

ESL GAME IDEAS

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Ball Game

Level: Any Level

Students stand up in a circle around the teacher. A ball is tossed to a student and the teacher asks a question, e.g.: "Say a color". The student then responds and throws the ball back to the teacher. The teacher then throws the ball to another student and asks another question. For higher levels, you can ask such questions like "Give me the past participle of an irregular verb". This is a fast game, and it is great for reviewing vocabulary.

Submitted by: Ashraf Abu Ghazal

Getting to Know a Little More about Your Classmates

Level: Any Level

The teacher gives every student a piece of paper on which they write a sentence about their personal life. This sentence can be about school, family, music, friends, the last vacation, etc. For example "I went to the beach last vacation" or "I always study for my exams" or "I have two brothers" etc. When they finish writing their sentences they fold the paper and give it to the teacher.

It is very important to tell students before writing the sentence that the information they are going to write is "a secret" and not to show it to their classmates. If they have a question about something, they should ask it to you instead of a classmate. Tell students to write their names on the papers.

After collecting all the papers, ask the students to write the numbers from one to 10 (or 20, depending on the number of students you have in that moment in the classroom) in their notebooks. After that, the teacher reads the sentences in random order (without saying the name of the student), and the students write the names of the people they think wrote sentences.

After reading all the sentences, say the question number and read the sentence again for each piece of paper and ask the students to name who they thought wrote it.

Then tell the students the name from the student who wrote that sentence. Students should write (C) for correct guesses and (I) for incorrect guesses.

This is one way for students to start knowing a little more about their classmates.

Submitted by: Lic. Carmen Martinez

Draw the Teacher

Level: Any Level

This game helps to teach children the names of facial parts.

Divide the class into two teams. Then draw 2 ovals shapes on the board. Then yell "Draw the teacher's eyes!" and the two leading students from each team run up and draw your eyes on the oval. Then yell "Nose!" which is drawn by the next two students. And so it goes. The student get a ball out of this as they have permission to make fun of their teacher, and your image can get to look pretty distorted. You can add other features, such as nose or ear hairs. This will also work if you want to do body parts as well. Just draw the basic torso instead of ovals.

If the kids are unsure as to which facial/body part you're talking about, just point to it.

At the end say both images look pretty good and call it a tie.

Another variation on this could be for naming parts of animals. The resulting picture would be a monster. i.e. peacock's tail, snake's head, elephant feet, bat's wings, etc.

Submitted by: Tindros

Acting Adverbs

Level: Easy to Medium

This activity is a great way to introduce the idea of how adverbs affect the way a verb action is done. Divide the blackboard in two and write as many verbs on one side and as many adverbs on the other as you can (get the class to come up with them). At this stage you can also teach how adjectives 'turn into' adverbs by writing down adjectives

e.g. angry, happy, and adding the 'ily'. Then divide the class into two teams and perhaps give them goofy team names (I find they enjoy giving each other names). Then get one team to choose a verb and adverb combination and the other team has to act it out, e.g. talk crazily.

My experience with this activity has been with younger learners where some kind of reward is offered at the end like stamps or being the first team to leave at the end of class. You can think of your own reward (or penalty) to motivate your class. It can be a lot of fun with both the actors and the 'directors' enjoying making fools out of themselves or watching others make fools of themselves.

Submitted by: Thomas Jackson

Suppose That

Level: Easy to Medium

This works well as a fluency activity

1. You are the black sheep of your family. Explain to us why.
2. You won a motorcycle and you are planning to embark on a voyage. Explain where you go.
3. You arrive face to face with a person who you owe 100 dollars to. What do you say?
4. You help an old woman across the street. It turns out that she is a magician. To thank you, she offers you four wishes. What do you ask for?
5. You arrive home at midnight, you open the door and

Submitted by Sholdstock

Cut-Up Sentence Kabadi

Level: Any

This is a combination of a basic TEFL game and the Indian(?) game Kabadi(?).

Prepare some cut up sentences from the grammar or vocab area you've been working on and place them on a table at the front of the class. Arrange the students into teams, standing behind a line or marker. They have to run to the table and arrange the words into correct sentences, however, they are not allowed to breathe in. To prevent this the students have to repeat 'kabadi' over and over. If they stop saying the word they have

to return to their teams. The first team to correctly arrange all their sentences is the winner. This can get a bit wild but it's fun.

Submitted by John Mehers

Writing Idea

Level: Medium to Difficult

I asked my students to write in their daily journals what rules they would like to see implemented in our classroom and which rules they believed would benefit our class the most. I then asked them to imagine how it would be if we had no rules in our class, in our school, and in the world. I asked them to weigh the pros and cons of this idea and write whether or not they would like to experience or live in this type of environment.

Spin Zone

Level: Any

Each set of partners receives a top. One learner says as many sentences or words in the target language as he can before the top stops spinning. His partner counts. The student who says the most words wins. We had fun letting the winners compete in "spin offs". I like to give stickers to all and candy to the winner!

Submitted by Amanda Dunaway

Prepositions Game

Level: Medium to Difficult

Prepare a text that contains prepositions. Take out the prepositions and print them on a separate sheet, then cut this sheet so that each preposition is on a piece of paper, then put all of them in an envelope. Divide the class into groups and give each group an envelope. Tell the students that you are going to read a text and whenever you raise your hand they should bring a suitable preposition and put it on your desk and that the fastest team would get points. Read the text with each groups' order and cancel a point for each mistake. Finally read the text with correct prepositions. You can play this game with adj as well as a,the and an.

Submitted by: Luma Ashoo

Martian

Level: Medium to Difficult

Tell your class you are a Martian and you are inhabiting a human body to study human ways. You then ask about virtually anything in the room, and ask follow up questions:

What is this?

It's a pen.

What's a "pen"?

You use it to write.

What is "write"?

You make words with it on paper.

What are "words"?

ETC...

You can make it as difficult as possible for your higher level students; at some point, though, you'll need to say "OK, I understand", and go to the next object. Even your best students will eventually get stuck on this one!

Submitted by Chris Mattson

Punctuation Game

Level: Any Level

I came up with this game to help the students understand what the marks of punctuation are. Draw a period (.), a comma (,), a question mark (?), exclamation mark (!), and an apostrophe (') on the board and leave a few inches between each symbol. Tell the students the name of each and have them repeat each name. When they are comfortable with the names, begin by pointing to each one in succession. Once they are proficient at this, speed up the pace. This is where it gets fun. Once they are able to say the names in order, change the order on them. Speed up each time through to get the kids excited. As a final tactic, have each student go through the names of the symbols at a slow pace and then speed up. I give the one who can say the most right a piece of candy or a sticker. Have fun and you'll see a big improvement in their punctuation.

Submitted by David R. Henry

Good Morning Balls

Level: Any Level

1. You have three different coloured balls, (they should be very light weight, small balls).
2. Get the class to make a circle.
3. Then give three people a ball.
 - o Red Ball - Good Morning
 - o Green Ball- How are you?
 - o Blue Ball - Fine thank you and you?
4. The class members pass or gently throw the balls and the person who receives them says the meaning of the balls.

This is fun and gets the class going first thing in the morning.

Submitted by Robyn Cooper-Pollard

Air-write

Level: Any Level

One person "writes" letters, words, numbers, shapes etc: in the air and others guess what it is. Can be done in pairs, as a group, along a chain.

Can also be played as back-write, that is, writing the letter/word/... on the back of another and they guess what it is.

Lost in a Jungle

Level: Medium to Difficult

This is a game suitable for a class of pre-intermediate and up. The game can be done in groups of three to six students. It keeps everyone involved even the quietest students.

The Teacher prepares a list of say 20 items and writes the list on the board or gives copies to groups. This is a list of things that people may need if they're lost in the jungle and things that they may not need.

For example:

- A pack of canned food
- 50 meters nylon rope
- Knife
- Torch
- Tent
- Cellular phone
- 6 gallons of water
- Petrol
- Alcohol
- Blankets
- Candles
- Matches
- ...

Then, the students in groups decide on 5 items on the list which seem essential to all of them.

This usually takes a whole session since they all come up with different ideas. Sometimes a creative student chooses an item apparently irrelevant, but when he/she explains how to use it, everyone agrees!

Submitted by Nazanin Nikanjam