or so on the board. Allow a couple of minutes to create the grids; it should not use up much class time. Randomly call out the words on the board while the students circle them as they are called. When a student has circled all six words he or she has finished and stands up. Play until everyone has finished with the young ones and until you have several winners for older children.

#### Number bingo ideas

With any sized class and with no material you can have each class member write down

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four numbers between 1 and 10. You then randomly call out the numbers 1 to 10 and whenever a player has a number you call, he circles it until all four numbers are circled, at which point he stands up. Continue until the whole class has finished and is standing. This bingo game would obviously practise the numbers 1 to 10, and you can use this same version of the game to practise any number or sequence of numbers, such as 10, 20, 30, 40 etc. or 100, 200, 300, etc.

### Language ideas

Bingo is a good game to use at the early stage of presenting language as it exposes the players to frequent repetition of the new vocabulary or language. With beginners you can limit yourself to simply naming the items "car, dress, pool, mansion". You can also be more detailed and specify "red dress, purple dress, green car". You can expose your players to more vocabulary still by being more descriptive, "beautiful red dress, green sports car", and you can also expose them to grammatical structures such as "I wish I had a green car".

As the one making the calls you need a system in place to ensure you call each picture once. You can either print off a bingo card and cut up all the different pictures, so you have one of each, and put them into a bag or hat, naming each one as you pull it out, or you can use a list - as you find easiest. If you want to use *Bingo* for revision you can have a class or group member pull the items from the hat and name them.

You can form sentences with the chosen word to encourage attentive listening. If you are playing *Bingo* with all new words then I suggest forming sentences with structures the class already know, so that you do not have all new elements. However if you are using *Bingo* to revise vocabulary, then you can use a grammatical structure you will be teaching in the following session so that the class hear it repeatedly. Your class has now been subconsciously introduced to the new structure and will grasp it much quicker in the following session.

### **Blind Painter**

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Category: Listening, speaking

Group size: 2 to a class in small groups

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Pen and paper for a small group, the board for a class

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

### How to play

Each painter is blindfolded and must draw something such as a face, a house, a person sitting on a chair, an animal, etc. As the painter draws the item they give a running commentary, for example "Here is the head, here are the arms, here are the hands, here is the left leg."

The younger children will find the result very funny while the older children might like the novelty of the game but will tire of it sooner. The other players or team members can chip in and help if the painter cannot remember the words.

If playing with a small group, each player can take it in turns to be the blind painter. However the minute you have bigger groups you want to have several blind painters at once so that people do not wait a long time for their turn. In a classroom situation you can have several blind painter teams at once on the class board, and you can also pin up large pieces of paper on the walls for more teams if necessary. In this case you can post your best students as group leaders to help with language.

### **Board Bash**

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Category: Listening, speaking

Group size: 2 to 30

Level: Beginner to Intermediate



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Materials: Class board, optional pictures, bean bags

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

Take in some beanbags. Split the class into two teams. For body parts draw a body or a face on the board. Call out a body part and the student with the beanbag has a go at hitting that part on the board with the beanbag. Award points for correct hits.

For other vocabulary stick picture cards up on the board and either call out the words only for beginners or use sentences with the words in. Students listen for the correct word and throw the beanbag. A way to ensure all students listen carefully is not to designate the student who will throw the bag until after you have named the word or read out the sentence. If a student was not listening you can deduct a point from that team for negligence if you find this to be a problem.

It is important to keep the pace up as much as possible otherwise imagine the time lag between goes with 20 students. Otherwise bring in different coloured beanbags - one colour per team - and let two or three students aim at the board simultaneously. This will help give every one a turn and keep the students much more interested. Students who have had a turn can pick up the beanbags and give them out. You may also delegate score keeping and watching for hits.

For a speaking variant ask questions to the class. Students earn the chance to aim at the board through correct answers.

### **Bogeyman**

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Category: Listening, speaking

Group size: 2 to 30

Level: Beginner to Lower Intermediate

Materials: None

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Excitable

Children really love this game and it's a great excuse for repeated speaking practice of short dialogues.

#### How to play

This game is more for small groups in a language school environment rather than a big class situation. The players pair up and have a set mini conversation with each other, such as:

Child 1: Hello

Child 2: Hello

Child 1: How are you?

Child 2: Fine thanks, and you?

As soon as child 2 says "and **you?**" he or she tries to touch the other player, (metaphorically giving the other player the bogey, if this is culturally acceptable for you of course). Only give the players a few seconds to transfer the 'bogey' and then blow a whistle or give the signal for a new round to start. Players can swap partners after a few rounds. You may use any mini-conversations for this game.

#### Ways to play with a larger class or to keep better control

To play this in a classroom space only allow the 'bogeyman' one go at touching the other player, and have a rule where children can only take one step. Depending on how your class is configured, you could also play this in pairs with your pupils seated. If they are not too close together they could play this without leaving their seats to help keep order - as otherwise the game would be too excitable for a class of more than 20. It is possible to play this with players seated on the floor in pairs - close but not too close, so they still have to stretch to touch one another. This way the children cannot hurt themselves on any furniture in their excitement to pass on the bogey.

### **Boggle**

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Category: Spelling

Group size: 2 players to a large class divided into small groups or working individually

Level: Lower Intermediate to Advanced

Materials: Letters or the class board

Age: From age 6. Use short words for ages 6 to 7

Pace: Calm

#### Materials – small groups

Place the letters for a long word or two words, such as "chocolate cake", in a zip lock bag. Repeat with four more bags using different letters inside. Give each bag a different number.

#### How to play – small groups

You may have people working individually or in small groups of 2 to 3 children. Hand out one set of letters per person or group and allow two minutes for the players to write down as many words as they can find in the given letters. When you say, "stop" everyone puts his or her letters back in the bag and passes it on to the next person or group, receiving in turn a fresh bag from someone else. Make sure the children know not to take another bag of the same number as it will have the same word in it. Allow another two minutes for the next set and so on until everyone has had five goes.

The groups can swap over their answer papers. You then take each set of letters in turn and each group gives you its words. Everyone gets 1 point for a valid word, 2 points for a word no one else has, and 3 points if they discover the original word using all the letters. Continue through the results taking each set of letters in turn. If this points system is too complicated only award points when a group comes up with a word that no other group has found.

#### How to play – bigger groups to large classes

Playing with the bags and letters adds a dimension to the game and appeals to kinaesthetic and tactile learners but it is not practical to handle all those fiddly materials with a big class.

Write up a grid of letters on the board containing several words and give your class a few minutes to find as many words as possible in the given theme. Here is an example of a grid with animals.

LOAD  
ICCL  
OGES  
NRTK  
BTHB

These 20 letters contain many animal words, such as dog, cat, lion, goat, bat, snake, bird, crocodile, tiger, rat, chicken, horse, hen, cockerel, kitten and maybe some more you will find! Tell the children to think of the animals they know in English, and then look and see if the letters are there. Display pictures to help if you would like to.

### **Brainstorm**

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Category: Listening, speaking

Group size: 2 players to a class

Level: Lower Intermediate to Advanced

Materials: None

Age: 6 to adult

Pace: Wake up

#### How to play

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Give each player or team twenty seconds to come up with as many words as possible in a given category. On your signal all the players in the team call out words as and when they think of them, in free-for-all style for a fifteen second time limit. The other team or teams (and you) count up the words. To prevent one student from taking over the whole game have a quota of one word per team member. Suggest to the better students that the team might earn more points if they let their team-mates go first. This means the better students have to think up less obvious words as the easy ones will be the first to be called out.

Once the twenty seconds are up the other teams can have a chance to earn bonus points if they can name any other vocabulary in that group of words in the ten seconds following. You then give the next team a new theme for a twenty-second brainstorm. By all means lengthen the time limits if you feel that is more appropriate to the level of your class, but always err on the side of not giving enough time to keep up the element of adrenalin and fun. Categories can include cartoon characters, types of transport, musical instruments, animals, types of food, toys, jobs, countries, favourite characters, etc.

### Large class variant

With your class divided into teams call out a theme - each team calls out one word from that theme. The person who calls out the word must stand up, and cannot participate again in that round. Continue round the teams until all the teams have run out of words. A team must give a word within five seconds. If the team cannot give a new word in that time limit move on to the next team. Avoid long delays as this makes the game drag. You may want to recruit a class member to be on a stopwatch for you.

Use pictures, prompts and mimes to help elicit the vocabulary. When you start round two - with a different theme - have another team start off, and go round in the same order. The winning team, if you want to have a winner, is the one that contributes the most words.

If you have a blackboard, have one member from each team down at the front writing up the words their team gave as the game is played. This allows you to easily count up the words for each team at the end of each round, and be sure the same words are not used twice. It also reinforces the vocabulary further seeing it written up on the board as well as hearing it spoken. Therefore if you do have some class members who are rather quiet during this game, fear not, at least they will be hearing and seeing the words, which is still helpful.

### **British Bulldog**

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Category: Speaking

Group size: 5 to 30

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: None needed, optional picture cards

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Excitable

Here is a version of the classic old playground game, and this one needs open space.

### How to play

One player, the bulldog, stands in the middle of the room with all the other players at one end of the room or playground. The players chant to the bulldog "hello, hello, how do you do, who do you want to help you?" The bulldog replies, "I want ..." and names a child who has to run to the other end of the room without getting caught by the bulldog. If the player is caught he or she stays in the middle and helps the bulldog catch the other players. The bulldog can say "British Bulldog" at any moment, when all the players have to run to the other side. Those caught stay in the middle.

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### Language ideas

You can use all sorts of language to play this game. Here are two examples of rhymes below but you can make your own up to fit the language you are teaching:

Players: Nice Mr Bulldog, one two three

Nice Mr Bulldog, don't pick me!

Bulldog: I pick Jacky!

### Play with questions

Instead of using the same rhyme each time you can have the players ask the bulldog any question that you wish them to practise, such as "What do you do?" or "Where do you live?" or "Where did you go this weekend?" etc. and the bulldog replies and finishes each reply with someone's name, or by pointing at someone. You can request that the bulldog gives a different reply each time, such as "I went to the beach, I went to the cinema", etc.

### Play with flashcards

Another version of this is to give each player a picture or word flash card, big enough for the bulldog to be able to see them. The players say their refrain or ask their question, such as: "Mr Bulldog, what will you have for your tea?" and the bulldog replies, "I'll have chips". The player with the chips has to run to the other side. A basic version would be for the bulldog to name the flashcards only with no question and answer format.

With a big class the bulldog should request three things for his tea so more people have to run across - this prevents the game from dragging on too long.

### **Bucket Game**

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Category: Writing and thinking about grammar

Group size: Any class size

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: None needed. Use the board or give out worksheets.

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Calm

Not everyone gets to speak in this game, but everyone writes, listens and thinks about the target structure, and some people have a chance to read the answers out loud. Have your class divided into teams and have a bucket (or plastic supermarket bag) per team, labelled with the team letter or number.

Give your class the exercise you would like them to do – such as a crossword, a fill in the blanks, an anagram or jumbled sentence, writing a question for an answer or writing an answer for a question. The team leader passes the bucket around his or her team to collect in all the answers. With the buckets at the front the team leaders each pull out one answer per bucket, and read it out to the class. The class vote as to whether it is correct or not. If it is correct, that team wins a point, if incorrect, they do not score. Move on to the next team, and so on.

Repeat the whole thing for round two, but use different children to read out the answers if possible, and so on for about 15 minutes.

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### **Call My Bluff**

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Category: Easy speaking

Group size: Divide the class into small groups of four to five children

Level: Beginners

Materials: Deck of picture or word cards for each group

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Calm

This language practice game is based on a card game. Instead of using playing cards use decks of homemade cards showing the vocabulary you want to work on. These could be pictures or words. Word cards are quick to make and help with spelling. Picture cards help with vocabulary acquisition and retention.

It's important that the cards are no see-through so if using paper then write out the days in pencil, or use light grey printer ink so the type does not show through and give the game away.

#### How to play

Lets say you would like to practise the days of the week. Make a sufficient supply of small cards for your class numbers, one day of the week per card. Students are dealt all the cards. The first person lays down any day of the week, upside down and names the day, for example Tuesday. The next person HAS to lay down either the day before or the day after. If he/she does not have the correct day he/she has to bluff. If a player thinks the person is bluffing he/she challenges them. "You're bluffing!" If the person is bluffing he/she must pick up all the cards in the pile and add them to their hand. If he/she was telling the truth, then the challenger has to take all the cards.

Players can lay down more than one card at a time but they are inferring that they are all the same card, three Mondays for example. The winner is the one who has no cards left. Alternatively play for a set time limit then let the pupils count up their cards and the winner is the one who has the least cards left at that time.

To enhance speaking opportunities instruct pupils to use the target vocabulary in sentences each time they lay down a card. For example days of the week and the present tense: I go skating on Mondays.

### **Call My Bluff Grammar Variant**

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Category: Speaking

Group size: Divide the class into small groups of four to five children

Level: Beginners to Intermediates



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Materials: Packs of playing cards

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Calm

Play as for Call My Bluff but use a pack of playing cards. Assign a part of speech to each number or picture. For example Aces are nouns, Twos are verbs, Threes are prepositions, Fours are Adverbs, Fives are conjunctions. Write those up on the board as a reference for the children. With younger children limit the parts of speech to verbs and nouns to start with.

Players must get rid of their cards by laying one or more of a kind down on the pile while describing what cards they are putting down, e.g. "Two conjunctions" would be two number fives, which can be laid onto an Ace or a Four only. To increase the speaking opportunity players can also be requested to name two conjunctions as well. Or to go a step further players must make a sentence containing two conjunctions. Make sure that the level of difficulty is within the capabilities of your students or the game will rapidly become extremely dull.

### **Chanting Game**

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Category: Very easy speaking

Group size: 2 to 15

Level: Beginners

Materials: None, blindfold optional

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

Thanks go to teacher Linda Yechiel for giving me this game. It is an excellent game for learning vocabulary and to gain confidence by saying words.

#### Variant needing blindfold and space

Blindfold one child and place a picture card or item somewhere in the room. The other children must guide the blindfolded child to the picture by chanting the word over and over again. Quiet chanting means the child is far away from the picture, louder chanting means the child is approaching the picture. Once the child has found the picture swap over and let a few more children have a go, but not necessarily every child. Keep it fresh and move onto something else quickly.

#### Variant with no blindfold for regular classroom

A variation of this game is to hide two pictures or items around the room and divide your group into two teams. One child from each team must find a picture with the group guiding him or her in the same way as above. No blindfold is needed in this version as the picture is hidden. The two teams race to have their seeker find their picture first.

### **Charades**

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Category: Speaking

Group size: 2 to 20

Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Materials: None

Age: 6 to adult

Pace: Wake up

#### How to play

One person mimes a book, a song or a film title by acting out each word or miming the idea expressed in the whole title. Those watching have to guess the book, song or film. The player miming is not allowed to speak at all and starts by indicating if they are miming a book (pretend to hold an open book), a song (pretend to sing), or a film (pretend to hold a movie camera). The other players respond to the mime by calling out the answer, for example, "It's a film" or/and "It's a book". The player miming then

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specifies how many words are in the title, and the other players respond, for example, "5 words".

The player miming can then either act out the whole title, or choose to act out one of the words, for example he or she might hold up 5 fingers and the audience responds with "fifth word". The actor mimes working in a factory until someone guesses "factory" correctly.

The student miming might then hold up 2 fingers to correspond to the "second word", and indicate that this is "a little word" by holding their thumb and forefinger close together, as if they were holding a small object between them. The audience responds with "a, the, it, an" etc. until someone says "and", which is the correct word in this mime. So far we have "and" and " factory". In this case the book and film is *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. With the 8 and 9 year olds you might want to think up some good titles for them in advance that are easy to mime in case the children cannot think of any on the spur of the moment.

Players can also mime syllables of words. For example hold up two fingers for second word, and then place one finger on your forearm to indicate first syllable. Then mime making a pot on a wheel to get the first syllable "pot" of the word Potter for a Harry Potter film. In addition to syllables one can also mime things that sound like the word. The person miming holds a hand up to his or her hear and the players respond with "sounds like". One might mime *Carry* saying it sounds like Harry to get Harry Potter. It's best to play with the basics first and add in these refinements once the children are used to the game.

### **Charades Race**

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Category: Speaking

Group size: 2 to 30

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Materials: None

Age: 4 to adult

Pace: Wake up

#### How to play

Copy a chart onto the board with vocabulary categories you wish to review. Allocate points for each category, the higher the points the harder the category.

Categories	Point Score			
	100	200	300	400
Animals				
Feelings				
Food				
Jobs				
Score Board				
Team A		Team B		

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For each category, write out a teacher's sheet with the nouns or words you intend to use and the points they are worth. For example:

Animals	Cat 100 points	Pony 200 points	Fly 300 points	Whale 400 points
Emotions	Happy 100 points	Sad 200 points	Angry 300 points	Satisfied 400 points

Divide the class into two teams and invite one or two students to come up to the board to select a category and a number of points, such as animals for 200 points, or jobs for 400 points. Show the animal, feeling or job to be acted out for those points to the student at the front only. This student acts this out to their fellow team members. Give a one-minute time limit only for the team to correctly guess the answer. If successful the team is awarded the points. If team 1 are unsuccessful let team 2 have a chance to guess and win the points instead. As a variation you could have two students from each team acting up front and the first team to guess correctly wins the point. Fill in the answers on the board as the class progress. At the end the team with the highest points wins.

### Grammar review

Aside from reviewing vocabulary use this game for sentence or grammar practice. For example the different squares can contain verb tenses such as present tense, present continuous, past continuous and past simple, the past simple being worth the greatest number of points. Students make up a sentence using the correct tense to win the point. Expand this idea for any grammar, any types of sentences or questions. For example to practise questions make each square contain a question word such as: where, why, how, what, which, do, does. How can be worth more than what. Why would be worth more than where and so on. Students pick their square and make a question starting with that question word.

### Pronunciation

Use the game also for phonemes or pronunciation. If you have a single nationality class all students are likely to have trouble with the same sounds and these can be worth the highest points.

### Chinese Whispers

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Category: Speaking (all vocabulary, grammar and also good for phonemes)

Group size: Any

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: None

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Calm

### How to play

I believe we called this game Chinese Whispers because it was hard for us to understand the whispering, as it would be hard to understand Chinese. No offence is meant towards the Chinese with the name of this game. One player starts off whispering something to the person next to them who whispers it in turn to the person next to them and so on round in a circle or down the line to the end. The last person then says the phrase or sentence out loud - and usually it is not the same as the initial message, which children find funny, although for ESL purposes it is not useful.

In order to encourage proper listening and speaking you can offer a prize or point to the team that does succeed in transmitting the message correctly, otherwise the children distort it deliberately as that is normally the funny part of the game. Either award a point to the fastest team with the CORRECT message, or award a point to all teams that have the correct message and in this case give out different messages to each team.

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A good group size is around 8 players. With a class you can either divide the children into teams or pass several messages around the class at intervals of five to six people to keep the players involved. With a large class let students pass the message down the rows that they form, or along benches from one side to the other.

While all the messages are travelling down do not interrupt the game to read out the results but have students write them down at the end of the line and announce them all at the end. Players can also write up the correct messages on the board.



### Language ideas

You can send any message down the line from very simple sentences to long and complex ones. You can also send down silly rhymes such as:

One banana, two bananas, three bananas, four  
Five bananas, six bananas, seven bananas, more

Or from Snow White:

Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?

For older children send tongue twisters or more challenging sentences round. See the rhymes, riddles and proverbs for ideas. Allow repetition to increase the likelihood of accuracy reward correct messages.

### Colour the Card

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Category: Speaking

Group size: Pair work for any class size

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Pairs of pictures – one coloured and one black and white

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Calm

### How to play

Divide your group into pairs. Give player one a coloured picture and give the other player the same picture but in black and white. Player one must not show the coloured picture to player two. Player two has to ask what colour the items are in the



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picture so that he or she can colour it in. For example if you give girls a picture of a lady in a dress player two can ask questions like: "What colour is the dress, what colour are the shoes, what colour is her hair, what colour is her belt?" The boys can have a picture of a man to colour in. As player one replies "The dress is red, her shoes are white", etc. player two takes the relevant colour and puts a dash of it on the picture, but does not colour the whole thing in at this stage. Once player two has made a note of all the colours the players swap roles. When player one has all the colours down you can either let the children colour their pictures in all together or they can take them home and do it later if they feel like it. You certainly do not want to spend much precious class time colouring in with the older children. You can always compromise and let them colour in for a few minutes and then tell them to finish it in their own time.

### Materials

You can often find clip art in black and white that you can print and colour, or have the children colour. You can also print a coloured clip art picture and then save the image in greyscale or black and white. If you do not know about clip art try taking coloured pictures from magazines or children's storybooks and taking a black and white photocopy.

A way round the problem of finding or creating pairs of pictures is to give out black and white pictures to both children. The children themselves then decide what colour the items in the picture will be.

### Colour Wolf

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Category: Listening or speaking (colours or articles of clothing)

Group size: Small group or large class variant

Level: Beginners

Materials: None

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Excitable and calm version for large class

### Small group variant

This is a fun version of 'Tag' or 'It'. The wolf shouts out a colour. If you are wearing it you are safe. If you are not wearing it then the wolf can catch you. The wolf has 10 seconds to catch someone not wearing the specified colour. If the wolf catches someone they become the next wolf and can immediately call out the new colour. If a wolf cannot catch anyone after two or three goes, change them over. Blow a whistle after the 10 seconds so players know when time is up.

In the listening version the teacher calls out the colour and one of the children is the wolf. In the speaking version the wolf calls out the colour directly.

You could do a variant on this game with articles of clothing.

### Large class variant

The wolf stands at the front, facing the board. Have the whole class standing up at their desks or benches. The wolf calls out a colour - if a pupil is wearing it, he or she gets eaten and sits down. If you all wear the same colours or uniform, then each pupil draws a circle in a chosen colour on a piece of paper, and holds that up to their chest.

Play this game to practise any vocabulary. Each pupil writes or draws an object from a selection and holds the picture up to their chest as above for the colours.

Use any target structure - the wolf can say any sentence or ask any question that includes one of the items from the selected vocabulary. For example let's say you want to introduce the present continuous. Your pupils pick a sport from a range of known vocabulary, write or draw something to represent that sport, and hold the paper up. The wolf mimes and says, "I am fishing". All those pupils who have chosen fishing are eaten and sit down.



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The winners are those left standing at the end. One of them can be wolf in the next round, or you might end it there.

### **Commands Race**

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Category: Listening  
Group size: Any  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: None  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

#### How to play

Divide the class into teams. Give a command such as run, jump, hop, or skip. The first member of each team must race to perform the action.

#### Small groups with space

Have the children seated at one end of the room and place one chair for each team at the other end. Give the command and the children race to the chair carrying out the action you specify.

#### Traditional classroom

Leave the children seated at their desks. When you give the command all children stand up, carry out the action and sit down as fast as possible. The team finishing last gets a forfeit. With some space in between rows you could have the children run around their desks or swap desks with another student for example. With no space at all the actions will have to be things the children can do while standing at their desks.

### **Copycat Commands**

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Category: Listening  
Group size: Any  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: None  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

#### How to play

This is an extremely simple game where you tell the class to do certain actions while miming them and they copy you. It is good for the initial introduction of vocabulary and also for a quick revision of vocabulary before a game such as *Simon Says*. As your class become familiar with the language you can stop miming and just give the commands.

Here are some things you can have your class do, (assuming you are in a classroom and not in a playground, where there are more active possibilities), and you can add freely to it:

Dance / Jump / Run on the spot / touch your nose / touch any body part / touch a colour / touch an item of clothing / touch a friend's leg, arm, etc. / open a book / pick up a pen / fold a piece of paper / pass the paper to a neighbour / screw up the paper / throw it at someone! / Pick it up / unfold it / write your name on it / be silent / crouch down / mime a chicken / write the number 7 / sing do re mi / tap your feet / clap your hands once / clap your hands five times / stand up / sit down / stand up if you're wearing a skirt / sit down if you are wearing shoes / stand up if you like tennis / sit down if you like chocolate / be a Jedi knight / Girls: be a princess / boys: be a prince / fly a plane / etc.

### **Counting and Number Games**

#### **Add up the Dice – speaking, ages 6 upwards**

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Roll three dice and have the players add up the total. With a big class you can bring someone up to roll the dice and then write the three numbers on the board so that

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everyone can see them, or call them out. You can use giant dice or divide your class into smaller groups.

To practise the higher numbers say that each number on the dice is x10 or x100 its face value. So 6 would become 60 or 600.

### Large class variant

Divide your class into teams of up to 10 pupils per team, or one bench full of pupils per team. Name one pupil as the starter and another as the finisher per team, who could be the two people at the end of each row. Write up an easy sum on the board such as  $4+3 \times 2$ . On the word "Go" the starter whispers the answer to his team-mate, who passes it down the line to the finisher. Any team member may give the answer to the starter if they work it out faster, but they must pass it down the line to the starter, they cannot call it out.

Allow only whispering to control noise and to control content only the answer may be spoken. Use of any other word, or any talking incurs a penalty for the team, or a disqualification in that round.

### **Clap and Count – speaking, all ages**

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Clap or bang a number of times and have the class call out how many times you clapped. You can also put the group into pairs and have them play with each other. With younger children you clap slower so they can follow you, and with the older ones you can make it quite difficult by clapping as fast as you can. The class members can also do the clapping.

### **Count the Cards – listening, all ages**

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Give out 10 to 20 cards to each player. The players must count out as fast as possible the number you tell them. You say something along the lines of, "On your marks, get set, 3!" And they count out three cards and then put their hand up saying, "finished!" or "3!"

You won't want to make it a race for the 4 year olds, but just have them count out the cards in their own time. If the same person keeps winning all the time have them call out the numbers.

To ensure you do not lose any cards - and this is a good tip for all the games - have your group leaders collect in the cards and have everyone count their cards back into the bag or basket, or whatever receptacle you are using to collect things back in.

### **Guess the Price – speaking, all ages**

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Hold up an item for the group to see. Each player writes down a price and the winner is the one who either guesses the price of the item, or gets closest to it. An option to avoid cheating, is to have the players swap their paper with a neighbour. Ask any player for their price. You respond saying whether the actual price is higher or lower. If it is higher all those with lower prices know they have lost. Continue asking players for their prices until the winner is identified.

For beginners the prices can be very simple such as 1 dollar, 3 dollars, etc. For advanced players you can have things priced at 1 dollar 98 cents, or 358 dollars and 43 cents, etc. You can also do this in different currencies to have them become familiarised with euros, pounds, yen, etc.

You can also divide your class into groups to play this game and elect your best class members as group leaders to hold up the card and ask for the prices.

### **How Many – speaking, all ages**

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Place a number of items around the room at 'guessing stations' and have all the players circulate freely, visiting each station and guessing how many items there are at each station. You can use things such as:

- A jar of coins
- A jar of sweets
- A bag of small objects
- A see-through bag of biscuits
- A see-through bag of peanuts
- A pile of magazines
- A pile of papers
- A page full of words
- A pack of envelopes

It is a good idea to give a fairly tight time limit to complete the task to keep everyone focused. Once all the players have written down their guesses have them divide into two teams either side of the room. Team one asks team two a question relating to "guessing station 1"; for example: "How many coins are there in the jar?" A volunteer player from team two answers; "There are 30 coins in the jar", or "I think there are 30 coins in the jar", or more simply for beginners, "There are 30". If your beginners cannot manage the questions then you can ask those and the pupils can simply say the numbers.

You tell the players whether the number is higher or lower. If the number is higher any player on team two who has a higher number can offer their guess, for example, "There are 55". You tell the players whether the number is higher or lower, and those still in the running give their guess until you get the closest possible guess to the actual number of coins. You write this up on the board under team two. Team two now ask team one, "How many coins are there in the jar?" The players on team one who are closest to the number give their answers - it is much quicker this time as only a few players will be in the running to give their best guess. You write up team one's best guess on the board.

Now reverse the order and have team two ask team one how many items are at the second 'guessing station'. Go through the process as described above. Continue to note the best guesses of each team until you have gone through all the guessing stations, and then write up the actual number of items at each station, awarding a point to the closest team. If a team gets the number bang on you could give double points.

### **Match Stick Game – speaking, age 6 upwards**

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This is the classic game where a group of people each have 3 matches or similar items behind their backs. Sitting round in a circle, each player takes between 0 and 3 matches and hides them in their fist. All players hold out their fist in the centre of the circle, the object being to guess the total number of matches in all the hands. Each player takes a guess. If someone says 6, no one else can say 6 in that round. Aside from numbers this game can also be used to practise "I think there are", "There are", "I believe there are".

### **Pass the Ball – speaking, all ages, small groups**

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To learn to count from 0 to 20, pass a ball round a circle with every one counting in unison. When the players become good at counting have only the player throwing the ball say the number. The 4-5 year olds can roll the ball across the floor. Boys seem to go mad when they get near a ball so replace the ball with another item that must be passed from hand to hand if necessary. With more than 15 children pass two or more balls round at once to avoid boredom.

You don't always have to start from 0 if you want to practise higher numbers. You can also count in tens: 10 20 30 40 50 etc. Or count up in 2s: 2 4 6 8 10 12 etc. Or count up in 3s: 3 6 9 12 15 etc. Or count all numbers with a 9 in them: 9 19 29 39 49 59 69 79 89 91 92 93 etc. Use this game for the alphabet too.

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When the class become good at this, whistle or clap to signal a change in direction so they count down instead.

### **Telephone Game – listening, all ages**

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Ask the pupils to write one number between 0 and 10 on a piece of paper, or give out laminated numbers if you have them. Divide the class into two teams. Call out a five-digit telephone number for team one. The pupils listen and if they are holding one of the numbers they must hold it up. Team two checks it is correct and if they see any errors they must point them out. Then call out a different phone number for team two.

If you have a smallish group then you can take it one step further and ask the team to stand in the correct order - that could score double points. Only read out the number once or twice and use a time limit to keep the children alert and the game moving on.

[Fizz Buzz](#), [Don't Drop The Bomb](#) and [Higher or Lower](#) are also suitable for practising numbers.

### **Dancing Demons**

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: 3 to 21  
Level: Beginner  
Materials: Picture or word flashcards  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up to excitable

#### How to play

This game works with small groups only as it takes time to attach pictures to people's backs. It could also become too chaotic with a full class. For small groups it is an excellent 5-minute game to practise vocabulary with plenty of movement.

In groups of three pin a picture on to the back of every player. Your class members can do this to each other - although not with people in their own group of three, as the others in the group must not see the pictures. The group of three face each other and dance and jump around trying to glimpse the picture on the backs of their two contestants, without allowing them to see the picture on their own back.

#### Ideas for organising the group

Once someone's picture has been identified they go and wait in a given spot (backs to the wall so people will not see their pictures) until other people arrive whose picture has also been seen in round one, and then they can play a second round together.

Alternatively children can form a circle and watch and when someone's picture is named that child sits down and a child from the circle takes his or her place. In this variation allow one minute only per round so you have a rapid changeover of children prancing about in the middle of the circle.

### **Decoding**

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Category: Listening and Spelling  
Group size: Any  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: None or pictures  
Age: 6 to adult  
Pace: Calm

Display on the board a code where numbers are equal to letters. For example: 348 = a, 468 = b, 708 = c. The teacher reads out a number and students write down the

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corresponding letter until a word is formed.

For vocabulary practise words may be used instead of numbers. For example display the following on the board:

Pig	=	A
Chicken	=	I
Duck	=	L
Sheep	=	M
Cow	=	N
Frog	=	S

The teacher or a selected student reads out the words Pig, cow, chicken, sheep, pig, duck and frog. The class write down the corresponding letters and find that they have spelled out the word 'animals'. In this task students benefit from seeing how words are spelled on the board while hearing how they are pronounced. To revise meanings rather than spellings place animal flashcards next to the letters instead of the written words.

### Detective Game

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: Speaking

Group size: Small group to a class of up to about 30

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: None

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Calm

#### How to play

One child is chosen to be the detective and one child the thief. The detective has three chances to find the thief. To find the thief the detective chooses three children and asks each of them a question. The question can be any question form that you would like to practise such as "What is your name? Where do you live? What were you doing last night?" etc. The child answers the question accordingly and if the child is the thief he must give himself up for arrest after answering the question. If the detective has not found the thief after asking three children a question someone else takes over as the detective until the thief is found, or you could say that the thief got away and choose a new thief and a new detective for the next round.

The above set up works well for a smallish group of up to about ten children. If you have more than ten children then pick more thieves and detectives to ask and answer questions simultaneously so that more children are involved in speaking.

#### Variation 1

An exiting variant is to allow the detective to ask as many children as possible in a given time frame. If you have some kind of audible timer it adds an element of excitement. Allow the detective two minutes to find the thief only and then play another round. If you divide the whole class into two teams you can record which team finds the most thieves during the course of the game.

#### Variation 2

Another way to use the same idea but with a different scenario for variety is to reverse the procedure. Instead of the detective trying to find the thief you could have a situation where the child asking the question does not want to find the answer. For example you could have a wicked witch who turns you to stone if you speak to her. The questioner could play an imaginary character of your choosing and must ask three children a question. If one of those three children is the wicked witch then the questioner is turned to stone and has to be released by the whole class chanting a spell.



### 4 Games for Directions

#### Blind Directions

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Category: Listening and speaking  
Group size: 2 to 30 in pairs or fours and larger class variant  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: Blindfolds  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

#### Small group variant with space

Everyone loves this game, even adults. Lay out a course that must be followed. Create this by placing books on the floor between the start line and the finish line. To play the game put your children in pairs or groups of four. Line up as many pairs as you have room for on the start line. You need one course per pair of children so you will probably only have room for two to three courses unless you play outside.

Blindfold player A of each pair on the starting line. Player B directs player A through the obstacle course you have created to the end and back. Player B can direct player A using directions such as: "Go straight on. Stop. Go left. Go right". You can complicate the vocabulary used as the level of your class evolves. Four year olds may not know the difference between left and right in which case you can play simply with go, stop and turn towards me or away from me. The idea is for each pair to reach the finish line before the other pairs. A referee can accompany each pair to make sure that the directions are given in correctly if you like.

#### Large class variant with no space

If you have a bigger class or not enough space to play then you can adapt the game as follows: You decide on an obstacle course around the classroom - in between rows of desks, round the bin and back or whatever, and have only one blind folded person do the course while half the class (team A) whisper directions all together. You time this and then team B has a go directing their person, (you have to change the course a little once their player is blindfolded) and you see which team gets through the course first. Two or three goes for each team of this will be enough.

Another way to adapt the game to the classroom is to make one long course through the class and have pairs set off close behind each other at intervals, with a referee checking the language. Have a rule where only whispering is allowed and anyone talking is out, or has to start from the beginning again.

#### Materials

For a blindfold airline eye pads work best, as you do not waste time tying them up the way you do with a scarf. You can also find children's masks in dressing up shops or supermarkets at Halloween, and you can tape over the eyeholes.

#### Grandma's Directions

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Category: Speaking - giving directions  
Group size: any  
Level: Beginner  
Materials: None, space in aisles of class helpful  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

This is a version of Grandmother's Footsteps. You, or a class member, are Grandma standing with your back to the class. Grandma calls out directions such as: "left, turn left, go left, right, go straight on, go backwards, go forwards, stop". You can add adverbs to these commands, such as "quickly".

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At any moment Grandma can suddenly turn round. Everyone must instantly freeze and if Grandma sees anyone moving they take Grandma's place.

### **Directions on the Board**

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Category: Speaking - giving directions  
Group size: any  
Level: Beginner  
Materials: Blindfold or none for large class variant  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

Draw a grid on the board and write some numbers or letters in each square of the grid. Blindfold a child and tell him or her to circle a particular number or letter by following the directions given by the rest of the class. To add some fun divide the class into two or three teams and let each team guide their team member trying to beat the time of the other teams to accomplish the task.

### **Large class variant**

Play this in pairs. One student sits with his head lowered into the crook of his left arm so he cannot see what his right hand is writing and the other student guides him to draw the circle around the number that you call out. Then swap the roles over.

### **Elastic Band Game - more Directions**

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Category: Speaking - commands and directions  
Group size: Small group activity  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: Thick elastic bands and small objects  
Age: 6 to 12  
Pace: Calm

A teacher called Jima gave this game idea to me. This is a fun coordination game ideal for practising giving directions. Put the children into small groups of three or four and give out one or two objects and a thick elastic band per group. A potato would be a good object to use or any other unbreakable object.

Tie strings at equal intervals around a heavy-duty elastic band. You need one string per participant. Players work together to pick up and move objects to a specified location by pulling on the strings to open the elastic and lower it over the object they must move. Reverse the process to release the object once moved.

To use this idea for speaking practice ask the children to play with eyes closed except for one child who must tell the others what to do by giving commands and directions such as, pull on the strings, stop, lift, Jacky go left, Richard go right, etc.

### **Don't Drop the Bomb**

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Category: Speaking – counting, the alphabet or vocabulary  
Group size: small group activity  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: None  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Calm

Keep a balloon up in the air counting every time someone taps it. If it touches the floor it will explode, as it is a bomb. Make sure it never does actually explode with the four year olds. For older children have a rule where you cannot touch the balloon twice in a row.

Use this idea to practise counting, saying the alphabet or saying any vocabulary, randomly or in themes.

### Draw

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Category: Listening  
Group size: 2 to a 40  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: Class board with pens  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

This is a simple game where you call out an item and members of the class race up to the board to draw it. To organise this count round the class from 1 to 5 repeatedly and each pupil retains the number you give them as you count. You then call out an item and ask all the number 1s to come and draw it. To add a time limit the rest of the class count up to 20 and all the number 1s must complete their picture by the time the class have reached 20. If you like you can let the class pick out the best-drawn picture.

If you have 40 students or so bring up as many as possible at each round to keep waiting time down. For example if you can fit 5 students at the board at one time then have 8 teams of 5. In this case you will have 8 rounds and every one will have had a go. The more teams the better.

### Dress Up

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: 4 to 30  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: Clothing and accessories such as belts, hats or scarves  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

#### How to play

Divide your group into two teams. Team A will start by dressing up so allow a minute or two for this with one item per player minimum. Give Team B one minute to look at team A and memorise who is wearing what. Team B then turn away and cannot look at team A while team A has one minute to switch items of clothing or accessories. Team B then turn round and call out the changes that have taken place. Allow perhaps three minutes for this to give time to use the language. You can give a point for each correct change noted, if you are scoring. Some examples of language you can use are:

Simplest: Point to the item that has changed ownership and say "the hat" or "black hat"  
Or: Harder: Elisa is now wearing the black hat  
Or: Possessives: Elisa is wearing John's hat  
Or: Present and past continuous: Elisa is wearing the black hat and before she was wearing the pink skirt

With the four and five year olds you want to make the task a little easier. Use fewer items and make fewer changes each time and make them obvious.

#### Materials

You can ask your class or group to bring fancy dress items with them that day. Girls love long fluffy scarves made out of fake feathers, shawls, extravagant skirts and hats, boys love cowboy hats, gun holsters, waistcoats, Mexican hats, etc. Save time by using a few different coloured hats and scarves as these are quick to put on. You might even use the children's own hats and scarves if it's winter and you are in a cold country.

#### Dress up variant

The above game can be adapted to any vocabulary. Instead of dressing up give out picture cards of the vocabulary you would like to practise. One team looks at the other and tries to memorise who has what. The team with the pictures do a swap amongst themselves and the other team spots the difference. The players can practise saying

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things like "John had the car", "John had the car and now he has the bus", "John has Eli's bus".

### Dress Up Race

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Category: Listening

Group size: From 4 players to groups of a maximum of 8 each

Level: Beginner

Materials: Clothing and accessories

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

Use this game when presenting new clothing vocabulary or to revise it. For each group you need a pile of clothing and / or accessories. For the younger children you might want to have two of each item (not necessarily identical). Divide the group into pairs and tell the first pair the item they are to fish out of the pile and put on. Put on some trousers - Ready steady GO! You can also have them race to take the items off.

### Duck, Duck, Goose

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Category: Speaking

Group size: Small group to a large class

Level: Beginner

Materials: None

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

#### How to play

The players sit in a circle. One player walks quickly round the outside of the circle gently tapping the seated players on the head saying "duck" each time. When he says "goose!" the "goose" gets up and chases him round the circle, trying to catch him before he runs a full circle and takes the place of the "goose". The "goose" almost never catches the one who touched him so every one has a go. Each round you can change the vocabulary, for example, sticking to the animal theme you can have, "tiger, tiger, snake!" followed by, "Cow, cow, pig!" Etc.

#### Using a rhyme or song

Use a little rhyme instead, which the whole group says in unison. See the [rhymes](#) for ideas. While the group chant the rhyme someone goes round the circle touching each child, until the group says the last word of the rhyme. At this point the person touched gets up and chases the one who touched him round the circle.

#### Large class variant

This game is an absolutely great excuse to have your class say the same words over and over so that they memorize them, and every one has plenty of opportunity to say them out loud.

Every tenth pupil screws up a piece of scrap paper into a ball. Using two of your chosen words the class say them rhythmically and steadily in unison, as follows, "duck, duck, goose; duck, duck, goose; duck, duck, goose" etc. Each time the third word is said the paper must pass along the line of students and through the class. Work out a simple route through the class that the paper balls must follow. Once the paper reaches the back of the class it can be passed back the same way or follow a circuit (easier). If you find the paper balls do not work for you for whatever reason just have the pupils send an imaginary magic power through the class, transmitted by touching their neighbour on the shoulder.

At some point on the word "goose" you say "stop!" All the children who are geese at that moment must stand up and mime being geese, or do a forfeit, all together to avoid any waiting time. Continue using two different animals this time, or any vocabulary words of your choosing.

## Games E-G

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### **Figure It Out**

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Category: Writing

Group size: 1 to 30

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Materials: Optional picture flashcards or objects

Age: 6 to 12

Pace: Calm to Wake up

If possible prepare sets of picture cards or objects to each represent a theme, if this is too much work then use words. For example:

School: Book, pencil, desk, chair, table, black board

Beach: Sea, sand, shells, towel, sunglasses, suntan lotion

Airport: Plane, runway, terminal, ticket, check-in

Restaurant: Waiter, tables, chairs, food, plates, kitchen, till

Cinderella: Glass slipper, pumpkin, a couple of ugly sisters, a princess, a prince

For the older children you can be a little more cryptic, for example:

Chocolate cake: chocolate, flour, butter, cake decoration, candles

Police station: policeman, handcuffs, key, parking ticket

Hairdressers: hairbrush, scissors, money, mirror

Disperse your sets of pictures or clues about the class give a 1-2 minute time limit at each clue for people to guess the theme these clues all belong to. Students write down the answer. Your class can work individually on this one or in pairs or groups if you can trust the children to stay on task. Every two minutes make sure everyone moves onto a different theme. Allow an additional 2 minutes to go through all the answers. People with the right answer can write it up on the board.

### Materials

If you want to make the effort you can put together real items in bags and place these around the class at 'stations'. The children circulate freely and have a time limit to work out all the clues. If you have children's toys at home you'll find these very useful. If you have no space and no materials use written clues that children work out at their desks.

### **Find the Pairs Memory Game A**

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Category: Speaking

Group size: 2 to a class divided into groups of up to 6

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Two matching sets of pictures cards per group

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Calm

### How to play

Take two sets of identical pictures, shuffle them and spread them out face down. The pictures can be laid out randomly or in a grid. Player one turns over two cards and names the items. If they are a pair player one keeps the cards. If they are not a pair player one turns them back over, leaving them face down in the same place. Player two



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now turns over two cards, attempting to turn over two identical pictures, and naming the items. The game continues until all the pairs have been found.

The younger the players the fewer pairs you lay out initially.

In the classic game when a player turns over a pair he or she gets another go. However as the goal is to have the group master the language rather than find a winner, it is preferable to let each person have only one turn. This makes it less likely for the brighter person to win all the pairs leaving the others with nothing.

A nice way to keep everyone interested, even when it is not their turn, aside from the fact that they are supposed to be memorising the cards, is to split each group into 2 teams. Each person has their go as normal, however the team-mates can help with vocabulary if need be. When counting up all the pairs at the end one can have a winning team rather than a winning individual.

### Language ideas

The language possibilities with this game are extremely numerous, keeping an eye as always on the complexity, so that the game does not drag.

Vocabulary: Each player simply names the items on the cards he or she turns over.

Phrases: Each player forms a short phrase including the item on the card. For example with pictures of people one could use adjectives such as "a pretty girl", "a tall boy", or with places "a big city", "a small village".

Sentences: Each player forms a sentence using one or both of the items. For example if you are using pictures of food players can say: "I like butter and milk", or "I like butter but I don't like milk". If you are using pictures of people players can say; "Her name is Claudia" or "She is a dentist", or "She is from Spain", or "She is wearing trousers", etc. One can also work on comparatives such as "the girl is taller than the boy", or "the girl is older than the baby". More advanced students can practise more complicated structures, depending on the language you would like them to learn. For example, "I was going to buy some milk but I bought some cheese instead", or "I have never been to London but I have been to Paris".

Questions: Players can ask questions related to each picture they turn over. For example with sets of people one can ask, "What's her name?" Or "Where does she live?" or "How old is she?" With two teams one can also have one team ask the other team a question that the player turning over the two cards answers. For example team one asks, "Where did you go last summer?" and a player from team two turns over two cards and replies, "I went to London and Paris".

### Materials

Use pictures for best results when learning vocabulary. Word cards are fine if you are practising sentences. With children under the age of 6 it is recommended to use only pictures.

### **Find the Pairs Memory Game B**

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Category: Reading and speaking

Group size: 2 to a class divided into groups of up to 6

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Two matching sets of word flash cards

Age: 6 to 12

Pace: Calm

To be played in the same way as *Find the pairs memory game A*, using word flash cards instead of pictures, so that reading and frequent exposure to spelling can be practised. One can make up phrases, sentences and questions in exactly the same way with these words as with the pictures, as described above.

### Find Your Friend

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Category: Speaking

Group size: Small groups to a class of 40

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Materials: Small cards or pieces of paper

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

#### How to play

Give out one piece of paper, card or picture with a place on it to each child. If you have thirty children then you might give out 6 to 8 different cards. The children have to find out who else lives in the same place as they do. For example you could give out pictures of major cities or countries. The children go around asking, "Where do you live?" The child who is asked replies, "I live in Paris", or "I live in France". If this is the same place then the two pair up and continue looking for other children who live in the same place as they do.

Think up pairs of words that go together, such as hair and hairbrush and have either a picture of hair and another picture of a hairbrush, or two word flashcards with one word on each. Shuffle and hand out one card per player in your group or class. Players must keep their card hidden and find their other half.

With the younger children (four to five), you need to give out identical pairs of pictures so they can match dog with dog, rather than dog with bone or basket.

For the beginner's version of this game the players can just name the item that they have and see if it matches the other player's item. Or players can ask a simple question such as "I've got a brush, what have you got?" They reply, "I've got a book".

For an intermediate version players can say one sentence about their item as a clue, for example "You use it to do your hair." Each player goes round saying their sentence to the other players until they find their partner.

For the advanced version players must guess whether the other item matches theirs by asking questions about it and they are not allowed to name their item. Miming is not allowed. If they have a brush however they can ask something specific such as, "Is your item anything to do with hair?" This version requires a huge amount of language and you might want to give the class some ideas of questions before getting started.

For example:

Is it part of a human body?

Is it something an animal has?

Is it something an animal/human would use?

Is it large or small?

Would a person use it in the morning?

Would a person use it to clean their teeth?

Is it edible / something we would eat?

Can you \_\_\_\_\_ with it?

#### Language ideas

Use this with any language.

1. For example for professions:

To practise professions, she's a, he's a, and places of work you can give out one set of cards of people doing jobs and another set of the places they work. For example:

Doctor and hospital

Nurse and doctor's surgery

2. Passive tense example: Give out cards with Dracula, the Incredible Hulk, a dinosaur, or other baddies that the children know from media. The children ask, "Were you bitten by

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a dinosaur?" The reply, "I was bitten by Dracula". This may not be appropriate in your country. However it is just an example to show how you can adapt the language to the game according to your needs.

3. Use with the [riddles](#) or [proverbs](#) provided at the end of this book. Cut the riddles in half and let students find the other part of their riddle.

4. Use with metaphors, with jokes, with sentences, even with short dialogues. Split any kind of text in two or more parts and let the students find the pieces.

### **Fizz Buzz**

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Category: Speaking

Group size: Small group game

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: None

Age: 6 to adult

Pace: Wake up

Have all your players sit in a circle of about 12 people maximum per circle. If you have too many people in the circle the game rapidly becomes dull. It is better to have two circles with your best student in charge of the second circle.

The first player says one, the next says two, the next says three, and so on. Now add in an element; every time the number 2 comes up, or a number with 2 in it (such as 12, 20, 22, 26, etc), the player must say FIZZ instead of the number. For example:

1 FIZZ 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 FIZZ 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 FIZZ FIZZ FIZZ etc. until 30, then 31, FIZZ, 33 etc.

Once the group have mastered this idea to some degree throw in another element, such as any number with a 5 in it becomes BUZZ. This would give:

1 FIZZ 3 4 BUZZ 6 7 8 9 10 11 FIZZ 13 14 BUZZ 16 etc.

Now if you want to make things really complicated you can say that any number which can be divided by 2 or 5 is a FIZZ BUZZ. However this would be for older children and adults only or it would be too complicated to be fun.

### **Other language ideas**

You can also use this fun game to revise vocabulary. Here is an example: Using animal vocabulary have a rule where any animal ending in an R is followed by FIZZ, and any animal ending in a T is followed by BUZZ, any animal ending in an E is followed by FIZZ BUZZ. A round might look like this:

Tiger, FIZZ, Antelope, FIZZ BUZZ, Elephant, BUZZ, ant, BUZZ, Lion, duck, bird, crocodile, FIZZ BUZZ, etc.

This game is quite tricky and it is useful to precede it with a game like *Brainstorm*, or *Ping-pong* beforehand to refresh everyone's memory of animal vocabulary. An easier version would be to play with any vocabulary rather than limiting the students to a theme. The above idea still applies where a word ending in a given letter is followed by FIZZ or BUZZ.

### **Flashcard Chase**

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Category: Listening with optional speaking

Group size: Small group to small class

Level: Beginner to lower intermediate

Materials: Flashcards

Age: 4 to 10 or 12 if they still like games

Pace: Wake up

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Thanks go to Tracy England in Spain for this game. Tracy plays this with six to eight children per circle. A significant amount of space is needed so this is not appropriate for the average classroom as children could injure themselves on the desks in their desire to play.

### How to Play

Each participant is given 2 flash cards. Participants stand in a circle and the teacher numbers them from 1- 6/8. The teacher also holds more flash cards to be introduced in the game. The teacher names a flashcard first and then immediately shouts out two numbers. The participants with those numbers must run around the outside of the circle and try to win the flash card named by the teacher. Whoever possesses the card named must hold it up in their hand so those running round the outside can try to reach and take the card.

This game is ideal with 6-10s, though you may use it more gently with younger ones, and it can also be used with older more advanced students for practising verbs and different tenses. It can be made more challenging by asking the participant who wins the card to make a sentence with it. If the sentence given is correct, he/she wins the card. If not, the card is replaced in the game and the game continues.

### Flip a Card and Variants

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: Small group table top game  
Level: Beginner to Advanced  
Materials: Playing cards  
Age: 6 to adult  
Pace: Calm

This game is good for vocabulary revision and sentence construction. Assign two letters of the alphabet for each playing card and write this up on the board. For example the Ace can be letters A and B, the 2, letters C and D, the King would correspond to the letters Y and Z and so on. There are 13 playing cards and 26 letters of the alphabet so each card will correspond to two letters.

Students play in small groups and each group has a deck of playing cards shuffled and placed face down in a pile on the table or floor. The first player turns over a card and says a word that starts with one of the two letters matched with that card. If successful the student keeps that card as a point. Students continue playing until there are no more cards in the deck.

Collaborative variant: Playing with a time limit means this can be a collaborative game too. Each group of students is a team working against the other groups. Within the given time limit students endeavour to win as many cards as possible from the deck. Students can write the words down that they come up with as the game is played to prevent them from cheating.

Intermediate variant: Here students turn over several cards and say or write down a sentence using words beginning with the given letters. This sentence construction may be done rigidly following a given grammatical structure or it may be used for general language revision.

For example a student turns over three playing cards, which correspond to the letters A or B, G or H and S or T. If required to use the past simple tense with these letter options examples are: Adam hated soccer, or, Beth got a tie. If allowed to make up any sentence freely examples are: Aunty goes shopping. Brigit has teeth.

For variations you may allow extra words to be added in the sentence to allow the students to be more creative. You may also allow the words starting with the 'playing card' letters to be placed in the sentence in any order.

### Forfeits

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Below are ideas for forfeits that can be used in many games. Giving a forfeit is a useful way to 'penalise' a student for an error without making them sit out of the game. Students can do forfeits individually or as a group.

- Name a picture flashcard
- Make a sentence or a question using the target language
- Ask a friend any question in English
- Name three things you like
- Answer a question the teacher asks such as, "Do you have a sister?"
- Hold an orange under your chin and pass it to a neighbour
- Walk about holding an orange under your chin
- Walk about with an orange between your knees
- Balance a ball on your head for three seconds
- Bounce a ball ten times and count to ten
- Bounce a ball saying 10, 20, 30 etc. up to 100
- Say your name backwards. You may need to write the name out for the student.
- Write your name in the air with a body part such as your head or your elbow, or even your bottom!
- Do a silly dance or sing a song
- Pretend to be a chicken, pig, dog, cat, lion, tiger, snake etc.
- Count to 10
- Yawn until you make someone else yawn
- Do a sum such as 70 minus 60
- Pretend to be a model and walk the catwalk
- Pretend to be Spiderman or batman
- Fight and be killed by Darth Vader with your light sabre
- Hop round the room holding one foot with your hand
- Pretend to be a dying fly
- Perform a doggy action such as wag your tail, beg, bark
- Say a tongue twister (see *Tongue Twisters* for ideas)
- Try to stand on your head (probably not very appropriate for most classrooms!)
- Make someone laugh
- [Limbo](#) under a stick
- Walk across the room on your knees
- Stand on one leg and do not smile for ten seconds
- Try and make someone else laugh in ten seconds
- Pull a funny face
- Have two or more children buzz like bees and see who can buzz the longest without taking a breath
- Look at someone and do not smile for a full minute.
- Say a sentence about kangaroos, or elephants, or any other topic.
- Intermediates say 2 or 3 sentences about a topic
- Advanced students give a one-minute talk about a topic

Ask your class to each come up with three funny forfeits for homework that can be performed in class – you'll get lots of great ideas that appeal to your students – collect them in and add them to your list for future use in the games.

### Gorilla

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Category: Speaking – vocabulary revision  
Group size: Small groups and large class variant  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate



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Materials: Picture flashcards

Age: 4 to 10

Pace: Wake up

Thank you Caleb Zimmerman, who emailed me this super game that he made up as a variant to [Find the Pairs Memory Game](#), where students turn over two cards to try to find a match.

### Small Group Version

The small group variant is a combination of Find the Pairs and British Bulldog. You need space.

1. Put one desk at the back of the class, and move all the others to the side of the room.
2. All the students place their hands on the one desk at the back of the class.
3. On top of the desk are two identical sets of about eight vocabulary words (e.g. 2 fire fighters, 2 police officers, 2 doctors, 2 cooks). The cards are turned upside-down.
4. The first student turns over a card and everyone chants the English word 3 times in unison. Then the student turns over a second card, hoping for an identical picture. The group again chants the word on the second card. If the student gets a match, the cards stay face up. If they do not match they are turned back over.
5. The second student does the same, and the third, and so on...
6. Several cards have a picture of an angry gorilla on them. If a student turns over a gorilla card you yell out "gorilla" and all the students run to the front of the room. If they make it to the board before you catch them, they are safe. If you catch any students, they have to sit out for one round.

### Simplified Small Group Variant

Forget the matching game and simply go through your stack of flashcards having the students repeat them after you. If the gorilla card comes up, they get chased to the blackboard.

This game works best if you really get into your role as a gorilla and pretend to be furiously angry if all the students make it to the board before you can catch them.

### Large Class Version

To use this game in a normal classroom the teacher is at the front and students are at the back. The teacher holds up a flashcard and the students say the appropriate word, phrase or question. For example: picture of fish, students response is, "Do you like fish?" Then when it's the Gorilla, swap places, the teacher runs to the back and the children run to the front. I run to the back and they run to the front. Continue changing places each time the gorilla appears.

If any kind of running is a no-go in your classroom replace that with the children getting down under their desks before the teacher can touch one of them, or a similar variant that does not involve organised chaos!

Whoever you tag or touch has to do the angry monkey dance, which is a count to three, and then stand up and pound your chest while roaring. If you do it too it will help the shy ones.

### Go to the Vocab

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Category: Speaking - giving commands and naming vocabulary

Group size: Small groups only - needs floor space

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Level: Beginner to Lower Intermediate  
Materials: None  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

Lay out a course of pictures or objects on the floor of the vocabulary you would like to work with. Have a matching set of pictures or words in a hat. Player A pulls a word or picture out of the hat and tells his or her team to go to that object or picture in the course. Player A continues to pull all the words out of the hat and sends his or her team to those objects until the hat is empty.

To include more vocabulary you can vary the verbs you use such as "hop to the pencil", "run to the hat".

Regarding organisation, with a small group all students can run to the picture called together, racing each other. With bigger groups split them up and take turns so that you do not have too many children running at one time to prevent chaos and collisions.

### **Grandmother's Footsteps Adaptation**

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: 4 to a large class  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: None  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

This is an adaptation of the children's playground game.

One of your students is grandma, down at the front, facing away from the class. Grandma asks the class to repeat certain words or phrases and at any time can raise her arms above her head as a signal, and spin around to try to catch someone moving.

For example, Grandma says, "Do you like apples?" The class repeat the question or reply to it as you wish. Grandma says, "Do you like pears?" While the class are repeating this Grandma spins around and tries to catch someone moving. You can tell grandma what to say if you need to, it's just probably better that you don't spend too much time with your back to the class, in case the naughty ones decide to get up to something!

Grandma can also say, "Left. Do you like ice cream?" Here the class must turn to the left to repeat the phrase, or reply with "yes I do", so Grandma has more chance of catching someone moving. Other actions could be, to the right, behind you, look up, look down, touch your nose and say, etc.

### **Guess the Action**

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: Speaking - good for present and past continuous  
Group size: 2 to 40  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: Picture or word flashcards  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

#### How to play - present continuous and/or vocabulary

Divide the class into two teams. Show team one a picture of an action or a word flashcard. Team one mime that action and team two have to guess what they are doing.

#### How to play - past continuous and/or vocabulary

Divide the class into two teams. Team one face the wall while you show team two an action which they mime until you say FREEZE. Team two now freeze in their positions, team one turn around and have to guess what team one was doing before freezing.

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### Organisation

With thirty children or more consider splitting the class into two sets of two teams so that smaller groups of children work together to allow more speaking opportunity. Give a different activity to the two teams acting and let them work simultaneously. Each child in the team must make one guess. Every correct guess earns a point for that team - that way you have a valid excuse to get all the children to use the target language.

### Guess the Word A

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: Writing and speaking  
Group size: 2 to 30  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: Pen and paper or the class board  
Age: 6 to Adult  
Pace: Calm

Have a player come up to the board and write down the letters you spell out. Take your time in between letters, as the idea is that the class have to guess what word you are spelling out. Divide the class into teams and encourage the children to call out any word at all regardless of the fact that you may only have written one letter up so far. As an incentive you can award one point for any word that could have been correct and five points for the actual correct word. For example if your word is CHOCOLATE it starts with C so a child who calls out CAT can win one point. Award five points when someone calls out CHOCOLATE. This is a good game to play prior to *Brainstorm*, *Fizz Buzz*, *Ping Pong*, or any of the more demanding games that require extensive vocabulary.

For an easy game, use words from one theme such as food. Use random words for more advanced players with larger vocabulary. Give clues if you need to or if no guesses are forthcoming add another letter to move on.

### Guess the Word B

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: Writing and speaking  
Group size: 2 to 40  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: Pen and paper or the class board  
Age: 6 to Adult  
Pace: Calm

Play as described above and involve more people at once by making each column of people in the class a team, with one child from each team at the front of the class by the board. The one at the front has a series of words, which can all belong to a theme for beginners, but can be totally random for advanced players. The person at the front starts to write out the word, but they are only allowed to write out the first 4 letters of the word, then their team has to guess the word. As soon as someone on the team guesses the word correctly the one at the front writes out the first four letters of the second word, and so on until all the words have been guessed. The idea is to be the first team to guess all the words. Give out different words for each team in this game, as the teams will hear the other teams calling out words. A quick way to prepare is to have each team write down 5 or 6 words for another team to guess.

## Games H-J

[Hangman](#)

[Hangman Variant](#)

[Happy Families](#)

[Head to Head](#)

[Hidden picture A & B](#)

[Hide and seek prepositions](#)

[Higher or lower](#)

[Hot potato](#)

[I Spy](#)

[Joker](#)

[Jump The Line](#)

[Jungle Treasure](#)

### Hangman

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Category: Spelling and speaking

Group size: Pair work or small groups

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

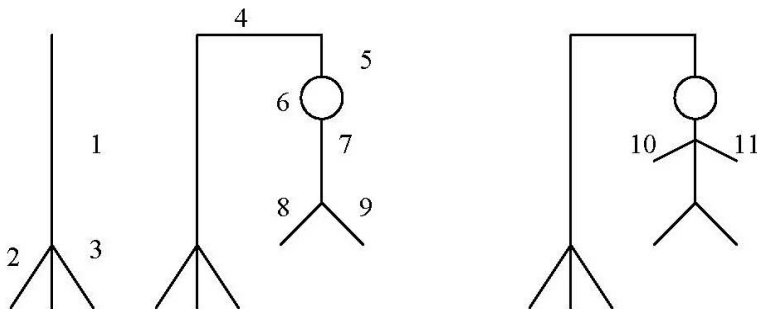
Materials: Pen and paper or the class board

Age: 6 to 12

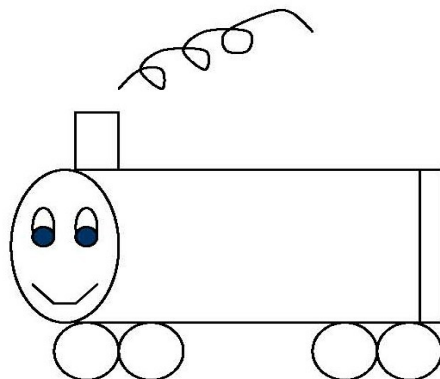
Pace: Calm

This is the classic hangman game of old. You, or one of the players, decide on a word and write up the number of letters in that word with dashes. E.g. if the word were *Dinosaur* you would write up           . The other players have to guess what the word is and they do this by naming the letters of the alphabet.

If they name a letter which is in the word, for example in this case the letter *N*, then you fill it into the blank:   n         . If however a letter is named which is not part of the word, such as the letter *E* in this case, then you start to draw the "hangman". The drawing represents a man being hung from a noose. The idea is that the word must be guessed before the man is hung. The hangman is drawn in eleven strokes like this:



If you would prefer something less murderous then make up your own little sketch - such as a cowboy's face, the nose being the last thing to go on. Here is an example of a non-violent alternative - a train. The last thing to be drawn is the smoke, which means that you have missed the train if you have not guessed the word by then. Draw this in eleven strokes also, first the round face, left eye, right eye, mouth, the whole body as the fifth stroke, each wheel one after the other, the chimney as the tenth stroke, and finally the smoke.



### **Hangman Variant**

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: Pair work or small groups  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: Pen and paper or the class board  
Age: 6 to 12  
Pace: Calm

Using the same drawings as above you can play Hangman to do more than say letters and spell words. Here is an example using clothing words: You, or a class member stand up at the board with a picture of a person in various clothes. The class have to guess what the person is wearing before you finish the hangman.

First tell them if it is a man or a woman. If it is a man your group members can ask questions like "Is he wearing a shirt?" If he is wearing a shirt you draw it. If he is not wearing a shirt you start the hangman. You could turn this into a general guessing game using multiple question forms where the class have to guess what is on a given picture. The object or activity depicted must be guessed before the hangman is completed.

### **Happy Families**

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: Small groups of 3 to 5 players  
Level: Beginner to Lower Intermediate  
Materials: One Happy Families set per group which you can buy cheaply  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Calm

#### Materials

For this game you need sets of *Happy Families* cards. You can buy these very cheaply in dollar stores or toy stores, and of course you can also make them.

#### How to play

Each group shuffles and deals out one set of families. The players have to take care not to show their cards to the others, and the 4 to 6 year olds can't generally do this but it doesn't matter! In turn each player asks any other player for a member of one of the families. If the player asked has the family member he or she must hand it over. If he or she does not have it that is the end of the turn, and the next player in the circle asks for a family member. The idea is to be the first to collect a whole family.

#### Language ideas

In order to ask for the family member you can have the players use different questions.  
Have you got Mr Smith? / Mrs, Miss, Master  
Have you got daddy Smith? / mummy, brother, sister  
Have you got father Alien? / mother, son, daughter  
Do you have?  
I would like Mr Smith please.  
Please give me Mrs Smith.  
Can I have?  
Please could I have?

Before you play *Happy Families* your players need to recognise and know the vocabulary for all of the family members involved. Play some of the other games such as *Jump the Line*, *Rapid reaction*, or *Find the pairs memory game* with the Happy Family cards first to familiarise everyone with the characters in the families.

### **Head to Head**

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Category: Listening (body parts)  
Group size: 4 to 30 or pair work  
Level: Beginner  
Materials: Optional picture flashcards or objects  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Excitable

Each player pairs up with another and the group forms two circles, one player on the inside circle and the other on the outer circle. One player stands in the middle of the circle. Play some music or have the group sing a song or chant a rhyme, while the outer circle rotates one way and the inner circle goes the other. When the music stops call out a command such as *Head to Head!* The players must find their partner and stand head to head. The one in the middle must try to get his or her head together with someone before they have found their partner and the new odd one out goes in the middle.

Other ideas for commands are; hand to knee, nose to nose, eye to eye, cheek to cheek, foot to foot, mouth to ear, head to toe, hand in hand, back to back, ear to ear, hand to ear, back to front, foot to bottom, heel to toe, shoulder to shoulder, finger to finger, finger to nose etc.

### Variants for larger classes, or if you have no space

If it is too boisterous with an odd one out in the middle you can suppress that and just have the children race to find their partner and get into the required position. If even that creates too much chaos for your liking, then the children can just go head to head with the nearest person when the music stops rather than rushing around looking for the original partner. This alternative is practical if you have too much furniture in your class to make circles. In that case have people walking slowly and randomly around the class, between the desks, and go head to head with the nearest person when you say so. If even this version is too chaotic just put your class into pairs and have them assume the position you describe. They should find even that fun!

### Language ideas aside from body parts

Aside from body parts you can play the game in the way described above but give the children a selection of picture or word flashcards. Call out some combinations when the music stops and the children with those pictures have to pair up according to your instructions. For example you might call out, "bananas and apples, oranges and pears". The bananas and apples must pair up and the oranges and pears make pairs. Children with other picture cards do nothing. Start the music again and call out a different combination of pictures.

## **Hidden Picture A**

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: 2 to a class  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: Easy to make – A piece of card with slits or holes in it.  
Age: 6 to 12  
Pace: Calm to Wake up

### Materials

Take a piece of card and make some slits or holes in it. For young children make bigger holes. Make thin slits for older children. The bigger the hole or the wider the slit the easier it is to see the picture underneath. Ideally use dark card so that they are not see-through.

### How to play

The card with slits or holes is placed over a picture so that only parts of that picture are visible. The players have to guess what the picture is behind the card. For 4 year olds you will want to use easy 'hidden picture cards' with bigger holes in them.

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Divide your group into two teams, hold or stick up a hidden picture saying, "ready, steady, go!" and both teams attempt to name the picture first.

### Small group version

If you have a small group you can have opposite numbers of each team play each other, or have the whole team involved each time - then you need to be careful that it is not always the same players giving the answers, while others do not get a chance because they are not quick enough. One way around that is to have the one who always answers first hold up the card. Another way to handle it is to pair up the brightest children so they play against each other.

### Class version

With a class you can divide it into teams - one team per vertical row of chairs, or per table. Each team has players and a referee who is neutral. With a class of 30 players you could have 5 teams of 5 players each with a referee. At the front of the class you place a number of hidden pictures per team, while each referee also has a set of the pictures or words and stands at the back of the class, keeping his or her pictures hidden from the others.

Player one from each team runs up to the hidden pictures for his or her team at the front. As soon as player one has identified one of the pictures he or she calls it out to the team referee at the back. If the item called out is correct player one reveals the item named and sits down.

Player two then goes up and names one of the remaining hidden items, calls it out to the referee, and so on. If the player calls out the wrong item you can either have them sit straight down or you can allow each player two goes - depending on the age of the players, and how many you have in your class. With younger children it doesn't matter if you have repeat items in each team. After the first round change the referees over.

### **Hidden Picture B**

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: Writing

Group size: 2 to a class

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Easy to make – A piece of card with slits or holes in it.

Age: 6 to 12

Pace: Calm

In this version you spread up to 20 hidden pictures around the classroom and on your signal have the whole class move freely about the class and race to identify each picture and write it down. If you have no room for the children to move around then display several pictures on the walls or board where children can see them from their desks.

### **Hide and Seek Prepositions**

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Category: Speaking

Group size: 2 to 30

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Pebbles or other small items

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Excitable

### Small group version

Hide pebbles or similar items all around the room. The players then go round searching out the pebbles, and making a note of where they find them. At the end the players have to say where the pebbles or items are, for example: There's one under Sarah's book. There's one by the door.

### Class version

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Divide the class into two, one half have a pebble that they hide, and then stay near the hiding place. The other half of the class go up to a member of the opposite team, search for the pebble, and can only claim it if they can tell the person who hid it where it is in English.

### Large class version

Go through some possible hiding places in your classroom. Ideas would be in your pocket, under your book, under the table, on your chair, in your pencil case, on your green book, in your bag, in your hand, in your left hand and so on. In pairs pupil A hides an item while pupil B closes their eyes. Pupil B must then find the item by asking questions such as "Is it in your pocket?" Play once and swap over.

### Higher or Lower

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Category: Speaking

Group size: Pair work to a large class

Level: Beginner

Materials: One or more packs of playing cards

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Calm

### Class version

If working with the whole class or large group turn over a card and read the number out loud. With all players standing, and divided into two teams, everyone decides whether the next card will be higher or lower than the previous one. Those who think it will be higher say "higher" and point towards the ceiling. All those who think it will be lower say "lower" and point towards the floor. Turn over the next card and read it out. Those who were wrong are out and have to sit down. Continue for three rounds and then count up how many are standing from each team. Start a new round.

### Pair work version

In pairs each pair has a pack of playing cards or number cards. Each player states whether they think the next card will be higher or lower, if correct the player keeps the card and the idea is to collect as many cards as possible. Where there is a tie, i.e. if both players say "higher", then the card remains in the pile. The next time one of the pair wins they take the whole pile of unclaimed cards. You can practise numbers by having a player name the card that is turned over each time.

### Language ideas: Numbers and comparatives

To work with the higher numbers say that each number is x10 or x100 its face value. So 6 would become 60 or 600.

This is also an ideal game to practise comparatives such as "5 is higher than 4", "3 is lower than 10", etc. You can also use "more than" and "less than", and "the same as". A variant on this game is to use sets of picture cards. Here is an example with animals: Each time a card is turned over the players guess whether the next one will be bigger or smaller, (in real life, not in the picture). Other examples that spring to mind are people, who can be taller, shorter, thinner, fatter, more intelligent than or prettier, etc. You can also use pictures of types of transport, which can be faster or slower. If you do not have any pictures you can always use word flash cards instead.

### Hot Potato

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Category: Speaking

Group size: Small group to a large class

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Materials: One or more potatoes or similar. Optional blindfold.

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

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Sit the children in a circle with one player blindfolded or eyes closed in the middle of the circle. The players pass the potato round as quickly as they can, as if it were burning hot, until the player in the middle shouts out "Hot Potato!" If you have no space for a circle leave the children sitting at their desks and they will pass the potatoes from their seats.

The player holding the potato at this moment has to do a forfeit. See [Forfeits](#) for ideas. If you have a big circle or class have two or more potatoes passed round at intervals of a few people, to keep everyone actively occupied. In this case all those holding a potato will have to do a forfeit together.

### Large class variant

Use this game as an excuse to frequently go over a song or a rhyme. You'll want to have introduced the song in a previous lesson and now you want to rehearse it. While the class sing they pass round a potato - you'll need at least one potato to every ten students. Establish the route the potatoes will take around the class and the students should stick to that. Somewhere during the song, unexpectedly, you make a loud noise or clap. The class instantly stop singing and the pupils with the potatoes must do a forfeit.

### Language ideas

As the potato is passed round the children sing a song or say a rhyme. In addition, with a small to medium group you, or the person in the middle can ask the people caught holding potatoes a question, and if they get it right they do not have to do the forfeit.

### More advanced variants

As the potato is passed round each player must say a word beginning with a certain letter, such as any word beginning with B. A word cannot be used twice. If they cannot think of a word they must hold the potato while they keep thinking - increasing their chance of being caught with it.

A variant of this is to say any word as long as it is part of a given theme such as an animal, or a profession, or a type of building such as bank or supermarket, or a country, or a colour. After each round change the theme or the letter.

Another variant is that the player must think of a word that begins with the last letter of the previous word. If player one says "bat", player two can say any word beginning with "T", such as "tree", player three must now think of any word beginning with the letter "E" and so on. Playing like this with a large class may mean you have to allow the repetition of words while passing several potatoes around at once.

## I Spy

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Category: Speaking

Group size: Pair work to groups of up to 10

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Pictures on the walls of a classroom are useful

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Calm

This is the classic game that so many of us have played on a long car journey during which we drove the adults spare asking if we were nearly there yet, barely had we left the house. One player looks around the room, or garden, or which ever environment you are in, and secretly chooses an item. You could have them tell you the item to prevent them changing their minds mid-game, which does have a tendency of happening!

The player then says "I spy with my little eye, something beginning with \_\_\_" (whichever letter of the alphabet the item they have decided on begins with). For example if they have decided on a "blue bag" they will say, "I spy with my little eye something beginning with B". The other players then have to guess the item by calling out possibilities such as

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"book" or "bicycle". In a classroom situation you can put pictures up on the walls. This is a particularly good end of term revision game.

Children can play in pairs or in small groups. It can quickly become dull if played as a large class as children can too easily drift off and stop participating.

### Jackpot

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Category: Easy speaking

Group size: Small group to class of about 30

Level: Beginner

Materials: Pictures on the board or flashcards

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Calm

Thanks to the teacher who emailed me this game. The teacher chooses 6 students in the class and they go to the board at the front. The teacher explains the students are going to practise vocabulary such as: numbers from 1 to 20 or the alphabet. The first child says "1, 2, 3" the next one "4" and the third one will say "5, 6, 7", the fourth one says "8". The teacher has set a "lucky number" on the board previously which will give one point to the child or team the student represents, lets say "20". As the children get close to reaching that number they start to get excited.

To use this with vocabulary other than numbers or the alphabet have pictures up on the board, or hold up flashcards. The lucky word can be written up on the board for all to see.

### Joker

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Category: Speaking - question and answer game

Group size: Small group card game

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Pack of playing cards

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Calm

Deal out half a pack of playing cards including the jokers to a small group of up to six children. The players must not look at their cards but place them face down on the table or floor. Ask player one a question. Player one answers and turns over a playing card from his or her pile. If the answer is correct the card is taken out of the game. If the answer is incorrect the card is placed in a pile in the centre of the group. Continue by asking the next child a question. When a child turns up the joker that child must collect all the discarded cards from the pile in the middle, UNLESS he or she has answered the question correctly, in which case the joker is taken out of the game. You may like to add in a couple of extra jokers from another pack.

You may complicate the game for variety with older children. For example you could say that any child turning up an ace may keep it as a "life-saver" against a potential future joker.

If you have well behaved children who will stay on task you may play in several small groups. In this case the teacher cannot ask the questions for every group. Therefore instead you can provide a set of cards or pieces of paper with the questions to be asked written on them. Put your best students in charge of a group each. Children can call on the teacher to arbitrate and check answers if they are not sure.

### Language ideas

Use any question forms you like. Use the same question form over and over for a simple level and mix up various types of questions for revision games or for more advanced levels.



### Jump the Line

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Category: Listening

Group size: 2 to a big class

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Picture or word flashcards and/or a class board

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

This game is ideal during the initial presentation stage of new vocabulary. Have your group form a line. If you have a class the children can stand in the aisles. If your children are stuck on benches you can still play.

If you can play in a space on the floor designate an imaginary line and place pictures or words either side of that line, to the left and to the right. With a class with no room draw a vertical line down the middle of the board and stick up or draw pictures or words either side of the line.

Now call out the items and the players must jump to the right or to the left depending on the location of the picture in relation to the line. If your children are stuck on benches with no room to move they can make arm gestures instead of jumping.

#### Language ideas

Use this game to present new vocabulary, and also to familiarise players with a grammatical structure by repeating the same sentence each time, with a different noun represented by the picture or word on the board. Call out actress, singer, businessman, if you are learning the professions for the first time. Call out a sentence such as, "I'd like to be an actress" or, "I'd like to be a singer" to revise professions and introduce the conditional. Do not introduce new vocabulary and a new structure in the same game.

### Jungle Treasure

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Category: Speaking

Group size: Groups of 8 to 20 players or so - space needed

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Treasure and optional magic wands

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up, possibly excitable

The group make a jungle of people, stretching out their feet and arms as if they were plants. Their hands and feet touch the bodies of the people next to them so that there is no way through. The treasure is placed in the middle of the jungle. Two at a time, or in threes or fours if you have a larger group, the players, each starting from a different entry point, have to get through the jungle to the treasure. They can only get through by asking the plants to move, and the plants can only move one body part each. The player has to get through the jungle without touching any of the plants, and make it to the treasure before the other players.

If your group is overly competitive add enough treasure for every player to find some, which is recommended anyway with the younger players who can otherwise be quite devastated not to have any treasure! The idea is also for the plants not to be touched by the player, but you can ignore this rule if you prefer, especially with younger players.

Decide on the magic words to get the plants to move or use short dialogues like:

Player: Excuse me please

Plants: Oh, Sorry! and the plant makes way for the treasure seeker.

OR body parts

Player: Please move your left arm (practise body parts)

Plants: Yes of course

OR

Player: With my magic wand I move your leg (touches leg with hand or wand)

## Games K-M

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### **Keep a Straight Face**

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Category: Speaking - question practice

Group size: 2 to 40

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: None

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Calm to wake up

With a group or small class put one student on the spot at the front of the class and the others in a line or circle around the student. The students think up questions to ask the student on the spot and the first student to have a question ready asks it. The student on the spot replies. From now on all questions must be answered with this same reply without the student on the spot laughing or smiling. So the first question might be: Where do you live. The reply will be something like: In Hong Kong. The next question might be: What's your name. The reply must be: Hong Kong. If the student on the spot smiles or has any expression other than a dead-pan straight face then he or she is off the spot and goes into the line or circle and another student has a turn on the spot. Rotate turns on the spot evenly.

With a very big class you will have to have two or three groups playing simultaneously otherwise there will be long delays in taking turns asking questions. Students must be encouraged to ask different questions so they cannot just repeat questions that have been asked already.

Glenda Rodriguez contributed the fixed reply 'Grandpa's pooh pooh pants' to the game because understandably her young pupils find it hilarious, though leave it alone if it is not to your taste or acceptable in your culture.

### **Kidnap**

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Category: Speaking

Group size: Large group to a very large class

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Picture flashcards

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

This game is hard to explain if you cannot speak the native language and your students understand no English. To ensure the game works the first time you use it play just passing pictures as described in the section 'The play'. When students successfully complete that part of the game add in the 'kidnap' papers, as described below. That breaks the learning of the game up into two simple stages. Teachers have found that children absolutely love this game and it is worth learning.

#### Set up

Divide the class into teams and draw or stick up simple pictures of the vocabulary you would like to use on the board. Tell each child to copy one of these pictures and make sure that all the pictures are being drawn more or less equally. One way to do this is to number the pictures on the board and then count round the children. The children draw the picture their number corresponds to. Children then write their team name or letter on the picture.

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In this game it is OK if the teams are not exactly even.

Use words instead of pictures if you are practising a sentence with a target structure, but if you are working on vocabulary pictures are much more effective.

While children are drawing write out the team names or letters in a vertical column on the board and allocate nine lives to each team horizontally. Each time a team loses a life in the game you will rub one off the board.

By now each student has a piece of paper with a picture on it. Make sure students have written their team name or letter on the paper. Ask students to each take a second piece of paper and one pupil from each team only draws a square on it, pressing lightly so the pencil line does not show through the paper. The other pupils leave their paper blank. Everyone now folds this second piece of paper in half.

Now all students pass the folded papers around until no one knows who has the papers with the square on. Your pupils look secretly at their folded paper to see if they have the square, and don't tell anyone if they do.

### The play

Now you are ready to play. Call out one of the words such as "bananas". All those with a banana picture hold up their hands. Pick one and that person stands up and is the collector of all the banana pictures. Do the same for another picture, such as milk. You now have two students standing, one who will collect in all the bananas and the other all the milk.

You now give the word or sentence that is to be repeated on passing a picture. A picture can only be passed when this word or phrase is spoken otherwise it's cheating. You can use plain repetition of the given vocabulary, or short sentences such as "I like bananas" if passing the bananas, or "I like milk" if passing the milk.

Use whispering or murmuring only so you can keep a lid on the noise. Anyone talking or saying anything other than the given vocabulary or phrase loses a life for his or her team. You can rub out one of the lives you drew on the board earlier.

Anyone with a banana picture must pass his or her paper along the line in the direction of the collector, while the milk simultaneously makes its way to the milk collector. Everyone passing a picture must say the given word or phrase to the person he or she hands it to. The paper must take the most direct line towards the collector and no one can be missed out in the line of flight so to speak. Alternatively have a rule that the paper cannot travel diagonally but can only go up or across rows. Use whatever works best for your classroom configuration so that the maximum number of people have to pass the paper to include as many students as possible.

After a few goes ask if anyone has not yet had a go at all. Specify that for the next round the paper must go via those people who have not had a turn, and ask them to stand up so they can be identified.

### The 'kidnap' papers

Now here's the snag! Those with the papers with a square can kidnap a picture if it comes their way, and take it out of the game. If anyone succeeds in doing this they shout out "Kidnapped!" and tell you the team letter on the paper they have intercepted. This is like the equivalent of a member of that team being taken hostage and that team loses a life from a given number of lives. With older children they can also write their name on their paper, along with their drawing and team letter, so that specific class members are kidnapped. (The younger ones won't really like this so for them keep it general.)

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Continue to play using the other words. You may have a blank paper swap every couple of rounds so that the square 'kidnap' papers can secretly circulate. At the end you see which team has the most lives.

You can use this game for absolutely any language you like, and it's great because everyone has a chance to speak and drill themselves in the given words or phrases while having quite a lot of fun!

### **Ladders Basic Version**

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: 8 to 40  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: None or Picture flashcards  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

Divide the group or class into two and have them sit on the floor opposite a partner in two long lines with legs stretched out and feet touching the partner's feet opposite. The pattern made on the floor by all the players is similar to a ladder, with the two lines of players making up the vertical sides of the ladder and their outstretched legs being the rungs. The players must keep their legs and feet on the floor at all times so as not to trip any players up.

Starting at one end of the line give the first player and his partner opposite a number. The next player along and his opposite would be number 2, and the next pair number 3 until all players have a number. The player and his partner opposite have the same number and will race against each other.

You then call out one of the numbers - for example 7 - and the pair numbered 7 get up and run over the legs to the end of the line, round the back of the line and back up through the centre of the ladder to get back to their original place and sit down. The idea is to get back to your place before your opposite number.

It is a good idea to match up the faster runners if you can, anyway at least avoid putting speedy Gonzales opposite the slowest. You can use numbers or vocabulary for this game. To introduce a new grammar structure before teaching it use known vocabulary in a sentence that uses the new grammar. The children can either remember their number or picture, but you can also, especially for the younger ones, give out picture cards so they do not forget what they are.

Do be attentive to give each pair the same number of goes. An easy way of ensuring this is to have your own set of picture cards and simply work your way through it - but in random order so the players never know who will be the next pair to run.

### **Ladders Question and Answer**

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: 8 to 40  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: None or picture flashcards  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

This is played exactly as *Ladders Basic Version*, the only difference being that all the players ask a question of your choice in unison, to which you give a reply. For example all the players ask you "What's the weather like?" and you reply, "It's raining" or, "It's sunny" etc. Each pair has a picture card representing the different types of weather, or a word flash card with the phrase on it.

This game is best for beginners and intermediates, but you can use it for complex

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structures you would like to repeat frequently for advanced students. You can of course as always give a player a turn at calling out the answers - just watch that they do not always pick their friends to run.

### **Limbo**

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#### The Concept

This is an outrageous game that children love. It won't be suitable for all cultures so use at your discretion. I'd use this at the end of term or the end of a class. Play some fun music while your pupils stand in line waiting to bend backwards low enough to fit under the limbo stick (broom handle, pole or stick). In order to win, the limbo master must not touch the stick or fall on the floor while limbo-ing under the stick (which is usually held by 2 people). As an alternative to the stick two children may join hands with outstretched arms to make the stick. With larger groups you need several limbo sticks so the wait for a turn is greatly reduced.

#### How to play

This is an ideal game to play during a song. Children walk around the class in a chain, going under the limbo sticks whenever they come to them. Anyone touching the sticks sits down. Anyone who accidentally stops singing is out! The teacher goes around gradually lowering the sticks so that the limbo-ing becomes more and more difficult.

Use this idea as a forfeit as part of any game. Or incorporate it in to any game. For example in [Relay Race](#) the last person in line limbos under a stick. It can be inserted almost anywhere to liven up a language exchange.

### **Make a Sentence or a Question**

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Category: Speaking and writing variant

Group size: 2 to 30

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: None. Bells or buzzers optional

Age: 6 to Adult

Pace: Calm

#### How to play

Divide your group into teams and say a word out loud. The teams have their fingers on their bells or buzzers and as soon as they have figured out a sentence with the word in to get a point for their team. Instead of bells or buzzers you can have the children knock on their desks when they have an answer ready. You can have rounds where each team has 3 to 5 seconds to reply before the other teams are allowed to jump in and use their buzzers.

#### Language ideas

You can practise English in a general way or be specific. To focus in on a specific linguistic structure specify that the sentence must be in a certain tense, or using a certain phrase. This game is adaptable to any language at all. Here is a simple version and a complex one:

#### Simple example

You can say different foods and the children make up sentences or questions about whether they like or dislike them.

Or hold up a picture or word and say, "sentence" or "question". The class or team must come up with something. For example, you hold up a picture of the word "potatoes" and then say "question", the students must think of a question with that word in it such as: "Do you like potatoes?" or "Can I have some potatoes please?" or "Are there any potatoes?"



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### Complex example

To work on if + past perfect with the perfect conditional you could say the sentence must contain a phrase such as *If I had wanted*.

If the word is "mother" the player makes up a sentence such as "If I had wanted mother to do it I would have asked her".

If the word is "pancake" a sentence could be: "If I had wanted pancake I would have asked for it".

If the word is "tiger" a sentence could be "If I had wanted to see a tiger I would have gone to India". And so on.

### Advanced variant

A variant of this game is that with each word that you give out the players must come up with a sentence as part of a story which they make up as the game goes along. The first to finish rings the buzzer and reads out their chosen sentence. The other team decides if it is correct grammatically and if so awards a point. To keep every one working you can have every team member create his or her own sentence on hearing the word but only one is chosen to read out the sentence. Work with small teams to keep all children involved.

If the sentence is not correct the opposite team have a chance to gain a point offering one of their sentences, and if not correct you go back to the first team, or to a third team for a different sentence, and so on until you have a correct sentence which is the first line of a story.

You then write up the chosen sentence on the board as a reference. You can use blue pen for all correct sentences from team A, red pen from team B and so on, so you know who has contributed what to the story at the end.

If you have a big class you could draw names out of a hat at random for the sentence contribution and allow other members of the same team to correct the sentence if need be before presenting their final version to you. However do endeavour to keep the pace going, giving only 10 seconds to correct the sentence and don't make them wait while you write things up, but let them be working on the next sentence of the story while you write on the board. You can also have one of your students write on the board instead of you or you can have all students writing up the chosen sentences.

### Making Up Stories

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Category: Speaking and writing

Group size: 2 to 30

Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Materials: One bingo set or random pictures for every 3 to 6 players

Age: 8 to 12

Pace: Calm

### How to play

Put your class into small groups, the smaller the better, and have them make up a story - which you can ask them to write up as they go.

Use pictures: Give out random pictures from a cartoon or magazine and instruct the class to make up any kind of story as long as elements from those pictures are included. It does not matter if the story is plausible or far-fetched. The important thing is that the grammar and use of language is correct. They will enjoy the challenge of making up a story using the imagination, rather than following the often dull and obvious story lines of picture composition prompts usually provided.

Give a free hand: With older students let them make up a story that they like, with or without picture prompts. Keep a copy of any good ones, edit them and use them for reading texts. This way your reading texts are sure to appeal to your target audience!

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### Language and marking

You may need to encourage your class to keep it simple - certainly with the intermediate children, as the temptation is to try to write an incredible story when the language and grammar is not there yet to do so. You may want to give them the tense the story takes place in - for example it was yesterday, it is happening now, or it is someone telling the story of what they plan to do in the future.

Once they have written up the story you can have them swap stories and read each other's - each group must correct any language mistakes they see, by writing out the correct version beneath the story. Each time the story is passed to another group they add any corrections they feel necessary. As far as the corrections go you may have several versions offered and you can then go through some of these with the class reading out the different versions and having the class say which one is correct.

You won't need to read out all the stories as the class will have read each others (or some of them at least), and depending on your class size you might not want to correct absolutely everything in this way, but you can pick up on a few of the most common mistakes. Having the class participating in the marking of work makes them focus on the details such as verb endings and those little prepositions that are so often wrong. It is a great exercise in awareness.

A follow-up game could be for a few students to come up to the front and act out one of the stories while the class have to guess which story they are acting.

### **Matching and Mirroring**

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Category: Listening

Group size: Any

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: None

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

Matching and mirroring is known in the art of NLP (neuro-linguistic-programming) for its capacity to bond people together. People often subconsciously mirror each other and this shows that there is some sort of bond or connection taking place. Consciously copying each other will also create a bond, and your group will feel positive after playing this game, because they will have connected with another human being without even being aware of it.

Divide your group or class up into pairs or small groups. One person per group is the leader and the others are the mirrors. Call out things for the leader to do such as touch their toes or dance rock or ballet, and the mirrors copy the particular way the leader does it. After a few goes swap the leader over and continue. You can increase the difficulty of the language according to the level of your group from simple commands to more imaginative language and actions such as waving in the wind like a field of corn.

With children you can have them be outrageous right away, but with the older players you can start conservatively and gradually give them more and more daft things to do.

### **Match Up – Writing and Speaking**

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Category: Writing and speaking

Group size: 8 to 40

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: None

Age: 6 to 12

Pace: Calm

### How to play

Your pupils write down a favourite food. Collect in the slips of paper and read them out

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to the class. The students write each one down on a separate line. Then they go around the class asking each other, "What is your favourite food?" and writing the name of each child by the food in question. If you have a class of thirty just dictate ten favourite foods and let the children find out who the ten people are who match those food items.

You can specify that when a child has found out the favourite food of eight other people he or she can show you. Alternatively allow five minutes for the pupils to ask as many people as possible in that time. Then you can see who has asked the most people. That should motivate the children to stay on target.

### Language ideas for this game

Where the children live, such as in a white house, in a flat on the third floor, on a farm with sheep, etc. Favourite toys, favourite colour, favourite item of clothing, favourite band, favourite hobby, favourite film or cartoon character, favourite place for holidays, favourite sport, etc. Pick something the children enjoy talking about naturally then they will be more interested in finding out the match.

### Miming Games

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Category: Speaking

Group size: 2 to 40

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Materials: None or props if you wish

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

### How to play

Miming games can be played in pairs or small teams, where one person gets up and mimes in front of the others in their team. Give everyone a turn at acting, regardless of whether they guessed the last mime or not.

A variant to include more children at once is to have teams of 3. Each player has a picture, which they look at secretly and then mime while simultaneously guessing the other players' picture, which they are also miming. The young children will not be able to mime and guess at the same time.



### Language ideas

Miming games can be adapted to a wide range of language uses such as:

Miming letters of the alphabet in pairs

Guess what they are eating: ice cream, pasta, chewy toffees, chewing gum, hot dog, chips, steak

Guess who they are in the family: mum, dad, baby, sister, brother, grandfather, great-grandmother

Guess the action: close the curtains, knock on the door, sit on the floor, stand up, see, look, run, walk, sleep, cry, sing, dance, play tennis, football

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Guess the feeling: happy, sad, angry, sleepy, dreamy, tired

Guess the profession: doctor, nurse, taxi driver, schoolteacher, footballer, racing driver, farmer, opera singer, actor, clown, circus acrobat

Guess the animal: mime the animal with or without sound effects

### **Musical Vocabulary**

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Category: Listening

Group size: 2 to 30

Level: Beginners

Materials: Sets of picture cards

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up to Excitable

#### How to play

Spread picture cards on the floor and have the group walk or dance in a circle around the pictures while you play music. Stop the music unpredictably and call out one of the picture cards, or a sentence containing one of the picture cards, such as "hamburger" or "I'd like a hamburger". The players jump on the relevant picture.

If you have a group of 20 players you can use 3 hamburger pictures, 3 pizzas, 3 milkshakes, etc. If you allow 4 players per picture when the music stops, you'll have 8 players out in the first round. Eliminate the rest fast by allowing only 2 per picture for the next round, and then 1 per picture, so that every one is back in playing again very soon. Adapt the rules as necessary according to your group size. You can involve those who are out by having them call out the next word.

Tip: Avoid having a lot of students trying to converge on only one picture.

If you do not have music the players can circle round the pictures chanting a rhyme or singing and at the end of each verse or song the picture card is called out.

#### Adaptation if you have no open space

Place the picture cards on the desks themselves. The players must touch the desk with the corresponding picture. To keep the children from banging themselves on the furniture from over-excitement use the following rule, which slows everyone right down: when walking the heel of one foot must touch the toe of the other, as you would do if you were measuring the length of a room in feet, (which by the way is something the English do.)

### **Mystery Bag**

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Category: Speaking and spelling options

Group size: 2 to a class, better for small classes or groups

Level: Beginners

Materials: A cloth bag or bag you cannot see through

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Calm

Give each group a black bag containing a few mystery items. Each group must feel the items in the bag and tell you what they are for speaking, or write them on the board for spelling practice. You, or the players write up the items under each team. If you are using different items for each group each team can swap their bag with another group and have another feel and guess. If you only have one to three items per bag the teams can continue to swap bags until they have guessed at the items in all bags. At that point you can have them open up the bags and name the items.

You can recruit one player per team to come up and mark the answers given, total up the points and see which team guessed the correct number of items.

Speaking opportunities are things like "It's an apple", "I think it's an apple", "There is an

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apple in the bag".

You can use any objects that you have to hand such as: pens, a rubber, a calculator, an old pair of glasses, a roll of tape, a CD Rom, a spoon, toys such as Barbie, mini cars, an apple, an orange, a tennis ball, a ping pong ball, a plastic mug, a piece of paper, medium-sized plastic animals and dinosaurs, their favourite toys such as Spiderman, or whatever is "in" at the time, etc.

Tip: Younger children can feel the items by placing one of their hands inside the bag while the teens or adults can try to guess by only feeling the outside of the bag – which is much harder.



## Games N-P

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<a href="#">Noughts and Crosses</a>	<a href="#">Ping Pang Pong</a>
<a href="#">One Up Stand Up</a>	<a href="#">Ping Pong</a>
<a href="#">Oranges</a>	<a href="#">Potato Race</a>
<a href="#">Pass The Box</a>	<a href="#">Preposition Challenge</a>
<a href="#">Pass The Parcel</a>	<a href="#">Preposition Mimes</a>
<a href="#">Pass The Pictures</a>	<a href="#">Pronunciation Chart Game</a>
<a href="#">Phonemes - Some Thoughts on Teaching the Phonemic Alphabet</a>	<a href="#">Pronunciation Game</a>
<a href="#">Phoneme Hangman</a>	<a href="#">Pronunciation Hands Up</a>
<a href="#">Phoneme Race</a>	<a href="#">Pronunciation Pictures</a>
<a href="#">Phonemes - Wall Charts</a>	<a href="#">Pronunciation Word Stress</a>
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### **Name and Chase**

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: 2 to 30  
Level: Beginner to Lower Intermediate  
Materials: Pictures  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up to Excitable

One student is the wolf at the front of the class. The teacher shows a picture card to the class and the wolf also sees it. The wolf asks a particular student; "What is it?" The wolf can try to catch the student unless the student names the picture. If the wolf catches the student they swap roles. If the wolf fails to catch a student after a few goes bring up another student to be the wolf and pick one who has not yet been chased either to share out the participation.

This game can be used for revising vocabulary you have covered during the term or in previous terms or years. You may also use it for practising telling the time or for any kind of question and answer format.

### **Noughts and Crosses**

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: Any - pair work  
Level: Beginner to Lower Intermediate  
Materials: Noughts and Crosses sets - see below  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Calm

Give out or have the class make one grid per team. A grid consists of nine pictures in three rows of three. The players need five items each to use as markers. You can either give these out, pieces of uncooked pasta twists work fine, or players use their own items such as blue pen lids and red pen lids, or pen lids on one team and rubbers on the other.

The players first decide which marker they are using. One player starts by naming a picture and placing their marker on the picture. The second player now has a turn, naming one of the remaining available pictures and placing their marker or pen lid on it. Continue until one of the players manages to form a line of three markers.

Lines of three can be formed horizontally, vertically and diagonally.

For intermediate players have them form a sentence about the picture rather than just name the object represented. Players cannot place their marker unless they can name the picture in the square or make up a correct sentence with the word.

### One Lemon

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Category: Easy Speaking  
Group size: Small group to a class of 30  
Level: Beginner  
Materials: None  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Calm

I love the absurdity of this game. Use it for numbers as described below, or replace numbers with vocabulary words.

#### How to Play

If you have the room put the students in a circle. If not play this at desks. Each player has a number. The teacher goes into to the centre of the circle and says:

"One lemon  
Half a lemon  
Calls three lemons"

Immediately, student number three goes to the centre and says:

"Three lemons  
Half a lemon  
Calls ten lemons"

Students must be on alert when they are called. If they don't react immediately they lose their opportunity to go into the centre, or they are out and must sit down.

To use other vocabulary simply replace the word lemon with a different noun. Combine with adjectives to practise word order, for example:

"One brown eye  
Half a brown eye  
Calls three brown eyes".

After a few people have been in the centre the teacher calls out "blue nose" and the next student must say:

"One blue nose  
Half a blue nose  
Calls eleven blue noses".

Remember it doesn't make sense anyway so use it with whatever language you like. However make sure the phrases are correct and plurals are used properly. This is a drill so accuracy is important.

With more than 25 children put the students in pairs so that there are two of each number. They can then come into the centre together and speak at the same time. This will allow more children to participate with less hanging around.

Another way to involve everybody is to have the whole circle say the first two lines all together. Only the third line is said by the person in the centre alone.

### One Up Stand Up

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: Small group to a class of 30  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: Picture flashcards  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

Every player including you holds a picture. Use a variety of revision words or a smaller quantity of newer words. Students sit at their desks with their eyes closed and their

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heads in their hands. You tap a student lightly on the head saying, "One up, stand up!" He or she stands up. You now show him a picture, which he names or makes as sentence about according to the target language you are practising.

Now you and the student each tap a seated student on the head and say, "Two up, stand up!" The two chosen students stand up and the exchange is repeated. Now there are four people standing. All four choose four seated students and tap them lightly on the head and say, "Three up stand up". And so on until the whole class is standing. If you wish to repeat this, have all students swap pictures, sit down, heads in hands and start again.

If students are hesitant you need more preparation with the target structure with a group speaking game such as True or False, or any of the step 3 games where student repeatedly ask the same questions in unison to drill them thoroughly before being expected to use the language alone.

### **Oranges**

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Category: Speaking – good end of term game  
Group size: 6 to 40  
Level: Beginner to Lower Intermediate  
Materials: One orange or round object per team  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up to Excitable

Have your teams form lines and give an orange to the first player in each line. On the command "ready, steady, go!" the players must race to pass the orange down to the end of the line, without touching the orange with their hands. The orange must be passed under the chin.

All the players in class say a rhyme or sing a song together while passing the orange down and they must get the orange down to the end of the line before the end of the chant.

Alternatively you can have the one passing the orange say something to the one receiving it - use any language that you would like to practise, from simple sentences such as greetings or phrases such as "Here you are!" to simple question and answers such as "Where are you from?" "I'm from Orange County". Use whatever language you like. Passing the oranges is just fun packaging for it.

### **Pass the Box**

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: 5 to 40  
Level: Beginners to Intermediate  
Materials: A box or several boxes for larger groups with a selection of items or pictures  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

#### How to play

In this variation of *Pass the Parcel* there is no unwrapping, only a box with a lid, which contains a mystery item. Play music or have the players sing a song or say a rhyme. Interrupt the music, song or rhyme unexpectedly. Pass round several boxes at once with a big group.

The player(s) holding a box take the lid off and name the item, either a real item or a picture of one, although real items are better. They can also answer a question or make up a sentence about the item depending on the degree of difficulty relevant to your group. If the player cannot name the item in the box, or cannot answer the question about it, get help from the group, and then you can give that player a forfeit. See Forfeits for ideas.

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After each box has been opened you need to go round and replace the item without the players seeing - you can ask them to close their eyes, or to put their head in their hands while you do this. Or to save time if you have a large class, prior to the game give each player a picture card. When a student has had a turn opening the box he takes out the item and replaces it with his own picture card. Continue playing with the new cards students have placed in the boxes.

### More advanced language ideas

Aside from simple question and answer drills for beginners to lower intermediates, use the game for any questions such as:

What is it used for?

Is it useful?

Is it something we need and why?

Would you want one? Why?

### Materials

It is great if you can collect children's toys at garage sales or boot fairs where you can pick up mini plastic animals, dolls' house furniture, and all sorts of small sized items. Failing having real items you can substitute picture cards or word flash cards.

### Pass the Parcel

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Category: Speaking – good end of term game

Group size: Small group activity

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: A present wrapped in many layers

Age: 4 to 10

Pace: Wake up

### Materials

This game does take preparation - and for material you cannot use again - so it is best suited to end of term or a small class so you only need prepare one parcel. Wrap up an inexpensive gift in many layers of paper. You can use plastic bags, newspaper, different sized boxes, bubble wrap, material, and anything else that comes to mind.

### How to play

Sit your group in a circle and play some music. The players pass the package round the circle. Use more than one package if you have a big group. Every time the music stops the player holding a package unwraps one layer of the wrapping. The music continues and the game continues until finally the present is revealed, and the one who unwraps the last layer gets to keep the gift. If you do not have music you can have the group sing a song, which you interrupt unexpectedly at different moments by clapping your hands or blowing a whistle. If you go to the end of the song every time it just isn't quite so interesting and the children will try and hold on to the parcel until the song is over.

Make sure that everyone has a turn unwrapping a layer - you can rig this by clapping or stopping the music at the appropriate time. The younger children will not notice you rigging the game but the older ones will pick up on it unless you are very natural about it, and generally they don't like playing games that are rigged, as they don't see the point.

Tip: If the gift can be related to learning such as an English comic, or a sticker in English then so much the better.

### Language ideas

Use any language with this game. Firstly there is a language speaking opportunity in singing a song as the parcel goes round, and secondly you can have a question and answer each time someone unwraps a layer. The group can ask a question in unison which those doing the unwrapping have to reply to. If you want to be really mean then the one with the parcel must forfeit their turn if they cannot answer the question

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correctly. If you do this with a four year old they will probably burst into tears, so I only suggest this twist to the game if you are playing with older children.

### Pass the Pictures

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: 5 to 40  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: Picture flash cards  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

Have the class or group sit in a circle and pass a picture round. It could be a picture of a nurse, in which case each player takes the picture and says "she's a nurse". Leaving an interval of 5 players pass a second picture round, such as, "he's a diver". Each picture makes a complete circuit of the group with everyone saying the required sentence or word. If students do not know the word they can ask someone next to them for help, but they cannot pass the picture on until they have named it out loud. When you clap your hands, or blow a whistle everyone stops and those holding the picture are given a forfeit.

#### Classroom variant with children at desks

Hold up a picture and name it loudly, then pass it to a child who must name it and pass it on to any other child. You wait a few seconds and then pass out another picture, naming it. You can give it to the same child as before or if you have a large class give it to a child somewhere else in the room. Keep handing out pictures until you have one picture to every three children. At various points during the game you can blow a whistle or give a signal and all those holding pictures must do a forfeit. See under *Forfeits* for ideas.

### Phonemes - Some Thoughts on Teaching the Phonemic Alphabet

Learning phonemes individually is not essential in order to speak a language well. This is a fact as I learned several languages fluently with no conscious knowledge of individual phonemes. However I hasten to add that the languages I learned were all related to English with the same Indo-European and then Anglo-Saxon or Latin roots.

Teaching phonemes can help enormously when learning a non-related language such as a Thai person learning English. Phonemes would be less essential with a German person learning English where many sounds are the same and there are relatively few totally new sounds. As well as making things easier for the student once the new phonemes are learned, this knowledge gives independence from the teacher in working out pronunciation.

While many teachers shy away from teaching phonemes so how can you decide if you need to teach them? I would say quite simply listen to the results you are achieving in class. If you can clearly see that you have some pronunciation issues that lead to confusion in meaning then it is worth taking a step back to learn phonemes. I say take a step back because it can feel like that. However with this solid foundation in pronunciation your students will become better English speakers in the medium to long term.

Do not expect to see amazing results right away. You need to go over phonemes regularly, little and often. New neural pathways need to be built as students learn the facial position for each new sound, some of which will be utterly new to them and their muscles will need practice to integrate these new sounds.

Games that are excellent for phonemes and pronunciation in this book are: Chinese Whispers, Phonemes - Wall Charts, Phoneme Hangman, Phoneme Race, Pronunciation Game, Pronunciation Hands Up Game, Pronunciation: C for Consonant, V for Vowel.

Any of the games in this book may be used for phonics, for example, [Writing Race](#).



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From a teacher: "I liked the first Writing Race game you sent me and I used it for a phonics lesson with my grade ones. I made pictures with the sounds for each word on the flashcard. I divided the children into 3 groups of 9, with the children numbered from 1 to 9. I called the children using their numbers. Those called came to the front, looked at the pictures, and went back to their groups to spell the word or name of the picture. The children enjoyed this."

### **Phoneme Hangman**

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Category: Saying sounds  
Group size: 1 to 30  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: None  
Age: 6 to Adult  
Pace: Calm

Use this game if you are teaching phonemes with phonemic script. This game allows students to say sounds and see what they look like in phonemic script. It helps young learners understand that phonemic script is made up of sounds and not letters. They also see an instant transcription of the sounds they make into the script.

Think of a word and the phonemic script for it such as the word wish. Write up \_ \_ \_ on the board. The children guess which sounds are in the word by making a sound, which you then transcribe on the board as phonemic script. If the sound is in the word you fill in one of the blanks. If not you write that symbol on the board so students can see what it looks like. If students give you sounds that are already on the board point to the corresponding symbol. Students continue until the word is filled in.

### **Phoneme Race**

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Category: Recognising new phonemes and revising them  
Group size: 2 to 40  
Level: All levels to learn phonemes and improve pronunciation  
Materials: Words on cards or the board  
Age: 6 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

Put 2 to 4 phoneme symbols on the board. If you are revising you may use a greater number. Use fewer with younger children. If you see children are struggling then play with fewer symbols. Write out about five words for each sound on cards or paper that can be read when stuck to the board. Put the students in small teams. A team member from each team comes and collects a word card from the teacher and returns to his or her group. Together the team decide by saying the word which phoneme matches the word and a student writes this on the back of the card. Another student from the team returns to the teacher who checks the phoneme. If correct the team keep that card, the aim being to collect as many as possible during the game. The teacher then gives another card to the student and the game continues until the teacher has no more cards to give out.

To play this with no cards the teacher writes the words up on the board. The students decide in pairs or very small groups which phoneme matches the words on the board and in a limited time they match the words with the phonemes either by coming up to the board and writing the words out under the correct phoneme or by making a chart at their desks. Allow less time than is needed to complete the task to keep the children alert and thinking on their feet.

Now ask two or three teams to race each other to find another word that also has that phoneme.

### Phonemes Wall Charts

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Category: Recognising phonemes

Group size: 2 to 35

Level: All levels to learn phonemes and improve pronunciation

Materials: Large pieces of coloured paper, or plain paper and coloured pens

Age: 6 to 12

Pace: Wake up

This is an ongoing activity that can be done over a term while introducing and learning phonemes. It is well worth learning phonemes to give your students a tool that will allow them to develop good pronunciation. For each phoneme you introduce use a matching picture such as a picture of cheese for the long /i:/ sound. After some initial drilling using a simple listening game like *Jump the Line*, which you can play with 2 or more phonemes, stick up a large piece of paper on the wall with the phoneme and the picture at the top and the word 'cheese' written underneath. In the first lesson you may only have two of these pieces of paper on the wall and you will add to them over the coming lessons until you have all the 42 phonemes up, or all the most relevant phonemes for your English language learners.

Next you can play *Show Me* where you call out a phoneme and the children point to the correct wall chart. In the same lesson and in subsequent lessons you can give out words on cards and give the students a time limit to stick their word or words on the correct chart. Use pictures or words for this. For example a child with a picture of some feet will stick the picture or word card on the "cheese" wall chart.

With a large class use repeat wall charts on each side of the class so the children do not all converge on the same chart. This is less of a problem when you have many different sounds up, but when you only have a handful of sounds you can duplicate them to keep the children spread out.

This activity can be carried out in silence if you have any kind of discipline problems but it is best if the children say their phoneme or word as they are searching for the matching wall chart. You can play music while the children do this and tell them to find their chart before the end of the verse or song. Then send the children round again to try and spot any errors on the charts. While the children are doing this the teacher also checks them.

### Pictionary

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Category: Speaking

Group size: 2 to 40

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Paper and pens or class board

Age: 5 to 12

Pace: Wake up

This is the classic Pictionary game where one player draws an object and the other players try to be the first to guess what it is. This game works well in teams of 6 players or so. If you have a class of 40 or more then 5 teams of 8 would be just OK and you play for as long as you have interest, it may be that you need to stop the game before everyone has had a go at drawing. Remember to stop the games while the players are enjoying them, before they show signs of boredom.

Each team member takes a turn to draw an object specified by you. You can run each picture as a separate race, but with a big class it is recommended to run it as a relay race straight through from start to finish. One member from each team comes up to you and you whisper the item in his or her ear, or you show the written word, or a picture of the item. They then race back to their group and draw the item. Their team must name the item in English.

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When it has been correctly named the next team member goes up to find out what he or she is to draw, and so on until all five or six rounds have been played. The winning team is the one that finishes first.

### Picture Flashcards

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Category: Speaking

Group size: 1 to a large class

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Picture flash cards

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Calm to Wake up

For lightening speed vocabulary revision hold up pictures and have your players call out the name of the item. Divide the class into teams and give a team 10 seconds to name as many pictures as possible while you show them flashcards rapidly. Ideally have a pupil on a stopwatch to keep it fair and another pupil counting up the words the teams name correctly.

Currently over 600 downloadable picture flashcards are included with this resource.



### Large class variant

Divide your class into teams and hold up 5 different pictures per team. The team must name as many as possible and score a point for each picture named. Move on to the next team with different pictures, or a mix of some of the same and some new ones. To prevent the same person naming all the pictures, have a rule where a person can only name one picture and then must allow other team members to answer.

To make the game exciting show each picture for a maximum of 2 seconds and go through the flashcards quicker if the children can keep up. In this way you move around your teams quickly.

### Piggy in the Middle

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Category: Speaking

Group size: 4 to a small class

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: None

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Age: 4 to 8  
Pace: Wake up

As the pace of this game is sedate you can play around the desks no problem if you cannot form a circle. Otherwise form a circle with one student in the middle, eyes closed. All the other players walk round in a circle chanting a rhyme, singing a song, or asking a question in unison. At the end of the rhyme, song or question, all the players stop, the piggy in the middle spins round, eyes still closed, and points at someone. Where a question was used the piggy will answer it while pointing. The person being pointed to is next to go in the middle. The new piggy takes his or her place in the middle of the circle and the chant, song or question is repeated, and so on.

Here are some examples of rhymes you can use:  
Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?  
Piggy in the middle spins round points at someone and says, "you are!"

This little piggy went to market,  
This little piggy stayed at home,  
This little piggy had roast beef,  
This little piggy had none,  
And this little piggy went wee wee wee all the way home!

On the "wee wee wee wee" piggy in the middle spins round and points at someone on "home!"

Hickory dickory dock  
The mouse ran up the clock  
The clock struck one  
The mouse ran down  
Hickory dickory dock

The piggy spins round on the last sentence to point at someone on the final "dock".

### **Piggy in the Middle Guessing Variant**

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: Small group activity  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: None  
Age: 4 to 8  
Pace: Wake up

#### How to play

Here is an example of how to play this game using vocabulary for professions: Form a circle with a pupil in the middle. Show the 'piggy in the middle' a picture or word flashcard, such as 'doctor' and then blindfold the 'piggy'. Hand out a few doctor pictures randomly around the group - say one picture to every three people in the circle. The children in the circle then say their rhyme, which can be anything you like, such as:

What does he do? do be do do,  
Do be do do, What does he do?

OR  
What does he do? Buzz, buzz, buzz.  
I want to know what he does!

Piggy spins round and points at someone saying, "He's a doctor". If Piggy points at someone who does have a picture, then Piggy gets to keep that picture, or is awarded a point, or is allowed another go in the centre. If Piggy points at someone who does not have a picture then he rejoins the circle, and someone else is Piggy.

### **Ping Pang Pong**

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: Up to a class of about 30 for best results  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: None  
Age: from 6 to adult  
Pace: Calm

A teacher called Alka sent me this game by email. Divide your class into groups of three students. Number the class from one to thirty, or however many students you have. The teacher starts by saying; "ping, pang, pong number 2. This means the members of that group are up. Number 1 says ping, number 2 says pang and number three says pong, followed by a new number, such as 10. Now the members of a new group are up. Number 10 says ping, number 11 says pang and number 12 says pong, plus a new number.

If any team says a number from its own team it is out, OR if a player says the number of any team that is already out, again the team is out. Finally, if a team mixes up the ping pang pong order the whole team is out.

A slightly simpler way to play is to dispense with the teams. As before give each student a number. Now start by saying ping pang pong number 3. Student number 3 says ping, number 4 says pang and number 5 says pong, PLUS a random number. The game continues for as long as you like, or until there are only five people left playing, who become the winners.

Use this game for speaking practice with any vocabulary. Simply replace ping pang pong with three words, such as cow pig duck, number 7.

### **Ping Pong**

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Category: Reading, writing and speaking  
Group size: 2 to a large class  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: Paper and pens or class board  
Age: 6 to adult  
Pace: Calm

*Ping Pong* works in the same way as *Rhyming ping-pong* but there is no obligation for words to rhyme. Players form teams. Give a time limit for teams to write down as many words as possible in a given theme. When the time is up teams take it in turns to call out one word. The opposite team must hit back with a different word until the teams run out of new words. The winning team is the one that speaks last.

As with most of the games, this one is very adaptable. It is up to you to make the language and vocabulary as hard or as easy as you like. Use categories of words such as sports or food, or play with short sentences like, "I'm French, I'm Spanish, I'm English" and so on.

#### Large class variant

Divide your class in teams and have the whole class stand up. Name a theme such as transport - the children call out words in that theme - restricted to one word per child. Once a child has given a word he or she sits down. A word can only be used once, although if you have a very large class you might make that two or three times per word. You won't be able to keep an exact handle on all the words but as long as you are approximately accurate the game will still hold up. The winning team is the one with everyone sitting down first. At that point start a new round or move on to another game.

You may need to go through several themes before a whole team is seated depending on the extent of your pupils' vocabulary. Seated students are allowed to whisper words to



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those standing. That prevents a slow student from being left standing and feeling stupid and it also encourages team spirit.

Use simple vocabulary revision for this game, or have the pupils call out a sentence, which includes a word from the theme and your desired target structure. Drill the target structure with some step three speaking games beforehand so this game flows well.

### **Potato Race**

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Category: Speaking

Group size: 2 to a small class

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Potatoes and spoons

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up to Excitable

This game is an excuse to ask and answer questions while racing with a potato balanced on a spoon. Below is an example of how this game can be played with a class divided into teams of 6, however you can adapt it to your needs. P stands for player.

Team 1					
P 1	P 2	P 3	P 4	P 5	P 6
Team 2					
P 1	P 2	P 3	P 4	P 5	P 6
Team 3 etc.					

### How to play

P3 runs to P4, carrying a potato on a spoon without dropping it, and asks P4 a question, which P4 answers. P3 gives P4 the potato and joins the back of the queue behind P6. Meanwhile P4 runs to P2, with the potato on the spoon, asks a question, receives an answer, hands over the potato and joins the back of the queue behind P1. P2 now runs to P5, who runs to P1 who runs to P6, who runs to P3 - now at the front of the queue again. Now everyone has had a go.

With the 4 year olds you might want to reduce the distance they have to travel with their potatoes. You can also introduce penalties if a player drops their potato, such as starting at the beginning again, or having to name four vocabulary words on the spot before continuing. You may be able to play this in the aisles of your classroom.

### Language ideas

You can use any question and answer vocabulary you would like to practise, ranging from the simple "What's your name?" to the complex. You can also use a question that always has the same answer and have all three team members on the side receiving the potato reply in unison. A question of this type would be "Do you like potatoes?" to which all three players reply "Yes I love them".

### **Preposition Challenge**

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: speaking

Group size: any - pairwork

Level: Beginner

Materials: Pictures or scenes

Age: 6 to adult

Pace: Calm

### How to play

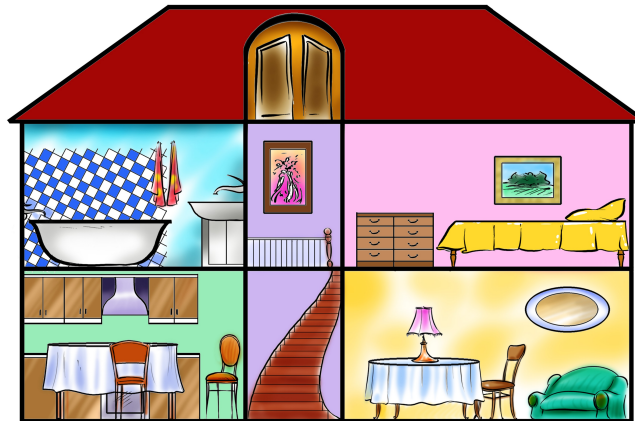
Children work in pairs. Child A holds up a picture for ten seconds while the child B tries to memorise it. Child A then places the picture face down and asks a question such as, "Where is the cat?" or, "Is the cat on the sofa or on the chair?" If child B answers correctly that's a point. Child A asks the next question until child B cannot answer. At that point child A holds up the picture for another ten seconds before continuing through

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the questions. Each time child A holds up the picture child B has a point crossed off. The point scoring is of course optional though it does give an incentive to concentrate.

For this game you need pictures of scenes such as a room with people in it, places or views. Try a furniture catalogue with pictures of rooms. Stick cute pictures onto that of cartoon characters, or animals. Other sources for good pictures might be holiday brochures, or a movie poster. The web will provide where all else fails.

This house background is provided with your flashcards in the Prepositions theme, in a larger size, in colour and in black and white



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You will find a miniature cat and dog with the downloadable flashcards you received as a bonus, in the 'Prepositions' theme – they are with the story. There are pictures of rooms provided in the 'Home' theme that you can stick people and things on. You may also like to stick things/animals/people onto the A4 places pictures from 'Places and Nature' theme. Be as wacky as you like, if you have a small red telephone stick it under a park bench, or on someone's head – it all adds to the fun.



With your demo picture prepared play this with the whole class, with you holding up your picture and asking the questions to the class. Let the children see the fun collage that you made and then tell them to each make one for homework. You may use these in the next class. As teacher you get to scan or photocopy the good ones and use them again in future as revision or with new classes.

### **Preposition Mimes**

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: acting out and naming prepositions  
Group size: 2 to 40  
Level: Beginner  
Materials: None  
Age: 5 to 12  
Pace: Calm

A simple game to practise prepositions creatively. This can be done with one student only but it is more fun when pupils work in small groups. Give each pair or group of students a word card with a preposition on it for them to demonstrate. Each group illustrates their preposition using their bodies and holds the position. Then let a few students go around the room and call out the words being demonstrated. Once a group have been correctly named they sit down again. Then repeat but swap in the students who named the formations.

The class will enjoy making physical representations of the prepositions and will be far more likely to remember them. For example "under" could be one student lying down while the others make a bridge over him or her by getting down on all fours - legs on one side of the student on the floor, hands on the other. They could do it by just holding their arms over the student if your floor is dirty or anybody is concerned about it. As always perform a demonstration of the concept with a few students in front of the class before starting.

Add a bit of zip to the game by bringing up a couple of groups to the front. Give them a word to do simultaneously and let them race to demonstrate the preposition while the class have to guess. Or a less competitive angle but still exciting would be to let the class to start forming their shape but at any moment you could call out "Freeze!" At that point everyone MUST freeze and then see whether students can guess the shapes. You may dish out points for successful shapes if this motivates your class.

### **Pronunciation Chart Game**

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: Speaking - thinking about pronunciation  
Group size: 2 to 40 and possibly more  
Level: Beginner to Advanced  
Materials: Word cards  
Age: 5 to adult  
Pace: Calm

This is a version of the [Phonemes Wall Chart Game](#) where students stick their word cards on the board or on the wall according to the sound.

#### How to play

This example uses past simple verb ending pronunciation. Draw your three empty columns on the board with a header for each column, /t/, /d/ and /ld/. Make an entry into each column by way of example. Column one, talked, column two, burned and column three wanted. Demonstrate the three ways of saying the 'ed' verb ending to be sure students can tell the difference.

Display a selection of past simple verbs on the board. These can be on cards or written up at the edge of the board. The students' task is to copy down the columns and write each word in the correct column to match the pronunciation of the verb ending. Students do this by saying the words, not only reading them. Simultaneously students should take turns to come up to the board and move the word cards into the correct columns either by moving the cards physically or rubbing out the verb from the teacher's list and re-writing it in the correct column on the board.

Periodically during the activity the teacher can stop students and say that there are a certain number of verbs placed or written incorrectly on the board. The teacher will not

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say which verbs are incorrect, only how many are wrongly placed - the students have to figure it out and make the adjustment themselves. Make sure the students at the board rotate often.

Rather than give out the rule for this let the students try to match their verbs to the correct column by saying the words repeatedly and choosing the pronunciation that seems easiest to them. Examples of words are:

/t/ liked, talked, danced, looked, dressed, watched, hoped, helped, finished, missed, kissed, washed, locked, worked

/d/ learned, played, tried, cried, lived, sewed, showed, ordered, happened, rained, payed, prayed, enjoyed, screamed, opened

/ld/ wanted, floated, hated, needed, waited, visited, painted, intended

The above example is for the past simple verb 'ed' endings however this idea can be used with any vocabulary words where you match the word to the phoneme or matching sound on the board. Some matching sounds are the words light, bright, site and bite or the words hair, bear, care, share, dare, pear and chair.

### **Pronunciation Feather Game**

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: Speaking - correct pronunciation for b versus p, and h.

Group size: 2 to 40

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Materials: Something fluffy that moves when you blow on it

Age: 5 to adult

Pace: Calm

This exercise is humorously demonstrated in the film *My Fair Lady* during an elocution lesson.

Children work in pairs and each pair has a feather or fluffy object that moves when you blow on it. I use pens that have fake feathers on the end, as these are readily available in my local toy store. This game works beautifully with a candle flame too but that is only suitable in a one on one situation where you can keep an eye on the candle.

You will notice that if you place a fluffy object in front of your mouth and say, "bat" the fluff will not move much but if you say "pat" it is as if a gale force wind hit the fluff. The same is true to a lesser degree with "high, hate and hello" as opposed to "I, ate and yellow". Children take it in turns to say words on a list you provide and give each other points for making the fluff move or not according to the word.

### **Pronunciation Game**

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: Speaking - correct pronunciation

Group size: 2 to 40

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Materials: None

Age: 5 to adult

Pace: Calm

Put the students in pairs, threes or fours. Spell out or write up a word that is frequently mispronounced. With younger children who are not reading or writing yet show a picture card. The children confer with each other as to exactly how this word is pronounced. A spokesperson from each pair or group says the word out loud and the teacher tells the pair to write down a one or a two. When all the pairs have given their version the teacher pronounces it correctly and says that all the number twos have a point. In each round the children never know whether the one or the two is correct and that prevents them from just copying each other. You'll find that the children take great care when points are at stake!

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Play again with a different word and this time a different team starts first and all spokespeople rotate. Play with up to ten words.

### **Pronunciation Hands Up**

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Category: Listening for phonemes and pronunciation

Group size: 2 to any class size

Level: All levels for pronunciation

Materials: None

Age: 4 to adult

Pace: Calm

This is a listening game to work with phonemes or pronunciation of words. The teacher repeats a word several times and then unexpectedly changes to another word using a different phoneme. Pick words that your students have difficulty with. For example a Spanish student would be likely to have trouble differentiating between ship and sheep. A French student will probably have trouble with worth and worse or earth and hearse. Japanese students will have a job with the letter r and so on.

The teacher says "lorry, lorry, lorry, lorry, lolly, lolly, lolly, lolly, lorry, lorry, lorry." When the students hear the change they raise their hands. When the change reverts back to lorry students lower their hands.

With a small group you can do this in pairs and award points to the first student to put his hand up. Deduct points for hands going up before the change! With a bigger class split students into teams. Count the number of times you say "lolly" before all students on that team have their hands up. Repeat with team two and award the point to the team that was fastest.

A big challenge is to let the students take over from you with the speaking. That certainly makes students focus on how they pronounce words.

### **Pronunciation Pictures**

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Category: Speaking

Group size: 2 to 40

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Pens and paper for the children

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Calm

Put a selection of words or pictures on the board in contrasting pairs or groups that you know your class have trouble with. Then in pairs let one child tell the other what to draw from those on the board. The children will understand how important good pronunciation is when they see if their partner does draw what they said and not something different. For example a Japanese student may have difficulty saying lorry and lolly, so these would be two words or pictures to put up on the board.

If you write up a selection of totally unrelated sounds the activity will not work on good pronunciation. The idea is to put up very similar sounding words so that the children have to concentrate on saying them correctly so that their partner draws the correct item.

This can be a one-off activity or an ongoing one. These pictures can go on the walls and the children can add to them any time they think of another matching word. If your children can spell they can write the word up alongside the picture. As a continuation of the pair work above, help the children by having picture flashcards of vocabulary up on the board for them to consider and choose from to add to the wall charts. Without this you may well find the younger children and early beginners will not be able to come up with any words on their own.



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### Pronunciation Word Stress

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: Listening  
Group size: Any  
Level: Beginner to Advanced  
Materials: None, or optional fly swatters  
Age: 6 upwards  
Pace: Calm

Write up a list words on the board as shown below. Each word is repeated for as many times as it has syllables. Underline a different syllable with each word. The underline represents where the stress falls and only one is correct of course. For example:

Television    Television    Television    Television  
Unbelievable    Unbelievable    Unbelievable    Unbelievable    Unbelievable  
Hello            Helloo  
Happily          Happily            Happily

Divide your class into four teams and give each a number. Call out the word, with the correct stress and say, "number twos". The number twos race up to the board, grab the optional fly swatters and swat the correct word from the four you have on the board. If you have mixed abilities then let your better students have the task of saying the words for the others. With some longer words there may well be stress in two places

This is a listening game so it can in theory be played in silence. Any noise and bang! Deduct a point from the noisy team.

### Proverb Pairs

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: Writing and Speaking  
Group size: Any  
Level: Beginner to Advanced  
Materials: Proverbs  
Age: 6 upwards  
Pace: Calm

To save photocopies write the [proverbs](#) up on the board in two columns as far away from each other on the board as possible, and not in the same order. One half of the proverb is in column A and the other half in column B. Mix up where you write the first part of the proverb so that column A does not only have the beginnings of proverbs.

Pupils pair up and copy either column A or column B. Once pupils have copied their column of partial proverbs, hide or clear the board and players cannot show their papers to each other. Player A reads out one half of a proverb or riddle and player B attempts to read out the second half. The players must match up all their proverbs or riddles through speaking alone.

## Games Q-R

[Question & Answer](#)

[Question & Answer Lottery Match](#)

[Quiz Race](#)

[Rapid Grab It](#)

[Rapid Reaction](#)

[Reading Comprehension](#)

[Reading Puzzle](#)

[Recognising Tenses](#)

[Relay Race](#)

[Relay Race Advanced Variant](#)

[Remember and Write](#)

[Rhyming Ping-Pong](#)

[Run and Write](#)

[Running Dictation](#)

### Question and Answer

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: Speaking

Group size: All class sizes divided into teams

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: None

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

#### Version using a ball for small groups

One player with the ball throws it and asks a question. The player who catches the ball answers the question and throws the ball to someone else. This person catches the ball and then asks a question and so on. If you just want the class to practise the answer you can be the one throwing the ball and asking the question, for example, "What's 10 minus 3?" You throw the ball to someone. They catch it and answer "7" and throw the ball back to you. You then ask another question to someone else.

If the four year olds cannot catch the ball they can roll it along the ground to each other.

#### Version with no ball for larger groups

You ask the class a series of questions to reinforce the question structure you are teaching. For example you ask: "Do you like apples?" The class respond out loud and all together with either "Yes I do", or "No I don't", according to their personal preference. If their answer is "Yes I do", they stand up, and if it is "No I don't", they sit down. If they are already sitting down and their next answer is still no, they answer "No I don't" and remain seated. Likewise they remain standing if their answer is "Yes I do".

This game has the benefit of having the class hear the sentence structure repeatedly, practise the answer, revise vocabulary and be actively engaged through movement while remaining calm and disciplined.

#### Large class variant

With your students in teams, tell everyone to write out a question using your target structure or tense. Randomly select one student from each team and ask to hear the question, with the proviso that the student says his question out loud from memory rather than reading it out. If the question is correct, that team scores a point. Now ask the class to write out an answer and repeat as above asking for an answer from a different student.

Although students do not all speak everyone has to work hard because no one knows who will be picked to read out the sentence or question. If a student does not have a question ready that team forfeit the chance to earn a point.

Continue until you feel the question and answer target structures are well ingrained - but do not play for more than ten minutes at most. If students need more work switch to a different game but continue with the same language.

This would be an excellent game to revise all sorts of question and answer forms. For intermediates allow your pupils to come up with the actual question form by telling them to ask for the time or find out someone's age and so on.

### **Question and Answer Lottery Match**

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: Writing and speaking  
Group size: All group sizes including large classes  
Level: Beginner to Advanced  
Materials: Questions  
Age: 6 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

#### Set up

Before you play ask your class to call out different questions they can think of to refresh their memories. You can also draw some prompts on the board to elicit these questions such as a clock face for "What time is it?" or a person with a suitcase and an arrow for "Where are you going?" With intermediates you can revise a number of questions using arrows to indicate tense. For example the person with the suitcase and a date such as 2007 can be "Where did you go in 2007?" Draw the different question forms out of your class and leave the prompts up on the board for the game. If you are stuck for drawing prompts put up the question words you want to practise on the board such as what, when, where, how and who, brainstorm them and leave those as prompts.

#### How to play

Divide your class into teams and ask half of the teams to write out any type of question while the other half write out any type of answer. Alternatively each pupil can write out a question and an answer to another question. For example they could write the question "What time is it?" and an answer, "I'm going to London". A student from team one asks their question, preferably from memory. If the question is correct that team scores a point. If incorrect someone with a question from another team has a chance. Once you have a correct question, you say, "Correct", which is the signal for anyone from the teams who have written out answers to stand up and say their matching answer. If the answer is correct it wins a point for that team.

For example a member of team A stands up and asks "How old are you?" You say "Correct." Now any class member from any other team who has a matching answer such as "I'm 7" can stand up and call out the answer. If correct they earn a point for their team. Now ask a member of team B for their question, and so on.

People can only ask one question each and give one answer each. They must have the answer on their paper to call it out. That is why it is a form of lottery, and not just a test to see whether they can answer the question. You can also use the proverbs and riddles provided at the back of this book to play this game too.

### **Quiz Race**

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Category: Reading with more advanced writing variant  
Group size: Variants for small and large classes  
Level: Beginner to Advanced  
Materials: Questions  
Age: 6 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

#### Easy variant for all group sizes

Write out a list of questions. Give them out to your class and give a time limit to answer them all. An easy idea is to start in the classroom with questions such as; "How many chairs/windows/doors/children/desks are there in the classroom?" "How many doors/teachers/gardens/windows/children are there in the school?" The children with the closest answer win.

#### Language ideas

Give the children a text to read with questions to answer and make sure the topic is of interest to them. It could be a comic strip, an extract from a magazine that the children enjoy or the words to a popular song. The trick to this otherwise traditional reading

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comprehension activity is to give a tight time limit to add an element of excitement, and to use topics that the children talk about in their free time.

### More advanced idea for smaller groups

Divide the class into groups and tell them to prepare a quiz. Each team chooses its own topic, such as a favourite band or cartoon character. Each team member comes up with one or two questions about that topic. The child writing the question must know the answer to it. Allow 5 minutes or so for the children to write their questions out. You may want to put some question types on the board to help out. Put the teams into panels, take all the questions in and have a TV type quiz to see which team wins.

### **Rapid Grab It**

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: Listening

Group size: 2 to 20

Level: Beginner to Lower Intermediate

Materials: Real objects

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

### How to play

This game is similar to [Rapid Reaction](#) in that it is a race to pick out an item. Have a pile of objects such as plastic animals or laminated letters and divide each group into pairs or threes. For example with a group of 12 players you would have three number 1s, three number 2s, three number 3s and three number 4s. You then say a sentence of your choosing, such as "Number 1, Out in the big wide jungle I saw a lion!" The three number 1s race to pick out the plastic lion.

### Four to five year olds

If you have four to five year olds you really want to have a lion for each of them to pick out, or ask them to pick something out in turn. In any event make sure that everyone gets something during the course of the game.

### Materials

Items you could use include coloured pens to do colours, plastic or real fruit and vegetables, doll's house furniture, Barbie dolls (pick out the Barbie with the pink skirt and blue top), classroom items, household items, different coloured numbers or different coloured letters. If laminated they will last but if you do not have any the class can make these quickly in a few minutes on paper and you can play with those and throw them away at the end as they will probably be crumpled and torn by the end of the game.

### Large class variant with children out of their seats and moving around

Another way to play is to scatter objects about the class on tables and ask, "Who can find such and such an object?" E.g. spread out coloured numbers or letters and ask, "Who can find yellow six?" etc.

### **Rapid Reaction**

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: Listening

Group size: 2 to 16. If possible have two groups of 8 rather than one bigger group.

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: One set of pictures for every 8 players

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

This game is ideal for introducing new vocabulary. It is also good for quick revision prior to a more demanding speaking game. Lay out a number of picture cards with the group seated around. With a big group of 16 lay out two sets of picture cards, with one set at one end of the group. Call out one of the pictures and the players race to touch it first. Rather than keeping score it is better to keep up a fast pace saying the words rapidly one

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after the other. This keeps the players on their toes and they have no time to mess around.

If you only have one small group of players and the same students keep winning, give them the task of calling out the words so that they cannot win all the time. You can also get them to play with one hand behind their back. Normally it is the fastest player who touches the correct picture who wins, however you can allow the fastest two or three players on any given picture if you wish.

With young players aged 4 start by laying out two cards and then gradually add to them. With the young ones allow everyone to touch the card rather than laying emphasis on someone getting their first.

It is the way you say the words that makes this game lively or not. For example switch back and forth between two cards repeatedly and then suddenly say a different card. You will be sure to catch some of the children out and that makes it more fun for them than if the pace is too slow and too easy.

### Language ideas

You can call out the word plain and simple, or you can give a clue about the word such as "you use it to play tennis".

For some speaking practice the players can ask you a question in unison such as "What do you do?" to which you reply "I'm a...Dentist!" The players then race to slap their hands down on the picture of the dentist.

You can make this question as complex as you like, for example the players can ask, "If you won the lottery, what would you buy?" You reply, "I would buy...a house!"

### **Reading Comprehension – A different challenge**

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: Reading

Group size: any

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Materials: Reading passages

Age: From 6 to adult

Pace: Calm

Reading Comprehension is something many of us are familiar with from our own school days. Generally students read a passage and then answer some mind bogglingly dull questions on the content. Here is a way to involve students far more in the text while giving them more of a reason to pay attention to the content.

### How to play

Give students a time limit to read a given passage. Students now close books and write one to five questions about the text for their colleagues. One question would be easy, five would be relatively difficult so adjust according to the level and age of your pupils.

Now students swap their questions with their neighbour. Give a time limit for students to answer these WITHOUT looking at the text again. Students swap back so the neighbour can mark the answers and give a score. Now repeat the exercise with the same reading text, this time students write a different question/set of questions. Repeat and compare scores – normally the scores should be far higher the second time around.

The use of a time limit adds zest to the activity. Creating questions for colleagues involves students more in the task. Using memory alone to answer questions adds to the challenge and fun. It's not just a question of looking through the text but trying to remember it.

Alternative version: A simpler variant of the above idea is to again give a time limit to the class to look at a text. Students turn the text face down and get ready to answer your



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questions. You ask and students who know the answer jump up into the aisle and call out the answer. If correct that's a point for the team, if wrong then ALL the team points are eliminated!! This discourages students from jumping in before they are really sure what the answer is.

Inevitably with a game like this you'll have the brightest students doing all the work. Get around this by putting them all in one team together and let each team take a turn to answer. Even better is to bring up the brightest ones and let them run the quiz, making up and asking the questions, and keeping score on the board.

### **Reading Puzzle**

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: Reading  
Group size: Any  
Level: Beginner to Advanced  
Materials: Text passages or dialogues  
Age: From 6 up to adult  
Pace: Calm

Give out sections of text chopped in half. For more advanced levels these could be anything from a sentence to whole paragraphs. Just as in [Find Your Friend](#) students mingle, reading each other's text and seeing if together they make a match.

To extend this activity and make it more challenging give each member of the class a sentence or short paragraph from a long story. Let the class have the joint target of constructing the whole story by sticking it together on a wall of the classroom, or working all around the class on four walls to let students be better spaced out. Stories with dialogues are useful and can be fun to piece together.

One could use four stories simultaneously, one wall of the classroom per story. The class do not know which story they have and start completely from scratch. When a child has placed his or her sentence he/she continues to participate by reading the pieces already up around the class and checking they make sense, moving anything that seems wrong.

Though the children are out of their seats this game should be played in total silence and anyone talking can be eliminated if necessary.

As a follow-up to this game use the wall texts for a treasure hunt. Call out a part of speech, a vocabulary word, any word starting with T or a character and let the children run to the walls and find an example.

### **Recognising Tenses**

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: Listening  
Group size: Small group to a class  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: None  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

This game is good to review several tenses and also to review two tenses while introducing one new one.

#### **Small group version**

Children stand in a circle. When you say a sentence in the present tense everyone moves one place to the left. When you say a sentence in the past tense everyone moves one place to the right and when you say a sentence in the future everyone scrambles to change places.

This can be varied as much as you like. You can play with any mixture of tenses and can add in extra movements such as clapping when hearing the present continuous and so

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on. If the scramble movement is too rowdy replace it with giving a high-five to a student opposite.

### Class version

This works in the same way as the small group version except that students remain seated at desks, or standing in the aisles between desks. Instead of swapping places students can do high-fives to the left, to the right and jump on the spot for future. Use any actions that work for you.

### Relay Race

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: Speaking

Group size: All class sizes with alternative version for very small groups

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Materials: Pictures are a good idea

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

### How to play

Put your group or class into teams of approximately 5 players per line. The one at the front has a picture of, say, a pizza. On your signal the first player in each line says to number 2 in the line: "Would you like some pizza?" Number 2 says "Yes please", takes the picture, turns to number 3 in the line and asks "Would you like some pizza?" number 3 says "Yes please", takes the pizza, turns to number 4, and so on until you reach the end of the line. The idea is to get the pizza down to the end of the line as quickly as possible. If you have a longer line of ten people for example, then you should pass down at least two different pictures, one after the other, to keep everyone involved.

Once all the pictures are at the bottom of the line the person at the end of the line can run up to the front of the class with them.

It is most important that the words are properly pronounced, and that accuracy is not abandoned for speed. To ensure this you can name the first person in the line as a referee for that team. This referee must belong to another team so that he or she will referee properly. Swap the referees around, but make sure your better students have the task.

### Language ideas

You can use any language you like for this game, from simply naming the item and passing it down, to longer sentences with a particular verb tense or structure that you would like practised. Nice ideas are:

I am Shelley, you are Jane. Jane continues with I am Jane you are Michael, etc.

I am Shelley, she is Jane. Jane: I am Jane, he is Michael, etc.

Shelley: I love icecream. Jane: I love chocolate.

Shelley: I love icecream. Jane: she loves icecream, I love chocolate. Michael: she loves chocolate, I love icecream, etc.

Shelley: I like icecream. What do you like? Jane: I like chocolate. What do you like?

Michael: I like cake, etc.

This can even be useful for advanced players if you would like to drill them in an aspect of language where they frequently make errors.

You do not have to use a picture but can just pass a message down the line, although it's not a bad idea to pass something tangible as well, especially for children as it makes it more fun for them as they see the progress the message is making in tangible form.

If this game does not work you probably need to either simplify the language to get the basics down or drill more with another game first.

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### Very small group version

Here's a way you can use relay race with only 5 children - let them pass the language down the line once, then time them with a stop watch. Then let them do it again and see if they can beat their time. Or instead of a stopwatch you walk across the room from one wall to the other and they have to finish before you get to the other side. The first time you can saunter over there, and gradually you can speed up, but always let them finish before you!

### **Relay Race advanced variant**

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Relay Race works very well with older and more advanced students too. Instead of handing down vocabulary cards or having set sentences repeated down the line of students you can give your pupils the more challenging task of coming up with their own sentences during the race. For example you can hand a picture card or word to the first student in each team and this student has to make up a sentence about that picture. The student then passes the card to the next person in the team and this person has to make up a different sentence. This allows intermediate students to work on speaking skills using a much wider range of language.

If you use this as a fluency game then you would not focus on correcting the language at all during the game. You might note a few errors and go over them on the board afterwards. Another way to play is to insist that the sentences be correct in order for the card to be passed. In this case you want the team to collaborate to correct any sentences with errors. You listen in and if you spot any errors as the cards are being passed you signal to the team and the students know they must work together to correct the error in order to pass the card on.

You cannot be a control freak with this game. It will be impossible to hear everything that is going on. Basically if you are doing an accuracy drill keep it sufficiently simple so that it is well within the students' grasp. If you are doing a fluency activity errors are inevitable and are to be accepted.

### **Remember and Write**

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Category: Writing  
Group size: 2 to a large class  
Level: Beginner to Advanced  
Materials: Pictures or real objects  
Age: 6 to 12  
Pace: Calm

Display at least 12 picture cards or objects at some place in the class where everyone can see them. Give the class a limited time to look at and memorize all the objects or pictures and then cover them over and allow a couple of minutes for the class to write down as many items as they remember. Play with a list of words on the board to help pupils learn and remember spelling.

If you want to practise a target structure with this vocabulary revision game then ask the pupils to write out a set sentence containing each of the words.

### **Rhyming Ping-Pong**

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Category: Reading, writing, speaking  
Group size: 2 to a class  
Level: Intermediate to Advanced  
Materials: Pen and paper or the class board  
Age: 8 to Adult  
Pace: Calm

Have your players get together in teams and write down all the words they can think of that have a certain spelling or rhyme with each other. For example you could tell them to

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write down all the words that rhyme with the sound "A" as in *LAY*.

The intermediates might come up with words such as: lay, day, say, play, clay, pay, tray, bay, Fay, gay, hay, May, way, pray.

The advanced players might also come up with words such as: weigh, daily, neigh, neighbourly, fray, playful, delay, jay, nay, flay.

Give the teams a limited time to write down their words (not more than 2 minutes). Then have a play-off where each team takes it in turns to call out one of their words. If a word has already been said it cannot be used again, and it must be crossed off the list.

When a team has no more words it is out and the remaining teams keep batting words backwards and forwards between themselves, until only one team is left.

The play off must be fast paced with a 4 second time frame for a team to return a word or the team is out. You can adapt the number of seconds, but keep an eye on the pace of the game - the sense of urgency is what makes it fun.

### **Run and Write**

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Category: Listening, writing and spelling

Group size: A class of up to 30 with students divided into groups of 3 to 4. If you have a small class put students in pairs.

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Lists of vocabulary or sentences, one set for each group.

Age: 6 to 12

Pace: Wake up

Give out a list of words to each group. Call out one of the words several times. The students hunt for that word in the list and as soon as they find it a leader from the group goes up to the board and writes out that word from memory. When the leader has written the word up correctly on the board he or she gives the teacher a high five. The first leader to give the teacher a high-five gets the point for that round. Tell groups that the role of leader is to rotate around the group, one word each.

Use sentences too. Students hunt for a sentence you say in a reading passage from their textbooks. When found students study the sentence, memorise it and write it on the board when ready. Use the game to work on any grammar, tenses or vocabulary. For a list of words you may have one ready-made at the back of your textbook. If leaders at the board do not spell the word correctly they have to return to their group and ask for the correct spelling. Students cannot show the leader the word again but must spell it out and the leader must memorise the letters. In the case of a sentence the group read out the sentence to the leader who must memorise it and return to the board.

As always you can deduct any points from a group that is too noisy, or for any groups shouting out corrections to the leader at the board, which is against the rules.

### **Running Dictation**

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Category: Listening, writing and spelling

Group size: A class of up to 30 with students divided into groups of 3 to 4. If you have a small class put students in pairs.

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Sentences

Age: 6 to 12

Pace: Wake up

Give a leader from each team or pair a sentence written out on a piece of paper, or use your textbooks and tell leaders to look at a particular sentence from there. Say "Go" and let leaders memorise the sentence. As soon as a leader thinks he is ready he goes to his

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partner and dictates the sentence from memory. The partner may write up the sentence on the board if you have a small class, or at his or her desk if your class is big. If you use the same sentence for everyone it will be a lot easier for students to check if they have it right. If a leader gets stuck part of the way through the sentence he or she may go back to the written text, read it again and try again with the partner. The first student to have written up the sentence correctly wins.

### Organisation of the class

If possible have leaders at one end and partners at the other. The written text stays at one end of the room so leaders travel back and forth to their partners. However if this would be too chaotic for your classroom then let the students work in pairs side by side. If you do this you structure the timing so leaders cannot simply read out what they have without memorising it. You say, "Go" and give leaders 30 seconds to memorise. You say, "Close books" or "Papers behind backs". Leaders close the textbook or hold the paper with the sentence on it behind their backs. Now you allow 30 seconds to a minute for the dictation part. If no student has finished at this point you repeat the above process until one of the partners puts up their hand and asks you to check the sentence. If correct that pair win the point for the round. If you have a large class, or if you have the same pair winning all the time you can award points to the first three pairs to come up with a correct sentence. If students feel they have no chance to win a point they will become de-motivated and not want to participate or start to mess around instead of trying. The other thing you can do is to mix up the pairs.



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### **Scissors Paper Stone Pair Work Formation**

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: 4 to 40  
Level: Beginner to Advanced  
Materials: None  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Calm

Pair work is a way to maximise on speaking time and here is a way of organising it that is useful.

Have the whole class form two lines facing each other. Each person will perform a pair work exercise with the player opposite them, and then, on your signal, everyone moves round one place, the people at the end of the line crossing over to the other side. In this way everyone now has a new partner.

To introduce the "geography" of this exercise play a round of "scissors, paper and stone". Opening the first two fingers into a V forms the scissors; holding the hand flat symbolises the paper while making a fist symbolises the stone. The scissors cut the paper, which wraps the stone, which blunts the scissors. The scissors win over the paper, which wins over the stone, which wins over the scissors. On the count of three both players make and name the symbol for one of the three items.

This will give everyone the hang of the pair work exercise and the moving round each time to a fresh partner. Once you have that down pat you can use it for any pair work exchange, incorporating the vocabulary and/or grammar you need to work on. In a question and answer conversation the winner can be the one who asks the question.

### **Sentence Conversion**

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: 2 to 30  
Level: Flexible for all levels  
Materials: Prepared sentences for the teacher  
Age: 6 to 12 - keep it simple for the young ones  
Pace: Excitable

Divide the class into teams of three so you would have ten teams with 30 students. Each team has three players, A, B and C. Send all the Cs down to the far end of the room and ask them to block their ears. Have all the As and Bs at the front and read them a sentence such as "I eat apples". The As and Bs then walk down to the end of the room and say the sentence to their team member C. C must convert this sentence into the past tense and come up to the front to give you the answer: "I ate apples". Now all the As and Bs are at the other end of the room so you can go down there and repeat the exercise using a different sentence: "I walk to the bus".

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Adapt this for any grammar such as converting present tense to present continuous, or present continuous to past continuous, or past tense to conditional and so on. Be sure to do a couple of demonstrations with one team in front of the whole class so everyone knows what to do. If the Cs cannot come up with the right answer then you need to do more structured drilling so stop the game and go back to it in another lesson.

Only accept answers from the Cs, the As and Bs must stay down the end of the room touching the wall. This keeps a semblance of order and prevents the teacher from being overwhelmed with enthusiastic children. If noise levels are a problem impose a whispering only rule with deduction of points for offenders. You could play this in pairs but using two children to carry the message down will help accuracy.

### **Shop-A-Holics**

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Category: Step 4 Speaking drill

Group size: 5 to 30

Level: Beginner to Lower Intermediate

Materials: Picture flashcards or real items and pretend money, which can be paper, coins or any small objects

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

In this game pupils pretend to buy things. Make a third to half of the class shopkeepers and the rest shoppers. The shopkeepers can have their backs to the walls of the classroom with pictures of the items they have for sale on a desk. If you have a small group you can play with real objects if you have them but with a class pictures are more practical. Shoppers each have a set amount of money and must accumulate as many products as possible. The shopkeepers cannot sell anything unless correctly asked for in English. Shoppers have a time limit to buy as many items as they can.

There is a catch. Every so often you announce that one of the products is off and must be recalled. Any students with that item in their basket must hand it over to the teacher and the shopkeepers withdraw it from their shops. Write the item on the board for reference. Anyone found with that item at the end of the game in his or her shopping basket is out.

When the time limit is up students count up the items they have and the winners have the most. In order to have lots of winners you can say that any student with over five items is a winner. Or you can say that any students with fewer than ten items must do a funny forfeit. Avoid making it traumatic for the students who have to do the forfeit. One does not want them to feel like they have failed. Children can be so sensitive about winning and losing that one has to tread carefully.

Tips: Give students plenty of money as the idea is to have them shopping and not standing around because they have run out. If you have monopoly money that is fantastic, otherwise use pieces of paper. You can ask the children to prepare an A4 sheet of bank notes for homework. Younger children are thrilled when they play with fake money as it makes them feel grown up.

Before you play have two children demonstrate the dialogue you would like exchanged at the shop. With beginners this can be short and simple. As the children will be repeating the same thing over and over this is a drill type game so accuracy is important, therefore make sure children are properly prepared. For example play a game such as Team Race Question and Answer, where the children all ask the question in unison, to drill something like "Could I have some carrots please?" or "How much are the carrots?" Use some of the step 3 speaking games to drill both the question and answer sides of the dialogue before releasing children to practise together in Shopaholics.

### **Shopping List Memory Game**

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Category: Speaking

Group size: Any class size in groups of 2 to 6 players per group

Level: Beginner to Lower Intermediate

Materials: Optional Pictures

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Calm

### How to play – small group variant

Place the picture cards of your chosen vocabulary in a pile. Player one takes a card and lays it down naming the picture or making a sentence about it as required. Player 2 picks out another card and lays it down next to player 1's picture. Player 2 repeats the required sentence, adding their chosen item to the list, and so it goes on, with the list getting longer and longer, for example:

Player 1: In my trolley I have got some milk,

Player 2: In my trolley I have got some milk and some chocolate

Player 3: In my trolley I have got some milk, some chocolate and some oranges

For younger players or when using freshly introduced vocabulary use picture cards as prompts as described above, for older or more advanced players they rely on memory alone.

### Language ideas

This game is adaptable to a multitude of language uses, for example:

There is/there are: In my wardrobe there are socks, there are shoes, there is a dress, there are shirts, there is a scarf etc.

Her name is/His name is: Her name is Barbie, his name is Ken, her name is Rita, and his name is Paul etc.

She's a/he's a: She's a model, he's an action man, she's a nurse, he's a doctor, etc.

She likes/she does not like

Playing sports: He plays golf, he plays tennis, he goes riding, he windsurfs, etc.

Past tense: Yesterday for supper I had milk, chocolate, pizza, etc.

### Easy, intermediate and advanced variations

For advanced players have them make up and memorize a story. An option is to give students a specific tense to work with in the story. You can use picture cards for them to weave into the story or not as you like. As the phrases created will be repeated over and over it is worth ensuring they are correct in order to avoid inadvertently reinforcing errors, for that reason this is best as a structured speaking exercise to reinforce a particular grammatical feature rather than a free-speaking exercise. You can ask players to write the story up from memory afterwards if you wish.

Another way to play that is more intermediate is to give each child a line of the story. The first player reads out the first line of the story. The second player must memorise it, repeat it and add their line. The third player repeats the first two lines and adds his or line and so on. Keep the sentences short so that they are easy to remember.

### Easy variant good for small and larger groups

This variant can be used with new vocabulary and short sentences. Sit the children in a circle. Start the game saying "one hat". Each child repeats this until it comes back to you. The child next to you then adds one item, "one hat, two gloves", and this goes round the group until it comes back to that child. The next child along adds a third item and so on. Use with any vocabulary.

### Show Me

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Category: Listening

Group size: 2 to a large class

Level: Beginner to Lower Intermediate

Materials: Classroom items or any items you have to hand

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

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Similar to *Copycat Commands* this is a simple game where the players show their understanding of vocabulary and it is a good game for introducing new vocabulary or revising it before a speaking game. Very simply you ask the players to show you an item. For example you say, "show me a pen" and everyone holds up a pen. "Show me a blue pen" and students hold up a blue pen. Here are other ideas: show me the floor, the ceiling, the wall, the left wall, the right wall, a rubber, a ruler, a friend, a girl, a boy, a hand, a leg, a friend's foot, a blue skirt, a sock, a door, a pen in a pencil case, a pen under a pencil case and so on for the prepositions, etc.

You can also give out picture cards so the children hold up the correct picture as you ask for it. You can also have them point to the item on the wall.

### Movement variant

If you have the space it is fun to distribute picture or word flash cards around the room. Call out, "show me a pig". All the children run to the picture of the pig. If you have more than 10 children you'll need more than one picture of each item, or you'll find it too crowded, and the group will be too unwieldy, with everyone trying to get close to one little picture.

### Silly Dialogues

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Category: Writing, then reading out loud

Group size: 2 to a large class

Level: Any

Materials: None

Age: From 6 to adult

Pace: Calm

This requires no preparation on your part. The children write up a dialogue for homework. Depending on their level of English this can be on any topic, or more structured. Either way it is important that the dialogues are varied. Give a list of topics to choose from that you have already covered. Recommend any useful pages of your textbook, if using one, for reference that could help.

In class ask students to cut their dialogue into strips. Then mix these strips up into tubs and hand out randomly. Let students go through their new dialogues in pairs and then swap with a different partner. If you don't want the children practising errors you will have to collect in the dialogues and correct them before cutting them up to use in class.

Some of the dialogues will make sense and some will be funny. Hear some in front of the whole class. Then a challenging option is to get each pair to work on their silly dialogue and turn it into something that makes sense.

### Simon Says

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Category: Listening

Group size: 2 to a large class

Level: Beginners to Lower Intermediate

Materials: None

Age: 4 to Adult

Pace: Wake up

*Simon says* is an extremely useful classroom game, and can be adapted to a wide age range, becoming increasingly sophisticated as the players get older or have a greater command of the language. The classic version of *Simon Says* is as follows: The teacher starts off as Simon and gives the players instructions which they must follow, but only if Simon says so. For example:

"Simon says touch your nose." Simon touches his nose and all players touch their nose.

"Simon says touch your feet." Simon touches his feet and all players touch their feet.

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"Touch your head." Simon touches his head. Players must not touch their head because Simon didn't say so. Any players touching their head lose a life.

Normally in the classic version any players who touched their head would be out however it is better to make them lose a life, as the idea is to have everyone playing, not sitting around watching. Alternatively as soon as you have three people out you restart the game with everyone playing again, and with a big class that is a good way to go because you cannot easily keep track of lost lives.

### Language ideas

Obviously *Simon Says* is a great game to play to work on body parts, and once your players have got the hang of the vocabulary they can be Simon. However the language potential for *Simon Says* does not stop there. Here are some other examples of things that Simon can say:

Raise your left hand/Touch your right leg

Touch something blue

Touch different articles of clothing

Touch a body part of the person next to them

Jump/run/skip/stop/dance/sing/be silent/sit down/stand up/listen/look at the ceiling/look up/look down/look to the left/look at the floor/touch a chair/write/

Mime an animal

Mime an action such as drink a glass of water/eat an ice cream/sleep/ get dressed/ get undressed/pretend to be a model/pretend to be batman/be Spiderman

Jump on a picture - you can lay out pictures on the floor for the players to become familiar with or revise specific vocabulary. Simon says Jump on the train! Jump on the bus!

Touch a real object - you can spread out objects that the players touch on Simon's instruction. Touch the train/the car/the plane if you have toy versions of these for example, or use pictures if not.

### Harder versions of Simon Says

For players with a good command of the language, and once they have got *Simon Says* down pat, you can complicate the game to keep them on their toes. In this version Simon says two things at once, for example:

Simon says raise your hand and Simon says touch your leg

The players must raise their hand and touch their leg

Simon says eat ice-cream and touch your nose

The players must eat ice cream but not touch their nose because Simon did not say so.

And here is a third, even more complicated version - you may have to practise being Simon for this one!

When Simon says to do something the players have to keep doing it until Simon specifically asks them to stop. In the meantime Simon continues to make other requests. For example:

Simon says touch your head

Simon says touch your shoulder and Simon says stick your tongue out

Simon says spin around and shout JUMP!

At this point the players should be spinning round with one hand on their head and the other on their shoulder, sticking their tongue out, but they should not shout JUMP, as Simon did not say to do so.

Simon then continues with: Simon says stop touching your head and rub your stomach instead

Players must stop touching their heads but should not rub their stomachs, as Simon did not say so.

Well I'm sure you get the picture. This game can really be a lot of fun and the trick is for you as Simon to keep the pace up and link the commands rapidly so your players' attention is absolutely riveted on listening to your every word!

There is nothing to prevent you playing until you have a winner - the better you get at being Simon the sooner you can trick everyone into making a mistake and you can have



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a winner fairly quickly, before those who are out have time to get bored. So that it is easy for you to see who is still in the game you can have those who are out sit down. I have seen this played with 8000 adults at a seminar and the game lasted less than five minutes before everyone was out!

### Simon says speaking variant

Allow your players to be Simon. You can have several Simons at once, as while one Simon is giving a command the other can be thinking of the next one - this ensures the pace is fast and furious, which it needs to be to make this game really fun.

### **Sit and Be Silent**

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Category: No category – a game to retain order and quiet quickly

Group size: any

Level: all levels

Materials: none

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: wake up

At the beginning of the lesson explain the game to the children and say that this game could happen at any time during the lesson and in any subsequent lessons. Establish a signal that means this game is commencing. Turning the lights on and off is a good one as that is a visual clue rather than a loud noise that would have to be heard over the potential din of a speaking activity. Another clue could be that the teacher puts on a special hat or goes to a specific spot in class and performs a specific action.

When the teacher gives the signal the game is on. It is quite simply that the last person to be sitting down with forefinger on lips in silence is the loser. This could mean doing a forfeit, disqualifying that team from the game in play when *Sit and Be Silent* starts, or any kind of penalty that you choose.

When you give the signal make sure some students see you do it so they at least sit and are silent. Gradually other students will see this happening and cotton on that the game is on. Then you will get a rush of students returning to their seats to be silent. Hopefully you will not often have a loser but will have many students sitting down simultaneously, which lets you off the hook of showing up the last child. Anyway it is not obligatory to have a penalty. With everyone now sitting you can just continue with the next activity.

### **Snowballs**

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Category: Reading and speaking – good end of term game

Group size: 2 to 20 but can be played with more although it will be increasingly chaotic

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Questions written out on individual pieces of paper and screwed up into snowballs

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Excitable

This is a good game to use in a last lesson of the term. It is useful but also great fun. Write out one question on a piece of paper for every member of your class. Use scrap paper otherwise this is a total waste of resources. An idea is to use old newspaper sheets and write out the question in thick black ink in large writing so that it is easily legible over the print. Either scrunch these papers up yourself or give out the sheets in class and ask the students to screw them up lightly. It is important that they are not scrunched hard as they will be repeatedly unfolded, read and scrunched up again, so you do not want to crush them totally. If you have the students do the scrunching that will save you time and will mean that the papers are easier to transport into class. Another option is to let the students write out the questions themselves from a selection that you put on the board.

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Now each student holds a ball of paper with a question. On your command students throw their ball at another student. If the ball hits the student he or she must pick it up, unfold it and answer the question on the sheet. If the student answers the question correctly he or she earns a point. Alternatively play where students who cannot answer the question have to do a forfeit.

In order to avoid total chaos it is best to have four or five students having a turn at one time while the rest sit quietly. Students who will throw the ball stand. Students who are hit must stand, read the question out loud and answer it. If a student does not hit any student with the snowball allow another turn.

Warn students that any violent throwing will not be tolerated (boys will be boys!) Use the *Sit and Be Silent Game* to retain quiet and order quickly when you need it.

### **Spell and Act**

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Category: Listening  
Group size: 2 to 40  
Level: Beginner to Advanced  
Materials: None  
Age: 6 to 12  
Pace: Calm

You spell out a word such as "s a d", and your players mime it. You can spell out sentences or say a part of the sentence and spell the key word, for example you say, "I play t-e-n-n-i-s". You can allow the younger players to write the letters down as you go, as they may have trouble visualising the word. You can also have your players spell words out for another team to name. If players find it difficult allow the children to write their own words down and then spell them out.

### **Spell and Speak**

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: 2 to 30  
Level: Lower Intermediate to Advanced  
Materials: None  
Age: 8 to 12  
Pace: Calm

This game works in the same way as *Spell and Act*. Put players into teams and spell out a word such as "l-i-g-h-t" or "p-l-o-u-g-h". As soon as a player has identified the word, whether you have finished spelling it out or not, they can knock on their desk and give you the answer, gaining points if they are correct. With more advanced players this is quite a good game to highlight certain words such as "bow" which can be pronounced in two different ways, with different meanings, and which can be a noun and a verb.

You can also use this game to draw attention to words which have silent letters, (as in "light" and "plough") or pairs of sounds with different spellings, (such as "whine" and "wine", "heel" and "heal", "whether" and "weather", "den" and "when", "graph" and "staff") or words which are frequently misspelled, (such as "recommend", "apartment", "principle" and "principal" or "exercise").

You can give your class a homework assignment where each person prepares a list of 3 words that they find difficult to spell. Put your class into teams and have them play *Spell and Speak* with their own selection of words.

### **Spelling Board Game and Variants**

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Category: Spelling  
Group size: 2 to a class with children working in small groups  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate

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Materials: Words and optional use of board games

Age: 6 to adult

Pace: Calm

### Board game variant

If you have some board games already as part of your teaching resources you may use any one that uses dice so players can advance around the board. The first player rolls the dice. Another player turns over a word card from a pile on the board without showing this to the other players and reads out the word. The first player spells this word. If correct he can advance his piece around the board by the number of squares shown on the dice. If incorrect the first player is shown the correct spelling and cannot move his piece that turn. Continue until one of the players makes it all the way round the board.

### Variant with no board game

If you do not have access to any board games or dice play this variant. The children have a pile of word cards face down on the table. One player turns over a card and reads out the word. Player one must spell this out. If correct, player one keeps the card as a point. Turns are taken around the circle so every one has the same number of goes. The winner is the one with the most cards at the end.

### Collaborative variant

This can be played as a collaborative game too. Each group is a team competing against other groups. One player reads out a word. Another player writes that word down and if spelled correctly the group keep that card as a point. If the player misspells the word the card is placed back in the pile and the pile is shuffled so the students have a chance to spell it again correctly when it reappears at the top of the pile.

After a given amount of time the game is stopped and the group with the most points at that moment wins. Groups can justify their points by showing the teacher the list of correctly spelled words. If you think that cheating is a problem with this game you can simply make one member of the group a representative from another team. This person will read out the words and will not give the spelling away as the group members are not on his or her team.

If noise is a problem specify that this game is to be played in English only and any use of the native language that the teacher hears will mean immediate confiscation of a point from that team.

### **Spot the Difference**

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Category: Writing

Group size: 1 to a large class

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Two similar but not identical pictures

Age: 6 to 12

Pace: Calm

Prepare in advance, or on the board, two identical pictures and either colour them in different colours, or make some changes to one of them. Show the first picture only for a few minutes and then cover it up and show the second picture. Your pupils must write down the differences.

A way to obtain two similar pictures easily could be to use a web cam that is broadcasting on someone's website. You can save the image in the morning and then again at night. The background will be the same but there will be differences in the people in the image, the time of day and what is happening.

Depending on the level, and whether or not you are revising or practising relatively new language, I suggest writing up a few fill in the blanks type sentences on the board as a prompt. For example you may have drawn a picture of a cowboy, and in the second

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picture you draw the same cowboy but with a pink hat with a feather and some different coloured pointy boots. On the board you write: The cowboy \_\_\_ wearing a \_\_\_\_\_, now he \_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_. The pupils should fill that in as follows: The cowboy was wearing a black hat, now he is wearing a pink hat.

With clothing if you can bring in some real items play Dress Up, to go with this game. You just bring two or more students down the front, put a few items on them, let the class look at them for a minute, send them out and give them 30 seconds to swap over their items or put on some different items, and then come back in for the class to spot the differences and write them down as outlined above.

### **Squeak Piggy Squeak!**

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Category: Speaking

Group size: 4 to 20

Level: Beginner to Lower Intermediate

Materials: A cushion and blindfold

Age: 4 to 10 and possibly older if they are not too 'cool' for the game

Pace: Wake up

Sit your players in a circle with the piggy standing in the middle, blindfolded and holding a cushion. If you have more than 8 players then have two piggys in the middle, each blindfolded and with a cushion, three piggys for 15 children and four for 20.

On your signal, the piggys make their way cautiously towards the edge of the circle and sit down on their cushion, in the lap of one of the players. In the classic party game the piggy says "squeak piggy squeak", the player goes "oink oink", and the piggy tries to guess who he is sitting on. You can use any language in this game. For example the intermediate piggys can ask the person they are sitting on a question and the player must reply, but using a funny voice as a disguise. The piggy can have people count from one to ten, name three objects in the room, describe what they are wearing, etc.

You need at least enough room for everyone to sit on the floor as this game cannot be played with chairs - Piggy would have a long way to fall if he missed the person's lap.

### **Stop!**

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Category: Writing and speaking

Group size: 2 to 40

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Pen and paper

Age: 8 to 12

Pace: Calm

Each player draws a chart with 5 or 6 columns, each with a heading, such as numbers, names, countries, animals, clothes, professions, TV shows, food, fruits, things they would like to have, etc. Use headings the players have plenty of vocabulary in. One of the players starts the game by calling out the letters of the alphabet. The player next to him or her randomly calls out "stop!" The one saying the letters of the alphabet has to stop on whatever letter has just been said. Everyone now writes down an item in each category starting with that letter, until one of the players finishes, when he or she says "Stop!" in which case everyone has to stop writing, whether they have finished or not.

You can also as a back up give a time limit so you do not have the game dragging on. If no one has said stop after one minute, perhaps because every one is having difficulty thinking up words beginning with the chosen letter, just say stop yourself. Repeat with someone else saying the alphabet and the person next to them saying stop on a different letter.

Continue for a few rounds and then quickly review the answers, awarding a point for each word written. If someone has a word that no one else has you could award double points for being original. Have all the players call out their answers so all the children

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hear the vocabulary repeatedly. Children can tick off their words when they are called out. You can either trust the players to do their own scores or have them swap papers with someone else.

Here is an example of a player's chart:

Animals	Countries or continents	Professions	Colours	
Panda	Poland	Priest	Purple	
Snake	South America	Singer	Silver	

### **Story Teller**

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Category: Reading and writing  
Group size: 2 to a class  
Level: Lower Intermediate to Advanced  
Materials: Pens and paper  
Age: 9 to 12  
Pace: Calm

Tell your class they are going to write a best-selling romance story as a team. Everyone writes each part of the story as per your instructions. Start the story with the girl's name and a description of her, then fold the paper over and pass it to the next player. Each player now writes the boy's name, and a description of him, folds the paper and passes it on. Next comes how they met, the first words the boy said to the girl, how the girl replied to the boy, what happened next, what the neighbours said, the consequences, what the newspapers said, and their future.

When everyone has finished let him or her unfold the papers and read the funny stories. You can have them read two or three of them aloud.

### **Other scenarios**

A salesman comes to the door to sell an item. The conversation talks about what he is selling, what the item is used for, where would you put it in the house and how much it is. This could lead to incongruous conversations where a lady buys some encyclopaedias to clean her bath and that she keeps in the garden shed.

A patient goes to the doctor. The conversation talks about which body part hurts, how did the patient hurt it, the doctor asks to examine the body part and gives the remedy. This could lead to incongruous conversations where a patient has a stomach, which he hurt while cycling so the doctor asks to examine his leg and prescribes a bandage to his head.

### **Swampland (British Bulldog variant)**

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: 5 to 30 - outdoor game or end of term. Needs lots of space.  
Level: Beginner to Lower Intermediate  
Materials: None  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up to Excitable

This game needs to be played in an open space. The scenario is a crocodile infested swampland. One player starts as a crocodile and all the other players are gazelles, which have to cross the swamp without being eaten by the crocodile. As the crocodile catches the gazelles they become crocodiles. The gazelles are gathered on one side of the swamp and the crocodile says:

I'm hungry for my breakfast  
I'm hungry for my brunch  
I'm hungry for my dinner  
And now I want my lunch!



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The gazelles reply:  
I know you want your breakfast  
I know you want your brunch  
I know you want your dinner  
But I won't be your lunch!

And then all the gazelles run across the swamp, dodging the crocodiles if they can. If a crocodile touches them they stay in the swamp and help catch the rest of the gazelles. The last gazelle to be caught is the crocodile in the next round.

### **Swat it!**

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Category: Listening - vocabulary and any grammar  
Group size: 2 to 20 (possibly more - see below)  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: Pictures or words and a fly swatter if possible  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

This is a variant of Rapid Reaction. Use picture cards for newly introduced vocabulary or to revise it. Use word flash cards to revise spelling.

Spread your picture cards all over the board, sticking them up with temporary sticky stuff. If using words you may stick these up or you may find it quicker to write them all over the board instead.

Divide the class into two teams and place two or three students on chairs in front of the board, each holding a fly swatter. If you cannot easily obtain a fly swatter improvise. An envelope will work although it is not as satisfying! As a variant you could use elastic bands, which the children aim at the word on the board.

You call out a word and immediately the children race to be the first to swat it. Students at the board are allowed one swat only. The fastest student who is correct earns a point for his or her team. Any talking or messing around in the ranks and you deduct points from the relevant team! Aside from the teacher saying the words this game should be played in total silence and if any students speak it should be in English, otherwise the offending students immediately lose a point for their team.

Use this game to introduce new grammar or revise a tricky structure that students have not fully grasped. Do this by repeating sentences, which include one of the words on the board. This allows students to hear a new or difficult structure repeatedly while they are concentrating on listening out for a word that matches one on the board.

### **Idea for bigger groups**

Teachers do play this with bigger groups but the problem is waiting time between turns, which leads to restlessness and boredom in class. One way to work around this can be to give half the class a writing task while you play the game with the other half and then swap around. To motivate the students writing to finish this task can be set for homework if not completed in class. You will also take in this writing task and mark it so students know it is a serious activity and not just something you are giving them to keep them occupied.

## Games T

[Team Race Basic Version](#)

[Team Race Question and Answer \(+ shopping variant\)](#)

[Team Race on the Board](#)

[The Big Freeze](#)

[The Blanket Game](#)

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### Team Race Basic – Listening Version

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Category: Listening

Group size: 1 to a class of 30 divided into teams

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Materials: Pictures

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up to Excitable

This is played exactly as [Team Race Question and Answer](#) (see below) except that there is no speaking. You would play it like this when still exposing the players to new vocabulary in order to have them hear and recognise the words repeatedly. The players are divided into their teams ready to go. You call out the word and the first players run down, collect the relevant picture and run back. They join the back of their team's line and wait for their turn to come around again.

### Team Race Question and Answer

[Table of Contents / Detailed Index](#)

Category: Speaking - asking short questions and learning new vocabulary

Group size: 2 to a class of 30 divided into teams

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Materials: Pictures

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up to Excitable

#### How to play

Place a pile of picture cards at the end of the room and have all players line up behind a line. The players ask you a question in unison, such as "What do you do?" and you answer, "I'm a dentist". As soon as they hear your answer the players run down to the pile of pictures and pick out the picture of the dentist. There is only one picture of each profession so only one player will return with a picture. However you can choose to have enough copies of the dentist for each player to return with a card as a variation. This is better for 4 to 6 year olds who may be upset to return empty handed.

With four players make two teams of 2, or with six players two teams of 3 etc. The maximum team size should be not more than 6 players per team, any more and the team members get bored or distracted waiting for their turn. With a class of 18 it is better to have three teams of 6 than two teams of 9 for example. If you have a class of thirty you could have 6 teams of 5, with two piles of picture cards at the end of the room, three teams running to each pile. You want to avoid having too many players running for the same pile to avoid a general pile-up or too much of a scramble. Once the first players have run to the pictures and back they join the back of their team's line and wait until it is their turn again.

The game continues until all the pictures have been collected and everyone has had at least one go. You can then swap team members around and play again or play a different game.

It does not matter if you have uneven teams, for example two teams of 6 and one of 5. The players all line up behind each other in their teams so player 6 can race against the first player from the team of 5 and so on. Or you can always have a player become a

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caller instead of you, if you have an odd one out or you want to give someone more speaking opportunity.

### Variant contributed by a teacher:

This is the way I played your game with my students, I write down different sentences which I have taught my students on cards with their names at the back. I divide my students into two groups. I put the cards into two different baskets about 15 meters from where they stand.

I call out their names, for example Rose and Mike, they run to the baskets looking for their names and read out loud the question on the card, after that they run back to shake the hands of their partners next in line who must answer the question, and then also run to the basket looking for their names and read out their question.

### Language ideas

The game can be used with as many question and answer forms as you have imagination. Here are some examples:

Clothing: What are you wearing? I'm wearing...trousers!

Past tense: Where did you go on holiday? I went to the beach

Weather: What's the weather like? It's raining.

Professions: What do you do? I'm a doctor

The time: What time is it? It's one o'clock

Age and numbers: How old are you? I'm 10

Sports and past tense: What did you do this weekend? I played tennis

Substitute word flash cards instead of picture cards if you do not have any pictures, although using pictures is better for working with vocabulary.

### Shopping variant

Divide the group into teams of not more than 6 per team. One member of each team, designated as the shop assistant, goes down the other end of the room and stands behind a desk with either real items, or picture cards on it. If you have no desk, just place the items or picture cards on the floor.

Give each team a basket or bag (optional) and a shopping list made of pictures or words. If your shopping lists are different you can play more than once.

Line the teams up at the start and say, "Ready, steady, go!" The first team member runs down to the shop. The shop assistant says, "Hello, what would you like?" (Or "what can I get you", or whatever phrase of this type you are teaching).

The team member replies by asking for one of the items on his or her list, using "I'd like..." You can leave out the shop assistant's question if you prefer.

### Team Race on the Board

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Category: Listening

Group size: 2 to a class of 30 divided into teams

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Materials: Class board and pens

Age: 5 to 12

Pace: Wake up to Excitable

This is played in the same way as *Team Race Question and Answer* but using the class board instead of pictures. If your class is seated at desks in rows you can make each row from the front to back of the class a team. You then call out a number and the first member from each team runs up to the board and writes up that number. You can also have them run up and draw the item you name, or rub out an item you name, or write up a word. The team can be allowed to help out and correct the spelling if necessary.

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The whole class, or just the players concerned, can ask a question before you give out the instruction. For example they can ask in unison: What do we write at the speed of light? Make up any silly chant or use a grammatical question that suits your purpose, and make it easier or harder depending on the age and level of your class.

### The Big Freeze

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Category: Listening  
Group size: 2 to a large class  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: None  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Calm

Have all your players walk around the room while you either tell a story, sing a song or randomly say a number of words. They listen intently to you and whenever they hear a specified word or phrase they must freeze. If they move they are out. For example you could say that whenever they hear an item of clothing they must freeze, or a type of food, or a profession, or a specific phrase. Your story can be nonsense, and it doesn't matter if the players understand all of it, or even any of it, as they are listening out for the special words. It is nice if you tell a real story, but it is not an obligation to play the game.

A variant on this is instead of freezing they clap their hands above their heads - this allows you to keep up a faster pace instead of stopping for prolonged periods to see if anyone is moving. For the 4 to 6 year olds they can sit down whenever they hear the word and they all try not to be the last one sitting down.

You can tell your story or say your words in a rap rhythm, and you can also play a song (make sure one can actually hear the words in it though), and ask the players to listen out for certain words, so if you played Sting's "Every breath you take" you could have the players listen out for "watching, heart, baby, please, breath". With a younger audience you would want to choose songs for their age group such as *Old MacDonald Had A Farm*.

### Spelling game

You can also play this as a spelling game. Say a word such as cat and then spell it out. If you spell it correctly the children keep moving, if you spell it wrong the children freeze or clap.

### The Blanket Game

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: 2 to a large class  
Level: Beginner to Lower Intermediate  
Materials: A sheet or blanket and variant with no materials  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Calm

First create a barrier for someone to hide behind. You can do this by setting up a clothes line and pegging a blanket on it, by having two students hold the blanket up, or by draping the blanket over a couple of chairs so someone could sit behind it and not be seen. Now you have your barrier, here is an example of how to play this using clothing vocabulary: A class member hides behind the blanket and puts on a selection of clothes, or props, such as a hat, belt, tie or scarf. The class asks in unison,

"What are you wearing?"

The person behind the blanket replies, "I'm wearing a hat" or "I'm wearing a red hat". Each class member decides whether he or she thinks this is true or false.

Whoever thinks this is true stands up. Whoever thinks it is false sits down. Now the

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person behind the blanket reveals whether or not he is wearing a red hat. (He may use real clothes or use pictures of clothes). If he is wearing a red hat then all those who sat down are out and only those standing up are in. If he is not wearing a red hat, but a black coat, then those standing up are out and have to sit down while those sitting down, who are still in, stand up again for the next round.

Another way to play is for each class member to hold up a paper with either a "True" or "False" on it. Every one starts the game standing up. The person behind the blanket chooses whether or not to wear the red hat and the class hold up either a True or a False card. Then everyone who got it wrong sits down and stays seated while you play the next rounds until you only have a few students standing. You may also play with a tick and a cross rather than the words true and false, which is easier for the younger ones.

Continue, and then swap over the person behind the blanket. Only allow that person a few seconds to dress up, to ensure that the class do not get bored waiting. The class can count up to thirty or say the alphabet while the person puts their prop on. If there are only 2 of you - you and your student - then you can take it in turns to go behind the blanket.

Dressing up is only one idea for this game to work with clothing vocabulary and short questions and sentences such as "What are you wearing?" However you may use flashcards instead of props.

### Language ideas to use with this game

#### Simple vocabulary repetition variant – small class

For elementary levels, or to revise vocabulary place two pictures (or word cards) on the floor behind the blanket – for example a picture of a plane and a truck. A class member stands on one of the cards and says, "plane", or a sentence such as "I'm going to Paris by plane". The student may stand either on the plane or the truck and the class must guess whether what he says is true or false as described above.

#### Simple vocabulary repetition variant – large class

If you have a fairly big class then you will not have time for everyone to go behind the blanket, so in that case, to get the most out of the time spent, instead of the person behind the blanket saying "plane", you could have your class say "plane" or "truck" depending on which one they think their class mate is standing on. Once the person behind the blanket is on their chosen picture you say "Ready, Go!" and the class call out the picture they think is correct. They may also call out the sentence you are requiring them to practise.

That way everyone has a chance to say the words, rather than just the person behind the blanket. Students award themselves points if they get it right. Some of the children will cheat and pretend they said the right word – but does it really matter? After all we only want them to speak English and feel good about it.

#### Question practice variant

This isn't a true or false variant, but while we've got the blanket out we might as well use it to the full. Put one class member behind the blanket along with a few picture or word cards. Lay out 3 to 4 picture cards for the young children, and up to twelve for older children. The words should all be in the same theme and if you need to you can also have a set of these cards in view of the class. With the older children you would probably not do this to make it more challenging for them.

Allow the class member behind the curtain five seconds to select a picture to stand on. He or she now cannot move from that spot. See below for how to continue depending on whether you have a large or small class.

#### Question practice – large class

Display pictures, or write up, the words you are using. One class member comes up to the front and points at one of the words – for example the car. The class ask the



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question form in unison, such as "Have you got a car?" The person behind the blanket replies, "Yes I have" if standing on the car and "no I haven't" if standing on another picture. The class see how many questions they need to ask before discovering the picture the person behind the blanket is standing on. Alternatively divide students into two teams and each team tries to guess in fewer goes than the other one.

### Question or sentence practice – small class

Each class member in turn asks a question and hopes to be the one to guess correctly. For example, the first student asks, "Have you got a car?" Answer, "No, I haven't". The second student asks, "Have you got a plane?" and so on until the answer is "yes I have." Give points if you wish. If you only have one or two students then join in the game with them.

Adapt this game to ask any question. Choose a question form and then pick some vocabulary that goes well with that question form.

### A lively variant

Here is a rather more lively variant of this game for smaller classes:

One child goes behind the blanket and the class all say this rhyme together – quickly and rhythmically if possible.

What is it? What is it? What could it be?  
What is it? What is it? One, two, three.

It helps if the children clap on the 'what', 'what', 'what' and 'be' and on the 'what', 'what', 'one', and 'three'.

By the time the class reach 'three' the person behind the blanket MUST be standing on their chosen card. After the class have pronounced the word three they are free to call out any possible word. Each class member can only call out one word but they can all call their words out together. There will be some noise! As soon as the child behind the blanket hears the correct word they jump out and all those who called out that word award themselves points (mass cheating no doubt, not to worry!). The next child up to go behind the curtain heads over there while the class immediately start up the rhyme again. The pace should be fast and exciting with no time in between rounds.

You can replace the simple rhyme above with one that you make up, which may include the sentence or question structure you need to teach, or it may be a rhyme with some vocabulary you would like to reinforce.

Here is an example:

Travel on a bus,  
Travel on a train.  
Ride on a bicycle,  
Fly in a plane.

When played well this game is really pretty noisy and fun, and the children have a chance to repeat the same words over and over so they will remember them.

You might want to teach the rhyme in a previous lesson, and you can use it again in all sorts of other games. The first time you play start slowly, and pick up the pace as and when your class understand what is happening. When you play it again in future lessons – using the same words if you are revising, or using a new set of words, you'll find that you can pick the pace up another notch.

### Tongue Twisters

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Category: Speaking

Group size: Any

Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Materials: None

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Age: 6 upward  
Pace: Wake up

Here are some classic tongue twisters that you can have fun with.

### Ideas

1. Give out the tongue twisters as anagrams and let the class work out the sentences.
2. Dictate the tongue twister in a monotone with no punctuation and let the class work out the punctuation and meaning.
3. Use tongue twisters in *Chinese Whispers* or *Relay Race*

Peter Piper picked a pick of pickled peppers, a pick of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked.

She sells seashells on the seashore.  
The shells she sells are seashells.

I wish to wish the wish you wish to wish, but if you wish the wish the witch wishes, I won't wish the wish you wish to wish.

Betty bought butter but the butter was bitter, so Betty bought better butter to make the bitter butter better.

Fuzzy Wuzzy was a bear, Fuzzy Wuzzy had no hair, Fuzzy Wuzzy wasn't very fuzzy, was he?

If a black bug bleeds black blood, what colour blood does a blue bug bleed?

It's not the cough that carries you off;  
it's the coffin they carry you off in!

I saw a saw that could out saw any saw I ever saw before.

Any noise annoys an oyster but a noisy noise annoys an oyster more.

### More advanced tongue twisters

Mr See Owned a saw. And Mr Soar owned a seesaw.  
Now See's saw sawed Soar's seesaw before Soar saw See, which made Soar sore.  
Had Soar seen See's saw before See sawed Soar's seesaw; See's saw would not have sawed Soar's seesaw.

I cannot bear to see a bear bear down upon a hare.  
When bare of hair he strips the hare, right there I cry, "Forbear!"

A tree toad loved a she-toad who lived up in a tree.  
He was a two-toed tree toad but a three-toed toad was she.  
The two-toed tree toad tried to win the three-toed she-toad's heart,  
for the two-toed tree toad loved the ground that the three-toed tree toad trod.  
But the two-toed tree toad tried in vain.  
He couldn't please her whim.  
From her tree toad bower with her three-toed power the she-toad vetoed him.

### Treasure Hunt

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Category: Speaking or writing  
Group size: 2 to 40  
Level: Lower Intermediate to Advanced  
Materials: Pictures  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Wake Up

Scatter pictures over a wide area around the classroom - on tables, on chairs and under things. It is a good idea to establish that no pictures are to be put inside people's bags,

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as you do not want everyone riffling through everyone else's possessions and potentially scattering them all over the place.

Read out a clue for one of the items, adapted to the age and language ability of your group. For example if the item is a television clues could be, "you sit in front of this at home", or "you watch it", or "home entertainment", or "a tool for communication". If the item is a watch clues could be "You wear it on your arm. It tells the time. It's one o'clock". Use very easy clues with the 4-5 year olds such as "You watch cartoons on it".

As soon as they hear the clue the players look around for the matching item. Give a one-minute time span during which time players who find the item make a note of it against number 1 (for clue number 1). You then read out clue number 2. With a big class not everyone will get round all the pictures in the minute given and that is all part of the game. Students then get together in pairs and check answers with each other, which can only be done through speaking. Students cannot look at each other's papers.

A simpler idea to the clues is simply to call out a word and let the students find its opposite, or its definition. For example, find the opposite of black. Answer: white. Find the definition of dress. Answer: item of clothing.

### Writing idea

Have the class work in small groups to come up with a series of clues and items for another team to guess. Then have a play off and see who has the best clues and who can answer them.

### Reading idea

See the follow-up idea of the game [Reading Puzzle](#).

### **True or False**

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Category: Listening

Group size: 2 to a large class

Level: Beginner to Lower Intermediate

Materials: None, items optional

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Calm

You name an item or make a statement and the class says whether it is true or false. For example you point to a picture of an apple and say "pear", the class must say "False". You hold a pen under a chair and say "The pen is under the chair", the class must say, "True", etc.

You can use more sophisticated language such as "Mary would have gone to the beach but her friends didn't invite her". If you said this while pointing to a beach the answer would be true, but if you were pointing to a picture of a building that would be false.

### **Truth or Consequence**

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Category: Reading questions and giving answers

Group size: 2 to 30

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: Questions in a bucket or bag

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

Here you have a list of trivia questions or daft questions written out on cards and placed in a "Question" bucket. Each player picks a question, reads it out and answers it. If the player cannot answer it he or she picks a card from a "Consequence" bucket, which is full of forfeits. This game can be played with any age - you just adapt the difficulty of the questions accordingly, for example: What's 1 plus 2? What is the most naughty thing you ever did? Who is Mickey Mouse's girlfriend? Etc.

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With a class of 30 have several children down at the front together reading their questions and answering them. Children can answer individually but while waiting for their turn they can at least be forming the answer in their minds to avoid a lot of hanging around waiting for students to be ready. Then do a group forfeit for those who could not answer correctly.

### Twister

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Category: Listening - ideal for body parts and colours

Group size: Small group activity

Level: Beginner to Lower Intermediate

Materials: One Twister sheet per group (none needed for variant)

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

*Twister* is an idea for exposure to colours and body parts. You can buy *Twister* however it is easy to make. Take an old sheet and paint circles on it of different colours using some kind of permanent marker pen.

Tell player number one to put his right foot on red - he must keep his right foot on red for the duration of the game, player two puts her left hand on blue, player three puts his left knee on yellow, etc. Continue by adding a body part and a colour each time while your group become progressively more intertwined and stretched into an unbelievable human tangle.

If your group do not yet know body parts have pupils touch a colour using any body part they like. You can also use your twister sheets for *Musical Vocabulary*.

### Variant of Twister - needs no material

You can play a version of *Twister* where instead of touching coloured circles people can touch someone's hand and someone's leg, and get themselves into a tangle that way. One way of doing this is to divide your class into groups of 12 and each group of 12 into 3 groups of 4 named A, B and C. Tell the class to decide who is A, who is B and who is C. Then tell all the As to touch someone's elbow with their left hand, all the Bs to touch someone's foot with their right hand, and so on, until the As, Bs are Cs and all touching two body parts each. If you want to go on you can have them touch another body part, or all sit down while still touching the part, and so on until you have had enough.

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### Up Jenkins

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Category: Speaking - fun question and answer game for small groups

Group size: 6 to 15

Level: Beginner to Lower Intermediate

Materials: A coin and children seated round a table

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

Form two teams and choose a captain of each team. The teams sit facing each other along or around a table. Team one pass the coin back and forth under the table. The object is for the team opposite to lose track of who has the coin. At any moment the captain of team two may call out "Hands Up!" At this point all members of team one hold their hands above their heads with fists clenched. Team two's captain then calls out "Hands Down!" and team one must slap their hands down on the table taking care not to make a noise with the coin against the table. Team two then have two guesses at who is holding the coin.

Members of team two take it in turns to guess. The designated player from team two asks the person he or she thinks has the coin a question. The person from team one answers and must lift both hands up to show if the coin is on the table. If the coin has not been revealed then a second member of team two may ask a question to a member of team one. If you have 12 to 15 children you might like to allow up to four questions to find the coin. After all from a teacher's perspective it is more useful for the children to be asking and answering questions than passing coins.

You may award points to the teams for correct guesses, and for correctly formed questions and answers. You may also set a time limit for play, the winning team being the one with the most points when the time limit is up. Make sure all children participate in asking the questions. Alternatively have the whole team ask the question in unison each time for an easy drill.

### Upside Down Game

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Category: Listening

Group size: Small group seated around a table or on the floor or a small class

Level: Beginner to Lower Intermediate

Materials: Pictures

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Calm to Wake up

Place a selection of picture or word cards on the floor or table face up. For a simple vocabulary drill name a word and two students. Those students race to turn over that card you named so it is face down. For a drill to introduce new grammar or reinforce a sentence structure use a sentence containing one of the words visible.

This can then be played in reverse where students turn the cards over that are face down back up again by attempting to remember where the correct word is.



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If you have a small class rather than a group you can play this with the cards stuck to the board.

### **Very Large Class Choral Work**

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: Large Classes  
Level: Beginner to Lower Intermediate  
Materials: None  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Calm to Wake up

Ask the class a series of questions to reinforce the question structure you are teaching. For example you ask, "Do you play tennis?" The class respond together with either "Yes I do", or "No I don't". If their answer is yes they stand up, and if it is no they sit down. You then ask, "Do you play football", and so on.

Then you can divide the class in two and have half asking questions in unison while the other half answers them. Hold up a picture of a football as the prompt for the children to ask, "Do you like football?"

### **Vocabulary Cut Outs**

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Category: Writing  
Group size: Any  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: Cut outs of nouns  
Age: 4 to 12  
Pace: Calm

This game takes some preparing so I recommend demonstrating the concept to children with a few cut outs of your own and then ask them to each make one or two for homework and bring them in to you.

Print out any of the flashcards included with this book onto 220-gram card and cut around the object. Show the card to students with the white face showing so they only see the outline or shape but not the picture. The idea is to guess what objects these outlines represent. If you hold the cards up to the light they may be see-through so it's best to stick them on the board, especially if the board is white.

Number the back of each picture or keep a track of the order you show them in. Show each outline for half a second or so while students write down the name of the item, or guess at it. To help out give clues, such as, this is a sport's item, or this is something you find in the bathroom.

Students swap over their lists and you then show the real pictures.

### **What am I?**

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Category: Speaking – fluency activity  
Group size: 2 to 30  
Level: Intermediate to Advanced  
Materials: Clothes pegs or sticky tape  
Age: 8 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

Cut out a product advertisement for each child in your group. Choose items children like such as Coke, Snickers, a teen magazine, KFC, Mac Donald's and M&Ms, or you can branch out into people and use sporting celebrities, cartoon characters or famous people. Alternatively ask your pupils to secretly write one down of their choosing so you are sure to get products the children know and relate to.

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Give out a clothes peg to each child and have the children stick their paper onto someone else's back without that person seeing the item. Give a few minutes time limit for everyone to figure out what is on their back by asking and answering questions. They can ask or answer anything other than directly asking "What am I?" type questions. Before the time limit starts, brainstorm with the class for suitable questions.

To keep the noise level contained you may require children whisper only and any one raising his or her voice or speaking in the native language is out of the game.

### What Time is it Mr Wolf?

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Category: Speaking - telling the time and/or meal times

Group size: Variants for all class sizes

Level: Beginner to Lower Intermediate

Materials: None

Age: 4 to 12 for meal times and 6 to 12 for telling the time

Pace: Various - see variants

Small group variant 1 - The classic game - suitable only for small groups in a 'summer camp' type environment.

The wolf walks slowly ahead with the children following behind. The pupils ask in unison "What's the time Mr Wolf?" Mr Wolf replies "It's one o'clock" (or whatever time he likes). The class repeat the question until Mr Wolf replies, "It's dinner time!" At this point Mr Wolf turns round and tries to catch one of the children. Swap Mr Wolf over at this point, regardless of whether he caught anyone.

Mr Wolf can also call out breakfast time, lunchtime, teatime, suppertime, and even elevenses, (a British custom of coffee or tea and biscuits around 11am). Whenever Mr Wolf calls out a time involving eating he turns and chases the group.

### Classroom variant 2

One pupil is the wolf, who faces the black board or away from the group. The class members stand behind their desks and ask in unison, "What time is it Mr Wolf?" Mr Wolf replies, "It's one o'clock". The class repeat the question until Mr Wolf says, "It's dinner time!" At this point the children freeze and Mr Wolf turns round to see if anyone is moving. Anyone caught moving becomes the new wolf. See variant three for more time telling options. Combine this with variant three for more fun.

### Classroom variant 3

One pupil is the wolf, facing away from the group. The class each hold up 1 to 10 fingers, 1 arm in the air for 11, two arms in the air for 12. The class ask in unison, "What time is it Mr Wolf?" Mr Wolf replies with a time, e.g. "It's 5 o'clock". Anyone holding up 5 fingers becomes the wolf. If more than one pupil has five then the wolf picks one of them out. You can combine this with variant two for more fun and variety. To use more time telling possibilities use the following idea. 3 o'clock would be three fingers held above the head. Quarter past 3 would be three fingers held to the right of the body. Half past 3 would be three fingers held over the stomach. Quarter to four would be three fingers held to the left of the body.

### Classroom variant 4 with flashcards

Pupils stand at their desks with a wolf up front. In this version, each class member has a flashcard with a different time on it. Remember you can ask the class to draw a clock and choose a time themselves to have everyone kitted out with their own flashcard in minutes. When the wolf gives a time, e.g. "It's half past five", anyone holding that time must call back, "It's half past five".

The class keep their flashcards flat on their desks, or hidden from the wolf. The wolf then turns round and must identify who replied by the sound of their voice. If the wolf does this successfully that person becomes the next wolf. Or swap the wolf over each time.

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### Other language ideas

Use any picture or word flashcards and play as described above but with alternative vocabulary and questions.

### Classroom variant 5 with flashcards

This variant is a little more lively, but still very manageable. The class hold up their flashcards (see variant 4) to the wolf. The wolf mentally picks one of the times he sees and turns away from the class. The class ask in unison, "What time is it Mr Wolf?" Mr Wolf says, "It's five o'clock", and then counts to four at a steady pace.

The class members holding "five o'clock" may, if they choose to, quickly swap their card, or give it to a neighbour before the wolf turns around. Every one freezes. On the count of 4 the wolf turns round and tries to catch someone moving and anyone caught moving sits out the next round only, loses a point or does a forfeit. The wolf then names the person he believes to be holding the 5 o'clock card.

### **Where Is It?**

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Category: Listening

Group size: 2 to 40

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Materials: Pen and paper or prepared pictures

Age: 5 to 12

Pace: Calm

The essence of this game is that you describe something and your group draw it. Using only pen and paper you can tell them to draw a house with 4 rooms. You can then tell them what to draw in each room, for example "The bed is in the bedroom", or "In the bedroom is a double bed, with two pillows and a pink duvet cover", or "Draw a bed. There is a dog on the bed. There is a cat under the bed. Next to the bed there is a chair." Make it clear by a rapid sketch example on the board that this is not a Leonardo di Vinci competition, and that speed is of the essence.

Children can swap pictures and describe the picture to a partner. Children can also work in pairs with one child telling the other what to draw. If you have a mixed ability class put the children in groups and let the more advanced children describe a picture to their group.

This game suits prepositions and a broad range of vocabulary, as well as many different sentence structures. For intermediates you can tell a story in the past tense, which they draw onto their picture.

### **Which One Has Gone?**

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Category: Speaking - naming vocabulary

Group size: 2 to 30

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Materials: One set of picture cards or objects per group

Age: 4 to 12

Pace: Wake up

Put up a set of picture cards on the board and ask the class to close their eyes. To prevent cheating you could ask the class to fold their arms on their desks and put their heads on their arms so they are all looking down at their desks. Take away one of the cards on the board and say, 'which one has gone?' When they hear this question the children look up, identify and name the missing picture as fast as possible.

You can take away more than one picture at a time if you wish. You can also move the pictures around in between goes - as long as you can do this quickly so players are not kept waiting. Bring up the winners to ask the question and take the pictures away to give the slower ones a chance to answer. With four year olds you can start with two pictures

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only and gradually add to it. As always with the very young have them all answer, with no emphasis on who answers first.

If you can divide your class into groups, giving each a set of pictures that the children can lay out on the floor, or on their tables. Each group needs a leader; so let the better students do this. All the players close their eyes, the leaders take away a card and ask in unison with you "Which one has gone?" In this way, although you are playing in groups, you control everyone's game. With teenage players and older, and once they have got the question down, you can let each group play at its own pace.

### **Who Wants to be a Millionaire Adaptation**

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Category: Speaking

Group size: 2 to a group of 20 students for best results. Can be played with 30 students too, but involves more waiting.

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Materials: None

Age: 4 to Adult

Pace: Calm

Split the class into two teams. Draw two columns on the board with 5 squares in each. With smaller groups you can add more squares to the columns - up to 12 squares maximum. Stick a card below the lowest square or place a cross there with the board pen. Ask 5 students from the first team to stand up. Ask a question that includes the language you are working on. One of the students answers and if correct advance their cross or card up into the first box in the column. That student now sits down. Now ask the team if they want to continue or stop. If they elect to continue the teacher asks another question and one of the four students who are still standing answers it. If correct their cross or card advances one more square up the column and if incorrect the cross or card drops right back to the starting line. It is like in "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" where one wrong answer means loss of all money won up to that point. Once that team have either elected to stop or given a wrong answer taking them back to the beginning it is the other team's turn.

With beginners ask easy questions such as: "What is your name?" With the four and five year olds ask the same questions repeatedly, this is an excellent excuse to drill. The questions do not need to be general knowledge as you are testing English here.

This is excellent for small groups. With a large class watch out that the game does not drag and keep the questions coming rapidly. You could ask the team not answering questions to be busy writing questions out for the other team to answer during the next round. This keeps all students involved and actively participating rather than passively sitting waiting for a turn.

### **Word Challenge**

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Category: Spelling

Group size: Divide the class into teams of 4 to 6 students

Level: Beginner to Upper Intermediate

Materials: None

Age: 6 to Adult

Pace: Calm

Allow each team a few minutes to think up some words for the other team to spell. Students may consult their textbooks to come up with words on condition that the words come from units already covered in class. Another rule is that students may only choose words that they know how to spell themselves. With more advanced classes you may allow use of the dictionary.

Now put the teams together in groups of two teams. A student from team A says his or her word to team B. A student from team B must spell that word. If correct, team B win a

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point. Each student from team A takes a turn saying his or her word and a different student from team B takes a turn in spelling it. Students may ask their team members for help but no looking in the textbook is allowed.

An optional follow-up activity is for students to note any words spelled incorrectly and you make a list of those on the board, which the class copy down and learn for homework. In the next lesson play a round of Word Challenge with these words only and see how the teams do. The results will be better and the children will be more likely to remember the spellings longer term.

### **Word Flash Cards**

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Category: Reading and Speaking

Group size: 2 to 35

Level: Beginner

Materials: Picture flashcards

Age: 6 to 12

Pace: Calm

Divide your class into two teams and in the space of a minute hold up as many word flash cards as you can while the team name each one. Do the same for team two, with different words or the same ones in a different order, and see which team named the most.

The rule is that everyone on the team must name the word at the same time. To put this in place through a clapping rhythm: slap the top of the thighs with both hands at the same time, clap hands together in front of the chest, click the left thumb and middle finger then click the right thumb and middle finger. If your pupils can't yet click their fingers give them another action instead. This will give you a four beat rhythm. During the thigh slap and the clap you turn the word flash card over, and during the clicks the team say the word.

You are the judge as to whether a word is well said or not. To pass you need the word said by at least half the team in a fairly convincing way. If you only have one or two pupils say the word, or it's somewhat muffled, then no point is awarded for that word! As you lay down the used words you can make two piles, one pile of points earned and the other that did not score so you can easily count up the team points.

You can also have the children's names on little cards in a bag on your desk. Every now and then you pull out a name, and that person must read the next word out, to get double points for their team. Only hold the word up for few seconds before hiding it again to keep interest and attention. If using word cards for spelling, for fun at the end of a game surprise the class by fishing out a giant word such as this one from Oliver Twist, "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious".

### **Word Photographs**

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Category: Spelling

Group size: Any

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Materials: Board and pens

Age: 6 to 12

Pace: Flexible

The essence of this game is to look at word shapes as pictures as well as letters. Here is the technique:

Look at the word and take a mental picture of it. Zoom in on the word, focus and then close your eyes and see the word in your head. Now ask yourself what the first letter of the word is, the last, and the third, and so on. With some training this technique will become automatic and the brain learns to photograph words, as well as hear the word as



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a sound. This helps exponentially with spelling.

To play reveal a word for five seconds (on the board or with a flashcard). Let the children take their mental photograph. Then ask, "third letter?" and let the class call it out while a pupil comes to the board and writes up that letter. Continue through the entire word until it is written up in full. Swap the person over at the front doing the writing with each word.

To make this more of a game use teams and have pupils race to the front to write up the letter you call out, as in [Team Race on the Board](#).

### **Word Stress Chant and Spell**

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Category: Speaking and Spelling

Group size: any

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Materials: Board and pens

Age: 6 to 12 and variant without spelling for younger pupils

Pace: calm

Read [Pronunciation Word Stress](#) first as background to this game.

And now here's another way to work on word stress. The teacher, or a pupil says the word, with the correct stress. The class then chant this in unison correctly ten times and during that time three or four class members come up to the board, write out the word from memory and return to their seats before the chanting is up. Points go to teams where the word is spelled correctly and within the given time. This game gives lots of speaking practise to the whole class at once while working on spelling. Enhance the correct stress by having the whole class clapping on the strong syllable each time.

If you have younger pupils or you prefer not to do the spelling part then use the same idea but have pupils come up to the board and draw the item before the chanting is up.

### **Write It Up**

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Category: Writing

Group size: 2 to 35

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Materials: Board and pens

Age: 6 to 12

Pace: Wake up

Divide the class into teams and number the players in each team. Call out a word or a sentence followed by one of the team numbers, say number 3. All the number 3s race to the board and write up the sentence. It doesn't matter if they copy from their classmates - this is not a cheat, but a learning experience. Have the class make sure the sentences written up are correct. While this has been going on all class members are thinking up a sentence to follow the one on the board, which would be a coherent follow-on. Call out another team number, say 1, the number ones race up and write up their version of a follow-on sentence, and so on.

With beginners writing up sentences in this way may be too ambitious, so use single words instead, the players can then write up any word that is related to the previous one.

### **Writing Race**

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Category: Writing

Group size: 2 to 40

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Materials: Pens or pencils and paper

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Age: 6 to 12

Pace: Wake up

Here is an easy, fun writing game. Thanks to Debbie Pyle for this game idea. You need some room between desks in class to play.

This game is to be played once your students are familiar with the target vocabulary and sentences and is particularly good for going over specific grammatical points or spelling. It adds a really fun twist to worksheets!

### How to play

Divide the class into pairs, threes or fours, but no more than four per group.

Each group has two pencils, one worksheet and one blank piece of paper. On the word go the first child of each pair or group runs to the worksheet and fills in the blank/s for the first item on the worksheet. He or she then runs back to the blank piece of paper and writes the item out in full there. This may be the whole sentence or just the words that went into the blanks on the worksheet. The pencils stay with the worksheets so the children do not run with them.

As soon as the first child reaches the blank piece of paper the second child can run to the worksheet and fill in the second item, leave the pencil on the desk and run to the blank piece of paper. The first child should have finished writing out the item by now, and either runs back to the worksheet to do the third item if working in pairs, or waits in line until his or her turn comes round again. Here is a concrete example of how that works. Using a worksheet for a/an the first child runs to the worksheet and fills in item 1, in this case 'an' before elephant. The child then runs back to the blank piece of paper and writes out 'an elephant', while the second child runs to the worksheet and fills out item 2, 'a' before ball, and so on.

A variant is to have two worksheets instead of a blank piece of paper - either identical for reinforcing newly learned things, or different ones for revising a greater number of items. When the worksheets are all filled up the game is over. For marking children can mark their own in pairs or groups. Each person or group can have three lives, which means that as you go through the answers, they can rub out three incorrect answers and replace them with the correct ones. This means that it is highly likely that the whole class will get 100%, which is great for the feel-good factor. In addition the fact of rubbing out the wrong answer and rewriting the correct one helps learning far better than a big red cross does. Now if any children rub out more than 3 incorrect answers then let them and pretend you haven't noticed. If a child squeals on another then you could say, thank you for helping but in this case it's better if you concentrate on your own worksheet. That has got to be better than putting the spotlight on the child who has got so many wrong answers that they have to keep rubbing them all out! Remember that the idea is for the children to learn, get high scores and enjoy English.

### Language ideas to use with this game

This game lends itself to any language as long as it is short - being a writing race it isn't practical to have great long sentences to write out. However if you use 2 worksheets and just do fill in the blanks then the sentences can be as long as you like. If you wanted to reinforce some spelling then you could have one worksheet which the children run to, memorize the first word, run back to the blank piece of paper and write that word down from memory while the second child runs to the worksheet to memorize the second word, and so on. You could also use that idea for very short sentences or vocabulary.

Another spelling idea is to use a worksheet with pictures only. The child looks at the first picture, runs back to the blank piece of paper and writes down the word. Practise any language with fill in the blanks such as question forms, verb endings, parts of verbs, vocabulary, pronouns, etc.

### Zambezi River

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: 2 to 12  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: Picture flashcards  
Age: 4 to 10  
Pace: Wake up

The Zambezi is a river that flows over the Victoria Falls and below the rapids it is infested with crocodiles! The players have to get across the river without being eaten by the crocodiles. They do this by jumping from rock to rock or picture to picture and naming the pictures as they go. They have to name the picture, or say the sentence or question about the picture in order to carry onto the next rock, and finally to safety.

Language can be simple vocabulary practice, to sentences or questions. For example all the players ask in unison "Where are you going?" and the player crossing the Zambezi says, "I'm going to the beach, I'm going to the circus, I'm going to the zoo", as he or she steps on pictures of the beach, the circus and the zoo.

With the younger children they can be quite perturbed by the prospect of being eaten by the crocodile, which is real in their imagination, and therefore I never eat four year olds, or allow them to be eaten by the other crocodiles (who are the other players). I have even seen 9 years olds on the verge of tears at the prospect of being eaten, but I have seen other 6 years olds deliberately get the word wrong just so that they can be eaten. Be sensitive to each individual - you don't want him or her in tears.

You can split your group into two teams and have one team as the crocodiles while the other team help their members across. How you go about eating your players depends on whether you are in a formal classroom situation, or whether you can be more relaxed with your students - I leave it to your imagination!

### Zip Zap Vocabulary Revision

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Category: Speaking  
Group size: 6 to 30  
Level: Beginner to Intermediate  
Materials: Picture flash cards  
Age: 5 to 12  
Pace: Wake up

#### Game One

Ideally seat your children in a circle. Each child has a different picture flashcard that is clearly displayed for all players to see. Start by calling out one of the words - for example bananas. The child with the picture of bananas must immediately name another picture in the circle such as apples. The child with the apples in turn names another picture, any one, except for bananas, and so on.

With more than 15 children call out two pictures, such as bananas and apples, so that two children then name two new words. This increases the speaking opportunities and ensures that all the children listen attentively, whereas with only one word to thirty children the pace would be too slow and the game boring.

If you notice that the same words are being called out over and over again then when a word has been named the child holding that card must turn it face down so it cannot be called again in that round. Either give that child another card or wait until all the cards are face down, then have the children swap their cards over and play again.

If you have to play with the children at their desks then play as above except that the children must hold their picture cards up to the person who has a turn at naming a card. If you have two or three words being batted about simultaneously then the children have

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to do their best to show their card to those children. As long as the child or children who must name a word can see some pictures to choose from the game will work.

### **Game Two** – Better for 6 to 20 pupils

Players form a circle, each one holding a picture card. One player stands in the middle of the circle. In turn everyone then names his or her picture while each person tries to remember the cards on his immediate left and right. The player in the middle then points a finger at one of the players in the circle and says ZIP-1,2,3,4,5. The child being pointed at must then name the card on his or her left without looking at it. If successful the person in the middle repeats the exercise with another child. If unsuccessful that child swaps places with the player in the middle. If the player in the middle says ZAP-1,2,3,4,5 then the child being pointed at must name the picture card on his or her right.

## Technology and Multi-Media

### Thoughts on Technology and Multi-Media

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This section contains some fantastic ideas about using the Internet and technology in class and for homework. I learned some of these ideas at a big TEFL conference where I was also speaking. The lecture was called something like: Technology and the 21st century ESL classroom and the speaker was from IATEFL Hungary.

To carry out these ideas you need to be very well equipped with computers at school and possibly at home, and children need digital cameras. However take heart, because if your school is not kitted out like the Star Trek Enterprise you can stay abreast of developments nonetheless!

If you actually LOOK at the activities that I will describe, you'll see they are about human beings communicating with each other, and we've been doing that for a long, long time, and you don't need a computer to do it! My personal view is that the use of computers, websites and digital cameras is just the PACKAGING for the activity so that your pupils will think it is cool. You can use all these ideas just as well by adapting them.

So here is the latest ESL BUZZ:

The buzz in teaching today is all about the "21st century" classroom, integrating technology and producing students who are ready to go into the work place. In order to close the gap between what employers are looking for and what is being taught in school teachers, in addition to English, should teach:

- Professionalism
- Work ethic
- Critical thinking
- Team work
- Technology
- Leadership
- Creativity
- Cross-cultural understanding
- Self-direction.

You are probably thinking; "oh boy and I was having trouble with the present tense."

#### Working across the curriculum

If students are learning computer skills as part of their curriculum liaise with the IT teacher and see how you could work together on one of the projects below.

So here are some of the ways to integrate technology into your classroom, which also allow for the development of other attributes on the above list:

#### Making a Class Blog

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- Set up a social network for the classroom.
- Only the administrator can invite new members so that ensures that only your class is on the network.
- The administrator can control content to ensure the site stays clean and on purpose.
- There is a forum section where class members can post topic and comment on things - all in English of course.
- You may post homework up there so if someone misses class they can log on from home.
- Post class projects, stories, upload photos, videos, put birthdays up there and create a class blog.

It's straight forward to sign up and you may well be able to get help from your pupils



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setting this up - someone in your class might love to have that job.

One place where you may do all of the above is [www.ning.com](http://www.ning.com) (this is a free service at the time of writing).

### **Quiz Websites**

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Use a quiz site to make quizzes and play online word games and multiple choice. There are excellent vocabulary games on there and the children may work at their own pace. One such site is [www.quizlet.com](http://www.quizlet.com) - a search on the net will yield others.

### **Making Picture Clips with Music**

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Find a site where children can make short picture clips with music by uploading three pictures and choosing the music. These sequences can be about anything, such as my favourite movie, family life, my ideal holiday, my best friend, my favourite band, or whatever topic engages your pupils. If you don't know then ask them!

Such a site as this is: [www.animoto.com](http://www.animoto.com) (a free service at the time of writing)

These clips can be uploaded onto the class blog or social network and shared. You may set homework asking the children to decide which movie gets the Oscar and why and so on. Let the children make up bizarre stories based on the clips. The kids may comment on the videos in the forum.

### **Making Movies**

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Children need digital movie cameras at home to do this assignment. Let children work in groups so that they learn cooperation and get around any issues with some children not having home access to a camera.

The example shown at the conference by IATEFL Hungary was a truly funny and inspiring video that had been made by a group of four children aged about ten as a project to explain hand symbols. They had picked hand symbols used for scuba divers. One filmed, one narrated and two acted out the symbols, fully equipped with diving masks, snorkels and standing behind an aquarium one of them had in their home!

Now that film clearly let the children use their creativity, work together as a team, learn something new and work independently of the teacher. What an ideal way to engage your class.

If you have the time and facilities software packages such as Windows Media or iMovie allow the uploading of films which can then be put to music, and subtitles. Fancy effects can easily be created to switch between scenes. If you have limited time with your class then one does have to consider whether one is teaching English or IT as the uploading of films and so on is extremely time-consuming... I fancy this is more appropriate as a homework task.

### **Slide Shows**

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PowerPoint is an easy-to-use software where pupils may upload pictures, music and add subtitles to slides. Pupils could prepare this and present it in English. Easy topics where students will have pictures available are: my family, an interview with a friend or family member, my friends, my school, my pet, my hobby, my home, my last holiday, my favourite movie, my favourite music band...

Help students by providing a framework or outline for them to fill in with their own specific topic. For example, introduce the main characters in the story, describe where the story takes place, write down the main events/questions in rough. Next assemble relevant pictures and music to put to the story. Finally students practise their narration as they show their pictures and play their choice of music.

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Allow time for pupils to practise these in class and consider showing them to other classes and to parents as part of an after-school show or event.

### **And now my ideas on how you can do all of the above from your yak tent or hill tribe village!**

I fully realise that many teachers are in remote areas and do not have access to cameras, the internet and so on. So of course you cannot implement these ideas in this way, but you can adapt them. Never fear, we can actually survive and be creative without internet and without techie gadgets! And, (gasp of amazement), many of us made it through school without a mobile phone.

Make a big notice board instead of the blog. Kids stick up their comments and pictures on pieces of paper.

Use the animoto.com idea using three pictures that the children draw or cut out from old magazines or TV magazines. Tell the children to prepare short plays to perform in front of the class instead of filming them and showing the class on a screen.

For those of you in countries where you do have access to the web then go ahead and give these ideas a go. For those of you in tepees, take the spirit of these ideas and apply them creatively.

The true value in these ideas is that they lead pupils to be creative, to work in a team, to be responsible for their own learning, to work independently from the teacher, to express themselves and to feel part of the learning process by actively participating in it.

## Rhymes

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Rhymes help with confidence and fluency, and allow syntax and grammar to be absorbed subconsciously. Children also love them, and they provide an opportunity to use words they have learned in the context of sentences, which is satisfying. You can use rhymes with sophisticated tenses and language right from beginner three year olds. First you teach some of the vocabulary found in the rhyme with games, and then you introduce the rhyme. With repetition, and exposure to the rhyme over a series of lessons, perhaps using the same rhyme in a different game or setting, you will find that the children will learn it over time.

Use miming with rhymes and songs whenever you can, especially with the young ones. Make up actions yourself, and ask the class for ideas for actions - you'll get some good ideas that way!

It dip doo  
The dog's got the flu  
The cat's got chicken pox  
and out go you!

Three blind mice  
Three blind mice  
See how they run  
See how they run  
They all ran off to the farmer's wife  
Who cut off their tails with a carving knife  
The three blind mice

I like coffee  
I like tea  
I like the boys  
and the boys like me  
Yes  
No  
Maybe so  
Yes  
No  
Maybe so . . .

One banana, two bananas, three bananas, four  
Five bananas, six bananas, seven bananas, more

Mirror mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all? (From Snow White)

This little piggy went to market,  
This little piggy stayed at home,  
This little piggy had roast beef,  
This little piggy had none,  
And this little piggy went wee wee wee wee wee  
All the way home!

Hickory dickory dock  
The mouse ran up the clock  
The clock struck one  
The mouse ran down  
Hickory dickory dock

One two  
Buckle my shoe  
Three four

Knock on the door  
Five Six  
Pick up sticks  
Seven eight  
Lay them straight  
Nine ten  
Big fat hen

Eeny meeny miney mo,  
Catch a piglet by its toe,  
If it squeals let it go,  
Eeny meeny miney mo,  
O U T spells out so out you must go!

Porridge in a pot, porridge in a pot,  
Hubble bubble, hubble bubble, hot, hot, hot!

Milk in a mug, milk in a mug,  
Drink it up; drink it up, glug, glug, glug!

Ickle ockle blue bockle  
Fishes in the sea  
If you want a pretty maid  
Please choose me.

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall  
All the king's horses and all the king's men  
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

Handy Pandy Jack a Dandy  
Loved plum cake and sugar candy.  
He went into the baker's shop,  
Then out he came, hop, hop, hop.

Hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle,  
The cow jumped over the moon.  
The little dog laughed to see such fun,  
And the dish ran away with the spoon.

Here comes a caterpillar, here comes a snail,  
Here comes a slug with a slippery trail.  
Here comes a butterfly, here comes a bee,  
How many insects can you see?

One for a seesaw, two for a slide,  
Three for the bike I like to ride.  
Four for a go-kart, five for a swing,  
Six for a kite on a long, long string.

Sally goes round the sun,  
Sally goes round the moon,  
Sally goes round the chimney pots  
On a Saturday afternoon

## Riddles for children

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Bearing in mind that most of these involve a play on words and good vocabulary they are best for intermediate levels. You can use these with adults too.

Why did the chicken cross the road? Because it wanted to get to the other side.

Can giraffes have babies? No, they can only have giraffes.

What does a house wear? Address

What did the sock say to the foot? You're putting me on.

How do rabbits travel? By Hare plane.

What shoes should you wear when your basement is flooded? Pumps.

What kind of ties can't you wear? Railroad ties.

Why are potatoes good detectives? Because they always keep their eyes peeled.

Why was the belt arrested? For holding up the pants.

What kind of eyeglasses do spies wear? Spy-focals.

What do you get when you saw a comedian in two? A half-wit.

When is it dangerous to play cards? When the joker is wild.

What does the invisible man drink at snack time? Evaporated milk.

What kind of soda must you not drink? Baking soda.

What part of your body has the most rhythm? Your eardrums.

How does mother earth fish? With North and South poles.

Where is the ocean the deepest? On the bottom.

Where is the best place to see a man-eating fish? In a seafood restaurant.

What do whales like to chew? Blubber gum.

What did the beach say when the tide came in? Long time no sea.

What did one potato chip say to the other? Shall we go for a dip?

What did the chocolate bar say to the lollipop? Hello sucker.

How does a king open a door? With a monarchy.

What do you need to spot an iceberg 20 miles away? Good eyesight!

What did the dog say to the little child pulling his tail? That is the end of me.

What horse never goes out in the daytime? A nightmare.

Where do animals go when they lose their tails? To a retail store.

What is the best year for a kangaroo? A leap year



## Proverbs

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A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush  
A friend in need is a friend indeed  
A miss is as good as a mile  
A penny saved is a penny earned  
A rolling stone gathers no moss  
A stitch in time saves nine  
A watched pot never boils  
A word to the wise is sufficient  
Absence makes the heart grow fonder  
Actions speak louder than words  
All roads lead to Rome  
All that glitters is not gold  
An apple a day keeps the doctor away  
April showers bring May flowers  
Beggars can't be choosers  
Birds of a feather flock together  
Blood is thicker than water  
Don't count your chickens until they're hatched  
There's no use crying over spilt milk  
Every cloud has a silver lining  
Familiarity breeds contempt  
Half a loaf is better than none  
Handsome is as handsome does  
Heaven helps those who help themselves  
Honesty is the best policy  
Horses for courses  
Let sleeping dogs lie  
Look before you leap  
Make hay while the sun shines  
Necessity is the mother of invention  
One man's meat is another's man's poison  
Out of the frying pan, into the fire  
Practice makes perfect  
Rome wasn't built in a day  
Strike while the iron is hot  
The early bird catches the worm  
The pen is mightier than the sword  
There's no place like home

## Other Resources by Shelley

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I hope that this book of games brings much joy to your classrooms. If the comments that I have had from hundreds of teachers are anything to go by then it surely will.

Here is a list of my other resources, which may be useful if you teach a variety of ages or class sizes.

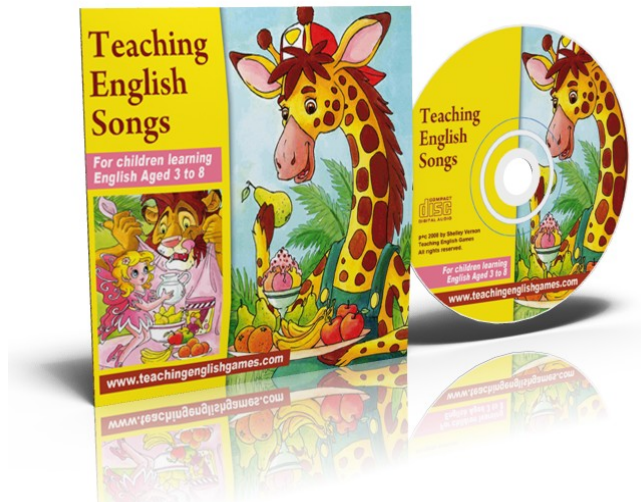
### 1. Teaching English Songs 1 CD or Download

This CD contains sixteen songs to match the vocabulary taught in my preschool stories series.

The words are simple, covering basic vocabulary themes, helping you to reinforce what you are teaching while bringing cheerful music to the classroom.

A songs activity book is included with lesson plan ideas for introducing and teaching each song.

The ideas in there may be used with any songs and not just the ones on CD.



In addition masks of all the characters in the story are included in black and white, to cut out, colour and wear, and pre-coloured. The two shown are not to scale.

<http://www.teachingenglishgames.com/eslsongs.htm>



## 2. Preschool Games and Stories 1 to 10

Ten stories covering basic vocabulary themes and useful vocabulary with a fun games book for preschoolers.



[www.teachingenglishgames.com/3-5.htm](http://www.teachingenglishgames.com/3-5.htm)

## 3. Follow-on Stories 11 to 20

More stories covering actions, family members, rooms of the house, nature, light and dark, verbs, farm animals, body parts, clothing and other useful vocabulary.

[www.teachingenglishgames.com/3-5/preschoolstories.htm](http://www.teachingenglishgames.com/3-5/preschoolstories.htm)

## 4. Teaching English Songs 2 CD or Download

More songs to go with stories 11 to 20 with the songs, karaoke version and masks of the characters.

## 5. Plays and Skits

Plays and skits for small groups up to 15 students, also for use one on one. Ideal for beginners aged 4 to 10.

[www.teachingenglishgames.com/eslplays.htm](http://www.teachingenglishgames.com/eslplays.htm)

## 6. Teen/Adult Games book

This includes games and activities for higher levels. Printable board games and game cards are provided to keep preparation to a minimum.

[www.teachingenglishgames.com/adults.htm](http://www.teachingenglishgames.com/adults.htm)

## 7. One to One Games and Video

- Games for private tutors and parents
- With video demonstrations
- For ages 4 to 12

[www.homeenglishteacher.com](http://www.homeenglishteacher.com)