

ESL GAME IDEAS

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Stop

Level: Medium to Difficult

STEP 1:

On the top of a page each student writes the following: category names: NAME, PLACE, ACTION, ANIMAL, OBJECT, FRUIT/VEGGY and TOTAL.

STEP 2:

Someone starts saying the alphabet, A, B, C...etc. then someone else interrupts the alphabet-teller shouting : STOP!!!

STEP 3:

Let us suppose the alphabet-teller was interrupted on letter "K". All the participants in the game would try to find words that start with "K" to fill out the category chart. For example one may write: Kansas for "PLACE", koala for "ANIMAL", key for "OBJECT", kiwi for "FRUIT" and so on.

STEP 4:

The participant that finishes filling all categories first shouts STOP!! And all the others should stop writing.

STEP 5:

The participants compare their words. The words repeated by two players are worth 50 points. the words repeated by three or more are worth 25. The words that are not repeated by anyone are worth 100 points. The empty categories are "0". Each player adds up all the points he got for the letter in turn and put the result in the "TOTAL" At the end of the game all the subtotals are added and the one who gets the highest score is the winner.

Submitted by Pablo Ortega-Juárez

Verb Review Game

Level: Any Level

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

Step 1:

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

Step 2:

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

Step 3:

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

Step 4:

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

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

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

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

Submitted by Pablo Ortega

Create Your Own Similes

Level: Easy to Medium

1. Present a few similes and the sample sentences to the class. Write the sentences with underline.

Ex. - The baby's skin was as white as snow.

- Finishing up the project by himself, the boy was as proud as a peacock.

2. Prepare flashcards with one adjective on each. Students pick out one card in turn and create similes by using the adjective on the card. Emphasize that unique ideas are welcome. Instructor shouldn't be judgmental, and accept any similes as long as they are logical.

Ex. - as big as Mt. Fuji / as soft as a cotton candy

Students compare their ideas and discuss which ones are interesting or funny.

3. If time allows play a song which includes a simile, for example the jazz song "As deep as the ocean" and discuss the usage and effectiveness of the simile.

This activity fosters students' creativity and encourages their active participation in the lesson.

Submitted by Mari Nakamura

Finding the best person for the job

Level: Any Level

The idea of this activity is to review or learn personality adjectives.

Tell the students that they are the owners of a cafe and they have to choose a new waiter/waitress from a list of four applicants for the job.

The teacher's preparation involves thinking of four personality adjectives for each applicant. Give the applicants a name and a colour. One applicant should be ideal for the job, two neutral and the other totally useless. After this the teacher writes each adjective on a separate card using a different colour pen for each applicant. Four applicants, four colours, sixteen adjectives altogether.

The next step is to arrive at work early before the students and hide the cards in sixteen different places around the classroom.

When the class starts, you explain the activity by telling the students their aim is to decide which applicant is best for the job. There are four applicants, each with their own colour and a total of sixteen words. The pair that finds all the words and chooses the best applicant first are the winners. But first they have to find the cards!

Pair the students off. Student A stays put while student B searches for the hidden words. When a word is found B must read it, (without alerting the other searchers) return to A and quietly say the word. A writes the word, keeping words of the same colour together. If B forgets the word or the correct spelling, he /she has to return to the word. A and B should swap roles after a number of words have been found.

At the end of the activity stick all the words on the board, in their colour groups, under the correct name. All the students can then discuss why the applicants are/are not suitable for the job.

The job could be changed depending on what sort of adjectives you would like to focus on as could the number and difficulty of the adjectives.

Submitted by Colin Guest

Village Fair

Level: Easy to Medium

Aim: To practise interrogatives ; suggestions ; acceptance ; refusal etc.

Each student decides what wares he is carrying to market to sell. Also what he wants to buy to take home.

Melee' : Students move around classroom trying to sell their wares ; haggling over prices , quantities etc.

They use language such as How about...? ; Could you make that...? ; That's a deal ; No deal etc.

End of 10 minutes all students report to rest of class what sales they made , what they couldn't sell and what they bought.

Depending on the proficiency of the class , language help may be provided at the beginning.

Submitted by Parvathi Krishnan India

Writing on Shirts

Level: Easy to Medium

1. The pupils say slogans/blessings/funny proverbs, etc.
 2. The teacher writes them on the blackboard.
 3. The pupils then write their favorite slogans with special markers on T-shirts.
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Advice

Level: Medium to Difficult

Aims: To practise giving advice and suggestions. To trigger creative contributions. To generate interaction from a simple raw material.

1 Get a student to say the first sentence below to his neighbour. The latter makes a suggestion, and goes on to utter the next of my sentences, and so on.

2 If the students are a bit cold, do the following; get them all to write down a piece of advice for the first sentence on a page-give them time. Then, you can go around the class enjoying the wide variety of contributions which are sure to ensue.

(I actually did the uttering of the sentences, and allowed the students to propose the advice).

Note: For some sentences you may get really boring answers, devoid of any thought-get them to modify it, change it a bit, spice it up, use creativity!

I HAVE A HEADACHE.

I HATE WORKING.

I FEEL SAD.

I WANT TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT.

I LOVE PEOPLE.

I AM ALWAYS LATE.

I KEEP LOSING MY CREDIT CARD.

MY FRIENDS DON'T WANT TO SEE ME.

I HAVE A RED NOSE.

I AM ALWAYS CRASHING MY CAR.

I WOULD LOVE TO MEET SOME PEOPLE.

IT WOULD BE GREAT TO BE RICH.

MY STOMACH IS HUGE

I AM VERY INTELLECTUAL.

MOTHER SAYS I AM ATTRACTIVE.

YOU SHOULD + INFINITIVE

YOU OUGHT TO + INFINITIVE (FORMAL)

IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA IF YOU + PAST SIMPLE

IF I WERE YOU, I WOULD ...

YOU HAD BETTER ... + INFINITIVE

YOU WILL HAVE TO + INFINITIVE

IT IS TIME YOU + PAST SIMPLE

WHY DON'T YOU ... + INFINITIVE

YOU COULD ALWAYS ... + INFINITIVE

HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT ... + ING IMPERATIVES (Don't ... Do ...)

Submitted by Gerard Counihan

Animals for a Day

Level: Medium to Difficult

Activity A

Show the students a photocopied list of many different animals (mammals, amphibians ...), and ask them to choose, individually and without speaking, an animal they would like to be for a day. Give them a minute. Then (something they won't be expecting), get them to write a few sentences, once again working alone, about their day, or their thoughts-as the animal they have chosen. Give them a few minutes.

Needless to say, you will be surprised by the imagination of your students, many of whom, I believe, love to indulge in moments of escapism-something us teachers know all about!

For example, I had a group of five female students, three of whom chose to be dolphins, one an eagle, and the last a bear.

What I got from one girl:

"I am a bear and I live with my friends in a mountain. I am happy, but when I see a hunter I attack him, but when I see a tourist I shout at him".

A second:

"I am a dolphin, but I am sad because they have put me into a pool, where I cannot move like before ...".

Activity B

Now, what you can do is get the students to read/tell their story, adding in extra bits as they go along.

Activity C

Now, you can ask them why they chose this animal, and then go on to pick up on what they said, expanding it into a session of exchanges between the students, involving yourself if you feel like it.

Activity D

Get a blank page and draw a circle in the centre. Then, place the words "animal in captivity" inside the circle. Give each student a copy of the page and tell them to do an INDIVIDUAL brainstorming exercise on the words in the circle. That is, get them to draw lines from the circle, each line leading up to a word or image suggested by the animal's situation. Give them all a few minutes to do this.

This, we can call a word-map, or even a mind-map.

Next, get each student to read out the ideas that came spontaneously into their heads as they thought. You can all marvel at the number of differences-or similarities that arise, and go on to discuss the matter of captive animals.

Don't forget to question students on why they put in such and such a thing. Watch out for strange concepts!

Put all the pages together so that the students can somehow see the work carried out by the rest.

Perhaps now, as a group, they could all focus on the main aspects of animals in captivity.

You could then move on to debate issues like endangered species, whale hunting ...

Activity E

(B) TIGERS KILL TOURISTS (B)

Get the students to debate, or role play, the following incident: Two German pensioners alighted from their car in a Spanish nature park in order to get a better picture (christ!) of the tigers, who were relaxing in the shade of a tree at the time. They were, bluntly, torn apart. There were signs up in many languages warning people to stay in their cars ...

Should the animals be put down?
Should they be in nature reserves in the first place?
Etc

Activity F

Here, you could mention the pros and cons of having a domestic animal-a pet-at home.

Submitted by Gerard Counihan

Animals, Our Friends

Level: Medium to Difficult

In February of 1998, a Somerset (UK) man was trapped under a fallen van he had been repairing. As he cried for help and darkness fell it seemed he would be left there all night; his leg had been caught beneath the wheels. The area was rather isolated and nobody heard his cries-except a parrot perched on a caravan in a nearby camp site. The bird mimicked the man's cries, which is apparently normal behaviour for this type of animal, and alerted two men working in the area. These reversed the van off the injured man, who, in the end, only had slight injuries.

Activity A

Have you ever been in a similar situation? Has an animal ever helped you in some way?

Activity B

Do you think animals are necessary for humans? Why?

Examples:

Company
Protection
Cosmetic testing

.....

.....

Activity C

List the most helpful animals, and why.

Examples:

- 1 The elephant can transport us and pull trees
- 2 Dogs keep us company
- 3 Spiders eat flies
- 4 Cows give us meat and leather
- 5
- 6

Activity D

Negative points associated with animals

- 1 They bite humans
- 2 They answer the call of nature anywhere
- 3 They bark and wake us up at night
- 4
- 5

Activity E

Should we use animals to test drugs and cosmetic products on? If your answer is "no", what way do you suggest instead? Humans? Robots?

Activity F

When you are at home, studying or watching TV, and you see a fly or a spider, what is your first reaction? Do you normally kill it? Why?

Submitted by Gerard Counihan

Mystery Object

Level: Any Level

I am teaching my Level 1 writing students how to describe things by means of process (First second then), extended definition (for instance/compare-contrast), and directions (N.S.E.W./right, left, etc). We have done these things one at a time but my

students are continually making learning leaps beyond the simple assignments and I want to reward them for their abilities while making sure they have the basics down. Also, we will soon be studying the correct form for personal letters and I think they are ready to move on. We did these two fun assignments:

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

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

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

I always encourage imaginations running wild; the greatest portion of my student's training tends to be incredibly focused and detail-oriented and an occasional stretch is important. Also, my father, who was an orchestra conductor, told me that when you are about to begin a new piece with the orchestra you do not start by practicing each section and then, when the sections are perfect, putting them together. You start by playing the entire piece through! You tell everyone not to be concerned about their mistakes, but just to try and keep up. Naturally this first "stagger through" sounds

terrible! But the psychological result is that when you are done every musician says to himself, "I can do this!" Obviously, they do not want to look bad in the group, so they will self-discipline themselves to improve.

Role Play: The Exclusive Picture

Level: Medium to Advanced

- Time: One hour, including follow-up debate.
- Language: As many speech acts as are possible. "Divergent" approach (see The Internet TESL Journal" for a good article by Patricia K. Tompkins).
- Organization: Small group (in my case, 7).
- Warm-up/Preparation: Each student compiles a fictitious character profile (or merely thinks up a few ideas on what he might say in the context).
- Procedure: Teacher asks for volunteers, or appoints them if the students are stalling too much.

Background:

The editor of a newspaper, whose sales are not going well at the moment, has just received a very graphic photo of a horrendous accident involving a school-bus and which occurred on a nearby motorway due to heavy fog. In the photo, you can see the injured and dead strewn around the crash scene. The rest is easy to imagine. The problem is whether to publish it or not. The image could shock, all the more so if it is on the front page. Should not the victims be left in peace, and not appear on the cover of a newspaper. Then again, perhaps by publishing this photo, the editor seeks to educate would-be careless drivers, or would-be drink-drivers. Of course, why should these victims be used as free advertising? Also, it is news, and nobody can fault a journalist for airing a story and photo. Moreover, the photo will attract, perhaps, new customers; people have a morbid interest in the misfortunes of others, it is said.

Role players:

- The editor, quite young.
- The photographer who took the shot, single.
- The accountant, married with two children.
- A journalist-relative of one of the victims-in favour of publication, married (with or without children).
- A second journalist, single, who is against publication.
- More journalists from various sections of the paper.

(The ages and marital status may be altered as you see fit).

Facts on newspaper:

- Employs fifty workers, most with children.
- Is on the verge of closure.
- Serious newspaper.

Follow-up:

Teacher collects main arguments raised and writes them down in order to fully tease out what was said, the validity/logic of same.

A more open "casual" group debate can ensue in the wake of the role play.

Variation:

Instead of a photo, it could be a nasty story about a local hero/personality.

Off-shoot Activity:

- The role of newspapers in society.
- What sells newspaper.
- Why do we buy newspapers.
- Will they disappear in the future?

20 True or False Items

Level: Easy to Medium

Print this out and give it to your students.

1. I never go to bed after 1 am
2. I study English more than 2 hours a week
3. I had a great time at secondary school-I loved it
4. My ambition in life is to get a permanent job
5. My parents started giving me pocket money when I was five
6. I don't mind wet days, there are still plenty of things to do
7. I really believe that motorbikes are dangerous
8. Parents spoil their children nowadays
9. The beach is for relaxing and doing nothing

10. I am an adventurous person
11. I never run for a bus-I can catch the following one
12. In the end, most people are very nice
13. I absolutely hate Mondays
14. I have never stolen anything-never
15. People who smoke are crazy
16. Tall men/women are more interesting than small ones
17. People who watch more than 2 hours of TV a day are wasting time
18. Spending 4,000 pesetas on a permanent is immoral
19. Keeping animals at home is cruel
20. I am intelligent

Submitted by Gerard Coughlan